

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 679

FL 026 741

TITLE Early Literacy and the ESL Learner: Participants' Manual. For Early Childhood Educators Working with Children from Language Backgrounds Other Than English.

INSTITUTION Language Australia, Melbourne (Victoria).; South Australia Dept. of Education, Training, and Employment, Adelaide.

ISBN ISBN-1-875578-86-2

PUB DATE 1998-00-00

NOTE 449p.; Project funded by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Learner (051)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC18 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Early Childhood Education; *Emergent Literacy; *English (Second Language); *Faculty Development; Foreign Countries; Inservice Teacher Education; Learning Modules; *Literacy Education; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; Worksheets

IDENTIFIERS Australia

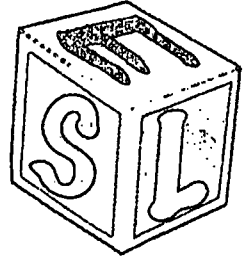
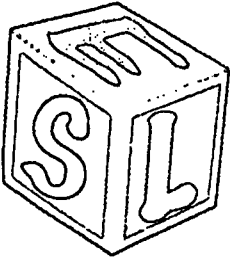
ABSTRACT

This volume is a professional development resource for early childhood educators, especially designed for those working with children from language backgrounds other than English. This resource is designed to fill a gap in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) education that has neglected the professional development needs of teachers of preschool and young elementary school learners. These materials are aimed specifically at supporting the development of early literacy skills in children aged 3-7 years. It emphasizes maintaining and developing the children's home languages for learning English and for maintaining personal and cultural identity, as well as the collaborative partnerships with parents and other professionals in early childhood settings. This manual is divided into eight modules: ESL learners in early childhood settings; developing an additional language in a supportive learning environment; talking and learning in a second language; reading and writing in a second language; reading and writing in a second language; a culturally inclusive approach to early childhood education; and planning more effective partnerships. Worksheets, case studies, activities, and learning journals are found in each module. (KFT)

Early Literacy

and the

ESL Learner



ED 453 679

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. L. Bianco

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

For Early Childhood Educators working with children from language backgrounds other than English.

1

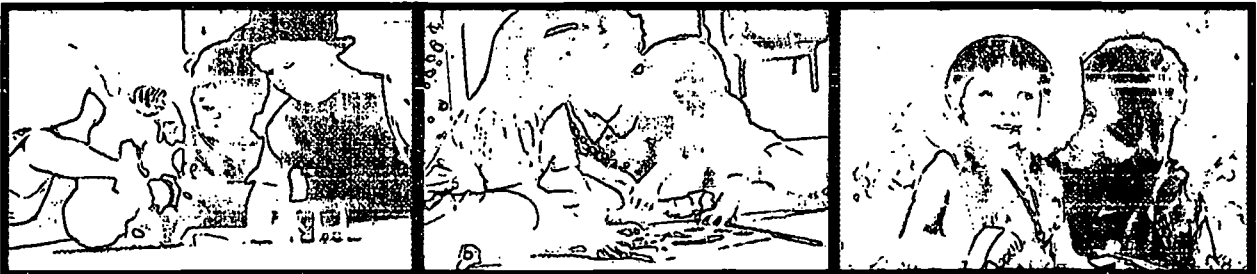
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.



Participants' Manual



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT



The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia

17026741



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

Early Literacy and the ESL Learner: Participants' Manual

ISBN 1 875578 86 2

Published by Language Australia Ltd 1998.

© Language Australia Ltd and the Department of Education, Training and Employment 1998
This work is copyright. It may only be reproduced in whole or in part for study or training purposes subject to release by the copyright holders. Reproduction of any part of this Resource Package requires the written permission of Language Australia Ltd (The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia) and the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment.

The publisher gratefully acknowledges permission granted by the following publishers and authors to reproduce the stated material:

- ABC and Yunupingu, M: for extract from *Voices from the Land*, 1994 Boyer Lecture. Boyer Lectures are broadcast on ABC Radio National and published by ABC Books
- Addison Wesley Longman for extract from *Composition through Pictures*; Heaton, J B, Longman
- Addison Wesley Longman Australia for "Children and Bias" In *The Anti-bias Approach in Early Childhood*; Creaser, B & Dau, E (eds); Addison Wesley Longman Australia
- Addison Wesley Longman Australia for extract from *One Childhood Many Languages*; Makin et al; Addison Wesley Longman Australia
- Australian Early Childhood Association Inc for "Write from the Start: supporting beginning writers" by Julie Martello, *Resource Book* Vol. 1 No. 4; December 1994
- Board of Studies, NSW for "What is Aboriginal English", *Aboriginal English* by Diana Eades © Board of Studies, NSW, 1995
- Cambridge University Press for extract from *Educating Second Language Children*
- Department of Employment, Education and Training for *Emerging Voices: the role of bilingual education workers as cultural and linguistic mediators in preschool and school-based settings*
- Eleanor Curtain Publishing for "Doing Things with words: early language socialisation" In *The literacy agenda: issues for the nineties*
- Harper Collins Publishers Australia for extract from *Onion Tears* by Diana Kidd
- Langmaid, J for *Fostering first languages: the maintenance and development of the first languages of children with English as a second language in kindergarten programs*
- McDonald's Australia Limited for use of The McDonald's Family Restaurant logo, *The Golden Arches*
- Multilingual Matters, Ltd for Chapter 7, "Literacy Among the Panjabs in Southall" In *Language and Literacy in Social Practice*; Saxena, Mukul, 1994
- Primary English Teaching Association NSW for Chapter 1 and extract from *Exploring How Texts Work*; Derewianka, B.
- Primary English Teaching Association NSW for Chapter 6 "The Mother Tongue in the Classroom" and Chapter 8 "Learning to Listen and Getting the Sounds Right" In *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*; Gibbons, P
- Primary English Teaching Association, NSW for extracts from *Talking to Learn*; Jones, P 1996
- Scholastic Australia Pty Limited for extract from *Inside Stories* by Rita Bishop, Ashton Scholastic, (1989)
- Scholastic Australia Pty Limited for extract from *Using Big Books and Predictable Books* by Priscilla Lynch, Ashton Scholastic, (1986)
- Trentham Books for extracts from *Multilingual perspectives in early childhood*

The project was supported by professional development funding of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Language Australia or the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment.

Foreword

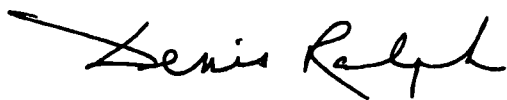
Early Literacy and the ESL Learner is a Professional Development Resource for early childhood educators, especially designed for those working with children from language backgrounds other than English. These resource materials emerge from a joint project of Language Australia Ltd (the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia) and the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment.

This joint project was a result of an external review of the Department of Education, Training and Employment's *ESL in the Mainstream* course, conducted in 1995 by the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia, as Language Australia Ltd was then known, through its then South Australian Teaching and Curriculum Centre. This review identified the need to give equal priority to staff working in the early years of schooling and the pre-compulsory years, in supporting them to meet the needs of ESL learners. The *Early Literacy and the ESL Learner* materials are designed specifically to meet this need.

The materials have been developed over the last three years, trialed in South Australia and then trialed nationally to evaluate and refine the content and processes prior to their release. The *Early Literacy and the ESL Learner* resource folder owes a significant debt to 'The ESL in the Mainstream' course (Department for Education and Children's Services 1993), which both inspired its development and from which it derives some of its structure and content. The Language Australia Child ESL and Literacy Research Network has also supported the resource.

The materials aim specifically at supporting the development of early literacy skills in children aged 3-7 years. They emphasise the importance of maintaining and developing the child's home language for learning English and for maintaining personal and cultural identity, and the collaborative partnerships with parents and other professionals in early childhood settings.

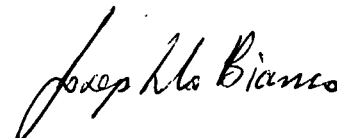
We commend the *Early Literacy and the ESL Learner* resource to you as a unique and invaluable tool for early childhood educators in achieving successful language and learning outcomes for children from language and cultural backgrounds other than English.



Denis Ralph
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT



Joseph Lo Bianco
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Language Australia (the National
Languages and Literacy Institute of
Australia Limited)

Contents

Introduction	i
Module 1: ESL learners in early childhood settings	1
Module 2: Developing an additional language in a supportive learning environment	55
Module 3: Talking and learning in a second language: Issues	105
Module 4: Talking and learning in a second language: Strategies	153
Module 5: Reading and writing in a second language: Issues	215
Module 6: Reading and writing in a second language: Strategies	267
Module 7: A culturally inclusive approach to early childhood education	321
Module 8: Planning more effective partnerships	369

Introduction

Early Literacy and the ESL Learner is designed for workshop and self-managed use by professionals seeking to extend their skills and understanding in working with children aged 3 - 7 years from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

The resource extends:

- understandings and skills for supporting children in their first and second language development
- understandings and skills in working with parents from language backgrounds other than English
- understandings of the implications of cultural and linguistic pluralism in education
- ability to provide culturally inclusive learning environments.

Resource readings and self-managed learning tasks are included, as well as workplace activities. Managers in the early childhood sector can also use this resource in workshops and other inservice activities. A facilitator's manual includes all procedures for running workshops based around the Resource Folder and includes learning activities for groups and individuals, as well as resource readings, reflection sheets, suggested written and workplace assignments, checklists of requirements and overhead projectuals for each module.

These materials are designed for inservice use but could also be used (with minimal modifications) within a university postgraduate education programme or by other preservice training providers.

The materials are designed to engender a dialogue between the writer and individual reader or workshop participant, with a balance of theory and practice intended to make the materials as accessible and as widely applicable as possible. The approach to grammar acknowledges a range of contemporary educational approaches and a range of theoretical perspectives, taking from each what is seen as most useful for the early childhood context and for English as a Second Language learners.

Key principles

A number of key principles underpin this professional development resource:

- the importance for learning English, of maintaining and developing the child's home language, in maintaining personal and cultural identity, in enhancing self-esteem and maintaining family and community cohesion
- the importance of successful English language and literacy outcomes in early childhood education as a foundation for empowering learners in later Australian schooling and in society more generally
- the critical role of the adult in scaffolding children's language
- the importance of collaborative partnerships with parents, with bilingual education workers and with learners in early childhood settings, to plan and provide for successful educational outcomes for learners from language backgrounds other than English
- a view of literacy as a set of social and cultural practices

- the importance of developing a culturally inclusive curriculum to provide a supportive and safe environment in which to learn
- the value of explicit teaching about language
- the significant role of oral language in children's social development and learning, especially in the early childhood educational context.

Contents

The Resource Package is designed around eight self-managed modules accompanied by facilitator's notes for use in workshop contexts.

- **Module 1: ESL Learners in Early Childhood Settings**

In Module 1 we look at the multicultural and multilingual nature of Australian society, and participants have the opportunity to explore their own perspectives. We look at the knowledge and life experiences that children from language backgrounds other than English bring to the early childhood setting. From this starting point, participants are asked to focus on factors which can affect learning outcomes and we begin to examine strategies to support these children, in particular, to achieve successful learning outcomes.

- **Module 2: Developing an Additional Language in a Supportive Learning Environment**

We begin this module by reflecting on literacy as a set of social and cultural practices and touch on the pedagogic implications of this view of literacy for supporting learners from cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than English. From this point, we revisit how children learn their first language. We then focus more specifically on the learning of English as a second language: firstly, through an experience as a second language learner and, secondly, by examining some of the issues in learning English as a second language in early childhood settings. Finally, we explore strategies which are useful in providing a supportive learning environment in which children can experience success in learning a second language.

- **Module 3: Talking and Learning in a Second Language: Issues**

Spoken language is a critical component of early childhood programs, both for developing oral language through learning and social interaction and as a bridge into reading and writing. For these reasons, we focus on spoken language in some depth in this resource folder. In Module 3 we examine the particular needs of children from diverse language backgrounds in learning to talk and listen in early childhood settings and explore issues of developing talk in a second language for both social and learning purposes in early childhood environments. As part of this exploration, we examine the nature of spoken language and the oral language demands implicit in certain tasks and texts interpreted and produced in early childhood settings.

This is the first of two modules on spoken language. The second one (Module 4) will explore a range of specific strategies for supporting the oral language development of second language learners of English in early childhood settings.

- **Module 4: Talking and Learning in a Second Language: Strategies**

In this module we explore a range of strategies for supporting the oral language development of second language learners of English in early childhood settings.

Firstly we focus on those aspects of early childhood programs which specifically encourage oral language development in a second language, including the role of the adult in scaffolding language. We examine the importance of small group work and the role of talk in learning and thinking and in developing language and social skills, and we model some strategies which focus specifically on small group work in oral language development. We also highlight strategies which support the development of listening skills. Finally we focus on planning and programming to enhance oral language development in early childhood settings.

- **Module 5: Reading and Writing in a Second Language: Issues**

In this module we revisit current understandings of literacy as a set of social and cultural practices and examine the pedagogic implications for supporting learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in early childhood settings.

We explore the early reading and writing experiences all children may bring to the early childhood setting, and in particular the experiences of ESL learners, and look at how these experiences might match what learners are expected to achieve in reading and writing in the early years of formal education.

Finally we examine specific issues for ESL learners in learning to read and write in English in early childhood settings.

- **Module 6: Reading and Writing in a Second language: Strategies**

We begin this module with an approach to examining and selecting texts for use across different areas of learning. There are many excellent resources available which incorporate effective strategies for ESL learners, some of which are listed in the readings section at the end of this module. Although in this training package it is not possible to describe all the strategies which are suitable for use with ESL learners, we will model a number of strategies which support the reading and writing skills of ESL learners in early childhood settings.

- **Module 7: A Culturally-Inclusive Approach to Early Childhood Education**

In this module, we revisit the principles of a culturally-inclusive approach to early childhood education which are embedded throughout earlier modules, and explore further the impact in improving educational outcomes for all children. We identify practices already referred to in this package which can be considered culturally inclusive and focus on others which will also support the implementation of a culturally inclusive approach. We examine our practices at both a program

and whole centre level and look at possible ways in which we can make them more culturally inclusive. Finally, we focus on developing a holistic learning experience for children which is more culturally inclusive.

Note: This module, both in content and processes, relies heavily on Workshop 9 in the ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course (South Australian Department for Education and Children's Services, 1993).

- **Module 8: Planning more effective partnerships**

Here we focus on ways to establish effective partnerships which extend and enrich the support available to ESL learners. Partnerships with parents and the local community, with bilingual education workers and other specialist support services relevant to ESL learners, as well as partnerships with local schools are examined. We also look at how collaborative approaches can enhance the profiling and assessment processes as these apply to ESL learners in the early childhood setting. Participants are asked to consider how they can develop and extend relationships within and beyond their centre.

The design of the folder

This resource is designed for workshops and self-managed use by professionals seeking to extend their skills and understandings in working effectively with children aged 3 - 7 years from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The eight module package consists of:

- participants' notes
 - resource notes
 - worksheets
 - workplace activities
 - readings
- facilitator's notes
 - suggested procedures
 - overhead transparency templates.

Readings reinforce key points in each module and give additional information, and reflection sheets included in the resource package encourage a personal response. The readings extend early childhood educators' knowledge and allow reflections on practice. There are also practical workplace activities suggested, investigating aspects of early childhood settings and practice of new skills in the participant's own setting.

This resource is designed so as to incorporate further refinements and extensions, and we welcome comments and suggestions for improvement.

In particular

- We need to assess the suitability and range of the readings for different early childhood settings.
- We need to see how sharing readings, dialogue and activities with colleagues allows for evaluation of new ideas and strategies and extends the value of the materials across the whole educational team in a centre. Your notes and readings can enrich future editions of this publication.
- Practical activities are suggested for educators to try out in their own early childhood setting. We need to assess the suitability and difficulty of these learning tasks in the field. They are intended to support educators attempting to implement change in the workplace and test the practical applications of new understandings and ideas. They are not intended to be prescriptive, particularly as issues will vary considerably across settings. For formal accreditation these may be used for action research projects or other assignments. Once again, your own notes, action research and case studies can enrich future versions of this professional development resource.

The materials are only available for use by individuals or groups under stringent copyright licence agreement, designed to protect the quality of the product without constraining the freedom to customise the materials to suit local purposes.

Suggested implementation in professional development

Each of the different modes for offering this professional development resource has its own advantages and disadvantages. The pilot training program involved a series of eight workshops offered over a single semester. This seemed to be an effective structure to maximise the impact of the professional development on educational practice.

The literature on educational change and professional development suggests that a number of criteria need to be met to ensure the practical effectiveness of any professional development, and these principles have provided a rationale for design of this Resource Folder.

In our view, effective professional development

- *is practical and relevant to educators' needs*

Practising educators have a keen sense of what will work, what might work, and what won't work in their own setting, and already have a good understanding of the needs of the children in their care. They are also under great pressure and do not have time for things they don't see as being practical and relevant to needs and to issues in their settings, and so any professional development needs to be firmly anchored in workplace environment and provide support materials that can be easily adapted to a variety of contexts.

- *acknowledges and values the skills and expertise of educators*

Effective in-service training acknowledges the expertise of practising educators as tutors and/or 'critical friends' and acknowledges the importance of collaboration. It seeks opportunities to explore and exchange ideas, and reach understandings together, in a supportive context that

enhances participants' self-esteem, acknowledging and valuing their skills, experiences and expertise.

- *is reflective*

Change is a very personal process involving letting go of entrenched and often unconscious beliefs and practices. Opportunities are needed to reflect on personal practices, to observe other educational settings and to compare materials and strategies.

- *is of meaningful length*

The best in-service training allows for exploring the terrain over a time span which is long enough to allow for reflection, professional reading, practical trialling of strategies and materials or other action research.

- *promotes strategies and materials that have been tried and tested*

Educators value strategies and materials that have been tried and tested and are known to work in real settings like their own. Professional development ought to allow the sharing of strategies, of materials developed and of materials adapted by participants.

- *is theoretically based but practically oriented*

Educators often express certain reservations about both theory in general and about academics in particular. This is partly rooted in impatience and may essentially be a reflection of the perceived urgency of their own problems for which they want answers yesterday.

They are often interested in current research and theory only so far as it illuminates practice. While professional development needs a sound theoretical base it also needs to address the 'so what' question educators invariably ask: 'how is this content relevant to our children and our workplace?' At the same time activities and readings need to be rigorous; educators don't want theory so diluted that it is patronising.

- *is system supported*

Educators need the assurance that professional development is valued by centre administration and directors, who demonstrate their support by their interest, resourcing, and addressing issues in policy and planning.

Effective professional development involves educators bringing about lasting, positive change in their settings. Effective educational leaders are concerned with developing the skills of their staff and can demonstrate this by assisting and supporting them to achieve desired change in curriculum or with whole-site initiatives. Leadership strategies range from encouragement, suggesting or arranging appropriate resources to those embracing coaching or more formal mentoring models which can be particularly effective in supporting individuals.

Where the Resource Folder is used independently

Keeping a progressive journal of personal responses to readings and activities and reflections can be very useful, and so the resource folder builds around this structure. Attempting some writing activities in response to the materials can help to clarify and test ideas.

Trying to implement some change in the workplace and documenting its impact tests the practical applications, and engaging colleagues in dialogue on issues raised in these materials allows for sharing and evaluation of new ideas and strategies and can extend the value of the materials across the whole educational team in a centre.

Structuring workshops from this Resource Folder

This resource package is designed so it can be used for independent access or as the basis for structuring a training program, based around modules which can easily become workshops.

If the materials are used to structure a workshop program, in the way we recommend here, in addition to active participation in the eight three-hour workshops, participants will need to find additional time to:

- complete readings
- write up the reflection on readings
- complete workplace activities that are recommended
- write up the reflection on the previous workshop.

An important aim of these materials is to encourage educators to engage in some 'talk time', to air things related to the materials in relation to their work and personal situation. Each module encourages reflection on a range of issues and also mutual sharing among colleagues, in particular, the sharing of practice.

A reflection session on the previous workshop, readings and workplace activities at the beginning of each workshop is a critical element. A workshop reflection sheet, including reflections on the readings and activities in the educational setting, handed back at the next workshop, is very useful both for participants and tutor. An evaluation should be completed at the end of any series of workshops to assess the value and impact of this professional development, both at an individual level and in the context of the early childhood educational setting.

The readings are selected to reinforce the key points presented in each module and give additional information. Readings reflection sheets are included in the resource package to encourage a personal response to each reading.

Activities are also suggested for educators to try out in their own early childhood setting. These are not intended to be prescriptive, particularly as issues will vary considerably across settings. If a training program is developed for accreditation purposes, participants may wish to undertake an action research project or other assignments based on the research and readings in this resource package.

If these materials are to be used within a coherent course structure, we would strongly recommend selection and training of tutors. In the longer term the development of a specific tutor training course is a recommendation from the writers in this project.

The role of a learning journal

One learning tool provided for you in this resource package is a learning journal. Throughout the modules there are activities and reflections to complete in written note form. We have designed these as a way to consolidate your learning, giving you some reference points in your own ideas and questions and asking you to articulate your understandings and your needs for further clarification. We hope that you will take the time to complete the learning journals for each module, as we think they are an important aspect of your professional development.

The learning journal becomes an essential component of this course if you are planning to present this personal program of professional development for formal accreditation within a tertiary course or as evidence towards a promotional position. The learning journal then becomes documentation of the time you have committed and of what you have achieved.

Accreditation

This course is accredited with the University of South Australia. Those seeking accreditation interstate need to contact their relevant education authorities.

Acknowledgments

We need first of all to acknowledge the role played in the development of this resource by Language Australia, in particular the South Australian Teaching and Curriculum Centre, working in conjunction with the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment.

Funding was provided from a number of sources during the course of the project: principally from SATCC core funding under a Teacher Professional Development grant from the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs; from the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment; and from the Language Australia National Office through the National Children's Literacy and ESL Research Network.

Extremely generous consultancy support was provided by the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment Early Childhood, ESL and Literacy Teams and by the trialling groups of practising early childhood educators.

There have been many individuals and programs who have given invaluable support, time and expertise through:

- feedback
- trialling the materials
- participating in the Reference and Advisory Groups
- debate and discussion.

Their ideas, knowledge and skills have helped enormously in clarifying and strengthening the directions of this resource.

Particular thanks to:

Project management

Jean Clayton: Manager of the former NLLIA, South Australian Teaching and Curriculum Centre

Dianne Dean: Manager, Language Australia Child ESL and Literacy Research Network

Gerry Mulhearn: Curriculum Superintendent, Department of Education, Training and Employment

Writers

Deborah Rees

Catherine Honeychurch

Jean Clayton

Research assistance

Nelly Ivanova

Swinitha Nawana

Dawn Meaney

Kate Elliott

Consultancy and advice

Graham Taylor: Coordinator, Department of Education, Training and Employment (special thanks for a major role in the early development of the concept and the initial pilot)

Rosemary Matwiejczyk: ESL in the Mainstream Coordinator, Department of Education, Training and Employment (special thanks for a major role in assisting the writing and providing editorial comment)

Jillian Barker: Senior Project Officer, Special Education/Disability, Department of Education, Training and Employment

Priscilla Clarke: Manager, Multicultural Resource Centre, Free Kindergarten Association, Victoria

Jean Gaedke: Consultant, Catholic Education, Victoria

Pauline Jones: Lecturer, School of Teacher Education, Faculty of Education, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW

Pam Winter: Senior Project Officer, Training and Development Unit, Department of Education, Training and Employment

Lyn Mansfield: Teacher, Wandana School, Department of Education, Training and Employment

Glossary of terms and acronyms

- acquisition** language acquisition can be broadly defined as the process by which vocabulary and grammatical rules are internalised so that they can be used to communicate in a language; in one sense, 'acquisition' is synonymous with 'learning'; however, Krashen (1981) uses these terms with different meanings when referring to the learning of a second language:
- 'acquisition' for Krashen consists of the spontaneous process of rule internalization that results from natural language use
 - 'learning' consists of the development of conscious L2 knowledge through formal study
- (adapted from Ellis, R. (1986) *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford University Press. Page 292)
- Gee (1991) refers to 'acquisition' as a process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models in natural, meaningful and functional settings, and in processes of trial and error .
- active voice** the subject of the verb is the 'actor' or 'doer' of the action *eg The wind (subject) blew (verb) the trees about* (see also **passive voice**)
- adjectives** words which specify attributes (describe the special characteristics) of a noun *eg its colour or shape or number... as in those two neighbouring houses, a really thick but interesting book, harmful cleaning liquid*
- adverbial phrases of time/location** cohesive groups of words which act to modify or connect verbs (actions) and which indicate the 'where' and 'when' of an activity *eg earlier on... before my arrival... just over the hill... after that... in the pile of books on my desk....*
- adverbs** words which specify the mode of action (how, where, when) of the verb *eg he always speaks slowly, she went out quietly*
- approximating** using a form of any language which is not the standard form but is the speaker's attempt to copy the standard as he/she understands it at that stage of learning *eg using gumbug for grandpa, or instreding for interesting.*
- bicultural** refers to living in, reflecting or identifying with two cultures (see also **multicultural** and **pluralistic**)
- bi-dialectal** knowing and using more than one dialect of a language; many languages have regional dialects and different members of the family *eg grandparent, father may use different dialects in different contexts*
- bilingual** knowing and using two languages. In common use, a 'bilingual person' usually refers to someone who speaks, reads, or understands two languages equally well (a balanced bilingual), but most bilingual persons usually have a much better knowledge of one language than the other (see also **multilingual** and **immersion**)

bilingual education worker/ staff member	staff in an educational centre who have been selected for their command of more than one language who can be used to support learners from language backgrounds other than English in their home language; this Resource Package refers to those BEWs who work within the centre in supporting the teaching and learning program through the maintenance and development of children's home language and in supporting the transition from home language to English; various titles are given in each educational sector to staff who operate in this area - they may be known as bilingual aides (BAs), bilingual student service officers (BSSOs), Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs), Aboriginal Education Resource Teachers (AERTs), Community Liaison Officers (CLOs)... depending on their role.
brainstorming activity	a rapid collection of ideas from a group, collated on paper or white board, which can be refined and organised as the basis for further activity
child-rearing practices	ways of raising children that are influenced by individual, family and cultural factors
cloze	a language exercise which involves concealing parts of the text or pictures or leaving gaps in sentences to encourage prediction from the listener/speaker which is often used in assessment of language understandings.
cohesive ties	connecting words which tie ideas together into clauses, sentences or larger units of speech/writing eg <i>and, but, furthermore, I just want to clarify that..., in contrast, however</i>
colloquial	casual forms of language, often involving the use of slang, local idiom, or other features of conversation that is not the same as more formal standard language used in business and educational contexts (see also dialect, ebonics, Aboriginal English, creole)
communicative competence	those aspects of our competence that enable us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts (from Brown; 1987)
communicative activity	an activity (often in learning) where the <i>processes of communication</i> are the main focus, such as using the appropriate language for different types of situations, using language to perform different tasks and using language for social interaction
community language	a language used within a particular community, most commonly used to refer to languages spoken by ethnic minority groups, eg Greek, Vietnamese and Polish (see also first language, L1 and home language)
comprehensible input	language presented/expressed to the learner in such a way that it can be comprehended and taken in
comprehensible output	language produced by the learner in such a way that it is effective and comprehensible in a communicative situation
concept map	a technique used in teaching and learning to graphically represent (or map) connections between ideas/concepts within a topic

<i>context</i>	a linguistic term used by Halliday to mean the environment in which meanings are exchanged and a TEXT is produced; each TEXT has both an immediate environment and a cultural environment known as its CONTEXT OF CULTURE; context influences the sorts of meanings that are made and therefore the structures and syntax of the text produced.
	We also commonly talk of educational context to mean the space (physical/ social/ cognitive) in which teaching and learning occurs
<i>cooperative problem solving</i>	pairs or groups of children working together on a learning task rather than as individuals for mutual benefit through sharing the thinking and expression of ideas
<i>cross cultural communication</i>	a two-way sharing of knowledge and experience between cultures; the implication is that, to be effective and genuine, this involves mutual acknowledgment, understandings and valuing of cultural differences
<i>cueing systems</i>	sets of cues which readers use to make sense of/gain meaning from a text; these can be semantic/ syntactic/ graphophonic (see Module 5 of this Resource Package)
<i>culture</i>	the totality of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviour, social habits, and so on, shared by the members of a particular group or society.
<i>decontextualised</i>	used of language and ideas which do not rely on the immediate context for their meaning eg the language of textbooks, abstract nouns like liberty, equality,
<i>dialect</i>	a regional or local variety of a language which has its own characteristics, so that it is distinct from other varieties of the same language
<i>early childhood curriculum</i>	the learning content and processes of programs and services for children under 8 years of age
<i>early childhood setting</i>	used to describe a range of settings in which children from birth to 8 years receive education and care outside their own families
<i>ellipsis</i>	leaving out words or phrases from sentences where they are unnecessary because they have already been referred to or mentioned, eg 'He went to the door and (<i>he</i>) opened it'. Let's go! (<i>to town</i>)
<i>ESL</i>	English as a Second Language -often used to designate special assistance programs or to define specific groups of learners; in fact English may be a third or fourth language for such learners; ESL may carry a stigma for some learners (being seen as designating a learning disability); although in some States ESL is an accredited Year 12 matriculation subject (see also NESB)
<i>ESL learner</i>	a person from a language background other than English who is developing English language competence and would benefit from specific language focussed assistance; it is however, important to note that not all people from language / cultural backgrounds other than English are ESL learners.

***ESL in the Mainstream
Teacher Development
Course***

a teacher professional development course developed in South Australia but used nationally which aims to develop knowledge and skills so that educators can cater more effectively for the needs of non-English speaking background students; it also aims to increase awareness of the essential role that the ESL specialist plays in education and to develop, as far as possible, collaborative working relationships between ESL specialists and mainstream teachers

ethnic

an adjective frequently misused; commonly but inappropriately used to refer to people of non-English speaking backgrounds whether born overseas or in Australia - as everyone has ethnicity (see 'Ethnicity'), it is more appropriate to describe people as: Greek-Australian, Vietnamese-Australian, Anglo-Australian etc., or of Greek background, Vietnamese background ...

ethnic group

any group of people who share a common language and/or cultural traditions

ethnic identity

a person's attitude concerning their personal relationship with an ethnic group with which they are associated, involving beliefs about one's obligations to the group, feelings about belonging to the group and about participating in the formal and informal institutions and activities of the group

ethnicity

refers to the language and cultural traditions which members of a group hold in common; it should not be confused with nationality, as national boundaries are politically imposed and are often changed by war, colonisation and revolution

explicit language

language that is deliberately structured (scaffolded) and focussed and strongly supported by visual and nonverbal cues to assist comprehension and intake by the learner

family literacy

all literacy practices which occur in a family context (intergenerational and sibling activities) including oral and visual means of communication and language development as well as written texts in all languages and dialects used within the family

first language

the language of a child's first hearing and learning; often used to refer to the language used within a particular community, including languages spoken by ethnic minority groups, eg Greek, Vietnamese, Polish ...

genre

a term to refer to any language activity, written or spoken, which moves through a number of stages in order to reach a particular goal or purpose; the various genres of spoken and written language are culturally specific and thus vary in shape and form from language to language and culture to culture

grammar

a way of describing the rules that have evolved in a language which govern its operation and which become standardised through education, literature, business and bureaucracy; there are various types of grammars: a descriptive type which focuses on correct usage as evolved over time (traditional grammar is an example of this) and an explanatory and philosophical type which describes how the language is commonly used among any social group (Systemic Functional Grammar is an example of this). Systemic Functional Grammar is explanatory because of the relationship Halliday argues exists between culture and grammar; the positions, ways of doing and being in the world which are available to children are embedded in our grammar.

<i>home language</i>	the language of first hearing and learning in the home
<i>honorifics</i>	a way of using language, including body language, to demonstrate respect for someone older or of greater authority; this can be quite ritualised in some languages, so that a different level or variety of language is used in different power relationships
<i>idiomatic</i>	idioms and idiomatic ways of using words develop as forms peculiar to or characteristic of a particular language
<i>imperatives</i>	a way to express a command or demand eg <i>get</i> outside, <i>bring</i> me the paper
<i>inclusive curriculum</i>	all aspects of the teaching and learning environment that impact on children's and families' ability to participate fully in the curriculum ie the way learning is organised to include or exclude certain groups and individuals
<i>information gap activity</i>	a type of learning task - basically, there are two different types of information gap activity: in a two-way information gap task, each learner in the group holds part of the information needed to complete the task and they share the information in order to complete the task together; in a one-way task, one learner has a complete set of information which another learner needs to obtain in order to complete the task; each type of task is designed to encourage development of skills in communicating and collaborating
<i>intergenerational literacy</i>	a process by which the literacy practices of one generation influence the literacy development of another (Cairney, 1992); this can work from a number of directions eg from adults to children or children to adults
<i>L1</i>	one's first language (see home language , home background language/culture , community language and mother tongue)
<i>L2</i>	a second language, acquired through experience or formal learning
<i>labelling activity/exercise</i>	attaching labels to graphics or identifying features of a piece of writing by attaching descriptors as labels to specific words and phrases or sections
<i>language features</i>	aspects of language which label items, which differentiate: people, things, colours, shapes, often seen in forms such as nouns and adjectives
<i>language functions</i>	a way of describing language according to the purposes for which language is used eg to invite, to complain, to explain steps in a process
<i>language maintenance</i>	the degree to which an individual or group continues to use and transmit their language, particularly in a bilingual or multilingual context or among immigrant groups
<i>language structures</i>	those aspects of language which build structures into larger units of meaning eg past compared with present, this compared to that, here compared with there, through use of tenses, articles, prepositions for example

LBOTE	Language Background Other Than English - a quite recently-invented term to describe, people and communities whose first language is other than English and to describe their children (even if the child's first language is English)
lexical items	words which carry topic/content information - sometimes referred to as the topic or content words in a piece of writing or speech (see lexical meaning)
lexical meaning	the meaning in a text (spoken or written) derived from its content words, ie words which refer to a thing, quality, state, or action and which have meaning when they are used alone, eg nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs
literacy	there are numerous definitions of literacy in the contemporary research and policy documents and it is an ever-evolving concept; it involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking; it also incorporates numeracy; it includes the socio-cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different social situations. Literacy can also incorporate numeracy.
literacy set	an individual's developing ideas and notions about literacy are often called their literacy set
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
metalinguistic awareness	the ability to recognise that language is a system; having understandings about how it works and what it can do; this awareness can be transferable across languages
migrant/ migration/ (immigrant/ emigrant)	in the Australian context, this refers to people who have chosen to move from their original country to Australia to live and work with a view to permanency, but with the possibility of returning to the country of origin if they so wish; they can be English speaking as well as non-English speaking; immigrant, however, may be a preferred term because 'migrant' is frequently misused as a term of discrimination/abuse to refer to all people born overseas in non-English speaking countries regardless of the time they have spent in Australia or their citizenship; the term is particularly inappropriate when applied to second-generation Australians, that is, children born in Australia of parents, one or both of whom were born overseas; 'Bicultural children' or 'Students from non-English speaking backgrounds' may be a more useful term to describe these students
mix and match activity	a learning activity involving mixing up bits which are then reconstructed into a meaningful whole or sequence
modality	this is a linguistic term used to refer to contrasts in mood such as degrees of politeness eg 'get it for me' compared with <i>would you get it for me, could you ... do you mind ...</i>
mother tongue	the first language which is acquired at home; also often referred to as L1 or home/background language
multicultural/ multiculturalism	when we refer to countries and cultures such as Australia as 'multicultural' we acknowledge the multiplicity of diverse ethnic backgrounds of our communities and we also usually acknowledge a commitment to this diversity as a valued element in our society (see also pluralistic /pluralism)

<i>narrative</i>	a spoken or written text whose purpose is sometimes to entertain and perhaps inform, and which structures events into a temporal sequence; its structure includes an orientation, a series of complications each with some kind of resolution, and sometimes a coda or conclusion; including children's stories, fables, anecdotes.
<i>oral literacy</i>	aspects of using and understanding spoken language and developing communication skills in which listening and speaking abilities have focus are usually referred to as oral literacy, in the same way that the ability to understand pictures, graphics and diagrams is often referred to as visual literacy.
<i>passive voice</i>	'voice' is the way in which a language expresses the relationship between an action (expressed in the verb of the sentence) and the noun phrase which is associated with it (who or what performs the action; passive voice is frequently used in written and more formal language and is used when the writer is concerned not so much with who or what is making something happen, but with something which is having something done to it eg 'The water <i>is heated</i> to boiling point' is passive voice while 'She heats the water ...' is the active form of this.
<i>picture dictation activity</i>	a story is told with words missing; the learner substitutes a picture to match each missing word
<i>pluralism/ pluralistic</i>	these terms are alternatives to multicultural(ism) and are used in much the same way to acknowledge cultural and linguistic diversity in a society
<i>prepositions</i>	words which indicate relationships between objects and situations eg <i>under</i> the desk, <i>on</i> the table, <i>in</i> the house, <i>among</i> ourselves, <i>through</i> this work
<i>problem reconstruction</i>	learners arrange in a sequence to make a visual solution to a problem
<i>process description exercise</i>	learners present an oral or written description of each step in solving a problem or completing an activity
<i>reference items</i>	a language item used as a cohesive device to tie a text together and give it coherence by referring back to words or phrases used previously in the text, eg the <i>former/latter</i> , <i>that</i> option, <i>this</i> led to ... , <i>which</i> meant ...
<i>register</i>	this can have a number of different meanings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a variety which differs somewhat from the standard form of a language, used by a particular group of people usually sharing the same occupation and which may be used to indicate membership of a particular group eg lawyers and doctors, intellectuals, teenagers (see also style) • in the Systemic Functional (SFL) model of language (see Systemic Functional Linguistics) 'register' refers to aspects of the situation in which the language is being used which affect how the language is used: 'field', 'tenor' and 'mode' as aspects of the context of situation and together describe the situation and this context determines the register of the text
<i>script</i>	the written form (eg alphabet) of a language
<i>semantic extensions</i>	extending the topic by adding new information

<i>semilingualism</i>	a term used in relation to bilingualism, but used to suggest a limited fluency in either/both language(s)
<i>story map</i>	a technique used to structure learning which supports reading for meaning by building a context (by providing spatial and temporal orientation) for the story and the details within it; story maps can also be used as a way for students to test their comprehension in responding to texts after reading them (see Module 4 and 6)
<i>syntax</i>	the study of how words combine to form sentences and the rules which govern word order and the formation of sentences
<i>text</i>	<p>Texts can be described broadly as 'spoken, written or visual (as in posters and public signs), or as combinations of these (as in picture books, film and CD-ROM encyclopaedias).</p> <p>Jones, P. (1996) 'Language and learning'. Chapter 1 in <i>Talking to Learn</i>. Edited by Pauline Jones. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association, p3.</p>
<i>true-false exercises</i>	learners are given a series of statements or pictures and state which are true and correct those that are false; this models both appropriate language and problem solving
<i>word grouping activity/exercise</i>	learners match new words to familiar words, phrases and symbols, grouping by similar meaning to assist comprehension

Module 1



ESL learners in early childhood settings



Module 1

Focus: ESL learners in early childhood settings

Overview

In this module, we will look at the multicultural and multilingual nature of Australian society, and you will have the opportunity to explore the knowledge and experiences of children from language and cultural backgrounds other than English.

From this starting point, you will be asked to focus more specifically on factors which can affect learning outcomes for these children and begin to examine strategies which can support them, in particular, in achieving successful learning outcomes in early childhood settings.

The module contains the following activities:

1.1 Reflection activity

1.2 Thinking about Australia as a multilingual and multicultural society

1.3 Factors affecting learning outcomes for early ESL learners

1.4 Responding to the learning needs of early ESL Learners

1.5 Strengthening home languages in the early childhood context

1.6 Suggested workplace activity

1.7 Readings

At the end of this module you will have:

- explored your understandings of some issues surrounding the experience of migration, settlement and dispossession, and of what it means to feel a sense of belonging in a multilingual and multicultural society
- gained an understanding of the range of experiences and knowledge that learners from language and cultural backgrounds other than English bring to the learning environment, and the possible implications of failing to respond to these
- developed an appreciation of the complexity of factors affecting successful learning outcomes
- begun to focus on strategies which will support successful learning outcomes for these learners.

1.1 Reflection activity

This introductory activity is designed to lead into some of the issues raised in the first module and to encourage you to begin to reflect on your own cultural and linguistic experiences and how they have helped to shape your particular view of the world. Read the questions below and respond briefly.

Worksheet 1.1.1

- 1 *The best thing about living in Australia is ...*
- 2 *My earliest memories of school are ...*
- 3 *A challenging experience I had learning a language/travelling in another country/meeting people from a different cultural background was ...*
- 4 *One thing I wish I had learned as a child is ...*
- 5 *In my family, when I was a child, literacy meant ...*
- 6 *Working with children, I think my strengths are ...*
- 7 *Children learn best when ...*
- 8 *The best thing about my work setting is ...*
- 9 *The most significant thing about one of the children in my setting who is from a language/cultural background other than English is ...*

1.2 Thinking about Australia as a multilingual and multicultural society

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to explore our understandings of Australia as a multicultural and multilingual society and to begin to reflect on our roles as early childhood educators within this context.

Activity

Here are some interesting snippets of information for you to think about, ranging from information about Australia's linguistic and cultural heritage to policy statements about the role of English and linguistic diversity to more challenging views on cultural and linguistic identity. These are individual perspectives which can be compared with your own.

Use Worksheet 1.2.1 (following Resource Notes 1.2.1) to jot down any reactions you have while reading these extracts. Do they give you new information or challenge you in any way? You may like to discuss them with colleagues if you have the opportunity.

Resource Notes 1.2.1

A Do you know how multilingual we are?

Australia has been characterised by multilingualism since first human settlement: the Aboriginal peoples of Australia often spoke several languages within their family, kinship and tribal groups. When a woman married a man from another group and thus spoke a different language, their children would continue to speak both their mother's and father's languages and would possibly learn to speak other languages to interact with relatives and members of other Aboriginal groups. . . . It is estimated that over 100 immigrant languages other than English are used regularly in Australia; approximately 14% of Australia's population use a LOTE at home, with many more using one outside the home. The most widely used languages in Australia are Italian, Greek, Chinese, Yugoslav languages, Arabic, German, Spanish, Polish, Vietnamese and Dutch.

(Janssen & Pauwels 1993: introduction)

B Are we a European or an Asian nation?

Australia is a unique country. It is an English-speaking nation within the Asian region. It has a very high proportion of people born in other countries - more so than any country except Israel. Its people speak 100 or more imported languages and 50 or more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages

(Makin et al 1995: xviii)

C What has happened to Aboriginal languages since settlement?

The arrival of the British and other European colonisers and settlers had a devastating effect on the use of Aboriginal languages in Australia - their numbers reduced from over 600 to a mere handful - and on the multilingual communication patterns of Australian Aborigines: some of these have only a few hundred speakers left.

(Janssen and Pauwels 1993: introduction)

D What is the significance of language in the refugee experience?

The stories of families in which language and cultural shifts have resulted in the breakdown of parental authority and of the children's respect for their parents are often tragic. For the South-East Asian refugee families especially, the breakdown of the family can mean a loss of everything. Many of them left behind all of their possessions when they fled their native lands. They came . . . with the hope of keeping their families intact. They do not understand what is happening to them as they see their families falling apart. They do not see how the language their children are learning in school figures in this process. They want their children to learn English. They know how critical it is to their economic survival in this country. They believe that they can maintain Hmong or Khmer or Lao or Vietnamese without help, since these languages are spoken in the home. They ask, 'how can children lose their language?' But they do. And by the time the parents realise what is happening, it is too late to do anything about it.

(National Pre-School Coordination Project 1991: 15)

E What can it mean when children lose their home language?

Farsi is a very rich and beautiful language The writings of Abdu'l-Baha are so beautiful and we try not to deprive our children of this valuable source that we have got

The other thing is that when you lose your language, you lose your identity, and when you speak that language, you feel that you are attached to that culture, to that information, to that religion, anything But when you cut yourself off . . . when the children grow up, they feel that need and they feel that human need to be proud of something . . . and when the parents come to the country, they never will become deep in English language . . . there are so many things I still don't know in English, but my children know. If we can't communicate in our language, we cut ourselves off from our children. We will lose this attachment to our children. We need this and they need this.

(Parent 1996)

F What is Aboriginal English?

Aboriginal English is the first language, or home language, of many Aboriginal children in New South Wales and throughout the whole of Australia. In subtle ways this language, a distinctively Aboriginal kind of English, is a powerful vehicle for the expression of Aboriginal identity. Although many of the Aboriginal languages are no longer spoken, we see patterns and influences from these languages in the ways that Aboriginal people speak English.

Nevertheless, Aboriginal English is often denigrated and misunderstood by people who mistakenly think that Aboriginal children are speaking some kind of bad English.

Within Aboriginal communities there are diverse opinions as to whether Aboriginal English should be referred to as people's home language or in fact as their first language

In linguistic terms, the differences between Aboriginal English and other kinds of English are dialectal differences. Aboriginal English is, strictly speaking, a dialect of English.

(Eades 1995: 3 © Board of Studies, NSW)

G What role might speakers of Aboriginal languages see for English in their communities?

Long ago from our grandparents' time the land has been sacred. So why have they ignored this? We send our children to school so they will learn English and when they become men and women they will be able to work on their own so they can care for their land.

We want the two ways, Pitjantjatjara and English. Maybe a white man may come with a hammer and smash the rocks and take them away. So that won't happen, we are sending our kids to school to learn English properly, so when we have become old they will help us by talking English. Maybe the children in the future may forget and give away the land for money. Then our grandparents' land might be destroyed. So that won't happen, we are sending the children to school to learn English so they can speak up strongly - if they learn Anangu and white ways they will speak up and look after the place properly. This is all I want to say.

(Messages from Fregon 1995: 37 - 38)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

H How can developing a first language help in learning a second?

And it's very important [to develop the first language] . . . and the more they know better the Polish language, it's much easier for them to develop the English language, because if they don't know Polish, and they don't understand a lot of concepts, it's much harder for them in English . . . they must be sort of in two languages.

(Bilingual Education Officer 1996)

I How important is English in the world?

No language is a demonstrably better or more efficient means of communication than any other, especially not English with all of its irregularities and vagaries. Throughout the history of Western civilisation, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, French and English have been international languages. French, Spanish and English retain significant roles in this respect today. In the history of the non-Western world, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, Hindi and Malay/Indonesian have been, and remain, important international languages. For a range of specific purposes and within a range of specific contexts so are German, Italian and Japanese. Despite this, there is a belief, a real prejudice amongst English speakers that English is the natural lingua franca; the only sensible lingua franca!

(Langdon 1996: 12)

J How can we define what 'culture' is?

Culture must be viewed broadly. Culture is many things. It includes language, values and customs. Culture can be thought of in concrete terms such as items and objects, clothing, food, music and dance. Culture is also experienced by how people live out their lives as well as what they believe and what values are important to them. These include family roles, child-bearing patterns, communication styles, holidays and festivals. People's goals in life and their belief about human nature and humanity are invisible but ever present aspects of culture. Culture is not something only celebrated by ethnic minority groups. Anybody who holds affiliation to a particular group, political, social, personal, or linguistic is part of that culture.

(Clarke 1993: 9)

K Why focus on a culturally inclusive curriculum?

If the currency of non-indigenous societies has been a pervasive disrespect for and abuse of indigenous knowledge and culture, then the central bank and the mint have been educational and academic institutions . . . we are thrust into the clothes of another system designed for different bodies and we are fed ideologies which serve the interests of other peoples.

(Dodson 1994: 12)

L What is the significance of having a national policy on languages?

Since 1987 Australia has a national policy on languages which recognises the importance and relevance of multilingualism for Australia's future at home and abroad. The National Policy on Languages (Lo Bianco 1987) and the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (1991) both affirm that bilingualism (i.e., having English and a language other than English - this can also include an Aboriginal language, and Auslan - the sign language of the deaf) - is both a personal and national asset.

Janssen and Pauwels 1993: introduction

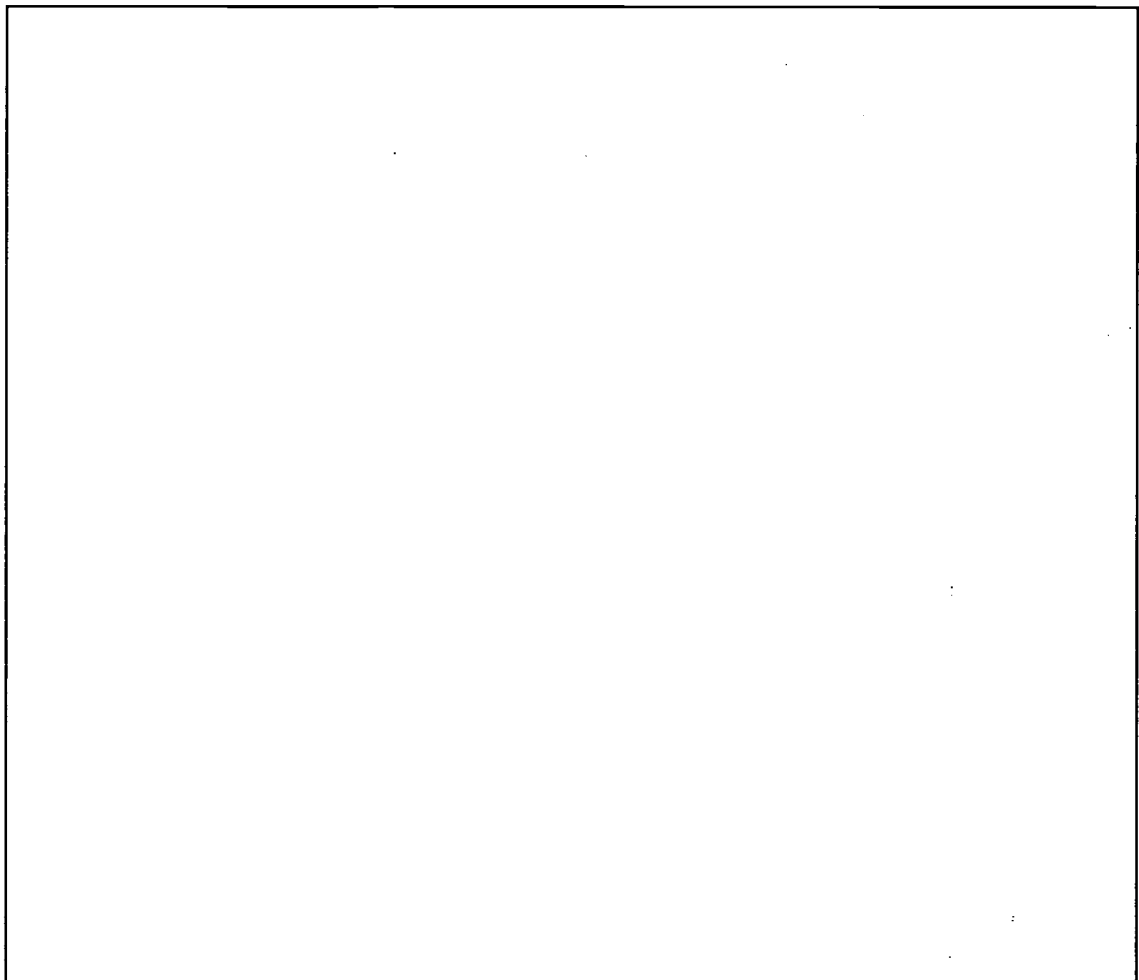
M How can State governments acknowledge linguistic and cultural diversity in their educational planning?

All children and students will be supported to be literate and articulate in a social environment where linguistic diversity is integral to Australian life. While English is valued as the shared language and the major vehicle for our literacy and language development, the social, cultural, community and economic vitality of our nation draws upon a wide variety of languages other than English. These include the indigenous languages of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and the languages used by other Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds. Languages education is crucial to education for a multicultural society. Literacy in English is fundamental for successful education and employment in Australia, and for full and effective participation in many aspects of Australian society.

(Department for Education and Children's Services SA 1995: 5)

Use Worksheet 1.2.1 to jot down any reactions you may have while reading the above extracts in Resource Notes 1.2.1.

Worksheet 1.2.1



Activity

As early childhood educators:

- we need to be aware that our local communities are made up of people from vastly diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and with an equally diverse range of personal experiences
- we need to understand the issues that families from language backgrounds other than English may experience that are different from or similar to other families we are working with
- we need to identify and meet the particular needs of children from language backgrounds other than English who are in our care.

In order to explore these issues, it is useful to begin with the idea that we all move in and out of 'belonging' to many different groups, that is that any one person has a number of different and sometimes changing social identities. (Adapted from Janks 1993). For example, you may be all of the following at any one time: a woman, a mother, a sister, an aunt, an English speaker, a Japanese speaker, a vegetarian, a Buddhist, an early childhood educator, a squash player, a member of the Japan-Australia Association.

Read Resource Notes 1.2.2, which explore these ideas further.

Resource Notes 1.2.2

You may find that you have certain social identities which may be the same as your friends and colleagues, e.g., you may all be women and educators, but you will have many social identities which are different from each other. Sometimes you might find that your different identities clash, e.g., you are a practising Catholic and you support your friend's decision to have an abortion. At different times your belonging to a group can be a comfortable experience or can make you feel like an outsider in certain social situations. For example, being a vegetarian may make you feel comfortable if you are at a vegetarian cooking class but uncomfortable if you are presented with a plate of chicken at a friend's dinner party. As well 'belonging' to two different groups may cause difficulties for you, e.g., being a mother and having a career.

For families from non-English speaking backgrounds, there will be many ways in which their different identities will match certain groups from English speaking backgrounds, e.g., the parents may come from the same economic status, the same profession, have had similar experiences at school, have travelled widely, and so on, and the longer they have lived in Australia the more likely they are to take up identities which fit within the dominant culture, e.g., children having part-time jobs at Woolworths or McDonalds, the family becoming Australian Rules football fans, the family owning a home, etc. For many families there may be a clash between identities as members of their home culture and those of the new and this can take time to work through. However, the unique mix of identities that evolve for families is what gives Australia its multilingual and multicultural richness.

To examine these ideas further, look at the following diagram in Worksheet 1.2.2 (adapted from Janks 1993:1). Here is a chart of the social identities of four-year-old Solyn. Of course this is not exhaustive, but it does give us an idea of the wide range of social groups in which she operates. When you have read the information about Solyn, try filling out the chart below, using your own child, a neighbour's child or any child you know, including a child from your centre or school from English speaking or non-English speaking backgrounds.

She is from a Cambodian background

She is a friend

She is a daughter in an extended family

She is Australian-born

She is a member of the Buddhist community, using the family's local temple

She is a student at an English speaking pre-school where she receives mother tongue support

She is a transition child visiting a local school

She is four years old

She is a television viewer, particularly of English speaking cartoons, and Power Rangers

She is a Khmer speaker at home and pre-school

She is an English speaker at home with siblings and cousins, and at pre-school

She is a sister

She is cared for by different family members at different times

Now do one for another child:

Another child you know

What identities do they have?

Understanding that we have many social identities helps us to avoid positioning people from backgrounds other than English as the 'other' and to see that we all belong to groups which may be the same or different from those of other people. It is important not to perceive people as just being 'Polish' or 'Vietnamese' but understand that all of us are made up of a complex blend of social identities and not to make assumptions or to stereotype your students because of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

35
35

Activity

Despite the fact that there will be many ways in which the different social identities of families from backgrounds other than English will match the social identities of certain groups from English speaking backgrounds, there will be some critical factors/experiences that will impact on the way families from non-English speaking backgrounds settle into life in Australia, how they maintain a sense of personal identity and feel a sense of belonging.

Reflect on how these experiences may mirror the experiences of families from non-English speaking backgrounds with whom you work. At the same time, reflect on how these experiences may be different from or similar to the other families attending your centre.

Use Worksheet 1.2.3 to identify some of these critical factors/experiences.

Worksheet 1.2.3

- *Recent settlement issues, e.g., need to find a home*
- *Family links, e.g., maintaining home language to communicate with grandparents*
- *Dealing with prejudice*
-
-
-
-
-
-

Conclusion

In this section you will have gained some further understandings of

- the multicultural and multilingual nature of Australian society
- the concept of 'social identities' and its impact on the way families from language and cultural backgrounds are viewed
- a range of experiences which can affect the way families from language backgrounds other than English participate in this society.

In the next section we will look more closely at some of the factors which can affect the individual learning outcomes of the ESL learner in the early childhood setting.

1.3 Factors affecting the learning outcomes of ESL learners in the early childhood setting

Introduction

Within cultures, within families and within educational settings, the variety of experiences that each individual has will be different. We are going to start by looking at some of the factors and experiences that can affect learning outcomes for all young children in family, community and educational settings. In the next section we will examine the variety of experiences that second language learners bring to and have in the early childhood setting.

Activity

First of all, think about factors which might relate to

- a) the background of any individual learner, including socio-cultural, family, age, gender and community factors
- b) the learning environment, including the physical environment, relationships with others, such as the nature of adult/child interaction, curriculum structures and learning resources.

Think about how these factors may impact upon any child's learning and social development.

Please note: it is important here not to focus on factors and experiences which construct a 'deficit' view of the individual learner, but to focus more on the factors and experiences themselves and how they create opportunities for children for learning and social development.

Use Worksheet 1.3.1 to record some of your ideas.

Worksheet 1.3.1

Individual learner	Classroom learning environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Language and literacy background</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Visual stimulation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Family child-rearing practices</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Numbers of children in a group</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Some factors which you have listed in Worksheet 1.3.1 might include:

Resource Notes 1.3.1

Individual learner	Classroom learning environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>language and literacy background</i> • <i>family child rearing practices</i> • <i>religious beliefs</i> • <i>care-givers' employment status (past and present)</i> • <i>home literacy practices</i> • <i>family values, attitudes and expectations</i> • <i>parents' previous schooling experiences</i> • <i>individual abilities</i> • <i>individual learning styles</i> • <i>play preferences</i> • <i>motivational factors</i> • <i>individual and family health</i> • <i>child's age and emotional maturity</i> • <i>previous experiences with English language</i> • <i>family mobility and stability</i> • <i>geographical location (city/country/remote/isolated)</i> • <i>gender</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>visual stimulation</i> • <i>numbers of children in a group</i> • <i>the way the learning group is set up</i> • <i>facilities and physical resources</i> • <i>the range of teaching and learning resources</i> • <i>teaching methodology and classroom discourse</i> • <i>expectations of early childhood educational staff</i> • <i>skill and commitment of staff</i> • <i>bias/racism towards an individual or group</i> • <i>inclusivity of programs/curriculum areas</i> • <i>centre management and leadership</i> • <i>the philosophy and ethos of the learning environment</i> • <i>strength of links with local community</i> • <i>representation and consultation in decision making</i> • <i>degree of staff collaboration</i>

These are only some of the many complex factors and experiences that can affect the learning outcomes of all young children.

In the next activity, we will look at factors which have a particular affect on the learning outcomes of children from language backgrounds other than English, through an exploration of individual case studies.

Activity

From a focus on individual case studies, we can gain a broader understanding of the wide range of factors which can affect the learning outcomes of learners from language and cultural backgrounds other than English. We can also begin to identify some useful strategies for supporting ESL learners.

Read the following case studies and consider how they exemplify

- those factors which support successful learning outcomes
- those factors which inhibit successful learning outcomes.

As you read, jot down your ideas in the space provided at the end of each case study.

Resource Notes 1.3.2

Case study 1: Mahdieh (pronounced 'Mahdy')

Mahdieh and her family came to Australia from Iran on a government-sponsored scholarship so her father could study.

She was enrolled in the reception class in the local school soon after arrival. There were no other ESL learners in the class. Mahdieh could speak no English but appeared to settle easily into school. She participated happily in some activities but not in others, and tended to play by herself and did not have the special skills to work cooperatively with other children. Sometimes she would have a temper tantrum. The teacher discussed her behaviour with the parents, who were very supportive. They spoke with Mahdieh, apparently telling her she would not be able to attend school if she continued to behave in this way. This resulted in her modifying her behaviour.

Mahdieh's progress was, however, not as hoped. In the following year she was placed in a year 1 class which was generally doing very well academically. Then the whole family visited Iran for 8 weeks, and when Mahdieh returned the teacher was very concerned about her progress and lack of social interaction with the other children. The teacher discussed the situation with ESL teachers and it was decided to move her (during the school year) to a R/1 class. The parents agreed. This proved to have very positive results for Mahdieh. In the process of moving Mahdieh to the other class it was discovered that she was in fact almost a year younger than the school records indicated. Although a passport showed the year of birth, the Iranian calendar and numerals are quite different from those used in Australia, and it is customary in Iran to be given the chronological year after your birthdate - that is, you are one at birth.

Mahdieh settled into her new class quickly and established a very friendly relationship with a Cantonese-speaking student who was also a beginning learner of English. There were also other learners from language backgrounds other than English in the class. Both Mahdieh and her friend were able to participate effectively in many classroom learning situations.

Notes: Case study 1

Case study 2: Duy (pronounced Dwee)

Duy is five and a half years old and at preschool. Although he was born in Australia, both parents and grandparents (who also live in the family home) were born in Vietnam and Vietnamese is the only language spoken at home.

Duy began preschool one year ago, having had no contact at all with any adults or children other than his family and their immediate friends. From the start, Duy was extremely unhappy and often visibly distressed and would not communicate at all, even with Vietnamese-speaking parents at the school. To ease the transition from home to the preschool setting, his younger sister also began preschool. Initially both were very unhappy but gradually they both began to play with some of the materials, particularly Lego, play dough and water.

Duy required close monitoring to prevent him from immersing everything and everyone including himself in water, and seemed unable to learn from regular reminders, reprimands and removals from these situations. He communicated with no one and it was worrying staff that he showed no emotion at all in a variety of situations. A Bilingual Education Officer was employed to work with Duy for 3 of his 4 preschool sessions per week. She reported that Duy had limited use of his first language. His parents were encouraged to borrow toys and books from the Toy Library and scissors, paper, crayons and pencils were sent home regularly. However, the parents were hesitant about using these materials as they worried about them being lost or damaged, or making a mess. Duy's fine motor skills greatly improved but he seemed unable to modify his behaviour to fit with the rules and routines of the centre or to remember from day to day, colours, animals and numbers taught to him in his own language. His younger sister, however, was becoming much more communicative in her own language and began one-word utterances and repetitions in English.

A Guidance Assessment for Duy was arranged. This supported the educator's predictions of a developmental delay, indicating that Duy was operating at a level 2 years below his chronological age.

Duy still operates independently of other children and adults at the centre. His time in preschool has been extended to the age of 6 and an extended transition period from preschool to school will be implemented. He is quite happy playing parallel to other children and attempts all activities both inside and out, but without communicating.

Notes: Case study 2

Case study 3: Ivan

Ivan came to Australia when he was 4 years and 3 months, from the Ukraine, where he had been living with his mother, grandmother, and aunt in a predominantly female household. He and his mother joined his Croatian father in Sydney after a two-year separation and then moved to Adelaide to be near the father's parents. After 3 months at home he was enrolled in the local kindergarten. Both parents speak English. Ivan spent 2 terms in kindergarten and was the only Ukrainian speaker. From the start he confidently conversed with adults but always in Ukrainian, and seemed undeterred that all his conversation received response in English.

He talked eagerly about his work, explaining his processes in building elaborate block buildings or while digging trenches in the sandpit. He read books with a concentrated eye for detail. His favourite book was an information book about machines. He requested the teacher to read to him (always in Ukrainian) and responded to her English by pointing out items of interest and chatting away in what seemed to be fluent and highly expressive Ukrainian. Ivan did not seek out other children but preferred to 'get on' with his own play, which was always purposeful. When other children moved into his play space or attempted to take away his toys he physically lashed out, shouting at them in Ukrainian. The father had given staff permission to smack Ivan if he misbehaved. The staff had explained that they did not hit children and talked to the parents about the 'time out' method they used when children behaved inappropriately. When the group came together for songs or story activity, Ivan often hid or sat with the group without participating. Bilingual support was sought but no Ukrainian bilingual education worker was available.

Ivan's mother was pregnant and suffering from severe morning sickness, and regularly came late to pick him up. She often talked about the 'troubles that we women must bear in life' but seemed to be referring to more than her difficult pregnancy. Ivan's father stated that he was not having success at home in teaching Ivan any English and that it was Ivan's mother's fault because she spoke to him in Ukrainian. When Ivan was eligible to begin school his parents were keen for him to begin as soon as possible. It had been especially difficult for the mother to accept half day kindergarten sessions as she had been able to put Ivan in state-run full-day child care in the Ukraine.

Notes: Case study 3

Case study 4: Sopheap

Sopheap was born in Australia to Cambodian-Australian parents. She is the third and youngest child of the family. Her brother, who is five years older and attends the Primary School on the same campus, is confident and popular. Her sister, who is two years older and attends the Junior Primary, is quiet but industrious. Both siblings are receiving ESL support.

Sopheap was enrolled at the Child Parent Centre (CPC) at the age of four and a half years. Her parents, who spoke only Khmer, were accompanied on this occasion by a friend who spoke English to facilitate the enrolment process. General details about her background were freely given by the parents.

She was the only child of Cambodian background at the CPC. Sopheap settled well, keeping busy with a huge range of activities but being most fond of the 'making table' and painting. She was silent most of the time but responded well to the educator's English directions. She enjoyed involvement in group tasks, as in painting a mural on the window, alongside the teacher and other students, but did not converse at all.

The CPC educator approached the ESL teacher at the school expressing concern that Sopheap had not begun to speak English. She felt that the child lacked confidence and did not want to take risks in speaking English. She wondered if there was a 'problem' that required assessing by a Guidance Officer or another professional. The ESL teacher, who already knew the family well, made a home visit accompanied by an interpreter. She maintained that Sopheap's oral Khmer was age-appropriate and that she spoke readily to her siblings and family friends in both Khmer and English. On learning this, the CPC teacher was reassured.

When Sopheap began Junior Primary, the situation did not change much. Her teacher did notice, however, that Sopheap was beginning to speak to other class members in English when working in small groups or at activity time. In the yard it was observed that she was well accepted by all children and spoke, and indeed shouted, in English. When encouraged by the teacher to make a response in class, however, she said nothing.

Some time after this, Sopheap's class teacher spoke to the ESL teacher and intimated her concern at Sopheap's lack of communicative abilities in English. She felt there should be an expectation for Sopheap to now speak English and that greater demands needed to be placed upon her in order to 'make her do so'. This teacher, though sympathetic, was used to placing fair but challenging expectations on all the children in her class. After considerable discussion with the ESL teacher, the class teacher decided to wait a little longer before putting more pressure on the child.

Slowly, in response to direct teacher questions or whole class situations where children took turns to give brief snippets of news, Sopheap began to speak in class. At first the utterances were very short but in time Sopheap began to speak fluently in English in all school situations.

*Notes: Case study 4**Case study 5: Lee*

Lee is a Vietnamese-speaking child, born in Australia, who began pre-entry at age 3 years and 10 months. She appeared to settle in to the routine of the preschool very easily and kept herself busy with painting and puzzles. She always greeted and farewelled the staff with her mother or father prompting her 'goodbye teacher', or 'chao co' in Vietnamese. Other than this she never spoke in her time at the centre, but appeared to be following instructions and focussing on print book activities throughout the session. When Lee began full time preschool she was introduced to the Vietnamese-speaking early childhood worker and immediately formed an attachment to her. They conversed easily in Vietnamese and this staff member commented that Lee's Vietnamese was age-appropriate and that she was always asking questions. Lee did not readily form friendships with other children, though for a while she engaged in joint construction of puzzles with a Vietnamese-speaking boy. Lee would spend most of her time with the Vietnamese-speaking staff member engaged in cutting and pasting, in solitary tasks at the writing table or on the puzzle mat. Whenever the teacher invited her to come outside she complied.

At one stage the staff member with whom Lee had formed a strong relationship was away ill for some considerable time. Lee refused to come to the preschool. Her parents insisted and Lee began a period of teary separations where she would cling to her mother and plead with her in Vietnamese to take her home. Neither of the parents were able to converse with the staff in English and no interpreter was available. It was later discovered that her parents were telling Lee that the staff would call the police if she did not stop crying.

After a difficult time over a month or so, Lee once again began to separate readily from her parents, once the Vietnamese staff member returned. She would often tell the Vietnamese staff member that she did not understand what people were saying in English and could she tell her what so and so had said. In group games and when working with the English-speaking teacher she began to imitate words in English. She did not do this spontaneously but only when the teacher made it obvious through gesture and intonation that was what she wanted. Lee also began to join in songs in both English and Vietnamese.

Notes: Case study 5

Case study 6: Solyn

Solyn's parents came to Australia with their parents 10 years ago as refugees from Cambodia. In Australia her grandparents have had more children, so that now Solyn has aunts and uncles who are her peers. She lives in an extended household where incomes and resources are pooled to meet basic needs and where a number of family members are responsible for the care and upbringing of the younger children. The language spoken at home is Khmer although most of the adults in the household do not read or write Khmer.

During her first few weeks at preschool, Solyn had difficulty in separating from her mother, standing passively against a wall or a chair and not speaking or smiling. Her mother brought her on a regular basis and encouraged her to greet staff by leading her to them before leaving her.

The program that Solyn was part of at the centre was planned carefully so that situations were set up where she had the opportunity to be involved and to use language without pressure. This meant that potentially passive learning situations became opportunities for her to respond verbally.

Over the weeks and months that followed, Solyn learned the routines and expectations of the preschool and at the same time developed trusting relationships with the adults in the setting. She began to talk in Khmer to the Khmer-speaking staff member and in English to the other members of the staff. Solyn also began to develop a curiosity and interest in talking about language, always asking about meanings and willingly telling staff how to say things in Khmer.

Gradually as she became more confident, adults interacted with her in a more deliberate way, supporting her explicitly to develop her language in both Khmer and English. During one week, staff were using the Aboriginal story of the Rainbow Serpent. It was read in English and then told in Khmer to a group of children. Solyn spent the next half an hour painting a picture of the old woman, her dogs and the 'humpy' and talking excitedly about the story to the Khmer speaking staff member.

Case study 6: continued

On another occasion, staff took photos of the children holding ply pome (apples), ply jach (bananas), etc, and presented them to the mother-tongue Khmer class at the local school which they visited in a small group twice a term. It was at this point that Solyn demonstrated that she had moved from the passive and non-verbal stage to being a confident speaker in two languages. She had taken about a term and a half to reach this stage. Often, during story time, Solyn enjoyed telling the group how to say many of the words and sentences in Khmer.

This centre looked for opportunities to invite visitors from a range of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Cross-age tutoring structures were set up with the local primary school and grants were applied for to buy and develop English language and multilingual resources. The enrolment pack included translated information about the importance of maintaining first language. This information was explained verbally to Solyn's parents by the Khmer speaking staff member.

Solyn's English language development over the year was both observable and measurable. Her ability to speak in two languages and her metalinguistic understandings of language were impressive for a child of her age.

Notes: Case study 6

Choose **two of the case studies** above which you identify with particularly.

Respond to the following questions on Worksheet 1.3.2:

- what are the factors supporting successful learning outcomes?
- what are the factors inhibiting successful learning outcomes?
- what further information do you need to clarify these issues?
- what strategies might you implement to deal with these issues?

You may wish to share your ideas or undertake this activity with colleagues in your own centre.

Name of Child:

Factors supporting successful learning outcomes

-
-
-
-
-

Factors inhibiting successful learning outcomes

-
-
-
-
-

Further information required

-
-
-
-
-

Strategies

-
-
-
-
-

Worksheet 1.3.2: (continued)

Name of Child:

Factors supporting successful learning outcomes

-
-
-
-
-
-

Factors inhibiting successful learning outcomes

-
-
-
-
-
-

Further information required

-
-
-
-

Strategies

-
-
-
-
-

Read the following Resource Notes 1.3.3, which suggest some possible discussion points raised by each of the case studies above.

Resource Notes 1.3.3

Case study 1: Mahdieh

- *enrolment procedures carried out in English*
- *factors in communication breakdown between school and parents*
- *expectations for social development beyond a child's level of maturity and the difficulties this causes*
- *importance of developing peer friendships and a sense of belonging*
- *move to more appropriate grouping and the effect this had on ability to cope with the learning in that classroom.*
- *cultural traditions in allocating an age to a child and educator's age-based expectations.*

Case study 2: Duy

- *role of bilingual support*
- *means of appropriate communication with parents*
- *school structures*
- *finding out about family and cultural attitudes to learning difficulties*
- *finding out more about Duy's interests from the start*
- *consider session times offered*
- *incorporate familiar objects into the play environments.*

Case study 3: Ivan

- *change in family structure from all-female household to living with father*
- *impact of migration experience on mother and child*
- *lack of continuity in experiences in formal early childhood settings*
- *mother's pregnancy and impact on her sense of well-being*
- *parents' attitudes to discipline*
- *lack of bilingual support available in the educational setting*
- *apparent high level of child's oral language development in Ukrainian*
- *child's obvious motivation and independence in learning*
- *child's preference for individual work*
- *child's ability to tune into English*
- *child's ability to deal with English-speaking peers on his own terms.*

Case study 4: Sopheap

- *the silent period in language learning*
- *Sopheap's choice not to speak to the teacher and possible reasons for this, e.g., culture shock/difficulty responding to the question/answer routine of the formal learning situation*
- *importance of seeking advice from colleagues*
- *how communication with parents about their expectations and the expectations of schools would have been valuable*
- *how bilingual assistance may have developed Sopheap's confidence and certainly given the teacher more information about her development.*

Resource Notes 1.3.3 (continued)**Case study 5: Lee**

- *the effect of Lee's dependence on the bilingual staff member*
- *emotional impact of separation from parents*
- *feelings of insecurity in an English speaking environment*
- *ability to develop friendships with children from both genders*
- *the role of music groups and other activities providing stress free opportunity to practise English*
- *parents' use of threat or bribery to modify behaviour*
- *what could English-speaking staff be doing to provide specific support for language development?*
- *the importance of self-confidence in taking risks with talking.*

Case study 6: Solyn

- *level of reading and writing skills of parents did not seem to inhibit Solyn's development of her understandings about reading and writing*
- *mother's attitude and support in encouraging her child to interact with staff*
- *encouragement of parent involvement in the early childhood setting*
- *supportive and positive nature of the early childhood environment for language learning*
- *the role of the adults in scaffolding Solyn's language development in both languages*
- *opportunities for Solyn to interact with others*
- *time allowed for her to settle in and learn routines and expectations of learning environment*
- *the development of trusting relationships with adults*
- *opportunities to use and develop first language*
- *Solyn's desire to use and pride in using her first language*
- *opportunities to develop metalinguistic understandings*
- *Solyn's ability to develop metalinguistic understandings*
- *use of inclusive resources*
- *use of Khmer staff member.*

Conclusion

By focussing on individual case studies, we can gain a sound understanding of factors which can affect the successful learning outcomes of learners from language and cultural backgrounds other than English and we can begin to identify some useful strategies to support these learners.

However, we must keep in mind that each child and family is individual and ensure that we always guard against stereotyping.

1.4 Responding to the learning needs of ESL learners

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to look at how we might begin to respond to the specific learning needs of ESL learners

- by acknowledging and valuing the knowledge, skills and experience children from language and cultural backgrounds other than English and their families bring to the formal learning environment
- by looking at some of the implications of acknowledging and valuing or failing to acknowledge and value what children and families bring to the learning experience.

Activity

Read the following Resource Notes 1.4.1, which focus on the knowledge, skills and experiences which an early ESL learner may bring to the learning environment.

Resource Notes 1.4.1

Learners and their families in the early childhood setting come from backgrounds which are linguistically diverse.

Family members may speak two, three or more languages and children may have some knowledge of how other languages work and may have even begun their literacy development in a language other than English.

They may have understandings of what being bilingual means, through speaking to different family members in different languages.

They may also have access to oral and literary traditions in languages other than English.

Learners will have experienced family practices that are socially and culturally diverse and have views of the world that are culturally different from the early childhood learning environment and from many of the staff in this setting.

They may also have had experiences in other countries, as well as of travelling to and staying in contact with relatives overseas.

Their family experiences will include a diverse range of religious practices, different cuisines and different ways of preparing and serving food, different celebrations and different music, dances, arts and craft.

This diversity in families will also include different understandings about child-rearing, discipline, family roles, and the education of young children.

Family members may have lived in Australia for various lengths of time and have gained understandings of and taken up certain social and cultural practices of the dominant culture, including schooling practices.

The notes above emphasise that young learners from language and cultural backgrounds other than English bring unique kinds of knowledge, skills and experience to the learning situation.

Can you think of other knowledge, skills and experiences these learners bring on which we, as educators, can build?

At the same time we need to look briefly at some of the consequences of failing to acknowledge and value this diversity so that we can remind ourselves that not doing so can lead to unsuccessful learning outcomes for these learners and a poorer curriculum for all students.

Jot down your ideas in the following Worksheet 1.4.1.

Worksheet 1.4.1

<p><i>Knowledge, skills and experiences ESL learners bring to the learning situation</i></p>	<p><i>What can happen if knowledge, skills and experience are not valued and built on in the learning environment?</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>own stories and songs available to share with others</i> • • • • • • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>poor self-esteem</i> • <i>unresponsiveness</i>

Acknowledging and valuing this diversity and building on it for the benefit of all learners in our centres is a challenge for early childhood educators and takes careful planning in all areas of the curriculum. We will be looking at many ways of doing this throughout this resource folder.

Following are some possible consequences of failing to value and build on this diversity which you may already have listed in Worksheet 1.4.1.

Resource Notes 1.4.2

- *shame*
- *loss of self-esteem/a sense of personal identity*
- *poor motivation*
- *impoverished cognitive development*
- *alienation*
- *isolation*
- *restricted cross-cultural and interpersonal understandings*
- *a curriculum which excludes some individuals/groups*
- *mismatched expectations*
- *inappropriate behaviour*
- *passivity or unresponsiveness*
- *feeling unsettled*

Conclusion

We will return to these issues of building on the knowledge, skills and experiences of children in later modules in this Resource Folder. We will look at ways of acknowledging and valuing diversity for the benefit of all learners and at how we can plan for inclusiveness in all areas of the curriculum.

One specific area of focus that we have highlighted throughout this first module is the importance of maintaining and developing a child's first language alongside the development of English language.

The purpose of the next section is to explore some of the many complex issues around maintaining the first language and promoting bilingual education within the constraints of our workplaces.

1.5 Strengthening home languages in the early childhood context

Introduction

Current research indicates that, for a number of reasons, it is critically important that a child's home language continues to develop while learning a second.

In educational terms, if the home language is allowed to develop, conceptual development is better able to proceed without disruption. There are many other reasons why the home language is important and should be maintained. Apart from cognitive factors, other significant factors include self-esteem, family cohesion, cultural maintenance, the development of a positive identity, and an openness to other ideas and ways of thinking.

(Makin, Campbell and Diaz 1995: 100)

In this section we will explore the importance of valuing and supporting the home language and some of the practical implications for your practice. As early childhood educators, we must look for ways to ensure that strengthening of a child's home language is supported alongside the development of English in our settings.

Activity

Read Resource Notes 1.5.1, which outline the nature of a culturally inclusive curriculum and its role in bilingual development, and consider how easily you could incorporate these objectives into your planning, programming and structures.

Resource Notes 1.5.1

Creating a positive environment for bilingual development

If children are to become competent language users and experience success by participating effectively in the curriculum we offer in the early childhood setting, they must have opportunities to develop their language skills within a supportive environment. Such an environment is one that respects and responds in positive ways to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of all children. Early childhood educators can create a supportive context for learning by developing and implementing a culturally inclusive curriculum.

Finding out about children and their families and building on the experiences they bring to the learning environment are important strategies in developing such a curriculum, as well as in developing positive images of cultural and linguistic diversity. In order to create a positive environment for bilingual growth (Makin 1995) we need to build:

- *strong relationships with families*
- *a bilingual workforce*
- *inclusion of children's home languages in planning*
- *positive attitudes to bilingualism amongst staff.*

From the following list in Worksheet 1.5.1, identify the strategies that you already use, those you could incorporate in your programs or those you would find difficult to implement. In the blanks, add any other strategies you can think of

Worksheet 1.5.1

Strategy	Already use	Could integrate	Difficult
• giving status to children’s first languages by talking about them with children from all backgrounds			
• endorsing activities and learning being carried out in the first language			
• attempting to learn basic phrases and songs in the children’s first language			
• modelling language learning strategies, like asking for repetition, and then listening and repeating yourself, or mixing words from both languages			
• consciously interacting with children, supporting them to make meaning and at the same time scaffolding their language learning			
• accessing and evaluating commercially produced resources through the local library, and other resource centres			
• finding out about ethnic schools and community associations and the work they do			
• finding out about bilingual, mother tongue and LOTE programs in nearby schools and centres			
• setting up opportunities for visitors, excursions and cross-age tutoring for language development			
• developing parent libraries and information in the first language, to reinforce its valued presence in the child’s educational setting			
• applying for grants to buy and develop language resources and multicultural resources			
• developing links with parents and the community in order to involve them in genuine participation in the classroom			
• setting up activities where all children experience other languages (songs, days of the week, colours, parts of the body, food items)			
•			
•			

Conclusion

Language experiences in the home language, and especially problem-solving activities using language, build on and support the development of young children’s conceptual development. These language experiences and metalinguistic understandings then transfer more readily to the learning of the second language.

Acknowledging and supporting bilingualism is simply an extension of good practice in supporting the acquisition and development of language, which is a critical element of the work of early childhood educators, in partnership with parents and other care-givers.

1.6 Suggested workplace activity: Creating a profile of a learner

Between each module, we encourage you to take back your new understandings and questions into your workplace and to attempt an activity which reinforces and extends your knowledge and skills for working with children from diverse language and cultural backgrounds.

Use the worksheets which accompany the workplace activity at the end of each module to jot down observations, ideas and questions that you want to explore further, and to make notes as you work through the suggested readings which accompany each module.

Rationale

The purpose of this first workplace activity is to begin the process of developing a comprehensive profile of a child from a language background other than English.

The focus of this activity in Module 1 is to explore the cultural and linguistic background of an ESL learner, and other relevant experiences which may have an impact on his or her learning. We will build on this activity in later modules.

Use Worksheet 1.6.1 (following) to jot down observations, ideas and questions arising from this activity that you want to explore further.

Activity

Seek ways to find out about the linguistic and cultural background and other relevant experiences of one child in your setting. Remember that considerable sensitivity will be required so that you are not seen as intrusive or threatening.

You might use parents, Bilingual Education Workers, existing records and children themselves to gather this information. You may also need to consider using an interpreter when talking with parents.

Some areas to look at are:

- country of birth or place of birth
- time spent overseas (prior to and since arrival in Australia)
- family members in Australia
- country of birth or place of birth of parents/caregivers
- city or rural setting of previous home
- parents'/caregivers' occupations before migration
- when they arrived in Australia
- current occupations of parents/caregivers
- languages spoken at home and by whom/when/where/how much

- the parents'/caregivers' skills in reading and writing in the home language and English (if appropriate)
- languages used by siblings
- languages used by close family friends on visits
- religion/ belief systems
- first-language maintenance strategies (by attending ethnic schools or other sources)
- home and community literacy practices
- experiences learning English to date
- relevant life experiences (war, life in a refugee camp, migration reasons).

This is a guide only. Not all of this information is relevant to every child. Some of it you already know via existing records and the links you and other staff have made with the parents of the child.

Some ways of gathering information:

- informal discussions with parents/care-givers
- home visits
- questionnaires
- talking with other centre staff to find out what they know
- working with liaison staff such as Bilingual Education Workers and Community Liaison Officers
- ethnic community associations.

Again, we stress that information gathering needs to be carried out with great sensitivity. Creating opportunities for regular communication with parents in English or with the help of a bilingual staff member will enable you to decide what may or may not be appropriate.

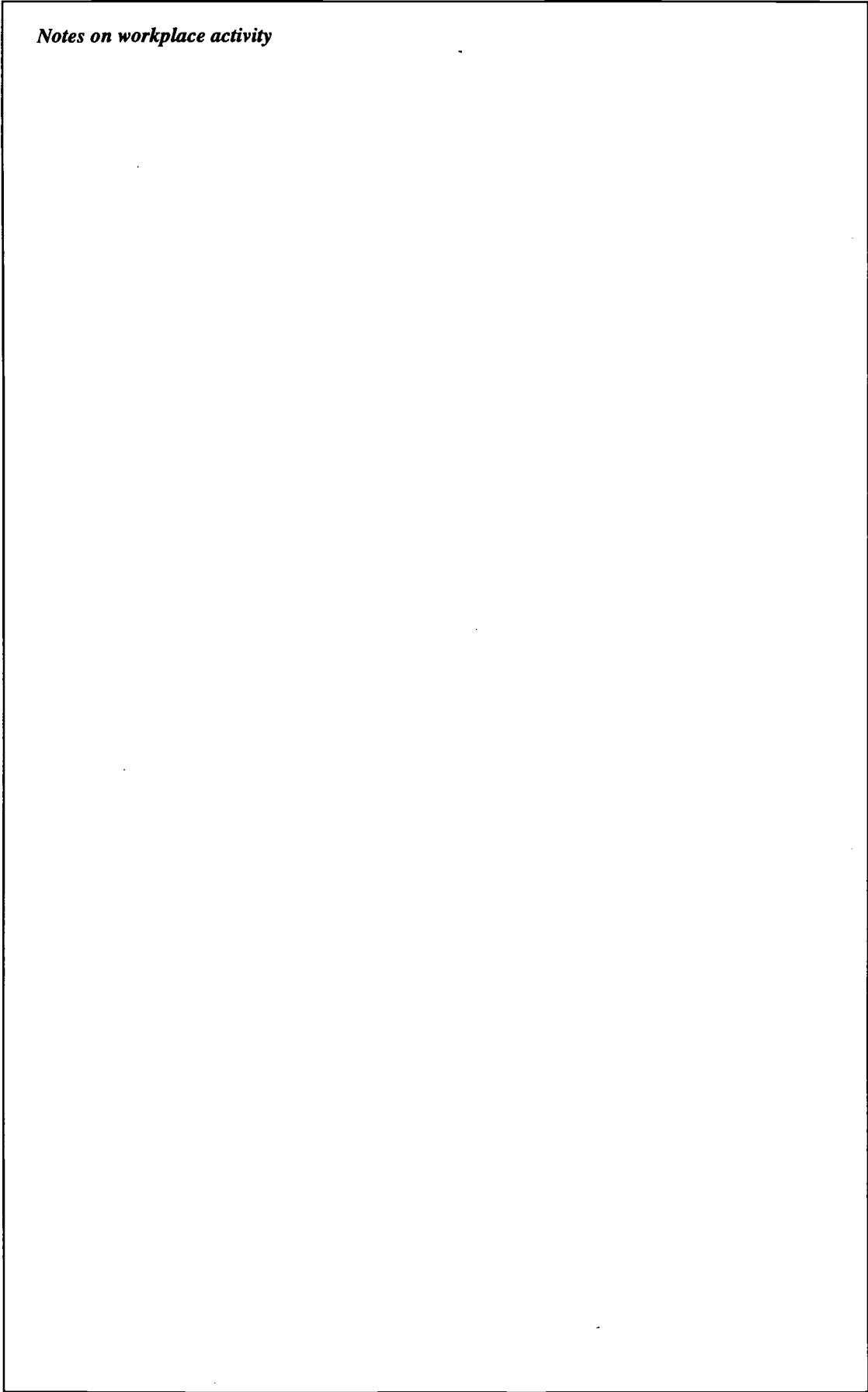
Ask a bilingual staff member for their opinion on certain questions beforehand if you are unsure.

Worksheet 1.6.1

Notes on workplace activity

Any issues or concerns arising from this activity

Notes on workplace activity



1.7 Between module readings

There are three essential readings for Module 1 as well as other suggested readings. The essential readings follow Worksheet 1.7.1. This worksheet can be used to make notes as you read.

Readings for Module 1

1. Kale, J. & Luke, A. (1991) 'Doing things with words: early language socialisation. In *The literacy agenda: issues for the nineties*. Edited by E. Furniss and P. Green. Armadale, Victoria: Eleanor Curtain Publishing

This article introduces key ideas reinforced in Module 2. It explores current understandings about literacy and the role of schools and centres in supporting the literacy development of children whose home literacy practices may not match those offered in these educational settings.

2. Extracts from different sources to highlight some of the issues surrounding identity, belonging, language and power discussed in Module 1.

*Suggested further readings (*highly recommended)*

*Ashworth, M. & Wakefield, H.P. (1994) 'Who are the children'. In *Teaching the world's children: ESL for ages three to seven*. Markham, Ontario: Pippin Publishing Limited, pp. 13 - 24.

This chapter outlines and explores the kinds of information that is important to gather on children from non-English speaking backgrounds and strategies for doing this. As well, it suggests some strategies for supporting these children when entering early childhood settings.

*Burke, D. (1991) 'Students from non-English speaking backgrounds - some factors influencing their school experiences and learning outcomes'. In *ESL in the mainstream teacher development course*. Adelaide, SA: Department for Education and Children's Services.

*Kristal-Andersson, B., 'Till min svenska pojke (To my Swedish son)' cited in Jalava, A (1988) 'Mother tongue and identity: nobody could see that I was a Finn' in *Minority education: from shame to struggle*. Edited by T Skutnabb-Kangas and J. Cummins. Multilingual Matters, pp. 161-176.

*Makin, L. Campbell, J. & Jones Diaz, C. (1995) 'Growing up bilingually' In *One childhood many languages* Sydney: Harper Educational, pp. 37-67.

Malin, M., Campbell, K & Agius, L. 'Raising children in the Nunga Aboriginal way' In *Family matters*. Australian Institute of Family Studies, No 43, Autumn 1996.

Meyers, M. (1993) 'Immigrant children and language acquisition' and 'First languages: help or hindrance?' in *Teaching to diversity: teaching and learning in the multi-ethnic classroom*. United States: Addison-Wesley, pp. 13-20

Milne, R., Orzesko, S., & Clarke, P. (1994) *Affirming family diversity*. Victoria: Free Kindergarten Association, Multicultural Resource Centre.

*Tabors, P. O. (1997) *One child, two languages: a guide for preschool educators of children learning English as a second language*. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Nyakatawa, S. And Siraj-Blatchford (1994). 'Bilingualism, biculturalism and learning in early years classrooms' Chapter 8 in *Teaching bilingual children*. Edited by Adrian Blackledge. Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire: Trentham Books Ltd., pp. 113 - 130.

Suggested videos

Child at the centre V113 (28 m), Australian Mosaic Series. Victoria: SBS Educational Videos (1988).

Lingo (31 m) Hendon, SA: South Australian Film Corporation (1988).

Your Notes

A large rectangular box with a black border, intended for taking notes. The interior of the box is completely blank.

Worksheet 1.7.1

Notes on readings

A large rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to write their notes on readings.

Worksheet 1.7.1 (continued)

Notes on readings

A large empty rectangular box for taking notes.

62 62

DOING THINGS WITH WORDS
Early Language Socialisation

 Joan Kale, Allan Luke

LITERACY AND DIFFERENCE: A SNAPSHOT

Tell you 'baut the crocodile first
 Well, this crocodile 'e smell tha/watnau? The chicken smell
 It's a raw one
 It's not a cook one
 but they eat raw one.
 So ... this first big crocodile where they wanna send them away
 well, e smell/'e's/take the smell of it
 so 'e went down an' jus' stop ...

It's Monday morning early in the school year, and your Year 1 class is sitting around the rug area swapping stories. Above is the beginning of one six-year-old's contribution. Pause for a moment and consider this before reading on. What judgements would you make about this child? Perhaps you concluded that she doesn't speak English 'properly' or that people of her cultural background are deficient. Or perhaps you decided that she hasn't been read stories by her parents. Or that she needs referral to a remedial program. Such naïve, erroneous or dangerous stereotyped judgements operate continually in the classroom. They are a crucial influence on how we see and teach and, in a sense, 'construct' that child in terms of her language background, competence and possibilities for learning and literacy. Such judgements are often driven by particular values, ideologies, beliefs and prejudices as readily as they might be products of professional expertise (Gee 1990).

This leads us to the decisions you will have to make when deciding how to introduce Elsey and her classmates to the culture of literate practices in your classroom. For example, how might she respond to immersion in children's literature? To formal classroom talk? Might she take 'naturally' to using invented spelling when writing stories and drawing pictures. Or perhaps she needs a rigorous basic skills program? Second language instruction? To make such decisions and to escape the trap of uncritical stereotypes, you will need to know more about the child, about her community and her language background. Further, you will need a preliminary overview of how languages are learned and used.

This is one of many instances in your professional training where it is wise to be a bit suspicious of your common sense recollections of how you and your friends learned language in the home and community. Some teachers tend to hold up their own childhood, culture and learning as a template with which to (mis)interpret and (mis)judge their students' language and literacy. As a teacher, you will need some informed criteria to explore that child's background, even to begin asking yourself appropriate questions.

This chapter is a first step towards understanding more about this particular child, and about language and literacy learning. The above classroom is one you are likely to encounter during your teaching career: it is a mix of children from various cultures, experiences and social class backgrounds. Some, if not a majority, of the children are bilingual, speaking a language other than English in their home and community and social class backgrounds,

often quite divergent from your own. The increasingly diverse cultural and language backgrounds of Australian children present concerns and challenges for you to pursue through your student teaching into your professional career.

Our aim here, however, is not to move towards definitive answers and 'how to' formulae; we want to pose questions and provide terms to guide your reading and discussion of this book.

APPRENTICING AT LANGUAGE IN HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

Confronted with a child who began school convinced she knew about books and reading, one primary teacher said 'School is where you learn to read'. She later informed the child's parents that the child wouldn't learn to read and write 'properly' until she understood that reading was something to be learned at school from the teacher.

Children enter school with diverse oral and literate competences, as well as dispositions towards what can be done with speech and writing, in effect, they possess 'theories' of the possibilities of language and literacy. This teacher was making a serious mistake: ignoring the knowledge and competence that her students bring from their homes and communities to classrooms. It is the teacher's work to learn from the children what they can do with both oral and textual language, and to constructively move them towards the specialised language demands, text types (or genres), sites, and patterns which enable academic achievement and, ultimately, social and cultural power (Walton 1991).

All teachers, classrooms and approaches to literacy begin with assumptions about what literacy is, the optimal ways it can be acquired, and how the literate person should look and act. Unfortunately, the above scenario is played out all too often in classrooms where teachers define literacy as a set of internal, psychological skills that are testable and that can be acquired step by step in the school. This concept of literacy as a series of mechanical skills learned through classroom drill and repetition is a limited and narrow one (Baker and Luke 1991). It leads to a view of teaching as the transmission of discrete, isolable building blocks (eg decoding the digraph 'th'; knowing spelling rule 'x'), and of learning as the accumulation of skills quite separate from the meaningful contexts where literacy is actually put to work for significant social purposes (Edelsky 1991). Yet studies of literacy in classrooms and communities show how both speech and literacy are active social practices which occur in diverse daily situations, in literate cultures inhabited by old and young, mainstream and culturally different, English speaking and non-English speaking families and communities.

One legacy of the skills training approach to literacy is the myth that language and literacy education 'proper' begins in the school: that children do and should enter school *tabula rasa*, as blank slates to be etched by teachers and programs. Some also believe that there are 'correct' ways of socialising children before they come to school, and that any variance and diversity leads to 'deficits' in skills and cultural knowledge. These beliefs are contrary to much recent research on language socialisation and development. In this chapter we describe one child's early language and literacy socialisation in order to show that there are multiple and varying routes to literacy - all artefacts of cultures. Teachers who understand diversity and differences in the kinds of oral and literate competences children bring to the classroom are in a stronger position to enhance their mastery of school (academic) and civic (functional) texts and knowledges.

The debate over whether there are universal structures of language development continues. What we do know is that the development of language appears to follow general patterns across cultures (Schieffelin & Ochs 1986). Yet as children develop they are socialised into particular language, ways specific to their community and home environments. As Halliday (197) maintains, language is as it is because of what it has to do. That is, language, is a

powerful mode of social action, a tool for making meaning and sense, for constructing and interacting with our social and physical environments. What is important to note here is that children's home and community culture is often not the same as yours: the increasing cultural and subcultural diversity of all modern nation states is an indicator of the significant variety and diversity of what children have learned to 'do' with language.

SPEECH EVENTS

Children grow in and through a range of speech events in homes and communities, experimenting with and developing functional ways of doing things with words. There children learn and experiment with when they can speak, when it might be appropriate to 'talk back' to an elder (if ever!), where they can discuss topics which might be considered 'personal', how to express emotions, what kinds of things can be said, for instance, at mealtime or bedtime, and so forth. This is not a matter of value-free, neutral skill acquisition. As part of this socialisation, they are engaging with a complex fabric of cultural values and political ideologies involving, among other things, gender, race, age and authority relations and power.

Virtually all children then, come to school with extensive competence with spoken language. They are able to 'read' social situations and come up with what are, *for them* and members of their families and communities, appropriate openings, comments, silences, questions, responses, endings, etc. Moreover, there is a good deal of evidence which suggests that children's competence is diglossic: that is, that they are able to shift between styles and types of language and, in the case of bilinguals, from one language to another, to fit the demands of different social situations.

If teachers believe that children come to school as blank slates to learn language then impediments and misunderstandings can occur. Children come to school knowing language suited for doing things in their home and communities, but this is not to say that the speech events they have learned to work within will fit the specialised expectations of the teachers and schools. Later in this chapter we will consider the highly patterned rules governing speech events in talk sessions, but first we need to ask whether there is a possible 'lack of fit' between what many children know and can do with language and what the school expects for academic participation, even in preschool and Year 1. The equation is further compounded when we turn from children's oral language to their introduction to literacy.

LITERACY AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

Literacy is a social construction; the possible activities which people undertake with texts of all kinds are negotiated, constructed, resisted and 'done' in particular sites in everyday cultures. Because Western cultures are print saturated environments, we often take literacy for granted. But literacy is not a natural species behaviour. In fact, the use of the alphabet for preserving and retrieving information is only about twenty-four centuries old, a relatively recent invention in the long run of species history. To this day tribal cultures in Africa, South America and other non-industrialised sites operate completely without the technology of literacy. Whether in holy books, hand-written manuscripts and notes, magazines, laws, ledgers or in computer files, text is a social technology, a tool which people have developed and used to interact with their social and physical environments. Indeed it is a significant tool, one which has proven to be an effective medium for scientific work, artistic expression, law making and government, trade and religion, and for critical analysis and transformation of the world. And it is a powerful tool which can be used to gain access to culturally significant knowledge and information. But it is important to note here that text can also be used to block access to, to distort and to bias knowledge and information.

In countries like Australia, we have come to associate literacy with a range of different uses: not only academic, scientific and economic but daily uses as well such as notetaking, list making, letter writing, magazine reading, and even televiewing. But historical and modern cultures have put literacy to work in different ways. Consider here the differences between the kinds of literacy learned by young Moroccan children and by children of the South Pacific Kiribati Islands. In Morocco, male children learn to recite the Koran from memory, beginning this practice from school age. On the island of Tuvalu, one primary use of writing is highly emotive letter writing, which is an integral part of inter-island and interpersonal communication. So the sites, norms, practices and purposes of literacy events - instances of daily interaction around and with text - vary greatly across cultures, stressing different values and ideologies, social actions and inter-relationships.

CULTURE-SPECIFIC APPRENTICESHIP

We can extend this perspective to look at the culture and subculture-specific ways that children apprentice to literacy in countries like Australia, Canada and the US. Even within the same culture there can be a good deal of variety in how children's speech and literacy events are constructed. Examining literacy in the Southern US, Heath (1983) found that communities separated by only a few kilometres tended to provide very different childhood socialisations into ways with words and ways with texts. In some communities, for instance, children learned that reading was about sitting still, listening to an authoritative adult reader, and sounding words out on request; in others, children learned that reading concerned making unprompted analogies between the stories and events in their daily life; and in yet others, oral performance of stories and songs was valued far more than book reading. Just as these children are learning the patterns of oral language in speech events, they are also learning a set of activities and task orientations with literacy: what can be done with texts, which texts are valuable, which texts are taboo and where, what can be said about them, how to interact in speech events and literacy events, some of which match the settings and activities teachers might deem educationally valuable, and others of which do not. We now turn back to Elsey, an urban child who will be entering a Queensland state school, and outline the kinds of oral and written competence she brings to a mainstream Australian classroom, one that you might be teaching.

ELSEY: A CASE STUDY*

** This case study is taken from an Australia Research Council project by the authors. And extended discussion of methodology and data is undertaken in Kale (forthcoming). We thank the members of the Torres Strait Islander Community for their continuing support, and of course, Elsey and her family.*

Six-year-old Elsey has lived in a North Queensland city since birth. She and her family are part of the large Torres Strait Islander community which has, since World War II, an increasing presence in Australian mainland centres. Like many members of her community, she is bilingual, speaking both English and Torres Strait Creole (hereafter TSC). TSC is the lingua franca, the preferred language for everyday communication, among many Islanders living on the mainland. While many parents and grandparents might speak traditional languages still used in the islands (eg Kala Lagaw Ya, Kala Kawaw Ya, Meriam Mir), Elsey and most of her generation are bilingual, switching from English to TSC depending on the particular site and situation for language use.

Torres Strait Creole is a language which has borrowed and mixed features of phonology, vocabulary, syntax, semantics and pragmatics from traditional languages, English and other hybrid languages used across the South Pacific for trade and cross-cultural communication. It is important to note that TSC is not a 'deficient' or 'unsystematic' form of English. It is a

rule-governed language in itself quite capable of meeting the functional demands of its community or speakers in common cultural situations (Nakata 1991).

Elsey has lived in several different locations over her six years, a reflection of the ongoing problem of finding affordable urban and suburban accommodation, and the Islander preference for three generation family units as a strategy for providing social, emotional and financial support. For some time she lived in the maternal family unit with her mother and grandmother in a two-bedroom flat. By this time she had younger twin sisters. Also living there were her mother, older sister, two children adopted by her grandmother and a related teenager and primary school-age child. During this period all the school-age children attended nearby schools and Elsey was an avid apprentice during homework sessions. While the older children worked at tables or on the floor, she would call for pencil and paper so that she could play at doing 'home work'.

For the past year Elsey has lived with her paternal grandmother. From Islander perspective, this household is unique in one respect: except on rare occasions, there is no middle presence of either of Elsey's brothers and sisters parents. Grandmother and child share a small, well-maintained maisonette in a fully integrated urban community. Without other live-in school age children to accompany Elsey to school, Grandmother decided to place Elsey in a nearby preschool. In the morning she heads off to the bus, her backpack containing a lunch prepared by Grandmother. She calls this backpack her 'letterbox', a reference to the activity sheets, notes and forms she brings home from preschool. By observing the activities of the other Islander children, her grandmother and family friends, and by participating in preschool, Elsey is developing a sense of what literacy entails, its artefacts and objects, where it can be used, for what purpose, and so forth.

At home, Elsey and her grandmother speak mainly TSC. Elsey chooses to use the English spoken at preschool when she has commerce outside the family unit. Elsey is an emergent bilingual. She is already competent in TSC as other children of her age, and she has learned how to do things with words in the speech events of her culture. This includes knowing how to break into a conversation, when not to interrupt, what is implied by talking 'cheeky', when she must 'tok praply' in more formal settings amongst Islanders, and when pertness and humour are rewarded. At the same time, she is learning English and mainstream Australian culture's rules of speech events with individuals outside her home and immediate circle of relatives. (E= Elsey, initials are used to mark other speakers.)

- E: J Go'n'get my bloody pencils
 J: Go'n'get your own bloody pencils
 E: J ...
 J: What?
 E: Can you go an' get my pencils, please?

Here Elsey is exploring and learning the protocols for making requests with mainstream English speakers. She often experiments with structures and meanings which would 'work' to achieve her social purpose in a speech situation with TSC speakers. In other situations, family friends and others directly encourage mainstream English patterns:

- W: S, please let go!
 Y: Ph, very polite, that!

Often her experimentation with English shows an awareness and developing control of many aspects of how language works. (G= Grandmother. English gloss of TSC is italicised.)

- G: Wane yu kaikai?
What do you want to eat?
 E: Don' know/what I'm gonna eat
 I might be gonna eat/'ave you go any cornflakes - no/

'Ave you got any cornflakes mam?

G: No cornflakes darling.

E: Okay. I/what we/wat're we got? a bread?

Yes, we got a bread

Elsy already knows a great deal about how English works and, even in this situation which might call upon her to use TSC, she is experimenting with English. She is learning about which auxiliaries (eg might, have) to select; indefinite articles with count and non-count nouns (eg a loaf of bread, or some bread); rules about how to pose questions; and about how to use English pronouns.

From this brief view of Elsey's oral language use (Kale, forthcoming), we can summarise a number of points. Elsey is able to do various things with words: expressing opinions, giving reasons, explaining, challenging, accusing, praising, joking are just some of the social actions she uses language for. But often home speech events take on very different rules and patterns from those that you would expect, understand and consider 'polite'.

E: [singing Mary Had A Little Lamb - unsure of pronunciation]

Ma' - laam o lam?

G: [shrugs shoulders]

E: O wane yu big fo?

What good is it your being an adult?

For Elsey, the rules governing what can be said to an elder, how to get and hold the floor, who is in control of the speech event are quite distinct from those of the mainstream home and classrooms. Further, Elsey shifts from TSC to English and from English to TSC, not randomly but depending on the specific context, the task, the topic, whom she is addressing and other cues.

Elsy's grandmother is marginally literate, having grown up in the Torres Strait when only schooling to third grade was available. She occasionally scans a TSC dictionary and grammar text but she is reluctant to write in either English or TSC and her reading is a laborious and uncertain process. Where possible she asks clerks and trustworthy relatives and friends to help her to fill in the forms she, as a pensioner, must contend with. She occasionally receives letters from her daughter on Thursday Island.

Yet Elsey engages in print, often enthusiastically, as part of her daily routines. One of her duties is to clear the mailbox each day, a responsibility she jealously guards. She has learned to recognise the addressee's name on envelopes and she can sometimes identify the logos and acronyms of familiar agencies (eg Telecom NORQEB). As she collected a letter one day, she glanced at the envelope and exclaimed, 'Oh shit, Telecom!', a signal of the significance such bills have in the household. Both she and Grandmother scan the mail daily. Elsey eagerly 'reads' cards and letters from family in Thursday Island.

Elsy, an emergent literate, uses writing and reading for a range of instrumental, recreational and social interactional purposes (Heath 1983). She writes her name proudly for Grandmother and herself on scraps of papers, letters, cards; she can also write some close friends' names. For play, she sometimes asks for names and words to be written for her to copy. And she sings church songs from books and written out lyric sheets. These forms of writing are integrated with leisure-time drawing, diagramming and simulations of writing: invented spellings and letters which she has developed in imitation of those writers she has observed.

Elsey's reading centres on functional 'found' print in her environment and she sees reading as serving specific purposes.

J: Are you gonna read the paper or what?

E: M?

J: Gonna read the paper?

E: Read the paper for what?

She can recognise names and addresses, and the logos which appear on signs (eg Big W, Target). At home, literacy events centre on talk around advertising flyers, newspapers, forms and the texts that she and her grandmother jointly use. Here Elsey and Grandmother are scanning an advertising flyer for a local store:

G: Shower curtain, plastic curtain

Yurni gede diswan

We'll get this one

Ai laik diswan

I like this one

E, tri dola

Eh, three dollars

E: Jest onli tri dola?

G: O, brokli your favrit

Oh, broccoli's your favourite

G: En karit mai favrit

And carrot is my favourite

G: Celery, not brokli

E: Which one?

G: That wan celery

E: You think brokli

G: Mmm ...

This basket gud fo Astro [a dog] fo slip

This'd be a good basket for Astro to sleep in

E: Which basket? ...

In this and other home literacy events, Elsey is an active participant, responding to Grandmother's prompts, at times switching the focus and topic, and linking the text to her own likes and dislikes, experiences and intentions. She and Grandmother switch readily between TSC and English.

Elsey is developing a sense of the social purposes of literacy and interaction patterns around text. As well, she is gaining technical competences with the technology of text, developing and increasing knowledge of the alphabet, of words she recognises by sight, and of sound/symbol correspondence for attacking unfamiliar words and distinguishing between familiar ones. Yet while much of her interaction around text is bilingual, English remains the primary language of use and power in mainstream social institutions like business, government and schooling. Since the TSC vocabulary is largely English based, only prosodic and phonological (sound) features might signal to a teacher than Elsey may not, at this stage of her language development, be a fully fluent speaker of English.

It is interesting to note - and perhaps crucial to understanding the kinds of problems which Elsey might encounter in your classroom - that most of the functional uses of text and literacy events featured in her home environment do not figure prominently in the early primary school literacy curriculum (Luke, 1988). Formal school-based introductions to literacy, whether in basal or holistic, skill or process-oriented approaches, tend to emphasise the reading and writing of fictional, narrative texts.

Yet Elsey is versed in structural oral narrative, gleaned from the experience of countless hours of her grandmother and others 'yarning'. Elsey's grandmother often recounts tales of the great cultural heroes and heroines of the Torres Strait. Such tales, often focus on the theme of 'how the world came to be', pivot around a moral, a directive to family and community members concerning their responsibilities and privileges. These storytelling events have two distinctive features. When Grandmother retells traditional narratives, she does not solicit or tolerate questions; the retelling is a sustained oral performance and the storyteller has the floor and 'speaking rights' until she relinquishes them. At the same time, listeners have rights to undertake other household and leisure activities while Grandmother is 'yarning'.

So while Elsey has a knowledge of story forms and events (eg how to signal beginnings and endings, what counts as a 'valid' story, what can be done by tellers, by listeners, who has the right to speak), it diverges in many ways from the 'bedtime story' events undertaken in many mainstream homes, eagerly supported by many educators, and emulated in many classrooms. Not only does the form and content of the stories stand apart from that of conventional children's literature (whether Golden Books or award winners), but storytelling is an oral performance with very different roles, expectations and rules.

This is only a brief sketch of Elsey's language and literacy development. However, we can make several pertinent observations about her language and literacy when she enters your Year 1 classroom. Elsey is bilingual, fully fluent for her age in TSC and with a growing functional vocabulary and a developing competence in English. Her language and knowledge of speech events in TSC with other Islanders is adequate for her community and family needs. She can achieve a wide range of social and intellectual goals with TSC. She is rapidly acquiring a better knowledge of how to use English appropriately in different sites and situations. Much of this development will depend on continuing opportunities to experiment with language in speech events with mainstream speakers of English. With family friends and acquaintances, she is encouraged to use English and switching to TSC is not met with hostility or misunderstanding.

Finally, Elsey has developed seminal knowledge about literacy. She participates in various literacy events at home and at preschool, from playing 'homework' and copying words, to 'reading' signs, newspapers, advertisements. She can write strings of letters and has a sense that this is a way of coding words, sounds and meanings. She often combines these 'words' with her drawings. Further, she has developed a facility for 'yarning' in both TSC and English, participating with Grandmother in the oral performance of Islander stories and recounting events in which she has had a role.

We would hope that when she enters a Year 1 classroom next year, she will encounter a supportive environment which will recognise her developing facilities with language and literacy and use them as stepping stones towards the kinds of competence that she will need to succeed in school (Gray 1984).

PROGNOSIS: LITERACY, EQUITY AND POWER

What will happen when Elsey enters the mainstream classroom in a few months time? How will her fluency in TSC and developing competence in English, her knowledge of literacy events, fit with the following kind of classroom literacy event? This is a 'reading around the group' session using a standardised reading series:

T: Why is it [the train] getting slower and slower, and slower?

S: Because it's a real steep hill and the carriages might fall off?

T: It's a very, very steep hill, yes. [resumes reading]

S: He must be strong

- T: Yes he must be! [resumes reading] Who knows why they have tunnels for trains to go through?
 S: To keep them out of the rain
 T: Does rain hurt trains? Jack?
 S: To go through big hills
 T: Yes, that's right. If you have a big hill like that ...
 (Baker & Freebody, 1989, p.167)

We present this lesson not as a template to follow, but as an example of many of the kinds of talk around text which occur in early literacy programs. Various unstated rules are at work here: the teacher asks questions, students answer, usually in brief clauses; the teacher nominates the book for study, the topics for discussion and who will speak when, about what; she defines what will count as a valid answer (Baker & Freebody 1989). School based book reading is about participating in this kinds of literacy events: about getting the floor, guessing what the teacher wants to know about the story and what is an accurate 'reading'.

How will Elsey take this lesson? Will she appear to respond 'naturally' with enthusiasm? Will her 'namings' for particular objects, actions and emotions fit those that the teacher is looking for? Will she know when to keep silent and appear attentive? When to speak out? When and how to make eye contact? Given her possible reactions, we can return to the judgements from which we began this chapter: will she appear 'bright'? 'slow'? 'impolite'? 'shy'? How will the teacher judge her competence and background? And how will such judgements influence Elsey's educational prospects? We would hope that, knowing considerably more about Elsey's background and competence, your judgements would be quite different from those that you made at the beginning of this chapter.

For now we can only speculate on Elsey's transition from the speech and literacy events of home to those of the classroom. What we can begin to see is that *particular approaches to literacy in the school systematically favour those children whose previous language and literate socialisation has accustomed them to rules and procedures of the classroom literacy events*. Inversely, these same approaches may *systematically work against those children whose previous language and literature socialisation has taught them 'other' rules and procedures for speech and literacy events*. As sociologists have argued, schools have a way of expecting of children what schools are charged with providing, of valorising and rewarding those children who bring to classrooms the most 'school-like' competences and task orientations (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977). Judging by current educational and demographic data, the prognosis for Elsey is not good. At present, urban Torres Strait Islander children do not perform as well in conventional school achievement as their mainstream counterparts (Kale 1990). Nor, we should add, do children of non-English speaking migrant backgrounds (Kalantizis, Cope & Slade 1989). We would argue the problem, at least in part, is due to:

1. a mismatch between speech and literacy events of the community/home and those of the school
2. the inability of mainstream schools to recognise and capitalise on those competences that the child brings to school
3. the inability of schools and programs to provide structured and deliberate introductions to the kinds of specialised English language and literacy required in a range of academic and community contexts.

That is to say little of the complex and interrelated factor of racism and ethno-centrism in schools, classrooms, staffrooms and communities which would lead some mainstream teachers to deem Elsey's community accomplishments as signs of inferiority and backwardness. For instance, the teachers Heath (1983, p270) studied had profound difficulties recognising competence that didn't appear in textbook accounts of allegedly

'normal' literate development. They tended to construe children's lack of familiarity with the speech and literacy events of the school as behavioural characteristics such as verbal and physical aggressiveness and disrespect, and skill deficits in responding to questions and staying on topic. For such teachers, 'the seemingly "natural" sequences of habits for them as mainstreamers were "unnatural" for many of their students' (Heath, 1983, p271).

TOWARD EQUAL ACCESS TO LITERACY

There are constructive ways of breaking this pattern. Heath (1983) involved primary and secondary teachers in a study of community ways with words and texts to increase recognition of what was expected of their students outside the classroom in community and occupational settings. Further, by making these community patterns the object of classroom study, and by sending children out to gather data on how language was used in the community, teachers were able to provide systematic language activities and instruction which enabled a more successful transition to the specialised texts, genres and events of school literacy (Heath 1986).

In work with Hawaiian children, members of the Kamehameha Early childhood project redesigned early reading lessons such as the one described above, to better fit the speech events which Hawaiian children were accustomed to at home and in the community. Reading comprehension and achievement improved markedly (Au & Jordan 1981).

Finally, in work with bilingual Hispanic students, Edelsky (1991) and colleagues developed a range of holistic instructional approaches which stressed learners' responsibility for their talk and writing, resulting in improved achievement and the enhancement of their capacity to talk about texts critically (see also Diaz, Moll & Mehan 1986).

In Australia, Brian Gray (1984) and colleagues at Traeger Park in the Northern Territory developed strategies for introducing Aboriginal children of non-English speaking backgrounds to specialised uses of English, in particular speech and literacy events. The task, as Gray saw it, was to engage children's first language competence and learning strategies in the classroom mastery of English. 'Concentrated language encounters' were built around meaningful shared themes and events (eg saddling a horse, going to the pet shop). These classroom situations were used to elicit a range of characteristic oral and written texts that might occur in real speech and literacy events, and to do so in a way that stressed the children's capacity to negotiate meanings based on their shared understanding of the situation, the information and the task at hand.

Though these strategies differ, they share a commitment to providing students of non-mainstream cultures with socially powerful and critical ways of using talk and texts. Further, all work form an undertaking that literacy is not an individual act or psychological skill to be transmitted and tested in schools, but an active social practice - apprenticed with experts, learned and used appropriately in various sites.

Much sociological research indicates that education systems produce inequality by disbursing competence and knowledge unequally to children of different social groups. There is ample evidence that literacy teaching and learning in schools play a key role in this cycle. Children enter school with various kinds and levels of oral and literate knowledge and competence. These in turn are validated, cancelled and privileged by schools which often reward those with the most mainstream, school-like competence. Not all children are given equal chances of acquiring powerful literacies. Success and failure in Grade 12 achievement, access to well-paid jobs and tertiary institutions in Australia - as throughout Western Countries - continues to fall along the historical fault lines of class, race and gender.

As Kalantzis, Cope and Slade (1989) and Walton (1991) have recently pointed out, programs which simply aim to celebrate and tolerate cultural and linguistic 'difference' - the pizza and spaghetti' approach to multiculturalism - too often fail to systematically address the existing inequities of access to cultural power and economic resources, and indeed language and literacy. At present - the best intentions and hard work of many teachers notwithstanding - schools and programs are not doing a fully effective job of ensuring that *all* children, regardless of their cultural and class backgrounds, have equal opportunities to engage with powerful literacies. That this disadvantage begins in children's earliest experiences of schooling provides an imperative and a challenge for us all.

Response Task

What follows is an excerpt from a Year 1 lesson in an Australian school. The teacher has several years' experience in early childhood education. The twelve children involved are from a working class suburb, seven of them speak a language other than English at home and in the community. Try to envisage this lesson as you read the transcript. The children are seated on the rug area of the floor. The teacher is sitting in front of them on a chair next to the easel, on which an enlarged print book is displayed. This classroom literacy event aims to engage children in reading and literature.

S1: I've gotta pair of socks like that.

T: David, will you sit up straight. Michael, just sit up straight and face the front. When we first look at this, I was looking at this book and there's something different about the goats. But around here [points to picture] ... what were all the goats wearing? [turns page]

S2: Go ... gooo

S3: Ah beard, ... a little beard, and they all gotta little beard

T: [loudly] A beard. Whatta they all got on the first page. Whatta they all got around their necks?

S1: Ah bells, a one has ...

S3: // Bells

T: [loudly] Bells. Well actually I was wrong. I thought that no one has bells, but I got it straight anyway. So ... has the little billy goat got a bell? Michael, if you can't sit down you can practice sitting up straight at recess. Okay? Sit down. But ... sshhh What's the big billy goat got?

Consider these questions for discussion:

1. What are the unstated rules of this particular lesson? Who can speak? When? About what? What is an appropriate sign that one is 'reading'? What are children learning about how to 'do' reading?
2. Based on what you know about her, how might Elsey respond? Why? What forms might her participation take?

As you work with your young students through the year, we ask that you keep Elsey in mind and return to these questions.

Your Notes

A large rectangular box intended for taking notes, currently empty.

7A 74

Reading 2

The following extracts from a range of resources highlight issues surrounding identity, developing language and power discussed in Module 1.

A

B: That's right. I've been an Australian citizen for years. My English is fluent and I greet people with 'G'day mate', but still I'm asked: 'Where are you from?'

C: It's not just you. My kid, who was born in Melbourne, is often mistaken for an Asian tourist. Basically if you've got slanty eyes and yellow skin, or wavy hair and brown skin, you can't be Australian. They think it's only if you've got blue eyes, pale skin, and are wearing shorts and thongs that you are an Aussie.

('What exactly is an Australian?' in Post Migration, June 1995: 13)

B

Everyone at school keeps asking me what my name means.

'Does it mean princess?' Mary says.

'COCONUT!' Tessa shouts.

'Butterfly!' 'Dragon!' They all try and guess.

'I know,' says Danny. 'It means DIM SIM!'

But I just shake my head.

One day I'll tell them what it means.

My Mum loved my name. She said it was very special.

.....

While I was painting, Tessa said, 'Tell us what your name means now? I smiled and shook my head.

But when we rode up to the shops I whispered to Mary, 'It means "Fragrant breeze of the South".'

'I like that,' she said. 'It's beautiful.'

(Diana Kidd 1989:9, 67)

C

I often wonder why me and my family have to be punished because we are poor: because the schools never taught my kids to read and write properly and nobody will give us a job? Why should I be punished because I do things differently to the way white people expect things to be done? Why do I have to worry that my son will get depressed in prison and take his own life? Why do teachers, police, welfare workers and doctors look down on me because of my Nunga culture? Why are my little girls called 'nigger' or 'black sluts' when they walk down the street?

(Malin, Campbell and Agius 1996)

D

Maria Lara is a teenager. She was born in the US of Mexican migrant parents. When she was three the family settled into a small rural community of few Hispanics. She attended a day care program in English. In elementary school the staff believed that she had acculturated well. She was pleasant cheerful and had lots of 'anglo' friends. Some people didn't even know her heritage. Her grades, however, were poor. Maria speaks no Spanish. At home she speaks to her parents in English and they respond in Spanish. Recently Maria has met 'prince charming' . . . Maria is indecisive and would like to talk to her mother about her own early marriage, and about Maria's childhood goal to be a teacher. But she can't begin to express her pent up fears, desires and emotions in a language they can both understand.

(National Preschool Coordination Project 1991: 8)

E

Shamelessly I stalked the dazed civilians while they assembled their belongings and trudged toward . . . the square. I was struck by their expressions, which had changed from a numb, empty look to one of grief. Yet no one wept. Tears were a luxury these people did not have time for. One hour was all they had to gather up the possessions of a lifetime.

I noticed how differently young and old reacted. Two young girls I photographed carried three bundles between them. They wore a look of determination as they strode forward. This was not true of . . . an old . . . Nam who sat cross-legged on the ground removed from what was going on around him. All he had saved was . . . a thumb-worn holy book . . . A woman with . . . an infant in her arms just stood there with unseeing eyes she gazed straight ahead, absorbed by some inner thought. The day before, her husband had been killed while standing by her side. . . . An old couple trudged up a hill leading to . . . the square. The woman held a cloth bag packed with food . . . her husband carried the family clothing. The two had just left the house they had lived in for over fifty years, never to return.

. . . An old man, weighted down by bedding, staggered along with . . . a frightened child toward . . . the square. There they got caught up in a human stream, which flowed past a young . . . irregular holding an automatic weapon. The refugees had no time for a last look at . . . the quarter with its elegant archways and peach-coloured limestone facade. The crunch of tramping feet over dusty rubble reminded me of a familiar sound I could not quite identify, until I closed my eyes. Then it came to me - it was like the surf rolling in along a pebbled beach. In the uncertain light of dusk when colours fade to tones of grey, I photographed the refugees . . . The head of the United Nations Truce Commission, stood next to me. 'Misery always wears the same face', I said . . . He nodded. 'I'm a Spanish republican. It was just like this at Malaga during the civil war.'

(Phillips 1976 Cited in STTARS, 1996: 2)

References

Clarke, P. (1993) 'Multicultural perspectives in early childhood services in Australia' In *Multicultural teaching 11.3*, Trentham Books, pp 8 -11

Desert schools: report of a national children's literacy project, Vol 2 (1996) Adelaide: NLLIA, South Australian Teaching and Curriculum Centre.

Dodson, M. (1994) *Cultural rights and educational responsibilities*. Frank Archibald Memorial Lecture. Armidale, University of New England.

Eades, D. (1995) 'Aboriginal English' In *Aboriginal Literacy Resource Kit*. Sydney: Board of Studies NSW.

Janks, H. (1993) 'Language, literacy & power'. *Critical language awareness series*. Edited by Hilary Janks. Johannesburg, South Africa: Witwatersrand University Press: Hodder & Stoughton Educational.

Janssen, C. and Pauwels, A. (1993) *Raising children bilingually in Australia*. Victoria. Language and Society Centre, Monash University.

Jalava, A (1988) 'Mother tongue and identity: nobody could see that I was a Finn' in *Minority education: from shame to struggle*. Edited by T Skutnabb-Kangas and J. Cummins. Multilingual Matters, pp 161-176.

Kidd, D. (1989) *Onion tears*. Sydney: William Collins Pty Ltd.

Langdon, A. (1996) 'Proud and prejudiced' in *LOTE Link*. Languages and Cultures Unit, Department of Education. Queensland. Vol 6, No 3, pp 1 - 2.

Lo Bianco, J. (1996) *Australian literacies: an accompanying volume to the national literacy policy for Australia: The commonwealth's role in literacy and language education*. Belconnen, ACT: Language Australia.

Makin, L., Campbell, J. and Jones Diaz, C. (1994) *One childhood many languages*, Sydney: Harper Educational.

Malin, M., Campbell, Katho and Agius L. (1996) 'Raising children in the Nunga Aboriginal way', In *Family Matters* No 43, Autumn, pp 43 - 47.

Multiculturalism in schooling and children's services. Policy Statement, Department for Education and Children's Services, SA 1995.

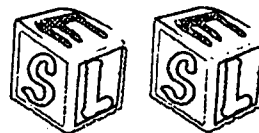
Phillips, John. (1976) 'A will to survive'. In *STTARS Newsletter*. No 23, Winter 1996, p 2.

'So what exactly is an Australian?' in *Post Migration*, June, 1995, p13.

'The NABE no-cost study on families' in *National pre-school coordination project*. San Diego, 1991, pp 13-15.

'Whatever happened to Maria' in *National pre-school coordination project*. San Diego, 1991, pp 8-9.

Module 2



Developing an additional language in a supportive learning environment



Module 2

Focus: Developing an additional language in a supportive learning environment

Overview

We will begin this module by reflecting on literacy as a set of social and cultural practices and touch on the pedagogic implications of this view of literacy for supporting learners from cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than English. From this point, we will revisit how children learn their first language. We will then focus more specifically on the learning of English as a second language: firstly, through an experience as a second language learner and, secondly, by examining some of the issues in learning English as a second language in early childhood settings. Finally, we will explore strategies which are useful in providing a supportive learning environment in which children can experience success in learning a second language.

The module contains the following activities:

- 2.1 Reflecting on Module 1*
- 2.2 Thinking about literacy and language*
- 2.3 Reflecting on language learning and early language development*
- 2.4 An experience in learning a second language*
- 2.5 Issues in learning a second language for young children*
- 2.6 Providing a supportive learning environment*
- 2.7 Suggested workplace activity*
- 2.8 Readings.*

At the end of this module you will have:

- increased your understanding of current thinking on literacy as a set of social and cultural practices and touched on some implications of this thinking for teaching and learning in early childhood settings
- reflected on your beliefs and understandings about language and language learning
- revisited your understandings of where most children are in their home language development when they enter early childhood settings
- experienced being a second language learner and, as a result, developed a greater awareness of the situation of second language learners in early childhood settings
- examined issues for young children in successfully learning a second language
- identified a range of strategies useful in implementing a supportive learning environment.

2.1 Reflecting on Module 1

You may wish to begin your work on this module by reflecting on the materials and readings from the previous module, by referring back to your notes in Worksheet 1.6.1 and Worksheet 1.7.1 and considering what new understandings you have gained and what critical issues require resolution or further research.

You may also wish to consider the relevance of these understandings and issues in your workplace and consider how your practice is being or could be affected by this professional development.

Jot down your ideas in Worksheet 2.1.1 below.

Worksheet 2.1.1



Learning journal: Module 2

Pull this page out of the folder and, as you work through this module, make notes of points that interest you, points that you want to follow up, or unresolved questions and issues. If you intend to use this for accreditation purposes, make sure that your notes communicate clearly with an outside reader.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Handwriting practice area with 20 horizontal dotted lines.

2.2 Thinking about literacy and language

Introduction

Current thinking sees literacy as involving 'the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing' (DEET 1991: 5). We acknowledge the interrelatedness of these modes of language in all aspects of our everyday lives. However, in this Resource Folder we have chosen to focus on oral language separately from reading and writing. This is because we recognise the fundamental role oral language development plays in early childhood settings in allowing children:

- to communicate with each other
- to interact socially
- to develop as individuals
- to learn
- to think critically.

We recognise that oral language development is important in its own right, not just as a resource for the development of reading and writing. Modules 3 and 4 deal predominantly with issues of oral language development of ESL learners and strategies for supporting this development. In Modules 5 and 6 we will examine issues in reading and writing development.

At this point, we need to revisit some key ideas about literacy which underpin this training resource and which have important implications for the way educators work with children from cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than English.

Activity

The following quotation summarises some of the current thinking about literacy:

Literacy can be seen as language in use - in speaking, listening, reading, viewing, writing and drawing. What is involved in each of these language modes varies according to context, purpose and audience. According to Luke (1993: 4), 'Literacy is constructed by individuals and groups as part of everyday life'. Speaking, listening, reading, viewing, writing and drawing are active social practices which occur in a range of daily situations. Children learn what can be said or written, how it can be said or written, to whom and under what circumstances.

Early Years Literacy Profile Department for Education and Children's Services:

South Australia (1996: 6-7)

In order to 'unpack' this description of literacy, read the extract in Resource Notes 2.2.1(a) and the responses to it in Worksheet 2.2.1(a).

These questions aim to help you to think about

- how literacy, as language in use, varies depending on context, purpose and audience
- the way literacy is constructed in everyday life
- how literacy, ie speaking, listening, reading, viewing, writing and drawing, are active social and cultural practices.

These questions also aim to help you 'understand diversity and difference in the kinds of oral and literate competencies that children bring to preschool and school' (*Early Years Literacy Profile 1996: 7*).

Resource Notes 2.2.1 (a)

Extract 1

The importance of memorisation and practice for Chinese students can also be seen if we consider the requirements of literacy in Chinese languages. A basic level of literacy requires the ability to read and write 1500 characters; reading a newspaper requires the ability to recognise 5000 characters; and to be an 'intellectual', such as a teacher, requires a knowledge of at least 20,000 characters. While various techniques are used to impart the knowledge of the characters, there is no doubt that a prodigious effort of memorisation and practice is required

In China the learning of characters is a painstaking process which begins around the age of seven. Children spend a great deal of time tracing the characters in the air, learning the correct sequence of brush stokes, overprinting large printed characters and copying characters in special writing books. It is a common sight to see young children practising characters with a forefinger on the palm of one hand. All these motor activities help the child to memorise the sequence of brush strokes, and the meaning of each character they learn is reinforced by pictures and repetition. As characters may have twenty or more stokes, and as the meaning of a character may be completely changed by a single stroke, careful analysis of each character is essential if written material is to be understood.

(McKnight 1994: 44-45)

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Worksheet 2.2.1 (a)

Responses to questions on Extract 1

What are the social and cultural practices evident in this extract?

- *Children start school at seven.*
- *Characters, representing ideas and words and sounds, are learnt through visual and tactile means and through continual and varied practice in order to memorise them.*
- *Literacy is taught by experts.*
- *Chinese characters are made up of strokes.*

What understandings about literacy might result from these practices?

- *Print is best learnt through practice, careful analysis and memorisation.*
- *Writing is a very complex and precise activity.*
- *Slight changes in the character formations can change meanings.*

What implications might these understandings have for successful participation in early childhood education in the Australian context?

- *There may be a mismatch between parents' expectations of how children learn to write and the expectations of the educator.*
- *Parents may want to help their children by using these same practices to learn letters of the alphabet: this may be perceived by early childhood educators as learning letters in isolation and be discouraged because of their perception of its reliance on 'rote learning'.*

How can early childhood educators value and build on the experiences that a child from this background might bring to the learning environment?

- *Encourage all children to learn to recognise and write some words in Chinese and explain how careful you have to be to write in Chinese: introducing different ways of approaching writing as a motor and perceptual task.*
- *Read bilingual books in Chinese and English, using a Chinese parent or bilingual aide, and highlight the shapes of Chinese script and its way of making meanings.*
- *Use Chinese script in art, music and other contexts as well as in reading activities.*
- *Let parents know that their attempts at helping their children are appreciated.*
- *Provide parents with translations of your understandings of how children learn the alphabet and learn to write, and arrange for a conference with parents and workshops on early literacy education with an interpreter.*

Now read Resource Notes 2.2.1(b) and respond to the questions which follow the extract in worksheet 2.2.1(b).

Extract 2

My own education was a Yolngu education. It took place with our large family group living in the places on our land that hold special importance for us. With Mum and Dad we went from place to place, and every place had its stories. Some of these were sacred stories that we heard sung in ceremonies. Some were family stories, like Mum's stories of when she was a little girl in this place or that. We knew that my grandad had been here, and his grandad before him did these things, and right back to the ancestors who made the land as they went about doing just the same sorts of things we did in our ordinary life and in our ceremonial life.

Mum and Dad travelled long distances with us kids. Just by going and living in the various places we were respecting those ancestors of ours who made the world. My father followed the seasons in his lands. Sometimes Mum took us over to her places. Like during April when it was starting to get chilly at night we would be inland. We were in covered places where it was sheltered; all those cosy places When the cold snap was coming on, after April into May/June when it is almost going into the dry season, that's when we'd start hanging around there.

Even when we were camped inland we would come down to the beach. There were good spots there. We would get Mum to come and help us collect oysters and get honey - rock honey and fruit - traditional fruit in season

Each move was a change of context as far as my education was concerned. Each new place has new concepts associated with it. Each place is connected to other places in deep ways. And I learned about that, both from being in the place and by associating it with the songs and dances of our ceremonies. In this way, the more abstract knowledge of how places are connected was linked with the practical and emotional knowledge of actually living in a place.

My father would teach me to be a man and take me hunting, spear fishing. He taught me all the fish names. And he would tell me off for doing naughty things too.

I remember the night-times best. We would listen to stories at night by the campfire. All stories had a strong lesson for us kids. They would be stories to get us to stay put by the fire and not wander about. They would get us frightened and get us to sleep much faster.

(Mandawuy Yunupingu 1994: 2-3)

Worksheet 2.2.1 (b)**Responses to questions on Extract 2**

What are the social and cultural practices evident in this extract ?

-
-
-

What understandings about literacy might result from these practices?

-
-
-

What implications might these understandings have for successful participation in early childhood education in the Australian context?

-
-
-

How can early childhood educators value and build on the experiences that a child from this background might bring to the learning environment?

-
-
-
-
-

The above activity is designed to highlight insights gleaned from recent research indicating that children and their parents come to educational situations with different (not deficit!) understandings about literacy and different ways of using literacy.

Activity

In order to explore these ideas further, think of a child from non-English speaking background within your own setting and respond to the questions in Worksheet 2.2.2.

Think of a child from non-English speaking background in your setting.

- *What do you know about this child's literacy practices in their family and community environments?*

- *How can you value and build on these literacy experiences and 'funds of knowledge' which this child brings to the early childhood setting?*

- *Sometimes it can be difficult to 'know' all about children's home literacy experiences for a variety of reasons. Suggest some strategies you can use to support children's classroom literacy development when you may be unsure of home literacy practices.*

This activity may highlight the need to find out more about the literacy practices of children from non-English speaking backgrounds in your settings. On the other hand, Module 1 Between Workplace Activity may have assisted you to do this, or you may already know a lot about your learners' literacy experiences through developing relationships with your families or using other strategies to gain information about the cultural backgrounds represented in your settings.

As this activity also suggests, it is difficult to know all about the previous experiences of your learners, for reasons including possible war experiences in a family's home country and the need to respect the family's desire for privacy. However, there are other strategies which allow you to support all your learners in developing the literacy practices of the curriculum. These include being aware that your learners will come to the learning environment with different understandings of literacy and understanding the need to use a variety of strategies to support all students to access and participate in classroom/centre learning. Such strategies could include developing a shared context, explicit teaching of language and negotiating the curriculum with your learners. We will come back to this point in subsequent modules.

Read Resource Notes 2.2.2, which summarise some of the ideas about literacy explored so far.

Resource Notes 2.2.2

Over time and within different cultures there have developed many ways of viewing the concept of literacy and its purposes. Depending on our reading, our training and our experiences, we as educators have integrated a range of these views within our beliefs about education and within our practice.

Current research explores the concept of literacy as 'not only... an internal cognitive state or a set of abilities that individuals possess, but also... social and cultural ways of doing things through the use of text' (Comber and Cormack, Cornerstones Module 1: 18). 'Text' in this context also refers to visual (pictures, graphics and videos) and oral texts.

This way of looking at literacy acknowledges that we use a 'multiplicity of literacies to get things done in our lives' (p19) and that such literacies are 'taught, learned and practised in different communities' (p19), sometimes in different ways, for a range of purposes relevant to these communities. Thinking about literacy from this perspective allows us to value, rather than see as 'deficit', the range of literacies used, because we see them as fulfilling individual and community purposes within particular social and cultural contexts.

The way literacy is used in home and community cultures represented in your settings may not be 'valued' in the ways that literacy is used in learning environments in the Australian context. There may be a mismatch between what 'counts' as literacy in certain communities and what 'counts' as literacy in more formalised educational early childhood settings.

If educators assume that all children come with the same understandings of literacy and of literacy use, for example having a story at bedtime, they fail to recognise the diversity and changing nature of literacy use and will disadvantage certain children by not acknowledging and building on alternative practices that these children and their families use. Some children's use of literacy in their family and community may closely resemble the literacy practices found in early childhood learning environments. For others this will not be the case. It has been suggested that those children whose family literacy practices will be different from practices in formal educational environments will need to be taught explicitly those aspects which will be 'valued' in education but may be unfamiliar to them.

Educators cannot assume that all children will simply pick up these literacy practices. Some will need to learn them. This has important implications for the strategies you will use to teach literacy in your educational contexts. As pointed out in Cornerstones Module 2, 'a strategy such as shared book, for example, will be conducted by different teachers differently, depending on their perceptions of how much of the reading needs to be taught explicitly to students, and how much they can be relied upon to absorb or acquire simply through participating in the activity' (p25). If there is a 'mismatch between what you are expecting students to acquire, and what they will only be able to learn through conscious teaching' (p25) in certain activities you implement, then this may result in these activities not being effective with all children.

It is important to realise that the choices we make as educators in the way we teach literacy reflect our own social and cultural practices as children and adults and demonstrate what 'counts' for us as literacy. Barbara Comber and Phil Cormack explore these issues in detail in their article 'Literacy: social and cultural practices' in Cornerstones: Module 1: 18-31 (DECS 1996).

Conclusion

In this section we have explored the concept of literacy as a set of social and cultural practices and, further to this, the idea that children come to educational settings with different understandings of literacy as an outcome of their family and community social and cultural practices. We have also looked at why some children, whose literacy practices do not match those 'valued' practices of formal learning environments, may need to be explicitly taught these practices in order to learn successfully in such environments.

2.3 Reflecting on language learning and early language development

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your beliefs about language learning in a first and second language, within the framework of our understandings about literacy explored in the previous section.

We will also revisit our understandings of

- the processes involved in early language development
- where most children are at in their home language when they enter early childhood settings.

Activity

Read the statements in Worksheet 2.3.1 and record your responses under the headings provided. Try to share this activity with colleagues in your workplace and compare and discuss your responses.

Worksheet 2.3.1

Choose one of the following responses to each statement below:

strongly agree (SA); agree (A); strongly disagree (SD); disagree (D); don't know (DN).

<i>Statements</i> (Adapted from Makin, Campbell and Jones Diaz 1995: xxx-xxxi)	<i>Your response</i>
Young children pick up a language simply by hearing it around them.	
Children need no special assistance to learn a new language.	
All children growing up in Australia need to be fluent in English.	
Early childhood educators and caregivers should correct children's language errors as they make them.	
Children learn a language through repetition of good models.	
Families need to use English at home if they want their children to learn English.	
Children will find it hard to learn to read and write in more than one language at the same time.	
Learning a second language involves the same processes as learning a first.	
The younger the child, the more quickly they learn a new language.	
Early childhood educators are the most important influence on a young child's ability to learn a new language.	
Young children learn language best when involved in hands-on experiences.	
An explicit language focus means teaching grammar, phonics and vocabulary items.	
Children should have a well developed first language before they are exposed to a second.	
Parents need to be fluent in English before they can support their child's learning of English.	
Bilingual Education Workers can be important in supporting second language learners.	
The role of the adult is fundamental in supporting children to learn a first or second language.	
Children will become bilingual by educators focussing on English and families supporting home language.	

As you work your way through this module, it will be interesting for you to come back to your responses from this activity to see if you change your thinking in any way or develop new understandings.

We now move on to briefly revisiting our understandings of early language development.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A word of warning

It is useful, at this point, in revisiting or developing our understandings of how young children learn language, to refer to certain levels of accomplishment at particular ages as being true for most children, but we must remember that children develop their language skills according to very individual timetables along a very individual continuum and as a result of many individual factors. This is equally true in first and second language development. We must be careful, therefore, to take all factors into consideration when assessing where individual learners are at in their language learning and be continually examining our understandings of what is 'normal' language development. We will come back to this point later in this module.

Activity

Read the following Resource Notes 2.3.1, which summarise accomplishments of most children in developing their home languages in the pre-school years, and then respond to the questions about language development in Worksheet 2.3.2.

Resource Notes 2.3.1

The language development of three to five year olds

Preschool-aged children already have substantial, although not complete control, over their first language. Normally developing children of 3, 4, and 5 already understand what language is for and know a great deal about how their first language works. They have developed an extensive vocabulary, they can use all of the basic grammatical structures, and they have begun to learn when, where, and with whom it is appropriate to use certain language forms. Further, they have begun to gain control over a variety of discourse forms as well: scripts ('You go to someone's house, eat cake, and open presents'), personal reports ('Yesterday I saw a tiger at the zoo'), descriptions ('It was the baby teddy bear who was on the tree limb'), plans ('When I get to Grandma's house, I'm going to bake a pie'), explanations ('I know Kristin had gym 'cause I saw her out-side'), and arguments ('I need to go now 'cause Mom is waiting'). All of these linguistic skills will, of course, continue to increase in sophistication during the school years, but the foundations have already been developed by the time a child is of preschool age.

Some preschool-aged children have not only developed these linguistic skills in a first language, but have developed them in two languages simultaneously.

(Tabors and Snow 1994: 104-105)

Worksheet 2.3.2

Do the points made in Resource Notes 2.3.1 accurately reflect your own observations of children in your workplace setting whose home language is English ?

Think of a child whose home language is not English. This may be the same child as in Worksheet 2.2.2. Do you know what stage he or she is at in their home language? How can you find out this information? Using the same notes? By other means? (If you cannot do this, do not worry, as this is the focus of Workplace Activity 2).

Note that 'bilingual children' refers to those children who have learnt two languages or have been exposed to two linguistic systems simultaneously from a very early age. One of these languages may or may not be English.

The majority of children entering our early childhood settings from languages and cultural backgrounds other than English are those who are acquiring a new language (English) when they enter these settings after the basis for their home language (or languages) has been established in the home environment. This Resource Folder aims to support these children in particular.

Conclusion

In this section you will have revisited and possibly expanded your understandings of language learning generally and of what most children, regardless of language background, achieve in their early language development.

In the next section you will have an opportunity to build on this knowledge of early language development through exploring the process of learning a second language and having an opportunity to gain greater awareness of the situation of second language learners in your educational context.

2.4 An experience in learning a second language

Introduction

The aim of this section is to involve you in a language learning experience so that you re-acquaint yourself with/or appreciate for the first time:

- what is involved in learning another language
- how it feels to be a second language learner
- practices which support or hinder second language learning
- the fact that each individual approaches the language learning task differently.

Activity

Ideally, for you to gain the most from this activity, you need to be part of a language learning lesson as part of this module (see Facilitator's Notes 2.4), or as a participant in a language class outside your workplace. However, we are aware that this may not always be possible. In view of this, other options have been suggested below which will give you some insights into the processes of learning a second language, some possible feelings associated with this activity and some practices which may affect the learning of a second language in early educational contexts.

Choose one of the following options:

1. Take part in the language lesson, managed by a facilitator, as part of the workshops based on this Resource Folder.
2. Seek an invitation to join a language class at your local school, university or TAFE centre.
3. Ask a colleague or friend from a language background other than English to carry on a conversation with you and to try to teach you something in their first language without using any English at all (e.g., colours, names of animals or names of fruit and vegetables).
4. Watch a film in another language (without subtitles if possible or cover this part of the screen).
5. Listen to community radio.
6. Try to read a book in another language.
7. Recall a situation in which you were required to communicate in a language you did not understand.

After your experience in learning another language, it is useful to reflect on and discuss this experience with colleagues. Use the questions below in Worksheet 2.4.1 to support you to do this. These questions will be most applicable if you have actually participated in a language lesson as outlined in options 1, 2 and 3, but you may still find them useful in organising your thinking if you completed option 4, 5, 6 or 7 instead.

Worksheet 2.4.1

How did you respond to your language learning experience?

- *What feelings did you experience as a second language learner?*
- *Why do you think you felt that way?*
- *What teaching behaviour supported your learning?*
- *What teaching behaviour hindered your learning?*
- *Did you notice any particular behaviours in yourself or in others in response to the lesson?*
- *What strategies did you use to help you understand the language?*
- *Would these strategies be the same for young learners? Why or why not?*
- *What might be the implications of this experience for your practice?*

Read the Resource Notes 2.4.1 below to see if your responses are similar to those of other learners surveyed after participating in a language learning lesson.

Resource Notes 2.4.1

What feelings did you experience as a second language learner?

- *anger, frustration, exhaustion, confusion, anxiety, stress*
- *excitement, sense of achievement, confidence.*

Why do you think you felt that way?

- *not able to follow instructions*
- *easily followed instructions*
- *had to concentrate all the time*
- *did not want to be chosen to speak*
- *not able to keep up*
- *able to understand most of what was said*
- *not sure what was required*
- *understood what was required*
- *concerned about pronunciation*
- *felt confident about using the language*
- *concerned about sounding stupid*
- *wanted to demonstrate understanding.*

What teaching behaviour supported your learning?

- *used concrete materials such as charts or pictures*
- *positive, non-threatening, encouraging attitude.*

What teaching behaviour hindered your learning?

- *spoke too quickly*
- *didn't use text or pictures*
- *seemed to be picking on people*
- *didn't give us time to think*
- *had a teacher's pet*
- *expected too much.*

Resource Notes 2.4.1 (continued)

Did you notice any particular behaviours in yourself or others in response to the learning experience?

- *refused to make eye contact*
- *doodled on worksheet*
- *giggled*
- *talked to others for clarification*
- *looked at others to see what they were doing*
- *opted out.*

What strategies did you use to help you understand the language?

- *read body language and facial expressions*
- *never took my eyes off the teacher*
- *listened for words sounding similar to English*
- *used all the visual supports - charts, worksheets, etc*
- *asked others.*

Would these strategies be the same for young learners? Why or why not?

- *young learners may not have explicit understandings about their first language to use it in learning a second*
- *young learners may not have the learning strategies to use visual supports, to ask others, to focus on the teacher, to listen for keywords, etc*
- *young learners may not have the cultural understandings to read body language and facial expressions.*

What are the implications of this experience for your practice?

- *appreciate how children may be feeling*
- *understand why they may be opting out*
- *try not to put them under too much pressure*
- *encourage them to use a wide range of strategies to understand what is expected*
- *use a range of visual and concrete materials to support learners in understanding*
- *understand the need for children to use their first language in learning.*

What does this mean for our learners?

There are several comparisons we can make between the situation you might find yourself in as a second language learner and the situation of second language learners in early childhood settings:

- we have a common language for support whereas ESL learners are often isolated, perhaps being the only speaker of a particular language (remember Mahdiah and Ivan in the case studies in the previous module)
- we know our teacher is able to speak our language; this is often not the case for some children in our care
- we know that the experience and its stresses will end soon, while, for ESL learners, struggling with communicating in a new language may be a long-term situation
- we are able to consciously use metalinguistic strategies to 'work out' meaning because of our knowledge of how our first language works and how it sounds; this may not be the case for young ESL learners
- we are able to consciously use 'learning how to learn' strategies, such as listening for key words, to help us gain meaning because of our previous learning experiences; young learners may not have developed these skills yet.

Can you think of any other comparisons we could make between our experience of learning a second language and that of our learners?

Conclusion

We need to remember, then, that for young ESL learners of English in early childhood contexts, the experience can generate a range of feelings which they do not necessarily understand. Suddenly they are not able to communicate their needs, which they have been doing quite successfully up to this point at home and in their local community. They also do not have the necessary sophisticated cognitive, linguistic and social strategies to analyse how they can best learn the new language or make sense of the situation in which they find themselves.

These are critical issues for young learners of a second language. In the next section, we will focus on these and other issues in learning a second language for such learners in early childhood settings.

2.5 Issues in learning a second language for young children

Introduction

There are a range of issues for learners of a second language in early childhood settings. Some issues are particularly relevant to second language learners in the early years and others apply to second language learners more generally. In this section you will have an opportunity to explore these issues, as well as looking at the similarities and differences in learning a second language from learning a first. In the following section (2.6) we focus on specific strategies which can be implemented in your workplace.

Activity

The following Resource Notes 2.5.1 outline key issues for second language learners in early childhood settings. Read these notes and jot down your thoughts in response to the questions on Worksheet 2.5.1. The questions are designed to help you focus your thinking about the text on your own professional knowledge and practice.

As this is quite a lengthy reading, it may be useful to use your learning journal or the margin to make notes while you read.

Resource Notes 2.5.1

What are the issues in learning a second language for young children in early childhood settings?

A Wanting to communicate and choosing to be silent

- *Although the processes for acquiring a first and second language appear to be similar, researchers have noted that, for a period of time after entering an early childhood setting, many children continue to use their home language even in second language situations, as if those around them can understand them. Eventually they realise that they are not being understood and will enter a non-verbal period where they may not talk at all.*
- *Other children realise from the beginning that they are not understood and immediately enter a non-verbal period. (Tabors and Snow 1994: 105-111). During this period, however, if the environment is supportive of language development, most children can absorb and comprehend the new language and gradually begin to produce utterances in telegraphic and formulaic speech.*

B The age of children entering early childhood settings

- *Second language learners entering early childhood settings are at an age where they may not necessarily have complete control over their first language and are in the early stages of cognitive development. This places them in a vulnerable situation.*
- *Younger children, according to Gibbons (1991: 6), whose language skills are less developed, are in a less favourable position to learn a second language. With less conceptual and linguistic development, they have fewer pegs on which to hang new learning. It would seem that one of the worst times to switch language environments is around the age of five or six, when the comparative fragility of the first language does not support the learning of a second.*
- *They will be exposed to new concepts about the world in a second language which they may not have yet developed in their first language, or cannot link to this language. The concepts of reading and writing are good examples of this.*
- *One area of difficulty with learning to read and write in a second language is that the skills of reading and writing normally develop on the basis of a sound knowledge of spoken language. When young children in early childhood educational settings learn to read and write in a second language, they are doing so at the same time as learning to speak in that language, which is a very different process from the way they have learnt their first language.*

C Language in learning

- *Adults tend to expect young children to learn language quickly and, indeed, young children appear to do this when they are learning everyday English for communicating with their peers and with adults in informal settings, such as in the playground. This kind of language, essential for basic communication, allows children to make friends, to express immediate needs and to take part in activities in their learning environments. However, in using this language, learners rely very much on the immediate context, on non-verbal gestures and face-to-face contact to get their messages across.*
- *Difficulties can occur when children are faced with the language of learning. In 'One childhood many languages', Makin et al (1995) explain the difference between the informal language of basic communication and the language of learning, highlight the length of time it takes to become proficient in a language, and remind us of the kinds of language demands placed on children in learning situations:*

It takes about seven years to become proficient in a language. Teachers and caregivers often exclaim how quickly children develop a new language, and indeed young children do seem to have a facility for language learning. However, it is easy to overestimate what children know.

Cummins (1987) suggests that there are two different levels of language ability - Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive-Academic Linguistic Proficiency (CALP). The first is what is called 'survival' language. Children at this stage can interact with their peers, join in classroom activities, and demonstrate social confidence and competence. However, if they are able to learn effectively in their new language, they must reach the CALP level. At this level they must be able to use language in order to reason, to hypothesise, to discuss abstract ideas, and to cope with decontextualised information such as is presented more and more in school textbook (Makin et al 1995: 85).

- *Although children in early childhood contexts are not expected to deal with textbooks, they are expected to have control over a wide range of language functions in English, such as describing, analysing, interpreting, questioning, hypothesising, clarifying and predicting, as outlined in documents such as Foundation Areas of Learning (1996) and Early Years Literacy Profile (1996) - see Reference List at the end of this module. It is important to note that second language learners may have gained these language skills (and will continue to develop them) in their first language.*
- *As early childhood educators, we need to provide opportunities for these learners to develop these more complex language skills in English.*

D The nature of the first language

- *It is important to know about the languages of the children from language and cultural backgrounds other than English in your educational settings as it may help you to understand difficulties they may have with learning English. There is some evidence to suggest that the more the language is different from English (this is called 'language distance') the harder it may be to learn the language.*
- *There is substantial evidence to indicate that the actual distance between the native and target languages acts as a constraint on transfer (Ellis 1994).*
- *It is also important to know what these differences between languages may be. Some languages rely on different tones to convey meaning. For example the sound of the word 'ma' in Chinese can have four different meanings, depending on which tone of voice is used (Jones 1984: 3). Stress and intonation in languages can also be used very differently. There are sounds in other languages which are not in English and sounds in English which are not in other languages. Differences in sounds in English, particularly between unvoiced and voiced sounds, are very difficult for second language learners to hear and learn, e.g., the sounds of 'th' in 'think' and 'then'.*
- *Another difference between languages can be the way the words are put together to convey meaning, that is the word order. There can be different uses of parts of speech. For example, some languages do not always use adjectives to describe the world around them. The Inuit people have many different nouns instead to describe snow so that they can describe it precisely. There are also differences in languages too in the way tense, gender and number are indicated grammatically (see Jones 1984).*
- *Written languages have different scripts as well as having different ways of reading and writing text. For example, with some languages the text is read and written from right to left and from what English readers and writers would consider the back of the book to the front.*

E Comprehensible input and output

- *Some researchers have argued that it is essential for language learners to make meaningful connections in the language they encounter and that understanding of messages is all that is needed in order to learn language (see Krashen in 'A child's guide to language', 1983).*
- *Others believe that input is not all that is needed and that having opportunities to use the language, to produce 'comprehensible output' is as important as understanding messages, 'comprehensible input'.*
- *Even in the 'silent period' that many beginning learners of a second language go through, we need to work out ways to ensure language interaction is meaningful and opportunities for communicative practice are available in meaningful contexts, without pressures being imposed on those not ready to speak.*
- *Children need opportunities for interactions involving purposeful use of language - both spoken and written - rather than just learning to deal receptively or passively with language.*

F Meaning versus form

- *Does focussing on meaning in early childhood programs entail not focussing on form or the structure of language? Can you do both? Why should you focus on form with early childhood learners? What would this focus look like?*
- *Focussing on form need not mean direct instruction of grammar in isolated contexts. That kind of direct instruction may be quite appropriate for older students in certain contexts, but it is not the way young children learn language.*
- *Children do not learn a language effectively and efficiently through direct instruction, or as an isolated subject ... Young children learn through using language to interact with others and with their environment in social activities which have meaning for them (Makin et al 1995: xxix).*
- *There is an explicit focus on form inherent in all areas of early childhood language education. When we use resources such as stories, rhymes, raps and songs we are drawing children's attention to forms of language. When we scaffold children's language, just as care-givers do at home, by recasting children's utterances to correct or extend the structure but maintain the meaning, we are drawing children's attention to the forms of language.*
- *When we model words or sounds by repeating them or encouraging children to repeat them, we are drawing children's attention to the forms of language. This explicit focus on form supports the development of metalinguistic awareness, which plays an important role in developing children's understandings of the links between oral and printed forms of language and between first and second languages.*

G The critical importance of affective factors

- *Young children are helped in learning their first language by the stress-free nature of the home environment, in time allowed to learn, lack of pressure, acceptance of mistakes, attempts by care-givers to understand messages, scaffolding that care-givers provide in constructing meaning with the child, and the unselfconscious and meaningful way language learning occurs in natural settings.*
- *The role of the adult in providing scaffolding of language in meaningful interactions is critically important in supporting children to learn a second language.*
- *Although it is not possible to reproduce the exact conditions in which the first language is learnt, we should work towards a learning environment where stress is minimised, where children are encouraged to take risks in their language learning and where they find success, enjoyment and stimulation.*

H ESL learners and specific issues

- *Children from backgrounds where lifestyles have been interrupted, such as refugees, or whose social and linguistic development has been restricted, such as children from orphanages, will need explicit support in oral language and conceptual development before they can be expected to undertake tasks in literacy. Children who have been exposed to different scripts will have to develop new understandings about the way print and texts function in English.*
- *Children from cultures which are orally based may have had almost no exposure to reading and writing in their first languages, so that learning these skills in a second language will take time and explicit and continuous support.*
- *There are children with a range of other special needs within families from language and cultural backgrounds other than English, just as there are within English-speaking families. To support these families, professionals involved in therapy, care and education need effective strategies for communicating with families, for implementing assessment and individual programs, and for acting as advocates for families who need help (Makin et al: 219). Professionals also need to be very sensitive to cross-cultural issues such as beliefs about and attitudes to the causes and management of disabilities.*
- *Sometimes it is difficult for educators to work out if the child's lack of progress in learning English is specifically related to English language development or to some other learning area. It is important to find out as much as possible about the child's development in their first language and to ask if the child is developing appropriately within cultural expectations. It is also important to look at their physical development.*
- *In building up a comprehensive profile of the child, and if you feel concerned about his or her progress, make sure you involve parents and seek advice and support from other professionals.*

I Similarities and differences between learning a first language and learning a second

Similarities

Both languages are learned

- *through using language for real purposes*
- *when there is a genuine need to communicate*
- *through experimenting with language*
- *when learners are exposed to language which is meaningful to them*
- *through interacting with others (especially adults or caregivers in the case of young children)*
- *through a 'scaffolding' process, where adults provide support to ensure that a child's participation in the interaction is successful*
- *through a similar acquisition process, that is initially through the use of telegraphic speech (the use of a few content words as a complete utterance) and formulaic speech (chunks of unanalysed language), and then finally through more productive use of the second language.*

Differences

Second language learners

- *are usually older, have been through the process of learning another language and can use concepts for talking about language; however, this metalinguistic awareness appears to be quite unusual in second language learners in early childhood settings*
- *learn the second language in an environment where there is less time to learn the language than in the first-language learning environment*
- *learn their second language in an environment which can be more stressful and threatening than their first language learning environment (where there is a great deal of acceptance of mistakes and considerable emotional support)*
- *learn their second language by trying to express what they already know and can talk about in their first language*
- *may have to learn concepts through a language over which they don't have complete control*
- *often have to learn reading and writing skills at the same time as learning oral skills in the new language.*

In summary, the actual developmental sequence of the learning of both languages appears to be quite similar. The major differences between learning a first and second language appear to lie in the conditions in which they are usually learned. Children generally learn their first language in the home in very supportive conditions: through one-to-one interactions, with plenty of time, in an environment which encourages risk-taking and is totally accepting of any attempts to communicate. Children learning their second language usually do so in a formal learning environment which is very different from the way they learned their first.

What points made in Resource Notes 2.5.1 confirm your previous knowledge?

-
-
-

Are there issues discussed which you had not thought about previously?

-
-
-

Are there any points made which contradict your previous thinking?

-
-
-

What issues most impact on your thinking, and why?

-
-
-

Are there issues discussed here which have implications for your practice?

-
-
-

Are there issues discussed which confirm aspects of your present practice?

-
-
-

Conclusion

In this section, we have focussed on issues in second language learning which impact on second language learners in the early years and which therefore have implications for you as early childhood educators. In the following section, we will examine specific strategies which could be implemented in your workplace to deal with these issues.

2.6 Providing a supportive learning environment

Introduction

How can early childhood educators provide a learning environment which supports second language learners' successful development of English?

In this section, we will look at a range of strategies, many of which you already use.

To explore or revisit these strategies, you can choose between Activity 1 or Activity 2 below. However, this choice will depend on the availability of the video suggested for use in Activity 1.

Activity 1

If you are able to view the video '*... and now English: a programme showing young children acquiring English as a 2nd language*' V114 (21 min), Victoria: Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre, 1987, we recommend that you do so at this point.

This video is divided into three parts:

- *Extending Language*, which focuses on strategies for maintaining and developing a child's first language
- *Introducing English*, which suggests a number of useful strategies for this very early stage of second language development
- *English for All*, which looks at a range of other strategies for developing English. Many of the strategies suggested deal with issues raised in Resource Notes 2.5.1.

If you choose this activity, you may like to use the framework suggested in the booklet accompanying the video to list the ways the children are supported in their learning as demonstrated in the video. You may also like to use other activities suggested to gain maximum benefit from this resource.

The following worksheet simply uses headings which indicate the three sections of the video. As you watch the video, jot down your ideas in Worksheet 2.6.1. When you have finished watching the video, refer to its accompanying booklet to compare responses listed there with your own.

What are the strategies used (in the video) to support the learning of English?

For extending home languages

-
-
-

For introducing English to beginning learners of English

-
-
-

Further strategies for English language development

-
-
-
-

Activity 2

Choose this activity if you do not have access to the video recommended in Activity 1.

Below are a series of statements and questions designed to provide an opportunity for you to document aspects of good practice you are already implementing in supporting English language development of ESL learners in your workplace; these are also intended to encourage you to generate new ideas from your readings or from discussions you have had with colleagues. The statements and questions are designed to respond directly to issues raised in the previous section. Respond as best you can and then refer to Resource Notes 2.6.1, either to confirm your thinking or to provide you with other possible strategies.

Worksheet 2.6.2

Strategies to support the learning of English

Suggest some strategies which might allow opportunities for communicative practice but not impose demands on those children not ready to speak.

-
-
-

Suggest some strategies which might encourage children during their 'silent period' to participate.

-
-
-

Suggest some strategies which support the development of children's metalinguistic awareness within the context of purposeful activities.

-
-
-

Worksheet 2.6.2 (continued)

How can early childhood educators make input comprehensible or help ESL learners to better understand messages?

-
-
-

If learners need to practise and use new language, what sorts of opportunities can early childhood educators provide for this in the learning environment?

-
-
-

How can early childhood educators support the development of the more complex language of the curriculum?

-
-
-

Suggest some ways of making the physical environment conducive to language development.

-
-
-

Worksheet 2.6.2 (continued)

Suggest some strategies which help to create an environment which is 'stress-free'.

-
-
-

How can parents of second language learners be involved in early childhood programs?

-
-
-

How can bilingual staff be used effectively to support new language learners?

-
-
-
-

Resource Notes 2.6.1

Suggest some strategies which might allow opportunities for communicative practice but not impose demands on those children not ready to speak.

- *use songs, rhymes, etc where learners can join in at their own level and not feel threatened*
- *use small groups where learners can listen to their English speaking peers and can demonstrate their understanding non-verbally*
- *ask children who are not ready to speak to be involved: by holding the big book, giving out paper, etc.*

Suggest some strategies which might encourage children during their 'silent period' to participate.

- *use small groups mixing English speakers and speakers of English as a second language*
- *provide activities where the focus is on enjoyment and the child's interest, and not talk, and which provide opportunities to join in and interact*
- *continue to talk to the child whether he or she responds or not.*

Suggest some strategies which support the development of children's metalinguistic awareness within the context of purposeful activities.

- *focus on rhymes and the rhythm and sounds of language in informal and more formal situations*
- *draw children's attention to the printed word in the context of reading, look at the shapes of letters*
- *take opportunities to talk about familiar words in different languages.*

How can early childhood educators make input comprehensible or help ESL learners to understand messages?

- *use bilingual staff to translate meanings*
- *use visual aids, concrete objects, non-verbal cues and provide regular routines, so that learners know what to expect*
- *paraphrase utterances, focus on meaning rather than on correct structures, listen carefully to what the child is trying to say and help out when needed.*

If learners do need to practise and use new language, what sorts of opportunities can early childhood educators provide for this in the learning environment?

- *adults continue to model new language items or phrases and to take opportunities to expand language*
- *games, songs, rhymes which reinforce new language*
- *opportunities to use new language in meaningful contexts, such as excursions or through literacy experiences.*

Resource Notes 2.6.1 (continued)

How can early childhood teachers support the development of the more complex language of the curriculum?

- *have a clear understanding of the language demands of the different aspects of the curriculum, e.g., the language of science and maths activities*
- *plan for language development in all areas of the curriculum*
- *develop activities across the curriculum which encourage using talk for different purposes in learning, e.g., explaining the life-cycle of a frog, predicting what will happen if . . . , expressing feelings, asking questions to gain information.*

Suggest some ways of making the physical environment conducive to language development.

- *have pictures, artefacts, resources which reflect the diversity of learners' languages and cultures*
- *have visual support for the curriculum areas being studied*
- *organise the environment so that learners have a clear understanding of the purpose of each area.*

Suggest some strategies which help to create an environment which is 'stress-free'.

- *provide bilingual support, encourage parents to be part of the program*
- *encourage peer support, use pair and group work to create situations which are less threatening*
- *encourage but do not force children to interact.*

How can parents of second language learners be involved in early childhood programs?

- *be welcomed and encouraged to participate in the program at any time they can*
- *ask parents to help with making resources in their home language*
- *ask parents to share aspects of their culture with all children.*

How can bilingual staff be used effectively to support new language learners?

- *maintain and extend the home language of the child*
- *explain differences between the home language and English*
- *translate and interpret for the child as required, so he or she understands what is happening*
- *act as support for parents and encourage the link between home and the centre or pre-school.*

Conclusion

Many of the strategies outlined, such as using songs and rhymes, you will already be using, some may be new to you. It is important to remember that these notes and your own ideas do not exhaust the range of strategies possible. You will find, through your discussions with colleagues, your professional reading and your own practices, a range of other strategies which will prove very successful in providing a secure and supportive environment for learners of English as a second language.

2.7 Suggested workplace activity: Finding out about the first language

Rationale

The purpose of this activity is to find out more about the way an ESL learner in your setting uses their first language.

It would be beneficial to continue with the child that you investigated from your workplace activity in Module 1 in order to continue developing your understanding of the language learning needs of this child, provided that this does not cause the child or their family any concern.

Again we stress the need for considerable sensitivity when working with young children and their parents and with bilingual staff.

Use Worksheet 2.7.1. (following) to jot down observations, ideas and questions arising from this activity that you want to explore further. You may also be able to jot down clarifications of issues arising from your workplace activity in Module 1.

Activity

Find out more about one of your ESL learners as a user of their home language. To complete this task, you could find out:

- about the language itself: is it a language which relies on tones for meaning? do syllables vary in stress or do they all receive the same stress (i.e., monotonal)? does it use sounds which are different to those found in English? are the sounds at the ends of words actually voiced? how does its written script differ from English?
- whether the family usually speaks the standard form of their language or a dialect, or switches codes in different circumstances
- about different verbal and non-verbal rules for speaking to teachers, adults, peers, family members, etc
- about culturally appropriate rules for touching, proximity, eye contact, covering parts of the body, sitting, etc
- who speaks the first language (and other languages including English) in the home and under what circumstances
- if the child uses the first language in your setting, with whom and in what situations, e.g., in the outside area, on the block mat, in small groups, with some specific peers, with bilingual staff, etc?

You may begin developing some intuitive understandings of where children are in their first language development by observing them in their play with other speakers of that language. This can be particularly valuable if you do not have easy access to bilingual staff.

Try to gain some idea about the levels of receptive and productive development of your focus child in their first language, through informal discussions and observation.

If you work with a bilingual staff member, invite them to work on this task in partnership with you, as they are an invaluable resource and will provide you with many insights into the child's home language and his or her use of it.

Suggested resources

- a bilingual staff member
- parents or siblings, if appropriate
- audio recordings of children talking in their first language
- Early Childhood Resource Centres, Multicultural Resource Centres and other libraries
- professional networks, including colleagues working in Languages Other Than English programs, Mother Tongue Maintenance Program, ethnic school and ESL teachers based at local schools.

Notes on workplace activity

Any issues or concerns arising from this activity

117

2.8 Between module readings

There are two essential readings for Module 2, as well as other suggested readings. The essential readings follow Worksheet 2.8.1. This worksheet can be used to make notes as you read.

Readings for Module 2:

Gibbons. (1991) 'Mother Tongue in the Classroom'. In *Learning to learn in a second language*. Rozelle, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

This chapter explores the benefits for learners of using their mother tongue in the classroom and strategies for doing this.

Suggested further readings (*highly recommended)

Clarke, P. (1989) 'Examining the silent period'. *ARAL*, pp. 122-137.

Makin, L (1992) 'Language teachers by necessity, not choice; early childhood teachers in a multilingual society'. *ARAL*, No. 9, pp. 33-48.

*Piper, T. (1993) 'Children's Second Language Learning'. In *And then there were two: children and second language learning*. Ontario: Pippin Publishing Limited, pp. 8-21

This chapter looks at how children become bilingual. It examines the conditions that lead to bilingualism in pre-schools and then looks at language learning in the classrooms and the potential for conflict between home and school experience, (pp. 61 - 69).

Siraj-Blatchford, I. (1994) 'Language, learning and multilingual development'. Chapter 3 in *The early years; laying the foundations for racial equality*. Trentham Books Ltd.

Soto, L. (1991) 'Understanding bilingual/bicultural young children'. *Young Children*. Volume 46, number 2.

Tabors, P.O. and Snow, C. E. (1994) 'English as a second language in preschool programs'. In *Educating second language children: the whole child, the whole curriculum, the whole community*, edited by Fred Genesee. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 103-126.

*Tabors, P.O. (1997) 'Getting started in a second language'. Chapter 3 in *One child, two languages: a guide for pre-school educators of children learning English as a second language*. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc., pp. 39-58.

*Tabors, P.O. (1997) 'Speaking a second language'. Chapter 4 in *One child, two languages: a guide for pre-school educators of children learning English as a second language*. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc., pp. 59-74

Wong, Fillmore, L. (1991) 'When learning a second language means losing the first'. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 6, pp. 323-346.

Suggested videos

*...and now English: a programme showing young children acquiring English as a 2nd language V114 (21 min). Victoria: Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre, 1987.

Bilingual staff at work V186 (24 min). Victoria: Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre, 1991.

Growing with language - developing English as a second language, Department for Education and Children's Services, Education Video

Your Notes

A large rectangular box with a black border, intended for taking notes. The interior is mostly blank, with a small, faint, illegible mark near the bottom right corner.

Notes on readings

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to write their notes on readings.

Worksheet 2.8.1 (continued)

Notes on readings

A large rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to write their notes on readings.

THE MOTHER TONGUE IN THE CLASSROOM

P. Gibbons

Chapter 6 In *Learning to Learn in a second language*. NSW Primary English Teachers Association,
1991

Why use the mother tongue?

The use of the mother tongue in the classroom can be a tremendous support for children learning English as a second language, particularly for those in the beginning years of school. Most kindergarten children who enter school with little or no English are, by necessity, expected to learn within the confines of a very limited range of language- their current level of development in English. These children have full capacity for learning, but in an English- only class they are without the language which will allow them to do so. In this situation their cognitive and conceptual development may be slowed down or hampered while they are acquiring sufficiently fluency in English.

There are many reasons that can be given for the use of the mother tongue in school, but there are three that are of special significance.

1. Using the mother tongue for learning allows children to draw on their *total* language experience and so continue their conceptual development. The use of the mother tongue in the teaching of basic concepts not only facilitates this development, but also makes it easier for the child to understand, and therefore to learn, the *English* related to these concepts. In addition, where children can draw on all their skills, the teacher can evaluate their learning more thoroughly.
2. The mother tongue helps to provide a social-emotional environment in which the basic conditions for learning can occur. It provides a link to the language of the home and family, helping to lessen the trauma and alienation children may experience in a new environment, surrounded by an unknown language. The use of the first language does much to maintain confidence and self-esteem because it is a signal that the classroom *includes* the child. It says: 'We accept your language and - by implication - your family, your ethnicity and your culture.'
3. It is sound educational practice to build on a learner's competencies and abilities. Ignoring children's first languages is wasteful because it ignores one of the greatest resources they bring to school.

The first years of schooling are critical in the development of confidence and self-esteem, and in building up the patterns of learning that will continue through school. A cycle of failure and low self-esteem started at this time becomes increasingly hard to break as the child moves through school. Children beginning school with no English are particularly at risk of being caught in this cycle. They may find that by the time they have learned sufficient English to begin learning in it, most other people in the class have learned to read; even by the end of the first year at school they may be 'learning to fail'. Early intervention provided through mother tongue support, as well as English, allows children to be successful learners.

There are many ways in which the mother tongue can be used in the classroom, ranging from a full K-6 bilingual program to occasional mother tongue support in class by a bilingual teacher's aide or parent.

BILINGUAL PROGRAMS

Ideally a bilingual program operates through the school from K-6. It involves part of the curriculum being taught through the medium of the mother tongue, and aims at developing cognitive and literacy skills in both the first language and in English.

In many parts of the world speaking two or more languages is a part of life, and current estimates suggest that there are more bilinguals than monolinguals world wide. A language conscious nation should see bilingualism as an asset, and ideally our schools would be resourced to respond to their multilingual populations and be able to educate all children - including monolingual English speakers - to become proficient and confident in two languages. Opportunities for bilingual education would help to reverse the current situation, where vast amounts of our potential linguistic resources remain neglected and untapped in our schools.

In reality, and frequently because of funding-related issues, many bilingual programs are 'transitional', meaning that mother tongue support is gradually withdrawn as the child learns to cope in English. Although such programs do not aim at the ultimate maintenance of the mother tongue, they nevertheless remain a very important option for schools which have large numbers of second language speakers who share the same mother tongue. A well-organised and well-planned transitional bilingual program offers many children perhaps the best chance they have to develop English, increase their capacity for learning and maintain self-concept.

These programs normally operate only in the first two to three years of schooling. Their main aim is to support conceptual development through the use of the mother tongue. There are many organisational options for such a program, and choice will depend on the numbers of children involved, the availability of teachers, and the many other curriculum demands that are part of a school. Whatever the choice of organisation, there are two key elements in any bilingual approach.

1. The children's *first language* (Arabic, Spanish, Vietnamese, etc.) is used to teach some areas of the curriculum, such as maths, social studies or science.
2. The children are also exposed to a source of *English* language models related to the same content area and concepts.

Both these elements are essential to a bilingual program. In other words, the children are not only learning through the use of the mother tongue, but *also* have opportunities to develop English.

Each language is used without translation, and the two languages are kept *separate* as far as possible (for example, by their separated use in the timetable), so that the children are involved in extended stretches of both languages. Videos of Spanish bilingual classes where the bilingual teacher simply provided on-the-spot translations as the class teacher was speaking illustrate the potential disadvantage of approaches where the languages are not kept separate (Wong-Fillmore 1982). The children's attention tended to wander when they heard English; they 'switched off' because they had learned to wait for the Spanish translation. Similarly the English speaking teacher - probably quite unconsciously - used less English with the children and made fewer attempts at making her language comprehensible, presumably because she also knew that what she said would be translated! The children

were therefore limited in their opportunity to develop English, and Spanish was not being used for long enough stretches for there to be sufficient conceptual development. There will be times where an instant translation is all that is required to clarify a particular issue or classroom instruction for a child, but bilingual approaches should not depend on this as an organising principle for the program.

One school's approach to a transitional program

This school's program operates in the first three years. The organisation of the kindergarten (the first year of school) is described here, but other year levels follow a similar pattern, with a gradual decrease in the amount of Spanish used.

The school has two kindergarten classes. Seven children in one class, and eleven in the other, speak Spanish as their language and little or no English. Seventy per cent of all kinder children are from language backgrounds other than English.

The eighteen Spanish speaking children come together with a Spanish speaking teacher for about two hours at the start of each day. During this period they follow the class program, which at this time is maths, social studies and science, but they are taught through the medium of Spanish. At this time the other kinder children are engaged in the same activities in English.

For the remainder of the day the Spanish speaking children return to their own classes and operate in English. At planned times during the week their class teachers, with support from the ESL teacher, consolidate with the whole class the maths and science work that has been covered, and at this time the Spanish speaking children have an opportunity to hear and use the specific English language structures related to the concepts they have been developing in Spanish.

There are several issues related to programs like this, and it may take some time before all the teachers involved feel convinced of the value of the program. In the school described the teachers had many questions when the program started. Some are included here, together with the answers they now give.

Will the children be missing out when they leave the classroom?

'No, they are continuing to learn the same things as everybody else; they are simply doing it in a different language.'

Will their English suffer?

'No, as long as they are given sufficient opportunity to hear and use the English associated with the learning. We now find that they develop English much more quickly than the children who have not done the "learning" first in their own language.'

We try not to 'withdraw' children. Is the bilingual program another 'withdrawal' program?

'No, because the bilingual program is not isolated from the class program. The children leave the class because that is easier than having two teachers in one classroom space speaking different languages! The classroom program remains the focus for all of us - both class teachers, the Spanish teacher and the ESL teacher. We plan it together.'

What about the children who are second language learners but who are not Spanish speaking? Do you feel they are missing out?

'We would like to offer the same opportunities for all children to learn in their mother tongue, but like most other schools we do not have enough resources to do this. So we have chosen to support at least some of the children - the largest group - in their mother tongue.'

But the bilingual program has had positive spin-offs for the other children too. Because we have an extra teacher during bilingual program time, we are working with smaller groups and can give more individual support to the other children. Also there is more acceptance now of other languages in the school by the teachers and children.' (See the section below: Other ways to support the mother tongue.)

How do you feel the children have benefited through the program?

'Children are understanding concepts in English much more quickly.'

'I have noticed a great increase in the self-esteem and confidence of these children.'

'The children are no longer falling behind in the home class, because they are continuing to learn in Spanish.'

'I now know whether a child has a problem with the language (English), or whether there is a problem with the understanding of the concept itself.'

'Parents are much more confident in communicating with the school.'

'Parents now see their language as of value.'

Cardenas (1986, p. 47), writing about the role of the mother tongue in education, refers to the analogy made by Bruce Gaarder, a long-time advocate of bilingual education in the United States. In developing a rationale for bilingual education, Gaarder compares the use of language to a window through which a child interacts with the environment, thereby gaining the experiences which produce learning. He suggests that the window of the minority language child is blue, while the window of the English speaking child is rose-coloured. On entering an English-only school, the child who is used to looking through a blue window is told: 'From now on you must learn to use the rose window for interacting with your environment.' Then the blue window is covered and the child is left staring at a blank wall instead. Should the child say, 'I don't see any rose window,' the school will reply: 'That's because we haven't built it yet, but if you keep looking at the blank wall, we will eventually put a pink window there.' Cardenas points out that staring at a blank wall does little to facilitate learning! The value of a bilingual program is that it allows the child to go on learning, and increases the capacity for learning, while the rose window is being built.

IN-CLASS SUPPORT

Support can also be given by a bilingual aide or teacher within the class while the regular classroom activities are going on. The same principle should still operate.

- The children must have extended time to take part in the same learning activities as other children, but in their first language.
- The children must have access to English through peer group work and teacher models.
- The bilingual adult should use the child's first language as consistently as possible. The dominant language (English) exerts a natural 'pull', and bilingual adults working in this way need to be aware of this and resist the temptation to slip into English.

Working with a bilingual helper

Bilingual helpers, whether they are teachers' aides or parents, have a rich experience of language and culture and an understanding and knowledge of their own ethnic group in the Australian setting. Although they may be involved with any children in the class, they will be of special help to those children whose language they speak. They may be able to help interpret students' problems, explain aspects of student behaviour and give teachers some indication as to why children may not be learning. They are able to liaise with parents and alert teachers to potential areas of cultural misunderstanding or difficulty within a particular

unit of work. They may also be willing to assist in various cultural activities. They are valuable people, and if you are working with bilingual helpers, their unique knowledge and language skills should not be wasted.

They are usually not trained teachers, or they may have been trained overseas and be accustomed to very different classroom practices and methodologies. To help the bilingual helper to work as effectively as possible with you and ensure the maximum benefit for the children, it is important that you both know what each of you expects. The suggestions below are intended to help establish a good working relationship and develop a way of working which will be most beneficial to the children.

Get to know the bilingual helper well, particularly his or her interests and skills.

Aim to develop a positive, trusting relationship.

Consider how the helper appears before the children and the parents. He or she should be seen as a colleague.

Establish clear discipline practices early on - what to say, what to do and who is responsible.

Make sure the helper understands the specific tasks in which he or she will be involved. It is important that the helper is clear about what the children will be doing, what the purpose of the activity is and what part he or she will be playing.

Make sure that you are making use of the bilingual skills and other personal skills of the helper. Involve him or her in program planning, or plan for the helper's involvement within the classroom.

The responsibility for the class always remains with the teacher, but a well-supported bilingual helper can be of great assistance to you and a great support for the children.

Some other ways to support the mother tongue

Even without a bilingual program or the regular assistance of a bilingual helper, it is still possible for a teacher to reflect the children's mother tongue within the classroom. Language and cultural diversity is not something that should be confined to a single group of children or one slot in the timetable. It should permeate the classroom and everything that occurs within it. The following ideas can serve as a starting point.

Build mother tongue stories into the program, using tapes at listening posts or making available books in the mother tongue. Older children or parents may help produce tapes.

Invite parents, grandparents or other members of the ethnic community to read or tell stories, sometimes to the whole class. A story could be told in the mother tongue and then retold in English. The experience of hearing another language and learning that this is also a way of communicating is valuable for English monolingual children too. Be sensitive to the fact that not all parents will be literate in their first language, but they may often have great storytelling talents.

Display the children's mother tongues in the classroom. Label objects around the classroom and display the children's writing.

Build up a stock of bilingual books based on the children's own writing. Children who are literate in their mother tongue, or parents, may help with translation. If the English and the mother tongue are on facing pages, all children will have access to the text.

Encourage bilingual children to write their names in their mother tongue, and perhaps the names of other children in the class too.

Incorporate song and related dance or drama into the program. A story could be dramatised and presented in English and in the mother tongue at a school assembly.

Use puppets or magnet board figures for children to dramatise in their mother tongue a story that the class has heard in English.

- ❑ Invite children to teach you and the class a little of their language, such as a song, a greeting, colours or how to count. Each morning for a week say 'good morning' to the class in one of the class languages, and encourage all children to reply.
- ❑ Use multilingual signs around the school to label places like the school office, the Principal's office, the library and the tuckshop. Put up welcome signs in the languages of the school.
- ❑ Provide interpreters at parent-teacher interviews if you feel they are needed (but not the children themselves).
- ❑ Send school notes home in English and in the mother tongue. Often parents will be happy to assist with translation. Do not be put off by the comment, 'The parents can't read their own language.' There will always be someone in the community who will be able to help them, and it is the message from the school that minority parents are *included* which is important.
- ❑ Explore cultural diversity within classroom themes. Within topics such as *Me, Our Neighbourhood or Food*, children can be encouraged to share their own experiences of culture and language. Try to stress also the commonality between groups: for example, the fact that good nutrition is important to everybody, but that there are different ways of meeting this need.
- ❑ ABOVE ALL - give a clear indication to parents that the use of their own language with their children will assist their children's learning and will not hinder their development in English. The choice of language which parents use with their children is ultimately a personal one, but parents who feel more confident in their own language, and would prefer to use it with their children, should be reassured of its importance and value.

Our aim in schools should always be to extend a child's range of options and choices. For bilingual children this means that we must foster an environment where they are able to make links and contacts across communities. A second language and culture is not learned by destroying the first. By ignoring the mother tongue, we run the risk of slowing down children's learning and encouraging, often unintentionally, the beginning of a one-way journey away from their families.

References

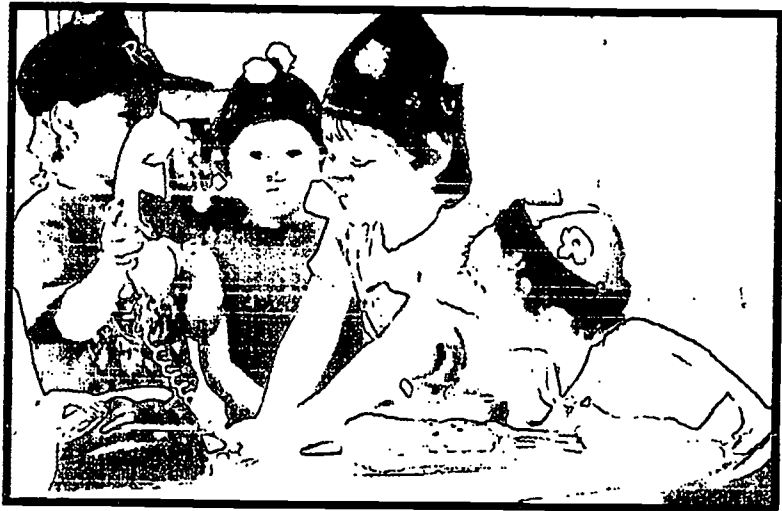
- A child's guide to language*. VHS (55 min) Horizon Series. London: BBC Enterprises, 1983.
- Cornerstones Module 1: *Socio-cultural issues in early literacy learning*. South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services, 1995.
- Cornerstones Module 2: *Finding out what learners know*. South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services, 1995.
- Early Years Literacy Profile* (1996). South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services.
- Ellis, R. (1994) *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foundation areas of learning: Curriculum framework for early childhood settings* (1996). Adelaide: South Australian Department for Education and Children's Services.
- Gibbons, P. (1991) 'Planning for a language for learning'. Chapter 2 in *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*. Rozelle, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.
- Jones, B. (1984) *How language works*. Awareness of Language Series, edited by Eric Hawkins. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Makin, L, Campbell, J. and Jones Diaz, C. (1995) 'Linguistic diversity: key principles for program planning' In *One childhood many languages*. Sydney: Harper Educational.
- McKnight, A (1994) 'Chinese learners of English: A different view of literacy'. In *Open Letter: Australian Journal of Adult literacy Research and Practice*. Vol 4 No 2, pp. 44-45
- Tabors, P.O. and Snow, C.E. (1994) 'English as a second language in preschool programs' In *Educating second language children: the whole child, the whole curriculum, the whole community*, edited by Fred Genesee. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yunupingu, M (1994) *Voices from the land*. Series: Boyer lectures. Sydney: ABC.

Module 3



Talking and learning in a
second language:

Issues



Module 3

Focus: Talking and learning in a second language: Issues

Overview

Spoken language is a critical component of early childhood programs, both for developing oral language through learning and social interaction and as a bridge into reading and writing. For these reasons, we focus on spoken language in some depth in this Resource Folder. In Module 3, we examine the particular needs of children from diverse language backgrounds in learning to talk and listen in early childhood settings, and explore issues of developing talk in a second language for both social and learning purposes in early childhood environments. As part of this exploration, we examine the nature of spoken language and the oral language demands implicit in certain tasks and texts interpreted and produced in early childhood settings.

This is the first of two modules on spoken language. The second one (Module 4) will explore a range of specific strategies for supporting the oral language development of second language learners of English in early childhood settings.

The module contains the following activities:

- 3.1 Reflecting on Module 2*
- 3.2 Talking in a second language: particular needs of ESL learners*
- 3.3 Learning to listen in a second language*
- 3.4 Talking in early childhood settings: what's involved*
- 3.5 Developing talk as a tool for learning in a second language*
- 3.6 Suggested workplace activity*
- 3.7 Readings*

At the end of this module you will have increased your understanding of:

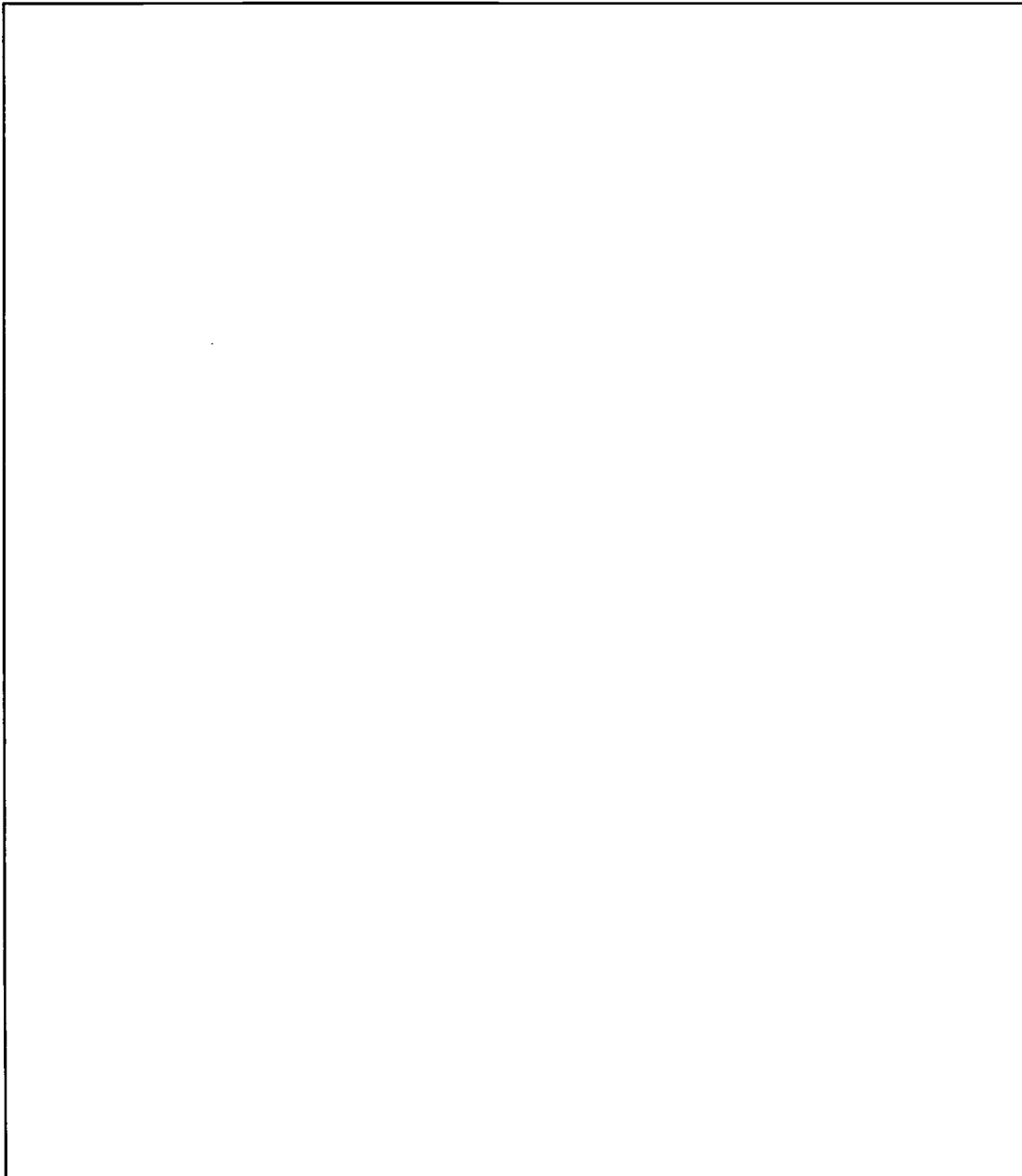
- the particular needs of ESL learners in learning to talk and listen in a second language
- the range of oral language demands implicit in early childhood settings
- the importance of oral language in learning
- the importance of oral language development for overall language development of ESL learners.

3.1 Reflecting on Module 2

As in the previous module, you may wish to begin your work on this module by reflecting on the materials and readings from Module 2. Refer back to your notes in Worksheet 2.7.1 and Worksheet 2.8.1 and consider what new understandings you have gained and what critical issues require resolution or further research. You may also wish to consider the relevance of these understandings and issues in your workplace and consider how your practice is being or could be affected by this professional development.

Jot down your ideas in Worksheet 3.1.1 below.

Worksheet 3.1.1



Dotted lines for writing practice, organized into 20 rows across the page.



3.2 Talking in a second language: particular needs of ESL learners

Introduction

Children from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds beginning pre-school or school bring to these situations a rich oral tradition, sometimes in two or more languages, developed through the experiences of using oral language within the social and cultural contexts in which they live and operate.

Many children from English speaking backgrounds will come to these settings familiar with Standard Australian English, the language of instruction, and familiarity with the spoken texts, both informal and formal, that are expected to be interpreted and produced in these settings. This is because their home literacy experiences are likely to be similar to those literacy practices they will encounter in these educational settings.

However many children, particularly those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds or ESL learners, although competent language users of languages other than Standard Australian English, will not be familiar with the particular literacy practices of educational settings and will encounter this kind of English for the first time.

Activity

Read the following transcript of a four-year-old native speaker of English retelling a narrative. This takes place in her pre-school setting in front of her teacher and the other children. She is aided in her retelling by the visual support of a felt board.

As you read, consider

- what contextual understandings has Elizabeth developed about storytelling. How do you know this?
- how might Elizabeth be advantaged by this task?

Use Worksheet 3.2.1 to respond to these questions.

Resource Notes 3.2.1

Retelling a narrative

Elizabeth is a native speaker of English. She is 4 years old

Child: *Three little pigs went out one day went down to the park...and then they got straw and sticks and bricks. They got the wheelbarrow and then they got their blue one, their green one and their red one . . . and then the wolf came along. Then blowed the straw house down Then he came and blowed the brick house down and then . . . the stick house . . . then the brick house but he couldn't blow the brick one . . . because that one was too hard. So he came through the chimney and he (. . . unclear) the little pig and then he, and then they jumped him in the cooking . . . in the hot water and that made him go out, and then he jumped out and then he (. . . unclear)*

Teacher: *Have you finished?*

Child: *Then he mother came to the house of the . . . um . . . little pigs . . . and then he said to the blue one . . . (unclear)*

Teacher: *He's the brick one er stick one*

Child: *..got in his house . . . and then the green one got in his house . . . uh uh missed one . . . Then this pig little pig went out into his house There!*

Worksheet 3.2.1

What contextual understandings has Elizabeth developed about storytelling? How do you know this?

How might Elizabeth be advantaged by this task?

Now let's look at a transcript of a child learning English as a second language tackling the same task in the same context. He also has the use of a felt board as a visual aid.

As you read, consider

- what contextual understandings has Udit developed about storytelling in this educational setting?
How do you know this?
- how might Udit be disadvantaged by this task?

Use Worksheet 3.2.2 to respond to these and the other questions in this worksheet.

Resource Notes 3.2.2

Retelling a narrative

Udit speaks Urdu and is learning English as a second language. He is 4 years old.

Child: *I'm . . . I'm making a . . . big . . . sound and wolf that come psh sh sh sh sh!!! . . . the house . . . um . . . like that . . . the wolf . . . get . . . h . . . the pig*

Teacher: *did he eat the pig? . . . did he?*

Child: *the wolf . . .*

Teacher: *what?*

Child: *gone the pig*

Teacher: *what did this pig do?*

Child: *(. . . unclear) . . . tip tap tip tap . . . (noises)*

Teacher: *what did this pig do?*

Child: *pig do it . . . making the house . . . wolf . . . like that . . . tick tack . . . door*

Teacher: *what did he say?*

Child: *open the house! . . . tip tap (noises)*

Teacher: *and what did the pig say?*

Child: *(unclear)*

Teacher: *what did the pig say?*

Child: *not come into the house (noises) . . . pig to the house gone.*

Teacher: *what did the wolf do?*

Child: *the wolf do like that (makes knocking noises)*

Teacher: *did he try to blow the house down?*

Child: *not.*

Teacher: *not? mmm*

Resource Notes 3.2.2 (continued)

Child: (noises) Push

Teacher: what happened with this house?

Child: gone to the o . . . per . . . to the house!

Teacher: mmm . . .

Child: and knock knock-knock knock-knock knock-knock knock-knock

Teacher: what did he say?

Child: oh oh! . . . go.

Teacher: what did the wolf say (pause) . . . to the pig?

Child: wolf said (. . . unclear) no (unclear) not this house . . . them gone. . . he seen the pig.

Teacher: he saw the pig . . . did the wolf say 'let me come in'?

Child: yes . . . no . . . no come in . . . I'm . . . left him to the (. . . unclear)

Teacher: what did the pig say?

Child: (unclear . . . fades away to whisper)

Teacher: not come into the house . . . so what did the wolf do?

Child: (unclear) gone

Teacher: he went away?

Child: (unclear)

Teacher: what happened with the fire?

Child: come into the psh

Teacher: (pause) is that the end?

Child: yeah

Worksheet 3.2.2

1. What contextual understandings of story telling does Udit have? How do you know this?

2. What strategies does Udit use to manage the task?

3. What would you consider to be Udit's oral language needs in order to retell a story more successfully?

4. How might this task disadvantage Udit?

5. Is this an appropriate task for Udit, given his level of language proficiency in English and the linguistic and cultural demands of the task?

Read the following Resource Notes 3.2.3 which attempt to summarise the points you will have raised in the previous Worksheet 3.2.1 and Worksheet 3.2.2.

Resource Notes 3.2.3

Elizabeth

Elizabeth understands that a story in Western culture is organised in a particular sequence (schematic structure) with an orientation or beginning, a series of events where there are problems to be resolved and a conclusion. This organisation of text and its language structures and features are referred to as 'genre' or text type, and this particular example is the 'genre' of oral narrative. She appears to understand the purposes of story telling and is able to adjust her style of talk for the task, using appropriate language and playing the role appropriate to the task.

We know all this from an analysis of the way the speaker has sequenced and linked the text (then, so, because, but) and the language structures (using past tense, e.g., went, got, came) and features (vocabulary such as adjectives, and phrases such as 'one day') used by the speaker for retelling a narrative in the early childhood setting. If we were able to hear and see Elizabeth, we would also know that she understands the purposes of storytelling from the strategies she uses to tell the story. These include looking at the audience, speaking clearly and using appropriate intonation and stress.

Elizabeth may well be advantaged by this task as she comes from an English speaking background and, we can assume, will have encountered the story of the Three Little Pigs in her home environment. She may well be very familiar with the purposes of telling fairy stories in mainstream Australian culture, and, having probably been read many of these during her early years, will be very familiar with their schematic structure and their language structures and features.

Resource Notes 3.2.3 (continued)

Udit

Udit has difficulty in sequencing the story and is not able to bring it to a conclusion. We don't really know whether this is because he doesn't understand the way such stories are organised and/or he doesn't have the English language to express his understandings. He uses the present tense and, although he has some necessary vocabulary to retell the story, he lacks significant vocabulary and content knowledge pertinent to the story to complete a successful retelling. He has difficulty in expressing his ideas fluently and accurately and requires lots of scaffolding and guided questioning from the adult listener.

If we were able to hear and see Udit, we would assume that he understands that storytelling requires using appropriate intonation and stress, as he tries to do this, repeating words and using sound effects. However, it is possible that he makes use of these techniques because he doesn't have the necessary language required in this task.

Udit may well be disadvantaged by this task as he comes from a cultural and linguistic background where he will not be familiar with the content and structure of this story. It may be the case that he will also be unfamiliar with social and cultural understandings implicit in this kind of storytelling, even if he comes from a background where story telling has a socio-cultural role. The way stories are told and the way ideas are organised can vary from culture to culture. As well Udit is disadvantaged because he doesn't yet have a sound grasp of the linguistic structures and features of English required to perform this task appropriately.

What do the issues raised so far in this section mean for our practice in working with ESL learners? The Resource Notes 3.2.4, on the following page, outlines some implications.

Very importantly we need to be aware of:

- *the rich variety of linguistic knowledge and sociocultural understandings different learners bring to the learning environment*
- *the oral language demands of the curriculum we offer our learners*
- *the oral language demands and contextual understandings implicit in particular tasks we set our learners*
- *how some teaching and learning tasks, through their cultural bias, may advantage certain learners.*

We need to look for ways that we can find out about and build on what children already know and can do in their home language. As we have seen in Module 2, knowing and experiencing another language and culture provides a remarkable resource on which learners and educators can draw in learning a second language. Module 2 Suggested Workplace Activity provided some strategies to help you find out about an ESL learner's first language development. In Module 8 we explore the importance of collaborative relationships with parents and with bilingual staff in extending this process.

As well, we need to look for ways that we can best support ESL learners to develop the range of oral language skills in English and the contextual understandings needed to participate successfully in our educational settings. Module 4 focuses specifically on such strategies.

In the latter part of Module 3 we examine transcripts of language produced in response to set tasks, in order to gain deeper understandings of their oral language requirements. We need to do this so that we can plan more carefully for oral language development and design activities which explicitly support ESL learners in using language for a range of purposes in a range of contexts.

Prior to this however, we will look in more detail at particular needs of ESL learners in learning to talk and listen in English which have not been dealt up with to this point.

We need to remember that each learner in our care will have unique needs within their English language development, depending on a range of factors including level of proficiency in their first language as well as in English, home literacy experiences, life experiences, time spent in Australia and intellectual ability.

Activity

In this activity we would like you to reflect on your own experiences and observations of ESL learners using oral language within your own educational setting. We would also like you to share these reflections with colleagues. In Worksheet 3.2.3 below we want you to jot down your own ideas about ESL learners' special oral language needs which you feel have not been raised in the previous activity. We have suggested a couple of starting points.

Worksheet 3.2.3

- *ESL learners may have difficulties in distinguishing different sounds*
- *may not understand even simple instructions*

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

Needs you have listed may be included in the following list, in Resource Notes 3.2.5.

Learners of English as a second language need support in:

- *talking in the unfamiliar sounds of English*
- *distinguishing between different sounds in English (e.g., bed/pet, hard/heart/art)*
- *understanding sets of instructions*
- *pronouncing particular sounds*
- *processing language quickly*
- *understanding oral and written texts unless supported by visual/concrete cues*
- *understanding and using different kinds of utterances, e.g., questions, hints*
- *identifying what are the key words in a message*
- *understanding and using appropriate intonation and stress*
- *putting words in the right order in spoken utterances*
- *following whole group interactions*
- *grasping new vocabulary and new language structures*
- *understanding the meaning of particular language features in texts which we might take for granted, such as prepositions, e.g., between, under; adverbs, e.g., quite, very*
- *understanding the more demanding language of areas of learning*
- *understanding idiomatic and metaphoric language, e.g., 'I'm pulling your leg', 'time flies'*
- *developing contextual understandings about school-based expectations*
- *learning appropriate non-verbal communication*
- *learning the appropriate language for playing collaboratively*
- *learning the appropriate language to interact socially with adults and peers.*

Conclusion

In this section we have identified a range of needs ESL learners may have in developing their talking skills in early childhood settings. In the next section we go on to examine the importance of learning to listen as an integral component of overall oral language development in a second language.

3.3 Learning to listen in a second language

Introduction

Listening is such an integral part of any learning program that it can quite easily be overlooked in the daily planning for literacy development. However, for children from language backgrounds other than English, learning to listen in English is critical. This needs to be explicitly planned for in an integrative way, and sometimes specific listening activities need to be developed for these students.

Understanding what you hear depends on your background knowledge of the topic or situation and your understanding of the language itself.

(Gibbons 1991: 90)

When children are learning English, they will have difficulties with both these components of the listening process because their background knowledge may be different or in a different language, and their understandings of how language works may be different.

In the following section we will explore some particular difficulties ESL learners may have with listening in English. Then, in Module 4, we will highlight strategies for developing listening skills in early childhood educational settings.

Activity

Think back to a personal experience with another language. Think about your experiences listening in and trying to comprehend this language, perhaps the language experience in Module 2 of this Resource Folder. Jot down in Worksheet 3.3.1 what factors made it difficult for you to concentrate on the act of listening and to listen with understanding, then check your own list against our suggestions in Resource Notes 3.3.1 overleaf.

Worksheet 3.3.1

- *unfamiliar individual and blended sounds*
- *too many words too quickly*
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Factors you have listed in Worksheet 3.3.1 may include:

Resource Notes 3.3.1

- *unfamiliar individual and blended sounds*
- *unfamiliarity with the way each language stresses particular syllables in a word or words in a sentence to carry meaning*
- *unfamiliar intonation patterns - the way pitch changes in speech, without which you may not be able to key into the meaning*
- *meaning conveyed through different tones, e.g., in Chinese, the single syllable 'ma' can mean horse, mother ... depending on the tone*
- *sounds at the end of words may not be 'voiced' (as in Cantonese). In English, we often do not pronounce the final 'voiced' consonant sounds of words very clearly, especially when speaking quickly and casually, so it is difficult for some learners of English to pick up the words in an utterance, e.g., 'we wen to the supermarket in the city'. In English, we make also our speech sound more fluent by moving the 'voiced' consonant to the next word eg 'si-tup' for 'sit up', 'pu-ton' for 'put on', 'goo-dafternoon' for 'good afternoon', etc.*
- *not able to distinguish units of meaning within a text (see above example)*
- *not able to distinguish between certain sounds, e.g., /t/b/d/in titbits, tip, bit, bib, bid, did, pip, peep*
- *not have the background knowledge of the topic or have access to visual cues to understand the message*
- *not able to tune in to which key words carry meaning in the utterance.*

The factors listed in Resource Notes 3.3.1 above are only some of the difficulties ESL learners will have when trying to listen in English and to make sense of what they hear.

Reading 1 at the end of this module expands on the issues noted in the activity above.

We need to remember that listening can be a very tiring process when you are learning the language and do not fully understand, and that it is easy to lose concentration and confidence. Early childhood educators need to monitor the non-verbal behaviours of children very carefully to identify the signs which indicate stress rather than boredom in children as listeners.

In this section we have focussed on the listening process and looked at some of the needs of ESL learners in learning to listen successfully in English. The issues raised in this section not only impact on the needs of ESL learners as listeners, but are also integral to the needs of ESL learners as fluent speakers in English.

Conclusion

In this and the previous section, we have explored the particular needs of ESL learners in learning to talk and listen in a second language. For the purposes of this Resource Folder, we can summarise these needs into 3 main areas, as outlined in the following Resource Notes 3.3.2.

Resource Notes 3.3.2

Particular needs of ESL learners in developing oral language

Learners need assistance to

- *develop skills in listening and comprehending English, including both teacher talk and peer talk*
- *develop and use talk appropriately for different purposes across all areas of learning and for a range of activities and tasks*
- *develop language skills to interact appropriately with adults and peers, and to work and play collaboratively.*

3.4 Talking in early childhood settings: what's involved

Introduction

In this section we will explore the nature of spoken language and the implications of the range of oral language skills children require to participate successfully in early childhood settings.

Activity

Read Resource Notes 3.4.1 which give a brief overview of the nature of spoken language.

Resource Notes 3.4.1

Spoken and written language are used for different purposes. In speaking and listening we tend to be getting something done, exploring ideas, working out some aspect of the world or simply being together. In writing we may be creating a record, committing events or moments to paper. . . Halliday (1985: 97) describes spoken and written language as 'two grids on experience': spoken language is essentially dynamic, about happenings, while written language is synoptic, about things. Teachers usually recognise the importance of these differences and plan curriculum units in which the focus varies between spoken and written language. Because of the critical role of spoken language in learning, speaking activities tend to precede writing activities, helping students to build the necessary background knowledge demanded by reading and writing across curriculum areas.

(Jones 1996: 12-13)

.....

We can think of spoken language in the classroom as a continuum from the very informal language of everyday and classroom chat to the more formal language of decontextualised situations such as newstime, where children are expected to recount happenings which have occurred at another time and in another place.

At the more informal end of the continuum we can describe oral language as having the following features:

- *interactive, where speakers take turns*
- *context-dependent, i.e., the language is close to the original context in terms of time and space*
- *unpredictable and spontaneous, characterised by interruptions, hesitations, pauses, incomplete clauses, false starts 'casual', everyday vocabulary, non-standard grammar, and 'content' words sparsely used.*

As oral language becomes more formal and more like writing, it can be characterised by the following features:

- *one speaker talking to an audience*
- *context-independent, where the text is removed from the original context of time and visual surroundings, e.g., recounting what happened at the weekend*
- *text is structured or organised in stages and is predictable*
- *more fluent (e.g., a speech)*
- *more formal vocabulary (e.g., scientific, technological), standard grammar, more use of content words.*

In summary we can say that, although the oral language, particularly the more formal oral language, shares some features in common with writing, in many ways it is different.

The following activity illustrates how spoken language in the classroom moves along a continuum from informal to formal use depending on the purpose and context.

Worksheet 3.4.1

Activity-based sharing:

1. *Collect the following materials: coloured paper, scissors, straws and glue. You will also need a tape recorder.*
2. *Use the materials to construct an object jointly with another colleague. Call yourselves Pair A. Ask two other colleagues to take part in this activity with you and ask them to do the same thing in another part of the room. Call them Pair B.*
3. *Only spend a few minutes doing this task. Tape the talk that is occurring while you are jointly constructing your object as Pair A.*
4. *Display your construction and explain what it is and how you made it to Pair B. Tape this talk.*
5. *Ask Pair B to explain to you what they made and how they made their construction, without showing you their object. Tape this talk.*
6. *Listen carefully to the three texts. Jot down in Worksheet 3.5.3 the differences between the texts. We have suggested some possible starting points.*

Worksheet 3.4.2

Text 1

- *meaning almost entirely dependent on the situation*
- *lots of spontaneous language*
-
-
-

Text 2

- *meaning much more dependent on the context*
- *text more organised*
-
-
-

Text 3

- *text needs to make the context clear to the listener*
- *use of more specific vocabulary to describe materials used*
-
-
-

This activity illustrates how oral language changes and develops in different contexts from more spontaneous and context-bound to more written-like, where the text becomes more explicit and complete. It is important that ESL learners get plenty of opportunities to develop this more formal language, which will be required in most learning tasks they will encounter in the future. ESL learners will need considerable support to develop the 'decontextualised' language of Text 3 as this kind of text requires greater linguistic resources. Texts 1 and 2 are supported by concrete and visual aids and therefore require less abstract language to complete the task. However, the language produced in Text 1 is also important to teach to ESL Learners as it is often the language necessary to work successfully in groups and to negotiate getting tasks done.

Activity

In regard to planning for balanced oral language development, Pauline Jones (1996) has suggested two ways of categorising talk

- talk as **process**
- talk as **performance**.

Read the following Resource Notes 3.4.2 which explain what these categories mean.

Resource Notes 3.4.2

Talk as process refers to learning experiences in which talk is associated with other activities. For example, students may be engaged in hands-on activities to explore concepts associated with floating and sinking. In this type of spoken language students and teachers usually focus on meaning or on talking their way to understanding.

Talk as performance refers to spoken language activities that take account of an audience. Like written tasks, these formal spoken tasks (such as information reports and morning news) often have identifiable generic structures and the language used is more predictable. The resulting texts will be positioned towards the most written-like end of the continuum. Because of less contextual support, the speaker must include all necessary information in the text-hence the importance of topic as well as textual knowledge. And while meaning is still important, there will be more emphasis on form and accuracy.

(Jones 1996 :14)

In summary, then, spoken language can be categorised as:

- process:
where talk is used to make meanings and talk your way into understanding
- performance:
where the notion of audience is important and where spoken texts will be more like written texts, with the emphasis on textual knowledge, form and accuracy.

Brainstorm activities or tasks that learners participate in, which require using oral language, under the headings 'process' and 'performance', as we have done with a couple of examples in Worksheet 3.4.3 below.

Worksheet 3.4.3

Process	Performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>group discussions</i> • <i>water play</i> • • • • • • • • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>dramatic role play</i> • <i>songs</i> • • • • • • • • • • •

Viewing tasks in this way allows us to plan for a balanced oral language program which provides opportunities for ESL learners to experience a range of oral language demands from the more informal to the formal.

Now we will move into more detailed analysis of oral language tasks to look at how language works and what particular skills children need to develop.

Activity

In this next activity, we will begin to focus on the complexities of oral language in the various areas of learning in early childhood settings by examining the language functions of tasks; that is, what we are asking children to do with language when we involve them in a task.

Initially it is useful to identify the range of language functions that we expect learners to use and develop through our programs. (Gibbons 1991: 14). These language functions will incorporate social and academic uses of language. Remember that language functions are always functional in a particular social context, e.g., when a child wants to tell other children in 'show and tell', about her toy, she may 'describe' it and perhaps 'explain' how it works. The functions are not isolated from the social context.

Read the following list in Resource Notes 3.4.3 of the more common language functions used in early childhood settings

Resource Notes 3.4.3

Language Functions

<i>agreeing and disagreeing</i>	<i>expressing obligation</i>
<i>apologising</i>	<i>explaining</i>
<i>asking for permission</i>	<i>hypothesising</i>
<i>asking for assistance/directions</i>	<i>identifying</i>
<i>classifying</i>	<i>inferring</i>
<i>comparing</i>	<i>planning and predicting</i>
<i>commanding/giving instructions</i>	<i>promising</i>
<i>criticising</i>	<i>refusing</i>
<i>denying</i>	<i>reporting</i>
<i>describing</i>	<i>requesting</i>
<i>enquiring/questioning</i>	<i>sequencing</i>
<i>evaluating</i>	<i>suggesting</i>
<i>expressing likes and dislikes</i>	<i>warning</i>
<i>expressing position</i>	<i>wishing and hoping</i>

(adapted from Gibbons, P. 1991: 14)

Use the activities you have identified in Worksheet 3.4.3 and this time think about what exactly you are asking children to do with language, that is, what language functions you are asking them to use in what contexts and whether the language links to process or performance type tasks.

Use Worksheet 3.4.4 to jot down your ideas. Some possible examples have been provided for you.

Worksheet 3.4.4

Activities/tasks in a social context	Process or performance	Language functions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> talking about the weekend at newstime 	performance	e.g., recounting an event
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listening to a story with the whole group on the mat 	process	e.g., explaining aspects of the story to demonstrate understanding, predicting what will happen next
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> finding out what objects float or sink in a science activity 	process	e.g., asking questions, hypothesising what might happen, explaining how things happen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> greeting adults and peers appropriately when arriving at the centre 	performance	e.g., expressing social language, turn taking, using body language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 		

You will see from this activity the wide range of language functions that children are required to use in early childhood settings, from the more social and informal use of language to the more academic and formal.

Activity

Now we will go deeper into analysing the language skills required for a child to

- participate in a typical early childhood activity
- learn from this participation.

Read the following transcripts in Resource Notes 3.4.4, taken from P. Gibbons in *Learning to learn in a second language* (1991: 30). Although these are of two older children, the understandings we can gain from analysing such transcripts are transferable to the early childhood context.

Both spoken texts are produced by two nine-year-olds working together on a 'hands on' activity.

Resource Notes 3.4.4

Text 1

Try this one . . . no it doesn't go . . . it doesn't move . . . try that . . . yes . . . it does a bit . . . that won't work . . . it's not metal . . . these are the best . . . it's making them go really fast.

Text 2

We tried a pin, a pencil sharpener, some iron filings and a piece of plastic. The magnet didn't attract the pin, but it did attract the pencil sharpener and the iron filings. It didn't attract the plastic.

(Gibbons 1991:30)

Use the following Worksheet 3.4.5 to analyse the differences between the two texts.

Worksheet 3.4.5

What might be the contexts in which these texts are produced?

Text 1

Text 2

What contextual understandings are required by the speakers?

Text 1

Text 2

What language functions are the speakers using?

Text 1

Text 2

What strategies might they need to successfully produce these texts?

Text 1

Text 2

Are they process or performance type texts?

Text 1

Text 2

How are the texts organised?

Text 1

Text 2

What are the linguistic structures and features of these texts?

Text 1

Text 2

The following Resource Notes 3.4.5 attempt to summarise many of the ideas you will have documented in Worksheet 3.4.5.

Resource Notes 3.4.5

What might be the contexts in which these texts are produced?

Text 1 is produced as two learners are working together experimenting with a magnet to find out which objects are attracted to it.

Text 2 is produced when they report back their findings to their class.

What contextual understandings are required by the speakers?

In the contexts in which the texts are produced, the speakers understand the different purposes of each task, and are able to adjust their style of talk for the task, using appropriate language for the task and playing the role appropriate to the task.

What language functions are the speakers using?

In Text 1, the speakers are hypothesising, explaining and suggesting as they work to solve the problem.

In Text 2, the speakers are reporting on and describing the process, and at the same time comparing and explaining what they discovered.

What strategies might they need to successfully produce these texts?

In Text 1 the speakers need to be able to take turns, listen to each other, be prepared to make suggestions and to work collaboratively.

In Text 2 the speakers need to look at the audience, speak clearly and fluently, ensure that they give the audience the necessary information to understand the process and results of the experiment.

Are they process or performance type texts?

Text 1 is a process type task because the speakers are focussed on interaction and collaborative problem solving.

Text 2 is a performance type task as the speakers are taking an audience into account and adjusting their language accordingly.

How are the texts organised?

Text 1 is unstructured and very informal.

Text 2 is organised so that the speakers first tell the audience what they did and then what the results were of their experiment.

What are the linguistic structures and features of these texts?

In Text 1 the language is very dependent on what is happening in the immediate situation. Pronouns are used instead of the names of the objects and the sentences are incomplete. The language is quite 'casual'.

In Text 2, because the speakers are aware of the needs of the audience, they use 'more written-like' language, so that the text begins to create its own context. The names of the objects are used, the sentences are complete and there is a more 'scientific' feel about the language of the text.

This activity highlights the complexity of language demands, contextual understandings and strategies implicit in any task or activity. Children need to be able to deal with this complexity to be successful participants in early childhood settings, and early childhood educators need to keep this complexity in mind in designing any learning activity.

Read the following Resource Notes 3.4.6, which attempt to summarise some implications for ESL learners arising from the discussions we've had so far in this module.

Resource Notes 3.4.6

Some implications for ESL children developing talk (and writing) in a second language

ESL Learners need to need to know that:

- *language is used for a range of purposes in a range of contexts.*
- *language in oral and written texts changes according to purpose and social and cultural context*
- *strategies for interpreting and producing texts change according to purpose and context*
- *particular genres or text types are organised in particular culturally-determined ways and have particular language features according to purposes for which they are used and situations in which they are used.*

It is important for ESL children to understand and control the range of genres they encounter in their learning in English, as these genres may differ from those encountered in their home language. We will deal with genres in more detail in Module 5 when we look at developing writing skills.

Conclusion

We need to be aware that the 'common' understandings about language and participating in social activities and learning tasks which we take for granted may not be understood by children from home language backgrounds other than English, and that what seem simple tasks may pose special difficulties for them which we did not anticipate.

Having deeper understandings of oral language and contextual requirements of particular tasks enables us to plan more carefully for oral language development and design activities which explicitly support children from linguistic backgrounds other than English to use language for a range of purposes with a range of audiences.

3.5 Developing talk as a tool for learning in a second language

Introduction

As we discussed in Module 2, most young children from language backgrounds other than English are able to develop proficiency in conversational English within two years.

However research suggests that, generally, ESL learners will take between five and seven years to acquire academic English proficiency to a level comparable to their English-speaking peers. This applies to oral language as much as to reading and written language proficiency.

Activity

In order to support learners to develop the language of learning, we need to have a clear idea of the different oral language demands of the various areas of learning in early childhood settings.

One good way to do this is to identify the range of language functions that you expect learners to use and develop through your program (Gibbons 1991: 14). These language functions will incorporate social and academic uses of language.

We have looked at language functions in the previous section. We will now take you through a process of thinking about the activities that you use in your setting and the kinds of language functions they would require children to use. At the same time, we will think about the kinds of language structures and vocabulary that you might expect from this activity.

Refer back to the list of the more common language functions in (Resource Notes 3.4.3).

Choose several functions that you would expect your learners to use frequently, and fill out Worksheet 3.5.1 which defines these in terms of activities/contexts, language structures and vocabulary. Some examples have been completed for you.

Worksheet 3.5.1

<i>Language function</i>	<i>Learning activity/context</i>	<i>Language structures</i>	<i>Vocabulary</i>
• <i>classifying</i>	<i>sorting buttons into colours in a maths activity</i>	<i>they are <u>all</u> red, blue etc</i>	<i>colours</i>
• <i>describing</i>	<i>describing a pet animal within a topic on pets</i>	<i>it has a <u>long</u> tail</i>	<i>tail, fur etc</i>
• <i>sequencing</i>	<i>arranging pictures to tell a story within a theme on stories from around the world</i>	<i><u>this</u> picture is <u>first</u></i>	<i>first, next, then</i>
•			
•			
•			

(Adapted from Gibbons 1991: 19)

The preceding activity is designed to highlight the range of language functions children will need through your program, and helps you to begin to describe the language children will need in order to participate and to learn successfully.

As Gibbons (1995: 15) points out: "Checking that you are using a range of language functions throughout the program will help ensure that you give learners opportunities to hear and use a variety of language". In providing opportunities for ESL learners to use a range of language functions it is important to set up a learning environment where learners can use language to interact with others, socially and collaboratively, and to use language to do things in a range of meaningful contexts. For children in the early years, important language functions are developed through participating actively in play and other hands-on activities in pair or group situations. This kind of talk allows a great deal of learning to take place. It is particularly important for ESL learners to have opportunities to develop this kind of talk in English, and also in their first language, as it is the kind of talk that allows children to hypothesise, to predict, to think through ideas, to problem solve, to think critically and to develop relationships with others.

Conclusion

In this section we have looked at the importance of planning for talk time and providing a variety of opportunities to use talk in our programs.

3.6 Suggested workplace activity: Finding out more about the oral language development of an ESL learner in your centre

Rationale

As we have discussed in this module, to plan well for an ESL learner's oral language development it is important to know what expectations you have of learners to be successful in early childhood settings, what an individual learner can do, what areas of this learner's oral language need to be developed and how these can be planned for. This activity aims to highlight these issues.

Use Worksheet 3.6.2 (following Worksheet 3.6.1) to jot down observations, ideas and questions arising from this activity that you want to explore further.

Activity

1. Choose a learning task or activity which you can easily carry out in your context.
2. Analyse the expectations of this task under the following headings:
 - language functions - what do you expect the children to do with language?
 - what language structures and features will be required for this task?
 - what contextual understandings are required?
3. Look at strategies - how does the child go about completing the task?
 - tape an ESL learner completing the task
 - transcribe about 5 minutes from the tape.
4. Fill out the following Worksheet 3.6.1.

Worksheet 3.6.1

How well did the ESL learner meet the expectations of the task?

What did the child do well?

What were the areas of difficulty?

Did anything surprise you about the way the task was done or the language used?

Have you gained any particular insights about the child's oral language development from listening to this child's discourse?

Are there any implications for your planning and teaching resulting from this activity?

Notes on workplace activity

Any issues, concerns or clarifications arising from this activity

3.7 Between module readings

There are two essential readings for Module 3, as well as other suggested readings. The essential readings follow Worksheet 3.7.1. This worksheet can be used to make notes as you read.

Readings for Module 3:

1. 'Factors in listening comprehension'.

This reading expands on the issues noted in the section on listening in Module 3.

2. Jones, Pauline (1996) 'Language and learning'. Chapter 1 in *Talking to learn*. Edited by Pauline Jones. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association, pp. 1-10.

This chapter explores children's early language and learning experiences, and then moves on to what children 'draw on' when they produce and interpret spoken texts and what implications this has for children from non-English speaking backgrounds in interpreting and producing spoken texts within the curriculum.

*Suggested further readings (*highly recommended)*

Berk, L.E. 'Vygotsky's theory: the importance of make-believe play'. In *Young Children*. November 1994, pp. 30-38.

Brechtel, M. (1992) *Bringing the whole together: An integrated whole language approach for the multilingual classroom*. San Diego, California: Dominic Press.

Cazden, C. (1992) 'Adult assistance to language development: scaffolds, models and direct instruction'. Chapter 8 in *Whole language plus: essays on literacy in the United States and New Zealand*. Columbia University, New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 99-113.

*Clarke, P. (1992) *English as a 2nd language in early childhood*. Victoria: Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre.

Davison, C. (1990) 'When nature needs some help! The natural learning approach and the teaching of ESL in the primary school.' In *TESOL in Context*. Volume 1, Number 1, pp. 15-18.

*Gibbons, P. (1991) 'Learning to listen and getting the sounds right'. Chapter 8 in *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

*Gibbons, P. (1991) 'An interactive classroom: Developing spoken language'. Chapter 3 in *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

*Jones, Pauline (1996) *Talking to learn*. Edited by Pauline Jones. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Schloss, J. (1993) 'Navigating a sea of confusion'. In *ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course*. South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services.

Your Notes

A large rectangular box with a black border, intended for taking notes. The interior of the box is completely blank.

Worksheet 3.7.1

Notes on readings

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to write their notes on readings.

Worksheet 3.7.1 (continued)

Notes on readings

[Empty rectangular box for notes]

165 165

Reading 1

As you read, consider what is already familiar to you and what is new, and consider which questions arise which you may be able to apply to your workplace situation.

FACTORS IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION

THE IMPORTANCE OF BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Background knowledge includes knowledge of

- what is being talked about
- what is the focussed purpose of listening
- what are the expectations of listening behaviour in particular learning situations.

Contextualised language ('here and now')

It is important for the early childhood educator to focus on topics and activities which develop the dynamic language of 'here and now' and on aspects of common experiences, to provide a shared background knowledge for ESL learners to which they can relate. Excursions, hands-on activities, shared viewing, shared objects and other activities which focus on personal and concrete experiences support ESL learners to build important concepts and to develop key language items in English.

Decontextualised language ('there and then')

It is also important to expose ESL learners to 'decontextualised' language, the language of 'there and then', which is often the language of stories, of recounting events that happened at some other time and of information texts which will be used in learning. This kind of language can be difficult for learners of English where it assumes background knowledge which ESL learners may not have and are therefore unable to learn. They will be unable to make connections between their own understandings and the new knowledge being presented.

We need to think what we do when we ask children to listen. We do not expect them to listen to everything. To support ESL learners in learning to listen, we need to focus the listening task by telling them to listen for certain things before we ask them to listen so that children are actively listening for something. This actually provides a purpose for listening and assists children to tune into the expectations of the activity. As we have suggested in the previous section, the 'valued' ways of listening in learning situations may be different from understandings children may bring with them from their family backgrounds. Children need to be taught that these are 'valued' ways in the education setting if these are the expectations.

Summary

To be actively involved as a listener, it is important that learners

- can connect what is heard to their previous background knowledge
- understand the purpose and focus of the task
- understand the sociocultural expectations of the task
- are able to participate actively in the task .

THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE

(This section relies considerably on Sharpe in Jones 1996: 29-30)

Language knowledge includes

- knowledge of the mechanics of the language
- an understanding of the vocabulary for each different task/activity.

These are important aspects of making meaning in English, which can cause difficulties for learners of English in both speaking and listening. Opportunities for many and varied opportunities to hear and practice the sounds and rhythms of English need to be created in meaningful contexts for the ESL learner.

Mechanics of language

Understanding the mechanics of the language means knowing about the grammatical structures and about fluency of the language. Language educators need to have some understanding of how language works, how the building blocks fit together, so that they can help children with the mechanics of language (e.g., pronunciation, pauses, intonation, word order, etc.) which play such an important part in being able to listen with comprehension.

Among the features of any language, we might select:

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES - the way that grammar is organised in English can cause difficulties for learners of English. Sometimes sentences can be quite complex and can be confusing to young learners. It is important, when children are learning English, for you to be aware of the way you model language and try to use a balance between language which is 'natural' and language which you have consciously modified or repeated.

FLUENCY is an important part of the way language moves between speaker and listener. Fluency is how language flows. The pronunciation of the language includes stress, pitch, volume, intonation, pausing and speed, as well as the individual sounds in each word. Accurate pronunciation plays a large part in fluency.

- *Read the above paragraph to yourself again aloud, listening for these features of the music of English.*

STRESS refers to the energy with which a word is spoken. In English the stressed syllable in a word or a stressed word in a sentence usually carries the primary message.

Which words and syllables would you stress in the following sentences?

- *Put the book on the table.*
- *Put that book not this one on the table.*
- *Please put the book on the table.*
- *Put the book not the pencil on the table.*

PAUSING is commonly used in English before an important word to mark its importance.

- *Where would you pause in the sentences above?*

SPEED of delivery varies. We tend to slow down when we want to emphasise something and to speed up when we're excited about what we are saying, elaborating a point or making an aside.

167
167

PITCH is usually used to express emotion. When we're excited, our pitch rises.

- Try saying "I'm really excited about this!"

VOLUME refers to variations in loudness. It is not the same as stress, as it's quite possible to vary the stress without any perceptible difference in volume.

INTONATION comprises the pattern of pitch changes in speech. A downward intonation indicates that a message is complete, while an upward intonation indicates a question and invites an answer to follow.

- Compare "We're going now." with "You're going now?"

VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE - knowing the meaning of the words in context, whether in a book being read or in a message being conveyed, is an important aid to listening effectively. It is important not to make assumptions about what words children understand. It is not always content words that cause difficulty. Often it is a 'simple' word such as 'along' or 'under' which can block understanding of a complete utterance.

PARALINGUISTICS - the way we use the face, eyes, hands and total body movements is an essential part of making meanings in language. Different cultures and languages have different non-verbal means of communicating. Where one culture may nod the head forward to show agreement, others will shake it from side to side. In some cultures a direct gaze is impolite. The paralinguistic features of language need to be modelled and discussed with children as part of developing communicative competence and metalinguistic understandings. This area of language can also be a bridge into intercultural understandings.

Your Notes

LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

Pauline Jones

Chapter 1 in *Talking to learn*, NSW Primary English Teaching Association 1996¹

EARLY LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

The oral language that children bring to school is a remarkably rich resource - one which provides them with the means of negotiating their worlds. Let's begin, then, by looking at an example of a younger child developing this resource. Dominic is two and a half years old and bilingual, growing up speaking Spanish and English. In the following transcript he is looking at books with his father, Ramon, and mother, Criss.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| R: (<i>picking up 'Imagine'</i>) Vamos a leer este. | Let's read this. |
| D: (<i>bringing another book</i>) Vamos leer este. | Let's read this. |
| C: En espanol con Pape. | In Spanish with Daddy. |
| D: Este libro is Pape's. | This book is Daddy's. |
| C: Con Pape. | With Daddy. |
| D: Look at this! ... I ... I ... Imagine ... I ... | Little little one. |
| (<i>taking the book from R</i>) I this back. | |
| R: Esta bien ... Como? | Good...What? |
| Quiere leer en espanol? | Do you want to read it in Spanish? |
| Voy a ponerlo atras ... pon lo atras. | I'll put it behind ... put it behind. |
| D: Snake ... | |
| R: (<i>starts reading the text in Spanish</i>) A ver ... | Let's see ... |
| Imaginate ... | Imagine ... |
| D: Snake ... | |
| R: Si vies los pajaros? | Do you see the birds? |
| Como se dice una snake en espanol. | How do you say snake in Spanish, |
| como se dice? | how do you say it? |
| (<i>waiting for D</i>) Snake se dice ... serpiente. | Snake says ... snake. |
| D: Serpiente. | Snake. |
| R: Como se dice ... serpiente? | How do you say ... snake? |
| Vamos a buscar una ... serpiente, no? | Let's look for a ... snake, no? |

Dominic is learning language by building up speaking and listening skills - in his case, in two languages. These languages enable him (with the help of others close to him) to develop understandings that include the literacy practices of his home and community.

¹ For further information about PETA publications and services please contact the Membership Coordinator on 02 9565 1277, fax 02 9565 1070 or PO Box 3106, Marrickville, NSW 2204.

Another child, Ellen, monolingual and two years older than Dominic, demonstrates how oral language allows her to take steps towards understanding what she observes. After witnessing a change in scene and time during a television show, she asks:

- E: Hey mum! You know in that story 'Cinderella'? How come it goes ball - boom - wedding - ball - boom - wedding?
- M: Oh well, that's the tricks of movie makers and writers. They make time seem to go much faster than it really does.

In the normal course of events the adults about Ellen would probably not initiate a discussion about time and relativity, but this dialogue indicates the way in which spoken language enables her to gain some control over ideas she needs to pursue. She was to return to the topic twice in subsequent days: once to point out what she felt was a more realistic representation of time in a different version of the fairy tale which interposed some activity between the ball and the wedding; once to introduce a scene change indicating the passage of time in dramatic play with her brother.

Through their interactions with others in the years prior to school, Dominic and Ellen have built up their own stores of social and cultural knowledge. Oral language has been a powerful tool in this development and will continue to be crucial for both of them at school, where it will become the key to specialised subject areas and lead to consciously literate modes of language use. It will also be the means through which they broaden their social relationships to include their peer group and adults outside homes and close community environments.

ORAL LANGUAGE AND THE CURRICULUM

English is unique as a learning area in that it is both a subject in its own right and the major vehicle for learning in other subject areas. Spoken and written English are accorded equal status in current curriculum documents, which describe texts broadly as spoken, written or visual (as in posters and public signs), or as combinations of these (as in picture books, film and CD-ROM encyclopaedias). Spoken texts include conversations, speeches, advertisements, broadcast programs and dramatic performances, and will be drawn from literature, specialised subject areas, everyday texts and the media.

In producing and interpreting spoken texts, language users draw on knowledge of their social and cultural worlds (i.e. *contextual understandings*) and the skills involved in segmenting streams of sound into words and sentences (i.e. *knowledge of linguistic structures and features*). Contextual understandings refer to our awareness of how the context in which a text is produced affects the language used. They can be considered from two points of view, the first of which is concerned with the broad level of culture.

The *context of culture* influences speakers and listeners in ways which include:

- appropriateness (what is considered appropriate to talk about, with whom and where)
- genre (the ways in which certain social activities are negotiated, such as storytelling, shopping, job interviews or small talk).

Variations in these two factors reflect what different groups of language users have come to value. For example, Standard Australian English, the language of public institutions like schools, is but one of the many varieties of English which make up Australian English. Genres also vary - what is judged appropriate in one cultural context may not be so in another. The result is that the context of culture is not singular but diverse. Effective communicators are aware of this and are constantly negotiating meaning across the differences.



A young student relates an incident to her older friends during lunchtime. Buddy systems and peer support programs not only help to develop a sense of community among students of different ages, but also broaden the range of opportunities for informal language use.

Individuals will interpret and produce texts according to multiple influences: for instance, age, gender, religious beliefs, ethnicity, geographical location and personal experience. Examples of varying interpretations can often be heard in the range of comments made by movie goers leaving the cinema. Students need to be aware of these variable factors and become skilled at interpreting and constructing texts in different cultural contexts.

The second point of view from which to consider context is concerned with situational knowledge - what is called the *context of situation*. In any particular situation the purpose of an interaction will be a major influence on the language used. Purposes demanded by the curriculum and school life include informing, instructing, entertaining, describing and persuading. Skilled speakers and listeners can vary their choice of language according to:

- *the role that spoken language is playing in the interaction* (e.g. the language used to explain and play a board game is different from that used to tell an amusing anecdote)
- the topic or activity being spoken about
- *the roles and relationships* between the speakers, or between speaker and audience.

Together these factors determine the *register* of a text. Students have to develop the linguistic resources required to engage with a variety of registers - that is, texts produced in the many different formal and informal, social and educational situations they will encounter over time.

Contextual factors, both cultural and situational, are embedded in or realised through the *linguistic structures and features* of texts. These include:

- the structure of texts (e.g. orientation, series of events, reorientation is a typical structure of recounts)
- text cohesion, or the way a text 'hangs together'
- grammar and vocabulary choices, determined largely by the topic.

Spoken texts also draw on aspects of phonology and paralinguistic features. Speakers and listeners rely on sounds, intonation patterns and rhythm to exchange meaning. Pitch, pause, emphasis and stress figure in this process, and body language, such as gesture, facial expression and posture, is also important.

In short, school makes new demands on children in terms of spoken language use. As the contexts for language broaden, Ellen and Dominic will encounter different ways of making meaning. These differences can be considered in terms of the three register components: field, tenor and mode.

Field: Children are expected to participate in spoken language activities centred on various curriculum topics (such as rainforests or three-dimensional shapes), on social relationships (such as peer support activities), and on learning itself (through such strategies as self-reflection and evaluation). Topics for talk will progress from the familiar to the abstract. This learning progression requires access to specialised vocabulary, to expressions of thinking such as cause-effect and contrastive relationships, to ways of clarifying or checking understandings, and to the kind of language used to discuss language and literacy (i.e. a *metalanguage*).

Tenor: The higher child-to-adult ratio encountered at school represents a major shift from the more intimate relationships formed between children and their caregivers and siblings in the pre-school years. Learning to be a member of a larger group will be a fresh challenge for most children and one they cannot avoid, for the group in various guises is the dominant organisational form for instruction and disseminating information inside and outside the classroom.

For some, school will present the first experience of collaborative tasks with other children. This change places new demands on children's language for negotiation. Interpersonal skills and the concomitant language resources not only shape playground experiences for individuals but, because of the emphasis on group work in many primary classrooms, will to some extent determine their level of success in learning.

Mode: Children engage in spoken language activities which range from familiar context-embedded activities (such as building with construction blocks or commenting on a sequence of pictures) to tasks requiring more reflective uses of language, in which aspects of audience, purpose and form are emphasised (e.g. formal debates and spoken reports).

Kindergarten teachers, recognising the challenge of these demands for young learners, often employ strategies which minimise the novelty of some aspects of register. They will use familiar topics related to self, family and community on which to build experience in the early weeks while children adjust to school life.

LEARNERS DIVERSITY AND NEEDS

Effective teaching is based on what children already know and can do. The teaching of English will achieve most where the considerable informal language knowledge and competence of students, whatever their cultural or language backgrounds, is acknowledged, used and extended.

(Curriculum Corporation 1994, p. 5)

Children beginning school will already have had experience of using oral language for a range of purposes - experience which will help to shape their performance at school. For example, Ellen has spent a good deal of time with her father, a gardener, and has helped to

establish a flourishing vegetable garden. In the following transcript she is working with her mother, whom she senses is less confident in the garden; she adjusts her language accordingly. (Mother and daughter were taking lettuce seedlings from a punnet and planting them.)

- E: Push it out like that.
 Careful of those little roots ...
 Well now ...
 Now, I'll give you the seed.
 You put ... oh!
 Here's yours.
 Now, here, you hold up the leave (sic) and I'll bury it around ...
 This got two plants in it!

Ellen's knowledge of the plant world and its associated vocabulary (and her skills in using the instruction genre) should serve her well in the fields of science and literacy, providing that she is supported in the move into more specialised understandings. Outside school, however, children will have very different experiences of the fields and tenor relationships associated with school and the uses for which language is employed there. So, just as school signals register demands different from those of the pre-school years, it also demands different things of different children.

Dominic and Ellen both have mothers engaged in the field of education and have spent several years in organised child care. Consequently they will come to school familiar with Standard Australian English, the language of instruction. However, considerable numbers of children will encounter this school variety of English for the first time. Prominent among those emerging with specific needs in oral language programs will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and ESL learners (of course there may be some overlap between these groups).

Teachers need to become aware of some of the issues arising from the language practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. For many speakers of Kriol or Torres Strait Creole, English is a foreign language. Other children speak variants of Standard Australian English at home and in the community. These variants are not 'incorrect'; rather they are legitimate languages and dialects which 'reflect, maintain and continually create Aboriginal culture and identity' (DEET 1995, p. 12). The task for the teacher is to support continued development of home languages and dialects, while demonstrating the purposes and contexts for which Standard Australian English is appropriate and helping students to develop their skills in using it.

THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS NOT A FIRST LANGUAGE

Children from homes where a language other than English is spoken comprise almost one quarter of the school population (Gibbons 1992, p. 225). Some, like Dominic, will have been born in Australia and begin school bilingual. Others born in Australia will begin school fluent in a language or languages other than English, and may or may not have developed literacy skills in them. Still others will have been born overseas and arrive in Australian schools at various entry points. These students may be bilingual (in the sense of fluency in both languages) and will certainly have differing literacy skills. Some will have been through severe traumas, such as family breakup, war or famine, and have had either little or severely disrupted schooling. For many, the process of family migration and settlement will have been unsettling in itself.

Newly arrived students are the most visible of the group who are learning English, as a second language. They must have ready access to specialist teachers, but they are not

normally segregated from the mainstream classroom, since this is seen as a critical site for social and educational development, and therefore for language development. There are several factors mainstream teachers can usefully consider when they are planning oral language programs for a class which includes a newly arrived child:

- Expect a 'silent period' during which the student will concentrate on using all of his or her available resources to understand and participate in the new environment. In other words, he or she will be focusing on the receptive skills of listening, watching and reading rather than the productive skills of speaking and writing.
- Encourage use of the student's first language, whether through opportunities to work with another native speaker of the same language (e.g. a peer, an older student or a community member) or the use of bilingual tapes and books. This not only assists ongoing conceptual development, but also sends a clear message to the newly arrived student that home languages are valued in the school environment.
- Design and adapt learning experiences that enable the newly arrived student to work on the same content as and with other class members. This may involve the use of a range of contextual supports, such as diagrams, charts, pictures and artefacts. Although newly arrived students will be working toward different outcomes initially, they need access to the mainstream curriculum.
- Monitor teacher talk to avoid confusing the student with ambiguity and colloquialisms. Try particularly to be consistent in signals for routine events and instructions during this initial period.

Because access to the mainstream curriculum is seen as a priority for ESL students and it is usual practice to place them in mainstream classes, a large number are to be found there. Yet while some of them enjoy success, a good many others do not achieve as highly as their native-speaking peers. Frequently they receive inadequate support in class because they do not stand out as ESL learners, being Australian-born and having enough English to successfully negotiate social life inside and outside the classroom.

Cummins and Swain (1986) have described the difference between the language demands of the playground and daily routines and those of specialised curriculum areas. (Playground and routine language is also known as basic interpersonal skills competency (BISC), in contrast to cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Face-to-face interpersonal language skills are relatively easy to pick up, but the conceptually related language skills take ESL learners considerably longer to acquire. In many cases their competency in social English distracts attention from their needs in terms of decontextualised academic language. However, like all learners, they need to be competent in both types of language.

Effective teaching strategies for academic and social language competence are based on the following tenets.

Language development is driven by purposeful language use.

Students need plenty of varied opportunities for language use. In the primary school language use is related to social and curriculum purposes, and students need to be involved in motivating learning experiences which are both linguistically and cognitively challenging. For example, consider the following problem-solving task included in a unit of work about animals:

With a partner, select a zoo animal. Design and make a model of an enclosure for a group of these animals. Your enclosure should reflect the animal's natural environment and allow for its behaviours.

Such tasks require learners to use language associated with the topic (e.g. *zoo, enclosures, giraffes, elephants, habitat, diet*) and which problem solving (e.g. *If . . . then . . . It has to have . . .*) as well as with collaboration (e.g. *I think . . . What about . . .? Yes/No, because . . .*). At the same time as their language skills are being stretched, learners are required to demonstrate their understandings of animal characteristics and needs, zoo facilities and design, and construction techniques.

Language is shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which it is produced.

Second language learners need classroom practices which make the links between texts and contexts explicit. They include:

- interrogating the social purpose (e.g. Who is the speaker? Who is the intended audience? What is the speaker trying to do? How else might it be done? What is your response? Where else do we find this type of talk?)
- modelling examples of the genre through role play or audio and video tape or through deconstructing texts (e.g. What sort of shape is this text? What function does this part have? How does the text hang together? How effective is it?)

Over time students and teachers build up a good deal of technical language with which to talk about their shared understandings. Classrooms which enable students to develop the tools for thinking and talking about language and the construction of texts serve ESL students particularly well.

Bilingualism and biculturalism are strengths.

Students' prior experiences of learning language and culture are a resource which they can draw on in learning a second or subsequent language and culture. For example, most ESL learners who are already literate in another language do not have to relearn concepts about print in order to read and write in English. Likewise those who have developed understandings about the world in their first language can readily transfer them to their second; they don't need to learn them again. In addition, the process of learning a second language helps students to develop a considerable metalinguistic awareness, and as a result ESL learners tend to be comfortable with explicit talk about language forms and practices.

Practices which value children's linguistic and cultural resources can have a powerful effect on their self-esteem. For example, a classroom using culturally significant motifs and artefacts to help students explore mathematical concepts can make strong links between home and school and reinforce cultural identity in a positive way. Programs which explore the many ways of meeting social needs (e.g. greeting and leave taking, performing family duties, recording important information, or celebrating) help all children to build up a framework for understanding and valuing the language and culture of their own communities as well as of others.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has stressed the important role of spoken language in learning, while attempting to describe some of the diverse aspects of the language in use among learners in our mainstream classes. The current curriculum guidelines which consider language in relation to the context in which it's produced strongly support the needs of all learners, and the following chapter draws on them to consider certain implications for classroom practice.

Acknowledgment

Many thanks to Criss Jones Diaz for the use of a transcript of her family life.

References

Gibbons, P. (1991) 'Learning to listen and getting the sounds right'. Chapter 8 in *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

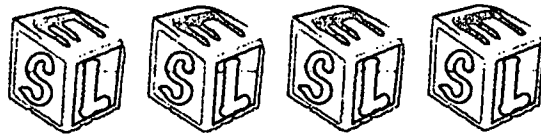
Gibbons, P. (1991). 'Planning for a language for learning'. Chapter 2 in *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Gibbons, P. (1991) 'An interactive classroom: Developing spoken language'. Chapter 3 in *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Jones, P. (1996) *Talking to learn*. Edited by Pauline Jones. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Sharpe, T. (1996) 'Assessing oral language'. Chapter 3 In *Talking to learn*. Edited by Pauline Jones. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association

Module 4



Talking and learning in a
second language:

Strategies



Module 4

Focus: Talking and learning in a second language: strategies

Overview

In this module, we explore a range of strategies for supporting the oral language development of second language learners of English in early childhood settings.

Firstly we focus on those aspects of early childhood programs which specifically encourage oral language development in a second language, including the role of the adult in scaffolding language. We examine the importance of small group work and the role of talk in learning and thinking and in developing language and social skills, and we model some strategies which focus specifically on small group work in oral language development. We also highlight strategies which support the development of listening skills. Finally we focus on planning and programming to enhance oral language development in early childhood settings.

This module contains the following activities:

- 4.1 Reflecting on Module 3*
- 4.2 Oral language development within early childhood programs*
- 4.3 Talking and learning through small group work*
- 4.4 Strategies for developing listening skills*
- 4.5 Planning and programming for oral language development*
- 4.6 Suggested workplace activity*
- 4.7 Readings.*

At the end of this module you will have:

- increased your awareness of how aspects of early childhood programs, particularly the role of the adult, support the oral language development of learners from diverse language backgrounds
- examined the importance of small group work as a strategy for developing oral language and social skills and for learning and thinking
- developed further your strategies for explicitly supporting listening skills in English
- increased your understanding of the importance of planning and programming towards oral language development.

4.1 Reflecting on Module 3

As in the previous module, you may wish to begin your work on this module by reflecting on the materials and readings from Module 3. Refer back to your notes in Worksheet 3.6.1, Worksheet 3.6.2 and Worksheet 3.7.1 and consider what new understandings you have gained and what critical issues require resolution or further research.

You may also wish to consider the relevance of these understandings and issues within your workplace and consider how your practice is being or could be affected by this professional development.

Jot down your ideas in Worksheet 4.1.1 below.

Worksheet 4.1.1



4.2 Oral language development within early childhood programs

Introduction

In this section, we will examine how early childhood programs can support oral language development through

- providing a supportive learning environment
- the interactive role of the adult in scaffolding learner language
- the kinds of activities commonly used.

We will explore how we, as educators, can use activities within a supportive learning environment to more explicitly support the oral language development in English of children from diverse language backgrounds.

Activity

Read the following Resource Notes 4.2.1, which outline features of a supportive learning environment for ESL learners.

Resource Notes 4.2.1

The classroom provides a comfortable learning environment.

Learners' attitudes to learning and their confidence in themselves as learners are key factors in successful learning. Feeling confident to 'have a go', without fear of failure, and developing a positive attitude to learning itself allows learners to develop confidence in their abilities to learn, and the importance of this cannot be over-emphasised. Many bilingual children suffer low self-esteem because of early frustrations and language-related difficulties in school. A cycle of failure, low self-esteem and subsequent expectations of continued failure must not be allowed to develop. In addition, positive responses by teachers to children's first language and culture are important in enhancing learners' self-esteem and developing their confidence.

Language is used in the service of other learning, with planned integration of content and language.

In the same way as children learn a first language as a means of finding out about the world around them, rather than as an end in itself, so learning a second language seems to be most effective when the focus is on using language to learn something else. There is a place for explicit discussion about language, but this is likely to be useful only so far as it is related to the actual language being used by the learner.

There are planned opportunities for meaningful interaction between peers.

The peer group is a powerful resource for the learner, providing a wide range of models of language use, and the need to communicate offers the learner a real motivation to use language.

Resource Notes 4.2.1 (continued)

Children have opportunities to be 'problem solvers' rather than 'information receivers'.

This will involve collaborative learning, where the children are given responsibility for some of their own or the group's learning.

The models of language presented are understandable to the learner but also provide new ways of expressing meaning.

Learners must be able to hear models which will extend their own language use.

There are frequent opportunities for interaction between teacher and individual student.

In classrooms where there are large numbers of bilingual children and few good English models, the quality and quantity of personal interactions with the teacher becomes a major resource for children's language development.

(Gibbons 1991: 11)

Reading 1 at the end of this module focuses on further strategies for developing an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

As the above notes reinforce and as we have discussed in Module 2, oral language is best learnt through meaningful interactions with others. For ESL learners, an environment which encourages interaction with adults and peers in both first and second language provides ESL learners with valuable opportunities to experience and practise speaking and listening, in a range of situations for a range of purposes.

Activity

All of the adults working in early childhood settings are ideally placed to support the oral language development of ESL learners through their interactions with them.

Scaffolding learners' language is an important strategy that adults can use, as care-givers and educators, in supporting children to make meaning. With ESL learners, it is important to listen carefully to the learner, take an active interest in what they are doing and saying, and scaffold their language explicitly.

Asking particular kinds of questions is an important way that adults can scaffold children's language. Through open-ended questioning, adults can encourage children to use certain language patterns, can extend children's utterances and can model language structures that they want their learners to use.

The following transcripts in Resource Notes 4.2.2 are examples of adult-child interaction where the adult has consciously employed particular scaffolding strategies, including asking questions, to support the child to communicate in a meaningful way and consequently enhanced the child's oral language development.

Read these notes and then identify in Worksheet 4.2.1 (which follows the transcripts) ways that the adults in these Transcripts 1, 2 and 3 have supported the oral language development of ESL learners. Consider the ways in which you do this in similar situations of child-adult encounters in your workplace.

Resource Notes 4.2.2

Transcript 1

Context: *a small group of children (C) and one adult (T) are playing with dough. The child speaking in this transcript is from a non-English speaking background.*

T: *I'm squeezing mine - look it's going through my fingers - look when I squeeze it the dough comes through my fingers. Yeah there through Lizzie's too . . . what's the dough doing Lizzie?*

C: *through my fingers*

T: *going through your fingers . . . I'm going to try again*

C: *I'm going to try again*

Transcript 2

Context: *Two children from non-English speaking backgrounds and an adult are holding and stroking a rabbit.*

C1: *he got same colour as mine*

T: *he has got the same colour as you . . . look feel his ear . . . feel his ears . . . how do they feel?*

C2: *I got two ears*

T: *you've got two ears . . . yes you've got one here and one there (points to child's ears) . . . Hippety's got two ears (holds the rabbit's ears up to show the children)*

C1: *I got my earrings*

T: *you've got earrings?*

C1: *I've got none*

T: *you've got no earrings . . . no you haven't got them on today . . . I've got my earrings . . . see two earrings (points to her earrings).*

Resource Notes 4.2.2 (continued)

Transcript 3

Context: *An adult and a child from non-English speaking background are looking at some photos of an excursion to a playground.*

C: . . . stairs and then we just go down

T: so you went up the stairs and you came down the slide . . . did you go up the slide?

C: (shakes his head)

T: why didn't you go up the slide?

C: I didn't want . . . too hungry

T: you didn't want to . . . you were feeling hungry

C: yeah

T: what's in this picture?

C: (points at the picture) round and round (unclear) and round

T: ah did you round?

C: and I push it (demonstrates)

T: and did you push?

C: yes

T: and did you get on as well and someone push you?

C: I push it

T: you pushed it.

(From the video '... and now English: a programme showing young children acquiring English as a 2nd language', Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre: Victoria, 1987)

Now identify ways in which the adults in these transcripts have supported oral language development of ESL learners, and consider ways you do this in similar situations of child-adult encounters in your workplace.

Worksheet 4.2.1

Strategies for scaffolding language development

Transcript 1

- *repeating new words*

-

-

Transcript 2

- *modelling correct tense as part of the natural conversation*

-

-

Transcript 3

- *asking open-ended questions*

-

-

Read the following Resource Notes 4.2.3, which may include some ideas to add to those you have recorded in the previous worksheet.

Resource Notes 4.2.3

Transcript 1

- *repeating new words*
- *asking questions to reinforce language and check comprehension*
- *demonstrating and naming the action at the same time.*

Transcript 2

- *modelling correct tense structuring as part of the natural conversation, e.g., 'I've got'*
- *repeating child's utterance to reinforce it in the memory*
- *expanding child's utterance to encourage language extension.*

Transcript 3

- *asking open-ended questions*
- *negotiating meanings between adult and child*
- *rephrasing child's utterance to provide modelling.*

As well as the explicit language support in the above exchanges, the use of visual and concrete objects is essential to aid comprehension and reinforce and extend language. These few examples show that conversations with individuals and small group discussions about familiar, everyday experiences, supported by visual and concrete materials and explicit adult scaffolding of children's language, all support the language development of ESL learners.

The video *And now English* (see References) shows many more examples of adult/child interaction, where adults explicitly scaffold the child's language in different ways.

Activity

We will now turn to focus on the kinds of activities that are commonly used in early childhood programs and think about those which have worked well with ESL learners in developing their speaking and listening skills in English.

Jot down some of these activities or strategies in Worksheet 4.2.2 and think about **how** they may be useful in supporting ESL learners' oral language development, including some language functions they may be developing.

Worksheet 4.2.2

Activity or strategy	Usefulness	Language function
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>socio-dramatic play</i> 	<i>provides a relaxing environment in which to hear and practise meaningful utterances; allows children to use language to actively construct meaning</i>	<i>planning, suggesting, imagining, hypothesising, explaining</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>excursions</i> 	<i>provide important background knowledge from new experiences; introduce new vocabulary linked to concrete objects; enjoyment</i>	<i>recounting a shared experience, describing</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>cooking</i> 	<i>provides concrete and visual materials to link new language; involves touch and smell, shape and size, objects in relationships to each other, objects changing state</i>	<i>giving instructions, sequencing</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>storytime</i> 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>paper crafts</i> 		

As an early childhood educator, you know that the strategies listed above are useful for developing oral language skills of ESL learners. However, you may not have previously articulated the purposes for using a particular strategy or activity in language development. You may have chosen an activity simply because you know it works well and the children enjoy it.

In this module we will emphasise the need to focus explicitly on particular aspects of oral language development of your ESL learners in your programming, and the need to choose specific strategies to meet their particular language needs. In other words, we need to work out first of all what language these learners need and then decide on strategies to achieve particular language learning outcomes.

It is important to note that, in a resource such as this training folder, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive range of oral language activities suitable for ESL learners. There are many excellent resources (see readings at the end of this module) which do this. The important point that we reinforce here is the idea that we might choose to use certain strategies because they are particularly effective in developing oral language essential for ESL learners to become competent users of English in the settings in which we work.

Activity

In Worksheet 4.2.2 you have identified a number of activities or strategies which are successful in encouraging ESL learners to speak and listen in English, and you have articulated how these strategies may be useful. Let's look at only one of these - songs and rhyme - in more detail. To begin this analysis, reflect on the following questions in Worksheet 4.2.3.

190 190

Worksheet 4.2.3

<i>Think about songs and rhymes which you have used in your setting. Which ones have been most successful with ESL learners, and why do you think this is so?</i>	
<i>Title</i> • • • •	<i>Why</i>
<i>Have you used songs or rhymes to fulfil a language objective? If so, which songs or rhymes and for what objective?</i>	
<i>Title</i> • • • •	<i>Objective</i>
<i>Have you made up texts based around a theme (e.g., fruit and vegetables) and put these texts to a familiar tune? If so, what theme to what tune?</i>	
<i>Title</i> • • • •	<i>Theme</i>

We can make use of songs, rhymes, chants and raps in non-threatening and enjoyable ways for ESL learners to learn many aspects of the English language. The benefits of their use are summarised in the following Resource Notes 4.2.4.

Resource Notes 4.2.4

Songs and rhymes provide many useful approaches to second language development:

- *to introduce vocabulary or concepts relevant to a particular theme, e.g., colours, number, body parts, animals*
- *to practise the sounds of the language in a non-formal and enjoyable way, emphasising pronunciation, rhythms and intonation patterns*
- *to provide opportunities for expressing ideas and feelings through facial expressions, words, movement and actions*
- *to practise language structures which are useful for communicative purposes in an enjoyable, non-threatening environment*
- *to develop listening skills and develop memory, by allowing children to listen to the new language in a non-threatening environment where they can take time to distinguish between sounds and respond to a variety of rhythms*
- *to provide opportunities for children to acknowledge and share their own cultural and linguistic heritage*
- *to encourage children to participate in an activity which does not demand spoken language.*

(adapted from Clarke 1992: 39-40)

It is important to ensure that song and rhyme activities are culturally inclusive and creative. Reading 2 at the end of this module provides some guidelines for choosing and adapting songs and rhymes.

The purpose of this activity is to increase your awareness of the effectiveness of activities you use every day in your work settings for promoting second language learning, and to highlight how these activities can be adapted and developed to provide greater benefits to ESL learners in the task of learning to talk and listen in English.

Conclusion

As we know, early childhood programs, with their focus on activities which encourage meaningful interactions, are rich and supportive settings for ESL learners to develop their speaking and listening skills in their second language. However, if ESL learners are to become competent users of English, we need to focus explicitly on particular aspects of oral language development and choose strategies to support this development. We will now go on to look at how we can do this.

4.3 Oral language development through small group work

Introduction

There are many resources available which demonstrate the advantages of small group work, particularly for ESL learners.

A summary of these advantages is offered by Priscilla Clarke:

Small group activities are valuable because:

- *they encourage the development of language, especially for children from non-English speaking background but are also extremely valuable for English speaking children*
- *they provide opportunities to assess children's individual needs*
- *children have more opportunity to participate when there are fewer to compete; the smaller number makes it easier for an adult to interact with individual children*
- *they provide opportunities for children to listen to and identify with a more manageable number of models.*

(Priscilla Clarke, 1992: 23)

There are many ways small groups can be set up, and many activities that can be carried out in small groups.

Small group work can be specifically planned or it can happen in a more informal and unstructured way.

Informal group activities include gardening, sand play, cooking, dramatic play and games, where there are valuable opportunities for meaningful interaction between children. In these situations, being interested in the activity, children are not concerned about making mistakes. These are important opportunities for ESL learners to hear and produce English in a stress-free environment.

The strategies modelled in the activities we present for you below are examples of small group work which are planned for particular purposes and have particular language outcomes in mind. They are all examples of 'process' type tasks as described in Module 3. Small group activities include problem-solving activities, information-sharing activities, rank-ordering activities, enquiry and elimination activities and barrier games (*Gibbons 1991: 35*).

In considering how useful such activities are in encouraging language development, the following questions from Pauline Gibbons in Resource Notes 4.3.1 are a helpful guide.

Resource Notes 4.3.1

- *Is talking necessary?*
- *Is interaction necessary?*
- *Are content areas of the curriculum being reinforced?*
- *Is at least one child using 'stretches' of language?*
- *Is thinking involved?*
- *Is the pace right, with enough variety within a given time span?*
- *Are all children in a group involved, either in speaking or in listening?*

(Gibbons 1991:41)

Activity

This activity illustrates a one-way information gap task, where only one of the participants has the information necessary to complete the task. For the successful completion of the task, it is necessary for this participant to give clear, precise information and for the other participant(s) to formulate clarifying questions.

We will model this activity using adults (three people preferably), but it can be modified to use with young children. You will need a partner for this activity.

It is also useful to have an observer to jot down what is being said or tape the activity, in order to analyse the kind of language (in terms of functions and structures and features) that is generated. You may choose to be the observer and ask two colleagues to complete the task. The observer can use Worksheet 4.3.1 to record examples of language used; or, if the activity is taped, you can listen to the tape as a group after completing the activity and use Worksheet 4.3.1 to record examples of language used.

Task: one-way information gap

Process

1. Participant A and participant B sit back-to-back.
2. Give A and B the **same** set of 8 Lego blocks, with each block in the set differing in some way in colour or size.
3. Ask A to take a few minutes to construct an object (e.g., tower/pattern) with the blocks.
4. Ask A to describe the construction, so that B can build it without seeing it. Remember that A needs to give clear, precise information and B can ask clarifying questions.
5. When A and B believe they have completed the task, the whole group compares the two constructions.
6. Using the observer's notes or the audiotape, reflect on the language generated by this activity and add to or make notes in Worksheet 4.3.1 below.
7. Read Resource Notes 4.3.2, which suggest some examples of language use likely to be generated by this activity.

Language functions - some examples

(e.g., location, sequence, questions)

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Language structures and features - some examples

(e.g., tenses, prepositions, vocabulary)

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Language functions - some examples

- *describing location*
e.g., 'The biggest red block is on the bottom.'
- *describing objects and sequences*
e.g., 'The next block is the small blue one.'
- *giving instructions*
e.g., 'Put the small blue one on top of the small red one.'
- *asking questions*
e.g., 'Where do I put the small blue block?'
- *expressing confusions and seeking clarification*
e.g., 'Do you mean....?'

Language structures and features - some examples

- *prepositions*
e.g., 'on the floor', 'on top of the red block'
- *imperatives*
e.g., 'put the smallest red block on top of the yellow one'
- *relevant vocabulary*
e.g., blocks, Lego, colours, sizes, smallest etc
- *present continuous tense*
e.g., 'I'm putting the red block ...'
- *simple present tense*
e.g., 'the tower is four blocks high'

Reading 3 at the end of this module provides more information about information gap tasks and suggests ways they can be adapted in early childhood settings.

Activity

The process of completing two-way information gap tasks needs to be modelled a number of times before children will be able to successfully attempt these tasks on their own, but it is well worth persevering, as such tasks create unique opportunities to negotiate meaning and can be adapted to provide children with opportunities to practise using language functions, structures and features which may have recently been introduced.

Two-way information tasks can be conducted in pairs or bigger groups and can be successfully modelled in a number of ways. It is important to remember that each member of the group must not have enough information to be able to complete the task on their own.

Groupings could include:

- an adult and a single child (as a pair)
- an adult and a group of children (as a pair)
- an adult and three children (as a group of four) . . . and so on.

Children working together as one member of a group can provide support for ESL learners who may not yet have enough English language to be an active member of a group in their own right. This also provides opportunities for these learners to hear language modelled in meaningful contexts without any pressure to perform before they are ready to contribute.

We model the following activity as an example of a two-way information gap activity which you can adapt to your own setting. As mentioned above, in this kind of activity no participant has enough information to complete the task alone, and so the participants must share their information.

For the successful completion of the task, it is necessary for all members of the group to give clear, precise information and to be able to formulate clarifying questions.

This activity uses a set of six pictures (see Resource Notes 4.3.3). You will need a group of six colleagues for this activity, or you may choose to have a group of three and provide each member of the group with two pictures. Alternatively, you may choose to trial the activity with a small group of children in your centre.

As in the previous activity, it is useful to have an observer to jot down what is being said or tape the activity, in order to analyse the kind of language (in terms of functions and structures and features) that is generated.

The observer uses Worksheet 4.3.2 to record examples of language used during the activity; or, if the activity is taped, listen to the tape as a group after completing the activity, and use Worksheet 4.3.2 to record examples of language used.

If you complete this task with colleagues, you will need Resource Notes 4.3.3 and should make copies of the pictures for each person in the group.

It is important that the participants in the activity do not know the sequence of the pictures before completing the task. For this reason, the activity would be more successful if you distributed the pictures and acted as observer. If you complete this kind of task with children, you will need to choose more suitable pictures for your learners.

Resource Notes 4.3.4 provide a more suitable activity for early childhood learners.

Task: two-way information gap

Process

1. Participants A, B, C, D, E and F sit in a circle facing each other.
2. Distribute the pictures from Resource Notes 4.3.3, giving one picture to each member of the group.

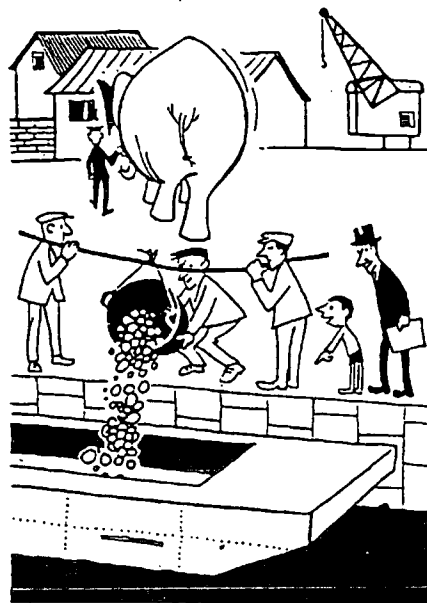
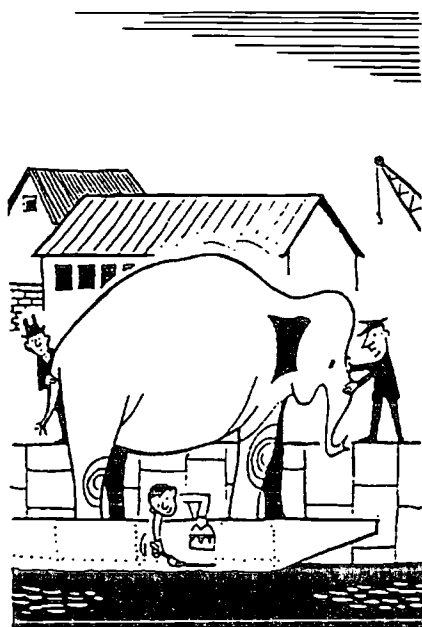
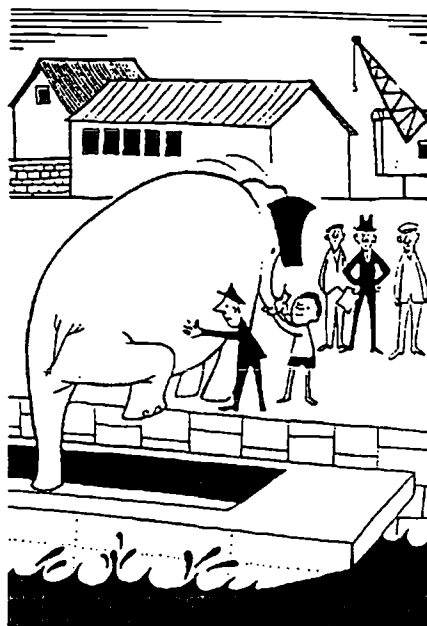
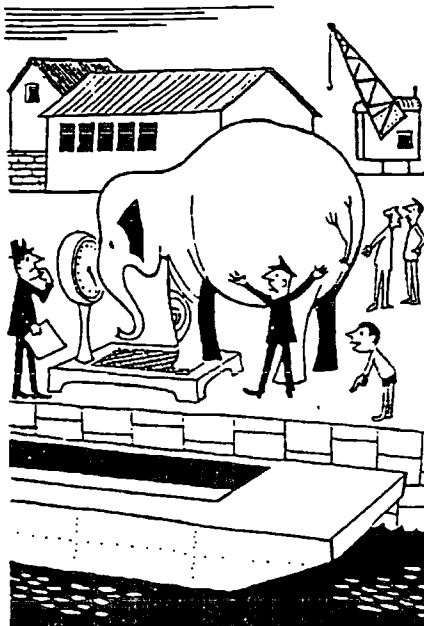
The pictures in Resource Notes 4.3.3 are in the correct order and so the pictures should be distributed randomly.

3. Ask the group to work out the order of the pictures **without showing the pictures to each other**.

Remember that all members need to give clear, precise information and ask clarifying questions if necessary.

4. When the group believes they have organised the pictures in the correct sequence, show their pictures in the order they have determined and see if they are correct.
5. With the observer or listening to the tape, reflect on the language generated by this activity.
6. Read Resource Notes 4.3.5, which suggest some examples of language use likely to be generated by this activity.

Resource Notes 4.3.3



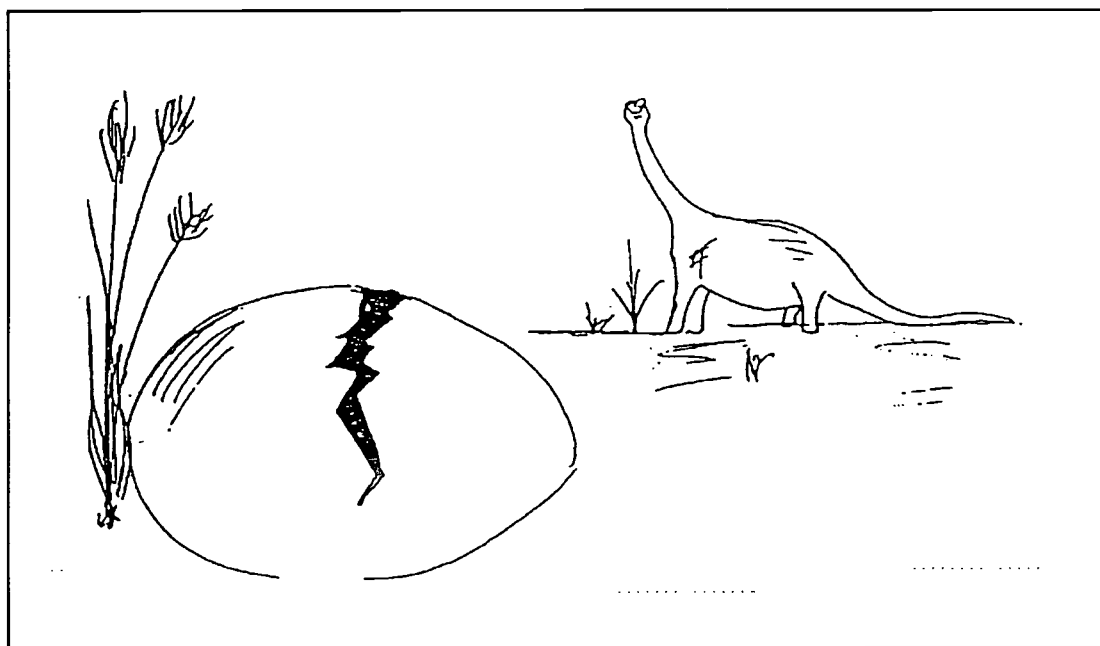
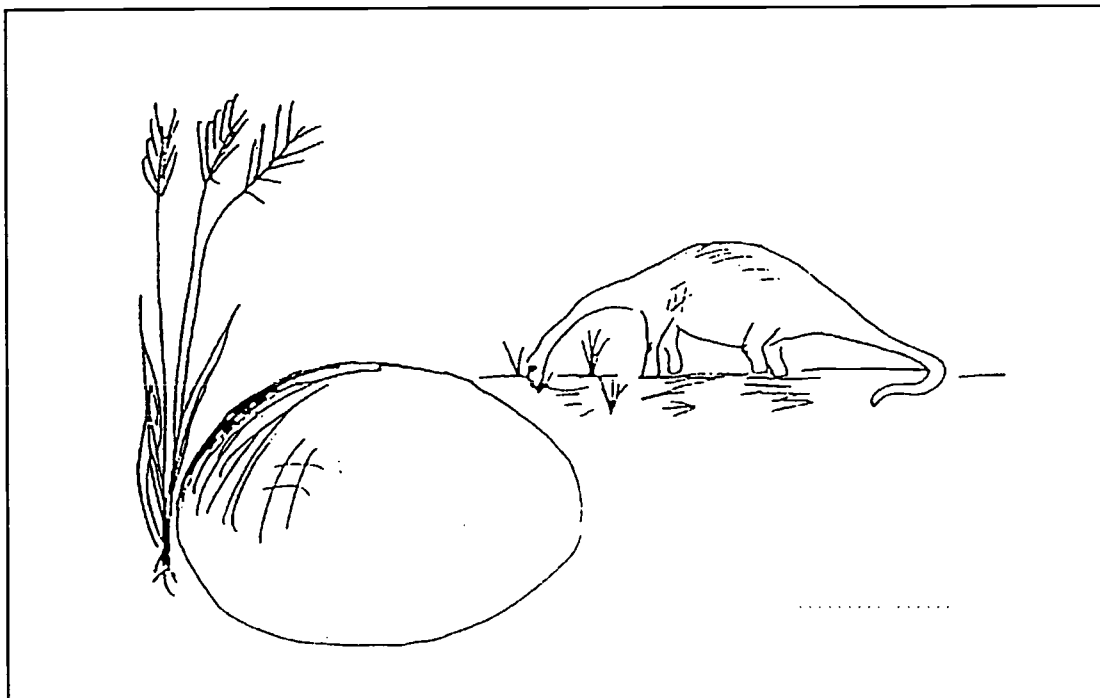
(from Heaton J.B: *Composition through pictures. Illustrations by James Moss.*
Essex, UK: Longman, 1966: 35-36)

Resource Notes 4.3.3 (continued)



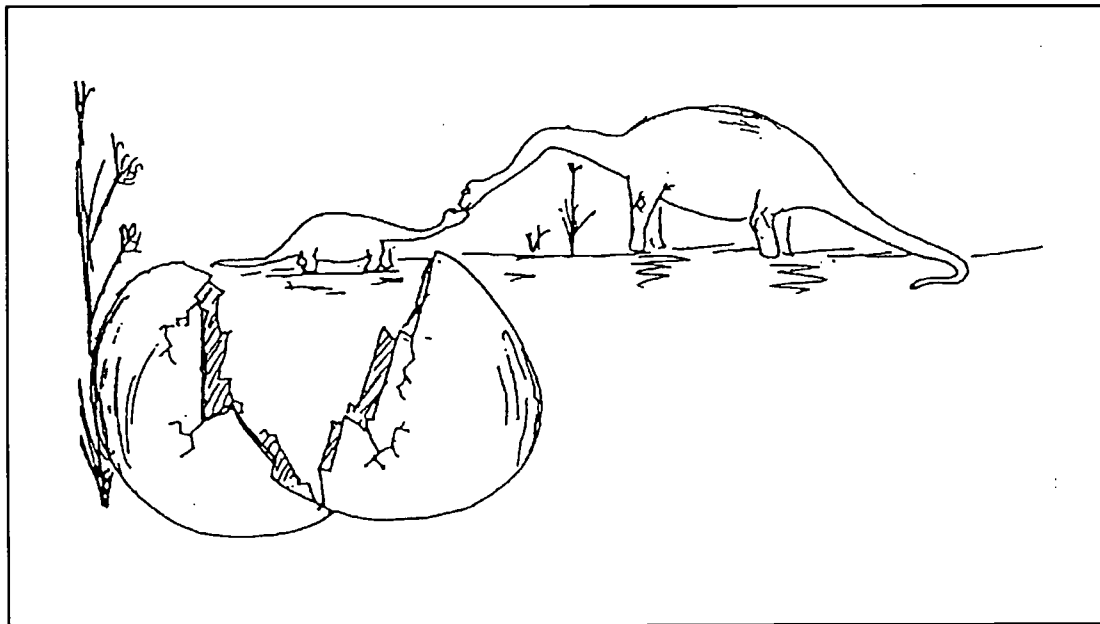
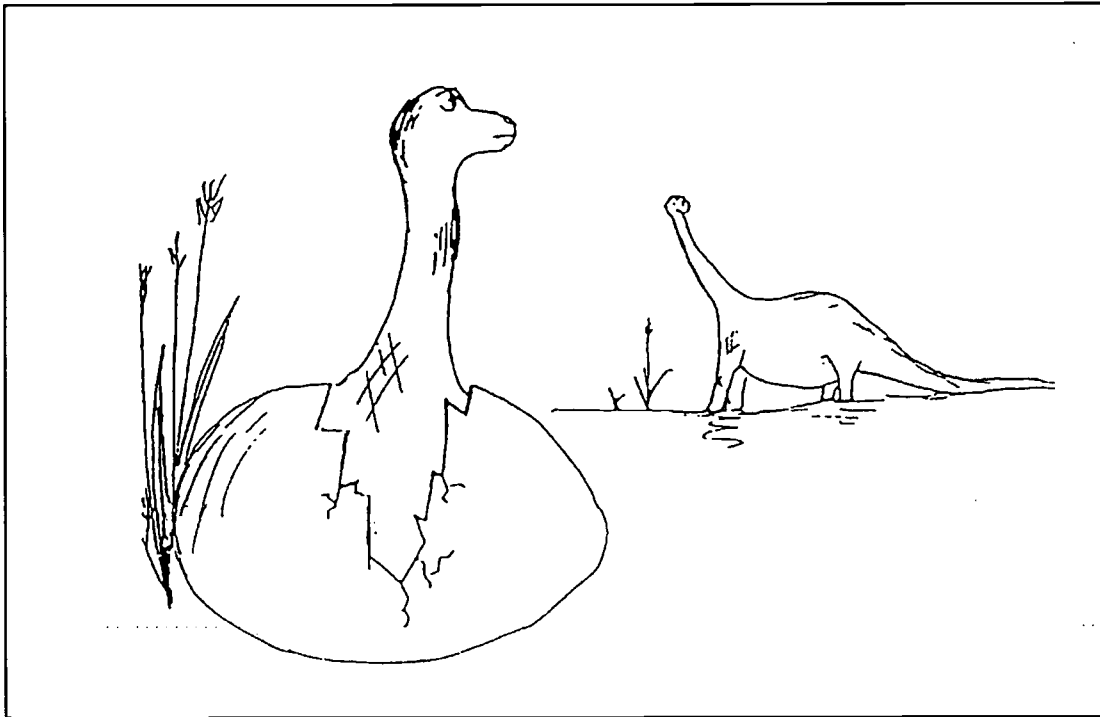
(from Heaton J.B: *Composition through pictures. Illustrations by James Moss.*
Essex, UK: Longman, 1966: 35-36)

Resource Notes 4.3.4



(D.Rees 1992)

Resource Notes 4.3.4 (continued)



(D.Rees 1992)

As previously explained, the observer uses the following Worksheet 4.3.2 to record examples of language used during the two-way information gap sequencing activity. If the activity is taped, use Worksheet 4.3.2 to record examples of language used as you listen to the tape.

Worksheet 4.3.2

Language functions - some examples

e.g., describing, guessing, sequencing

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Language structures and features - some examples

e.g., vocabulary items, tenses, prepositions

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

The following Resource Notes 4.3.5 include some examples of language likely to be generated by a two-way information gap sequencing activity.

Resource Notes 4.3.5

Language functions - some examples

- *description of what's happening in the pictures e.g., actions, relationships, locations*
- *description of objects*
- *making suggestions and guessing*
- *justifying/giving reasons*
- *agreeing and disagreeing*
- *asking questions*
- *sequencing ideas and events.*

Language structures and features - some examples

- *connectives, e.g., 'next', 'after'*
- *modality, e.g., 'could', 'may be'*
- *relevant vocabulary*
- *present continuous tense, e.g., 'he's moving ...', 'it's looking at ...', 'they're going'*
- *prepositions, e.g., 'in', 'through', 'under', 'next to'*

(adapted from ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course: Workshop 8)

Another example of a two-way information gap has been included for your information to illustrate how you can use such activities to involve children in using deductive reasoning skills, in this case, to find the solution to a problem through a process of elimination. The activity is taken from a very useful resource text, *Group solutions: cooperative logic activities for grades K-4* (Goodman 1992), which stresses the importance of preparing children carefully for this kind of activity, which will be common in schools, both for its value in learning how to cooperate and in understanding the concept of elimination, and offers some excellent strategies for doing this.









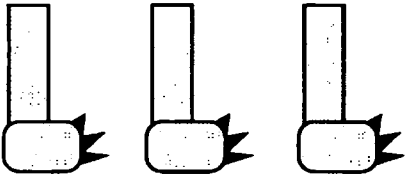


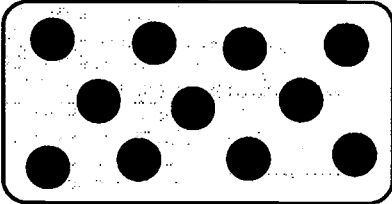
The activity included here could form part of a theme on animals and lends itself well to reinforcing vocabulary on parts of animals' bodies and what animals look like. It could easily be adapted to focus on other descriptive words about animals, people or places.

You will need a group of four learners for this activity.

Again, as in the previous activities, it is useful to tape the activity, in order to analyse the kind of language (in terms of functions, structures and features) that is generated.

Process

1. Photocopy Resource Notes 4.3.6 and Resource Notes 4.3.7.
2. Cut up Resource Notes 4.3.6 into separate cards.
3. Give one piece of Resource Notes 4.3.6 to each learner. Learners must not show the pictures to each other.
4. Work out together which picture on Resource Notes 4.3.7 all the pieces belong to.
5. Listen to the tape and reflect on the language generated by this activity.
6. Then read Resource Notes 4.3.8, which suggest some examples of language use likely to be generated by this activity.

 <p>Find The Animal </p>  <p>1 tail</p>	 <p>Find The Animal </p>  <p>2 ears</p>
 <p>Find The Animal </p>  <p>3 legs</p>	 <p>Find The Animal </p>  <p>spots</p>

Goodman 1992, 'Group solutions: cooperative logic activities for grades K-4': 38

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Resource Notes 4.3.7

(M) "Find The Animal" Picture Cards (M)

Goodman 1992, 'Group solutions: cooperative logic activities for grades K-4': 39

207
207

Read the following Resource Notes, which list some of the possible language functions, language structures and features that may be generated by this task.

Resource Notes 4.3.8

Language functions - some examples

- *asking questions - 'what does your card say?'*
- *explaining - 'it is not that animal because...'*
- *hypothesising - 'I think that...'*
- *describing - 'my card has a ...'*

Language structures and features - some examples

- *relevant vocabulary*
- *present tense*
- *use of 'because' (linking cause and effect)*
- *negative statements.*

For greater impact on language development, the content and processes of the activity should be chosen to reinforce particular language functions, structures or features, since the language used in these activities will vary according to the content of the pictures and what the task requires. For example, finding the differences between two pictures will generate different language from sequencing a series of pictures.

Children will also need to be introduced to the language required for the activity, before being expected to successfully take part in it.

They may not be familiar with all of the vocabulary they will need (e.g., size words, shapes, colours) or with terms for sequence and location ('up', 'down', 'top', 'next', 'on the right'). Consider also how concrete and non-verbal cues could assist in making meaning and developing language - for example, how could you demonstrate language concepts such as 'huge', 'round', 'quietly', 'swimming', in a concrete way?

Activity: using graphic organisers

All graphic organisers are supportive of ESL learners because they organise information visually and relate the sound and shape of words to concrete images.

There are many ways of organising information in diagrammatic or graphic form, depending on the nature of the information. Story maps, time-lines, structured overviews, concept maps, flow diagrams, tables and maps are just a few of these.

Story maps and timelines (e.g., a sequence of photographs of your children growing up) are useful for demonstrating the sequence of events in narratives or recounts; flow charts for showing life cycles of

animals or plants; picture glossaries for showing what's needed for a procedure; charts for scaffolding newstime presentations; etc.

It is important to ensure that ESL learners understand the different uses and purposes of visual texts.

Visual texts can be used in the following ways:

- as a teacher aid in making language more concrete for learners and supporting oral comprehension and cognitive development
- as a strategy for children to organise their own learning
- as a form of literacy that children develop and use for particular purposes in particular situations.

The process of developing visual texts does not necessarily have to occur in small groups and does not require all participants to contribute orally, as information tasks do. However, in a small collaborative group situation, the ESL learner, if not yet confident to contribute, will still be able to participate and hear important language being modelled.

Our next activity looks at using one form of visual representation, a concept map, as a teacher strategy.

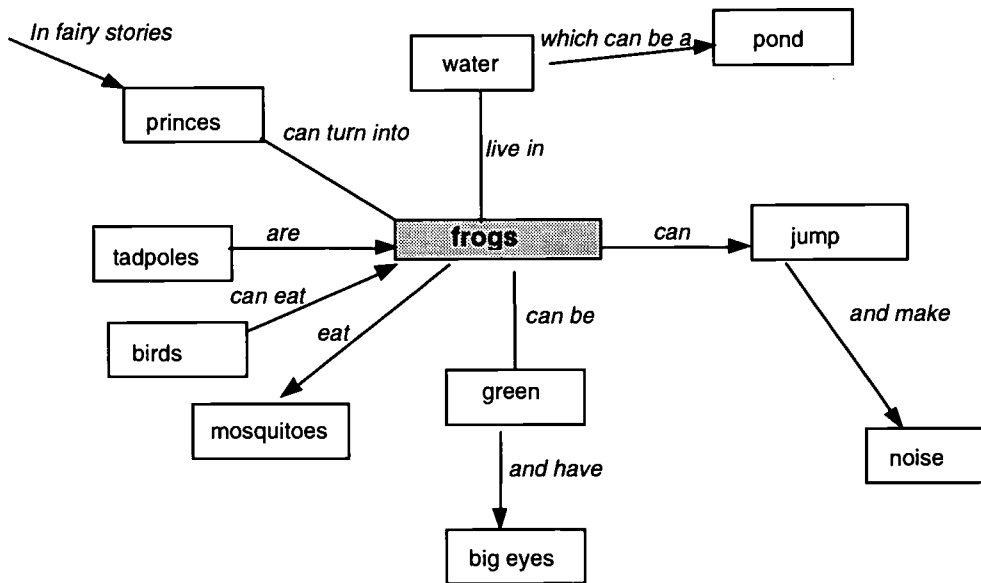
A concept map can be used to:

- determine what children know about a specific topic and build on that knowledge
- focus ESL learners on the text or task
- make language more concrete
- make linguistic links between concepts
- enable learners to clarify their ideas about a topic
- support oral comprehension
- introduce new vocabulary.

A concept map can be used across all types of learning activity.

A simple concept map is a group of words or pictures linked to a main idea. It is a visual representation of ideas as illustrated in Resource Notes 4.3.9.

Example of a concept map



Here we will model a concept map as a way of finding out what children know about a topic before beginning a study on the topic or before introducing an information book on that topic. In this context, it can be considered a pre-reading strategy as well as a strategy for developing oral language.

You may find it useful to try this activity with colleagues or with children at your centre.

Worksheet 4.3.3

Task: Developing a concept map

1. Identify a topic which you are covering in your program, e.g., frogs
2. With a group of learners, brainstorm ten words related to this topic. It is useful to keep the topic narrow and limit the number of words brainstormed. You may need to use focus questions.
3. Write these words or draw pictures on cards and use blu-tack to put cards onto a large piece of paper or whiteboard. If you are doing this task with colleagues, appoint a scribe to facilitate this process.
4. Ask learners to arrange the pictures or words to show how they relate to the topic and to other words.
5. Ask learners to say a sentence to show how two words or pictures might link, e.g., 'tadpoles are baby frogs', 'frogs live in creeks', and write in the linking words.

There are a number of advantages of using concept maps with ESL learners. It is useful to make a concept map out of materials that can be changed or added to, e.g., cards, felt pieces or magnetic boards.

There are also a number of ways they can be adapted for different purposes. If you have used concept maps before you will have already tried different approaches to using them in the early childhood setting.

Read Resource Notes 4.3.10, which outline other purposes and uses for concept maps.

Resource Notes 4.3.10

Concept Maps

Other purposes and approaches

- *as an assessment strategy at the end of a topic*
- *as a diagnostic strategy with new students to identify areas of strength and difficulty*
- *as a way of organising key concepts from a text*
- *to find out what children know and understand about the language of an unfamiliar new topic*
- *use pictures and words that children are already familiar with and arrange in a map to create new links and extend vocabulary into new areas*
- *use pictures or words to develop children's early reading skills or provide visual clues for inexperienced English speakers*
- *can be displayed so that they can be added to, altered and discussed as the theme progresses.*

Conclusion

Planned group activities enable opportunities for the development of language that children may not otherwise encounter. Communicative activities that emphasise the development of communication skills developed in meaningful situations are enormously beneficial for second language learners.

When planning for group work, consider some of the options as outlined in Resource Notes 4.3.11.

Resource Notes 4.3.11

Communicative activities to support ESL learners

- *plan for children to sometimes work with bilingual staff or in first language groups*
- *plan for mixed language ability groups*
- *create opportunities for children to work with adults in 1:1 situations*
- *have specific purposes for setting up groups*
- *plan to develop children's skills as members of an audience*
- *think about whether the activity requires all group members to talk and negotiate meaning*
- *think about whether the activity allows for 'exploratory' talk or gaining meaning through talking*
- *plan to provide opportunities to practise newly introduced language and concepts.*

4.4 Strategies for developing listening skills

Introduction

This section focuses on strategies which educators will find useful to support the development of listening skills in English of ESL learners.

In the previous section, the activities modelled involved listening in an integrated and purposeful way, which is the most effective way of developing listening skills. For example, think about how useful information gap activities are in developing children's listening skills.

However as Pauline Gibbons points out, *(t)here is a danger that listening will only be planned for incidentally because it is a less tangible skill, and so it is a good idea to program for it to occur regularly (1991: 91)*. This is particularly important for children learning to listen in a second language.

Activity

In the following Worksheet 4.4.1, jot down ways that you presently support the development of listening skills in your workplace setting and compare your ideas with those suggested in Resource Notes 4.4.1, which follows the worksheet.

Worksheet 4.4.1

Means for developing listening skills:

- *have focussed listening activities, e.g., you clap the rhythm and the children copy or clap the rhythms of songs, rhymes or raps*
- *ask children to look at the pictures as you read the accompanying text in a story*
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Means for developing listening skills

- *model good listening behaviours so that children are aware of the strategies for succeeding with listening tasks*
- *have clear and shared ideas of good listening behaviours*
- *explore the idea that, in different contexts, the listening behaviours will be different*
- *have charts which make the expected listening behaviours visible*
- *relate listening activities to real objects, to pictures and to words*
- *plan listening activities that take into account where children are at, so that they experience success and so that they can be encouraged to move on and be extended*
- *when requiring children to listen, use language that they can relate to*
- *encourage children to recall and retell what they have just experienced or achieved*
- *incorporate listening into all areas of the curriculum, e.g., encourage listening in all play areas by drawing children's attention to sounds and conversations that other children are having and provide opportunities for the ESL child to contribute*
- *plan activities where there is a purpose for listening*
- *use opportunities where children listen collaboratively, e.g., plan an activity where each child listens for different information*
- *encourage questioning and pause during the story or conversation to check on children's comprehension of the content*
- *make directions and instructions explicit and check for comprehension*
- *use a range of resources for listening, e.g., environmental sounds, videos, audio tapes, adults and other children*
- *have focussed listening activities, e.g., you clap the rhythm and the children copy or clap the rhythms of songs, rhymes or raps*
- *play listening games*
- *do phonemic awareness activities, which focus consciously on the sounds of language, e.g., rhyming words, hearing the differences between sounds, etc*
- *use audio tapes of familiar everyday sounds for children to identify*
- *use simple songs and rhymes regularly to encourage listening for pleasure*
- *use different rhythms in music or with musical instruments for children to respond to.*

We have mentioned phonemic awareness briefly here, but we will deal with this important concept further in Module 5 when we explore its relationship to early literacy experiences.

Just a reminder that early identification of any hearing impairment is critical in the development of oral language, and an essential part of developing listening skills ought to be careful monitoring for signs of hearing/visual difficulties. You may need specialist support for intervention in this area.

For further information, see Makin et al (1995) 'Bilingual children with special needs', Chapter 6 In *One childhood many languages*. Pymble, NSW: Harper Educational.

Conclusion

This section has dealt with some general strategies which are useful for developing the listening skills of ESL learners in early childhood settings.

The suggestions given in this module to support oral language development of ESL learners in early childhood settings are by no means exhaustive. You will find many ideas in the list of resources provided at the end of this module, which you can use or adapt for your workplace. Many other resources are available from early childhood resource centres, kindergarten associations and multicultural resource centres which cater specifically to educators of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

We now move into the final section on oral language, where we focus on the importance of planning and programming for oral language development.

4.5. Planning and programming for oral language development

Introduction

Throughout Modules 3 and 4 we have emphasised the critical importance of speaking and listening in early childhood programs for ESL learners, both for the development of fluent oral language skills and for their development of reading and writing skills in English. In Modules 5 and 6 we will deal further with oral language and its relationship to the development of early reading and writing.

To ensure, therefore, that spoken language is an integral part of our programs, we must plan and program with an explicit focus on oral language learning outcomes.

The following activity relies heavily on the language framework developed by Pauline Gibbons in *Learning to Learn in a Second Language* (1991: 19) and you will find other parts of her discussion very interesting. We have adapted her original framework to include the categories of 'process' and 'performance' type tasks (Jones 1996: 14) which we explored in Module 3.

Activity

With the needs and interests of one of your ESL learners in mind, use the framework (Worksheet 4.5.1 below) to develop an oral language activity with a focus on the language of learning.

Refer to the worked example presented in Resource Notes 4.5.1 from Pauline Gibbon's book *Learning to Learn in a Second Language* (p19). We have not adapted the worked example to include the categories of 'process' and 'performance'.

Resource Notes 4.5.1

Topic	Activities	Language Functions	Language Structures	Vocabulary
shape/ size/ colour	arranging attribute blocks (as a matrix or in sets) barrier game: giving partner instructions 'What's missing?' game △ ○ □ (blue) △ ○ □ (green) △ □ □ (red) (use large and small blocks to extend matrix)	classifying giving instructions describing position describing	they are all (blue) these are all (triangles) draw a ... colour it ... draw a triangle under the ...; beside ...; between the ... it's a big, red circle (order of adjectives)	triangle square circle red green blue under beside between

216

The topic...

includes these activities

which require these language
functions ...

which will be modelled using this language.

21
217

(Gibbons 1991: 19)

Worksheet 4.5.1

Topic	Activities	Process/ Performance	Language Functions	Language Structures	Vocabulary

(adapted from Gibbons 1991: 19)

Now comment on the usefulness of the framework you have just used and how it relates to your work. You may like to complete this activity with a colleague or with the whole staff in your centre.

Worksheet 4.5.2

Planning and programming for oral language outcomes

Ways in which the framework is useful

-
-
-

Ways I presently plan and program for oral language development

-
-
-

Benefits of making explicit language development an integral part in learning activities

-
-
-

Conclusion

This framework is only one suggestion for how to plan for oral language development across areas of study.

Planning in this way, however, ensures that:

- teachers model appropriate language within activities
- children have an opportunity to hear and use new language
- the language implicit in the activities we choose is highlighted
- the curriculum content we choose matches the individual needs and interests of the children
- planning for specific language outcomes is based on the language needs of children.

4.6 Suggested workplace activity: Implementing a strategy for developing and supporting oral language

Rationale

The strategies modelled in Module 4 focus explicitly on the development of spoken language of ESL learners in early childhood settings. The following workplace activity aims to support you in implementing one of these strategies and evaluating how useful it is in supporting an ESL learner's oral language development, or in informing you of the language needs of that learner.

Activity

1. Choose one of the strategies modelled in Module 4 and work with a small group of children, including an ESL learner, in your setting to implement it.
2. Make an audio recording of the oral language generated through the activity.
3. Listen to your own language, as well as to the language of the ESL learner in the group.
4. Use Worksheet 4.6.1 to make notes on how you implemented the strategy and any insights you may have gained about:
 - the usefulness of the strategy in focussing on aspects of spoken language
 - strengths and needs in oral language development of the ESL learner in the group
 - your own use of language during the activity.

Notes on workplace activity

Any issues, concerns or clarifications arising from this activity

4.7 Between module readings

There are four essential readings for Module 1 as well as other suggested readings. The essential readings follow Worksheet 4.7.1. This worksheet can be used to make notes as you read.

Readings for Module 4:

1. Strategies for developing learning environments for oral language development.
2. Choosing and adapting songs.
3. Using information gap tasks.
4. Jones, P. (1996) *Talking to Learn*. Primary English Teaching Association. Newtown: NSW, pp. 16-26.

This extract outlines important factors to consider in fostering genuine communication in classrooms. It then looks at designing activities for talk as process and talk as performance, and provides a sample unit of work.

Suggested further readings (*highly recommended)

Beaton, P. (1994) *Rhythm, rhyme, rap and music for TESOL, pupils and puppets*. ACTA-WATESOL, 1994, pp. 3-8.

Claire, E. (1988) *ESL teacher's activities kit*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

*Clarke, P. (1992) *English as a 2nd language in early childhood*. Victoria: Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre.

Dalton, J. (1985) *Adventures in thinking: Cooperative talk in small groups*. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson.

Gibbons, P. (1991) 'Planning for a language for learning'. Chapter 2 in *Learning to learn in a second language*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

*Gibbons, P. (1991) 'An interactive classroom: Developing spoken language'. Chapter 3 in *Learning to learn in a second language*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Goodman, J (1992) *Group solutions: logic activities grades K-4*. University of California: GEMS.

Hadfield, J (1984) *Elementary communication games: a collection of games and activities for elementary students of English*. Walton-on-Thames, UK: Nelson.

Jones, Pauline (1996) *Talking to learn*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Moline, S. (1995) *I see what you mean: children at work with visual information*. Melbourne: Longman.

Palim, J. and Power, P. (1990) *Jamboree: communication activities for children*. Walton-on-Thames, Surrey: Nelson.

Rowe, G. (1989) *Let's talk: Activities for oral language*. Melbourne: Dellasta.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

223

Your Notes

Worksheet 4.7.1

Notes on readings

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to write their notes on readings.

225

225

Worksheet 4.7.1 (continued)

Notes on readings

A large empty rectangular box for taking notes.

Reading 1

As we have pointed out previously (see particularly Module 2), one of the key factors to successful learning of and in a second language is the supportive and inclusive nature of the learning environment.

An inclusive learning environment for developing oral language in second language learners

- learn about and value other cultural ways of doing things, e.g., parenting, children's ways of behaving, non-verbal communication
- explore the notion that there are cultural differences in what is considered good listening behaviours
- learn about the languages of the ESL learners in your settings
- choose resources which reflect the interests and backgrounds of the learners
- create opportunities to enable children to use their first language with peers and adults whenever possible
- encourage collaborative learning by planning activities and arranging space which encourage children to talk, interact, use materials, explore, engage and have fun
- establish clear routines, so that children learning English know what to expect and to give them the opportunity to develop formulaic speech based on chunks of language learned as a whole, such as 'Hello, how are you', 'My name is . . .', 'Please, can I have a . . .' etc
- establish ground rules for talk that all children are aware of, e.g., expectations regarding interrupting, hands up etc
- use talk that is clear and supported by visuals
- support ESL learners to understand and to learn expected ways of behaving in the learning environment
- support the development of positive relationships between children and adults of different language and cultural backgrounds
- recognise how English has many 'polite' language forms which often do not occur to the same degree in other languages, where politeness may be shown through the forms of address or non-verbally. Therefore ESL learners will need lots of opportunities to hear, practise and have explicitly modelled this feature of language through use of games, puppets, role play, and books
- value errors as indicators of the stage in oral language development that the child is at
- work on scaffolding strategies that encourage a child to produce English, including nonverbal cues such as facial expressions for prompting, imitating, modelling, reformulating, etc.
- use open-ended questioning, e.g., 'tell me about your baby sister' to encourage expanding of talk.
- plan for specific oral language outcomes.

227

Your Notes

Choosing and adapting songs and rhymes:

- Choose songs or rhymes where the cultural component is familiar to the children, or which children can connect to their own family experiences or experiences in early childhood settings.
- Seek a variety of rhythm and tempo (speed), different dynamics (loud/soft) and face and body movements. All these expressive devices help children experience ways of communicating in English that may be quite different from their first language.
- Consider how visual cues can support and clarify the meaning of certain words. Action songs and rhymes involving a total body response help reinforce the meaning of words.
- Consider children using instruments and objects to accompany and dramatise songs and to allow for non-verbal participation.
- Consider generating songs and rhymes based on current topics and learners' interests. Some songs which will be familiar to most centre staff which are suitable for substitution with your own words are 'Frere Jaques', 'What will we do with a drunken sailor?', 'Here we go round the mulberry bush', etc, as well as tunes from nursery rhymes.
- Collect and recirculate children's playground chants.
- Use song texts for extension activities including drawing, stories and for comprehension in cloze activities.
- Use songs where children's names can be substituted. This is a good way of involving children, especially those who are not ready to use English, in the activity.
- Use songs that can be acted out, and especially songs which are rich in repetition and rhyme. Use sound effects produced by the children in stories, songs and rhymes.
- Use songs practising particular language structures, such as questions and answers, contrasting sounds, opposites, tenses.
- Consider the possibility of using new texts for songs, e.g., 'I Went Walking' to the tune of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.
- Consider how visual cues can be used to reinforce connections between words and meanings, e.g., cut-outs of characters . As children sing the song, place cut outs on a matching board or in a bucket.
- Use authentic songs and music from different cultures. Ask parents, bilingual staff members, children and community members to provide favourite songs on tape, or to present them personally; encourage children to bring songs from home and the community to share with the group. Have tapes of songs used in the centre available for children to take home to share with their families.
- Consider applying for project funding to purchase new music resources from diverse cultures or to produce culturally-diverse tapes from local community resources.

Your Notes

INFORMATION GAP TASKS

One-way information gap tasks encourage some negotiation of meaning because only one participant has the information to complete the task and must impart all the necessary knowledge to the other participant(s).

This kind of activity can be successfully modelled where the children have the information and the adult has to complete the task by asking clarifying questions.

In a two-way task, no participant has enough information to complete the task alone and so the participants must share their information. There is likely to be more negotiation of meaning in activities in which exchange is essential for the successful completion of the task.

Research into second language learning has indicated that, when there is some negotiation of meaning between learners, language learning takes place. This is why these kinds of activities are considered excellent strategies for encouraging language development.

This kind of activity can be adapted in many ways in the workplace. The content of the activity can be chosen to reinforce particular language functions (eg describing size, shape and colour) or structures (e.g., the red block is on the blue block) or features (e.g., vocabulary such as colours, prepositions). It can also be used to identify areas in a child's language which need further development.

Types of information gap activities include communicative crosswords, describe and make/draw tasks, find the difference, complete the map, information transfer and split stories and sentences. See Jones 1996: 20 for descriptions of these different information gap activities. There are also a number of resources included in the Readings at the end of this module which contain these kinds of activities.

Some suggestions for adapting information gap activities:

- use a variety of materials with different textures, shapes, sizes to describe in a variety of contexts, e.g., blocks in horizontal and vertical structures, farm animals in a farm yard, cars on a road map, beads on strings or in bowls
- use sequencing activities to model sequencing structures in language, e.g., thread some beads and have one child describe to others how to thread the same ones in the same order without showing the original
- create a focus on the language of location, e.g., use felt boards, pictures in books, and shapes of objects being handled to focus on language of position, size, shape, relationships
- work in mixed groups, e.g., adult/child, English speaker/ESL learner, older/younger, new learner/more advanced or first language group only
- create links to writing, e.g., children or adults write instructions or labels for games, children and/or adults create pictures to illustrate texts or songs and record play activities
- use tape recordings, e.g., make a tape recording of a recipe and play it to a group of children for them to follow; ask them to tape instructions for others to follow to play a game

- use a child's first language whenever possible to reinforce metalinguistic understandings and encourage parallel language development, e.g., develop pictures and make kits for children to work with at home with siblings; invite parents or bilingual staff to conduct the activity in their own language with all children or with children from the same language group
- use relevant cultural objects and pictures from both home culture and 'mainstream' Australian culture for describing with the group for them to draw; these pictures need to be kept very simple.

THE COMMUNICATIVE CLASSROOM

Pauline Jones

From *Talking to Learn*, NSW Primary English Teaching Association, 1996¹

Whether talk is routine or planned, there are some important factors to consider in fostering genuine communication in classrooms.

Making the rules visible

Classrooms in which interaction is encouraged are likely to be fertile sites for successful oral language programs. Oral language flourishes particularly in classrooms where small groups are routinely formed. In all classrooms, however, there will be moments of teacher direction as teaching points or organisational issues are dealt with, and it's important to have clear and shared ideas of expected behaviours, just as it is to have procedures in place for solving problems and resolving disputes.

In communicative classrooms students and teachers frequently discuss and isolate factors that make good talkers and listeners. Many teachers record and display them as a reminder (see Fig. 2.2 for an example). Such discussions can lead to an exploration of cultural differences (e.g. eye contact) and contextual differences (e.g. the expectations of good listeners and talkers in a partner activity as compared with a whole class discussion).

Teachers also need to continually provide models of good spoken language and processes of active listening. One I know recommends a listening time after a teacher joins a group before he or she says anything.

Classroom organisation

The physical organisation and layout of the classroom can have quite an effect on opportunities for interaction. Best is the kind of layout that enables students to move quickly and easily between whole class, small group, pair and individual activities. Interest corners, learning centres, quiet listening spaces, and construction, preparation and performance areas are all desirable for listening and speaking activities, while younger students should have access to space and materials for dramatic play. Students also need to be able to locate (and care for) resources independently.

Broader audiences

The daily lives of school give rise to quite a variety of opportunities for using spoken language - communicating messages from classroom to classroom, participating in the school council, escorting visitors, using telephones, giving instructions and recounting events. From time to time students are also required to prepare public texts for thanking guest speakers or for delivery at special events, ceremonies and so on. Often such activities fall outside the scope of specific units of work, and yet students still need to know the appropriate conventions. Teachers can give them support through modelling and by allowing them extended time to rehearse. This support should be built into the oral language program.

¹ For further information about PETA publications and services please contact the Membership Coordinator on 02 9565 1277, fax 02 9565 1070 or PO Box 3106, Marrickville, NSW 2204.

<p><u>A good speaker...</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · looks at the listener · speaks clearly · checks the volume · speaks slowly · lets others have 'air time'. 	<p><u>A good listener...</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · looks at the speaker · listens carefully · makes sure s/he understands the message · answers questions
---	--

FIG. 2.2 WALL CHARTS

DESIGNING ACTIVITIES FOR TALK AS PERFORMANCE

Initially talk as performance needs to be prepared for and scaffolded in much the same way as written text, and many of the teaching strategies used to make understandings of written text accessible can be applied to the more formal uses of spoken language. For instance, models can be supplied from video or audio recordings, transcripts, written dialogues or role plays. They may be authentic or specially constructed. Popular genre-based teaching practices like the ones described below can be used to structure activities.

Deconstruction

It's possible to explore the social context of a text with questions like these:

What's the purpose of this text? What's it trying to do? What's it about? Who is/are the speaker/s? Who's the intended audience?

Text deconstruction activities which enable students and teachers to consider genre and language features are also useful. Guiding questions might include:

What shape or structure does this text have? What does each part do? What sort of language is found in each part? What words related to the topic are used? What sort of relationship is there between the speaker and the listener or audience?

The resulting understandings about context and genre features can be drawn on during joint construction of another model.

The use of supports like palm cards, diagrams or posters might also be a part of modelling. The set of palm cards reproduced in Fig. 2.3 were used by a young child during a spoken information report on spiders, the pictures serving as prompts.

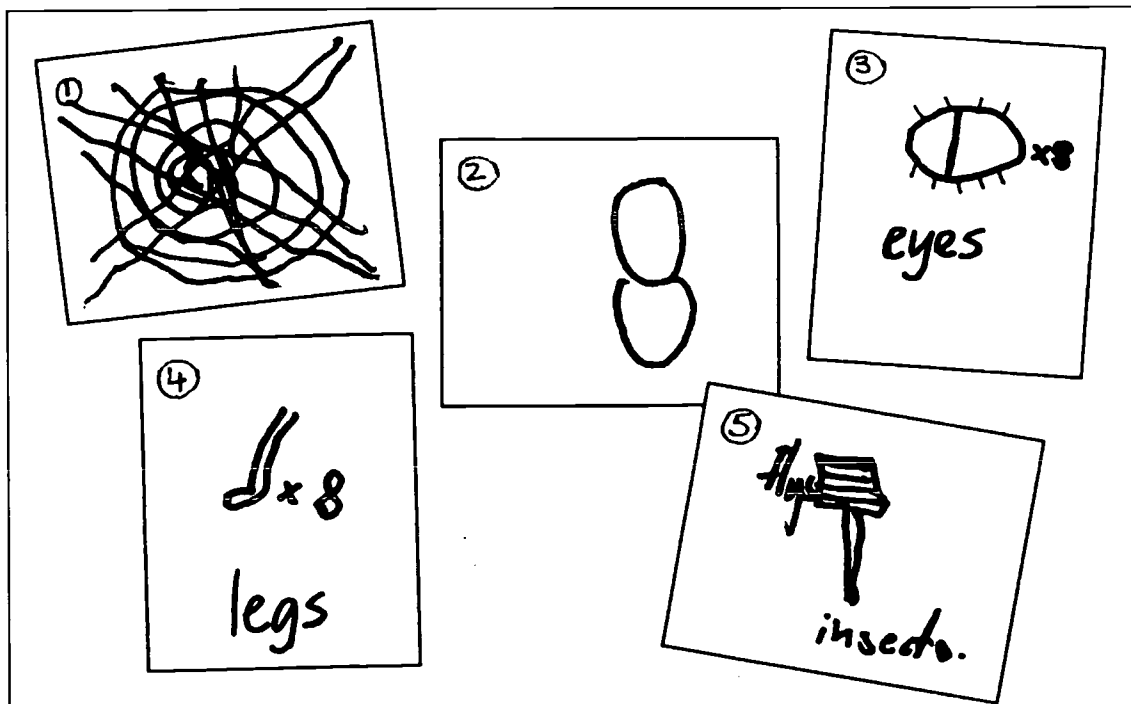


FIG. 2.3 PALM CARDS

Joint construction

Learning to construct and deliver more formal spoken texts involves recognising the importance of planning. The amount needed varies of course; some tasks require students merely to think through or mentally rehearse the parts of a message, while others involve quite extensive preparation. For example, spoken information reports require students to research and organise material in much the same way as they would in preparing a written report.

The planning and research process needs to be modelled clearly for students while they are gaining control over these types of spoken text. In joint construction teacher and students will be attending both to content and form, perhaps using questions like these:

- What do we want to say?*
- Why are we saying it?*
- To whom?*
- Where else do we find this type of talk?*
- How might we say it? What shape might it have?*
- What words will we need? Let's write them on cards to help us remember.*

After considering such questions, joint construction can begin — Who would like to start the talk? The completed text might be taped and then replayed for collaborative reviews. A further joint construction would demonstrate the importance of rehearsing such texts.

Individual construction

Many tasks like delivering classroom messages or buying lunch require brief modelling before younger students can be expected to perform them independently, though with a little planning or rehearsal they become habitual. However, students will benefit from being able to rehearse more extended tasks onto tape or to a supportive audience, so that they can reflect and adjust their material and delivery to suit their final audience.

DESIGNING ACTIVITIES FOR TALK AS PROCESS

Second language teaching, with its emphasis on language in use, cognitive as well as linguistic challenge, and participation for all students, can provide some useful activities for adaptation to mainstream classrooms. These include information gap activities, role plays and problem-solving tasks, all of which are described below. Including such activities in a curriculum program can enhance the oral language development of all students.

Information gap activities

There are a number of types of information gap activities. They are usually a pair of small group tasks, based on distributing information among pairs or small groups of students so that each one has a different share (or sometimes none). It's essential that no student can see the information distributed to another, and so some teachers erect a physical barrier like an open book or folder between participants (hence the term *barrier games*), while others have them sit back-to-back. The students then work together, using language only to reconstruct the information or otherwise complete the task. Some different types of information gap activities are described below.

Communicative crosswords. A has all the horizontal answers and B has the corresponding set of vertical answers. A nominates a blank space (eg. 1 down) and B, who knows the word that fits there, responds by devising a clue like a definition or a phonic hint (eg. it's used for fishing or it rhymes with book). A then tries to identify the word and B confirms it or continues to supply clues until A is successful. B then nominates a blank space (eg. 2 across) and A supplies a clue. The game continues like this until both students have completed crosswords.

Describe and make/draw tasks. A has a completed picture or model and gives B instructions for drawing or making an identical one. Emphasis can be on both students contributing information to successfully complete the task: that is, A gives directions but B can ask questions to clarify details. Tangrams, beads or construction blocks can also be used in these tasks.

Same or different/Find the difference. A and B are given pictures with slightly different details. They describe their pictures to each other and try to identify the difference.

Complete the map. A and B are given plans of the same area with different features shown on each. They must work together to add all the features to both maps. (Coordinates are a great help here.)

Information transfer. Students are given identical diagrams, but A has diagram and labels, while B has diagram and captions. Together they label and caption both diagrams.

Split stories/sentences. This is a group activity which requires the teacher to select several short texts and divide them into portions. Students are each given a strip of paper with a portion of text, which they memorise. They then try to locate the students with the remainder of their text and together try to sequence and retell it.

Role plays

Role plays can be used in a number of curriculum contexts. The framework given to students can vary from just the scene and characters to one containing a good deal more detail. Role plays provide students with opportunities to extend their language repertoires by increasing the number of situations (and therefore registers) available in the classroom. They're a useful way of exploring community issues too: for example, role plays centred on

woodchipping allow students to consider the points of view of environmentalists, timber workers and politicians.

Students may need some kind of introduction to role plays. For younger children this can take the form of dramatic play around familiar activities like shopping; they might each be given a picture of the person they have to 'be'. Older students may benefit from the 'Say-It' exercise, which involves them working in pairs with a grid like the one shown in Fig. 2.4. When A calls out a square (e.g. 1a), B must do what is described in that square.

1a	2a	3a
<i>Pretend that this is your first day at a new school.</i>	<i>The principal asks you about your hobbies.</i>	<i>You are going to buy your lunch.</i>
Say your name.	Tell her about three things you enjoy doing in your spare time.	Ask how much it costs.
Say where you come from.		Ask and pay for the things you want.
1b	2b	3b
<i>Compare your last year's class with this one.</i>	<i>Invite a friend to your house after school.</i>	<i>You have to go and see the school assistant.</i>
Describe two differences.	Say why you want her or him to come.	Ask a friend how to get there.
1c	2c	3c
You are sitting next to a new friend.	Your school wants to raise some money for buying library books.	You have just got home from school.
Ask him or her to help you with a spelling problem.	Give two ideas for raising the money.	Tell a parent what you did at school.
		Tell about two things you saw on the way home.

(Adapted from Nation and Thomas 1988, p.22)

FIG. 2.4 EXAMPLE OF THE 'SAY-IT' EXERCISE

'Hot Seat' is a form of role play which gives students the opportunity to imagine themselves to be someone else and consider motivation for actions. One student is given the role of a real or imaginary character (eg. a sports star or other well-known person, or a character from a shared narrative) and occupies the hot seat. Others adopt questioning roles to explore what motivates the character. The student in the hot seat shouldn't be given much time to plan responses, though the class may have built up quite a bit of background knowledge previously.

Problem-solving activities

These types of task usually require collaborative effort to complete. There is no correct answer but students are often called upon to explain or justify their decisions. Some common examples are described below.

Rank ordering. Students must reach a consensus about the relative importance of particular ideas, values or items. For example, in a unit on natural disasters, they

might be asked to imagine they were being evacuated from their homes because of a cyclone. Working on their own initially, they make a prioritised list of five items they would take with them. They then meet in a group to reach agreement over one list of five items.

Design tasks. Collaborative design tasks encourage students to talk constructively, as long as the criteria of the task are clearly established. Many teachers construct a design brief to make their expectations clear, including such details as the product, the purpose, the materials and techniques, and the time available. The brief can also be used for evaluating finished products (see Fig. 2.5 for an example).

Design and construct a model for the improved playgrounds in area 5.

The playground is to be used by young children attending playgroup as well as K-6 students, and for occasional school and community events.

The completed design should include existing facilities as well as more shade and a greater range of activities.

The model should be approximately one metre square and should be made from a variety of scrap and reused materials.

FIG. 2.5 EXAMPLE OF A DESIGN BRIEF

Worksheets. A carefully designed worksheet gives groups of students a measure of autonomy during problem-solving tasks, as well as fostering their language development. It will outline some problem or information gap to be solved and will usually allow for open-ended answers. It should be based on a common experience like an excursion or a shared text- for example, the playground observation worksheet reproduced as Fig. 2.6. Here students had identified the typical elements of children's playgrounds (eg. swings, trees and litter bins) and grouped them according to function (shade, activities, aesthetics) in a joint construction with their teacher. They then used the worksheet to evaluate a number of playgrounds. Transcripts of the talk which featured prominently in the activity show a rich use of language centred on design and the built environment, and a high degree of interaction among the students without the need or distraction of the teacher's continual presence.

Some points to consider when designing tasks for talk

When they're using a particular type of communicative task for the first time, teachers often find that it doesn't work as well as they'd hoped. However, activities which don't succeed at first can be modified for subsequent use. Many teachers find checklists useful for designing successful oral language activities - here's an example:

Is talking necessary?

Have students been provided with models of the language requirement of the task?

Does the activity build on previous knowledge?

Does the activity stimulate students' interest and engagement?

Do students have to think and process information to contribute to the task?

Do students know where to get assistance if they need it?

Has enough time been allocated for students to complete the activity?

Are all students involved?

Playground Location: Chapel St

Criteria	How?	very poor 1	not good 2	OK 3	good 4	excellent 5
Type and Variety of Activities	Swings slide basketball hoop				✓	
Safety	Walls wooden fences rubber mats grass sand			✓		
Shade	trees walls hats		✗		✓	
Amenities (toilets, food, water)	bubblers barbecue picnicketables garbage bin		✓		✓	
Attractiveness	safty equipment, seat, shade					✓
Access for disabled people	Yes safty path bridges					✓
Space	yes court path Picnic area			✗	✓	

FIG. 2.6 A WORKSHEET FOR ASSESSING PLAYGROUNDS

Of course, teachers do not consciously design all the spoken language activities that occur in their classrooms. Nevertheless making time to design and implement communicative tasks on a regular basis will help to provide a range of learning experiences, as well as opportunities for observation and assessment.

A SAMPLE UNIT OF WORK

Fig. 2.7 reconstructs a unit of work on Leisure which was undertaken with two Year 3 classes in an urban area. Many of the children spoke languages other than English at home, and the school was classified as disadvantaged. The unit was collaboratively planned and taught by the classroom teachers and the ESL teacher over several weeks. At the same time the children were engaged in language and literacy activities clustered around the theme of leisure.

Although the unit was a part of a wider curriculum, the teachers wanted to work within the context of Science and Technology to develop understandings about the built environment and the process of design. They were also keen to explore with their students some of the ways in which decisions are made about the built environment and how informed community action can help shape local planning.

Worksheets and the design brief (Fig. 2.5) were used to scaffold activities. The teachers were very conscious of their students' language needs. The unit design provided for many oral language activities, although the emphasis throughout was on talk as process as students build up shared knowledge and the technical language of the topic. Activities such as the

initial brainstorming of activities, the rank ordering tasks, the playground excursion and the construction of models were rich in opportunities for students to talk to each other. There were also moments when teaching points about language and participation could be made and were made. The tasks in which talk was more careful or formal, such as selling the leisure activities and presenting designs, required quite explicit modelling.

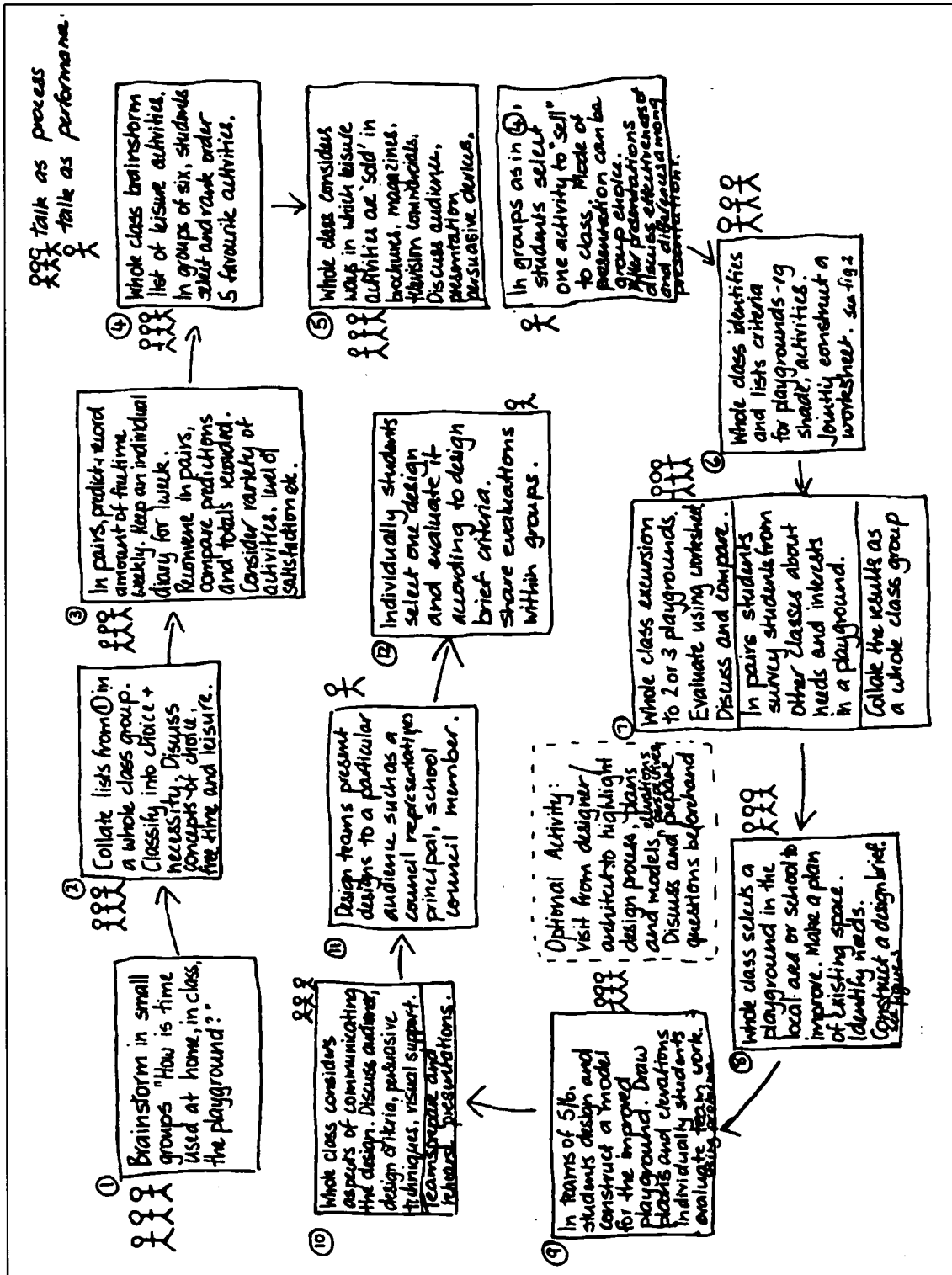


FIG. 2.7 OUTLINE PLAN OF A UNIT ON LEISURE

The original unit design was subject to negotiation based on the students' interest and the teachers' judgement during implementation. The reconstruction presented here includes all resulting changes, as well as others made on more mature reflection, yet it does not differ significantly from the original. The balance of process and performance talk was one which the teachers were satisfied met the needs of these young students for this particular topic. In addition, using a range of formal and informal strategies, they were able not only to access the students' talk in a variety of situations but also to use this talk as a means of assessing the students' understanding of the topic. Listening to students evaluating playgrounds and planning and presenting designs enabled them to judge the degree of control each student had over the conceptual and linguistic understandings involved. In the next chapter we'll look more closely at some means of assessing oral language.

Acknowledgment

I am grateful to Stephanie Searle and Tracey Thollar at Belmore South Public School for the use of material from their Leisure unit, which was developed with the support and resources of the Metropolitan East Disadvantaged Schools Program.

241

References

*...and now English: a programme showing young children acquiring English as a 2nd language. Video V114 (21 min), Victoria: Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre, 1987.

Clarke, P. (1992) *English as a 2nd language in early childhood*. Victoria: Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre.

Foundation areas of learning (1996) South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services.

Gibbons, P. (1991) 'Learning to listen and getting the sounds right'. Chapter 8 in *Learning to learn in a second language*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Gibbons, P. (1991) 'Planning for a language for learning'. Chapter 2 in *Learning to learn in a second language*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Gibbons, P. (1991) 'An interactive classroom: Developing spoken language'. Chapter 3 in *Learning to learn in a second language*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Goodman J. (1992) *Group solutions: cooperative logic activities, grades K-4*. University of California: GEMS.

Heaton J.B. (1996) *Composition through pictures*. Illustrations by James Moss. Essex, UK: Longman, pp. 35-36.

Jones, Pauline (1996) *Talking to learn*. NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Makin, L. Campbell, J. and Jones Diaz, C. (1995) 'Bilingual children with special needs'. Chapter 6 in *One Childhood Many Languages*, Sydney: Harper Educational.

Rees, D. (1992) *Supporting oral language learning*. A Windows on Practice Publication. South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services.

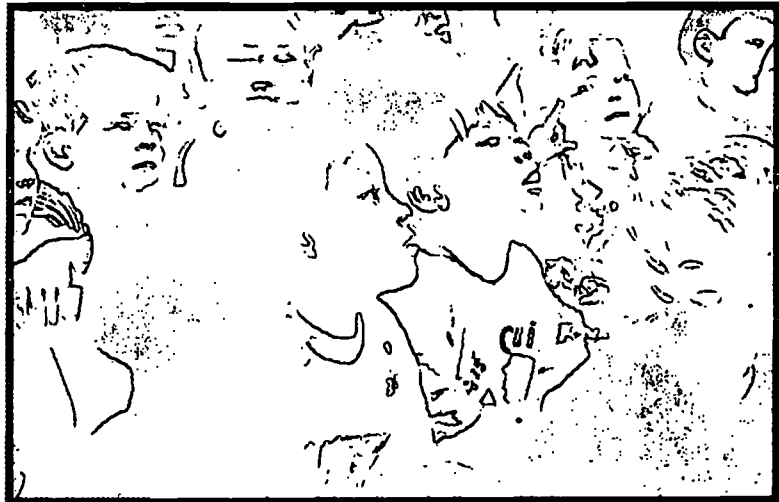
Workshop 8. In *ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course*. South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services, 1993.

Module 5



Reading and writing in a
second language:

Issues



Module 5

Focus: Beginning reading and writing in a second language: Issues

Overview

In this module we revisit current understandings of literacy as a set of social and cultural practices and examine the pedagogic implications of this thinking for supporting learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in early childhood settings.

We explore the early reading and writing experiences all children may bring to the early childhood setting, and in particular, the experiences of ESL learners, and look at how these experiences might match with what learners are expected to achieve in reading and writing in the early years of formal education.

Finally we examine specific issues for ESL learners in learning to read and write in English in early childhood settings.

This module contains the following activities:

- 5.1 Reflecting on Module 4*
- 5.2 Literacy practices within social and cultural contexts*
- 5.3 Early reading and writing experiences*
- 5.4 Reading in early childhood settings - what's involved*
- 5.5 Writing in early childhood settings - what's involved*
- 5.6 Suggested workplace activity*
- 5.7 Readings*

At the end of this module you will have:

- increased your understanding of current thinking on literacy as a set of social and cultural practices and examined some implications of this thinking for teaching and learning in early childhood settings
- developed your awareness of the wide range of reading and writing experiences and understandings young ESL learners bring to the learning situation
- revisited understandings of the roles and demands of reading and writing in early childhood settings
- gained greater understanding of special issues for ESL learners in learning to read and write in English in early childhood settings.

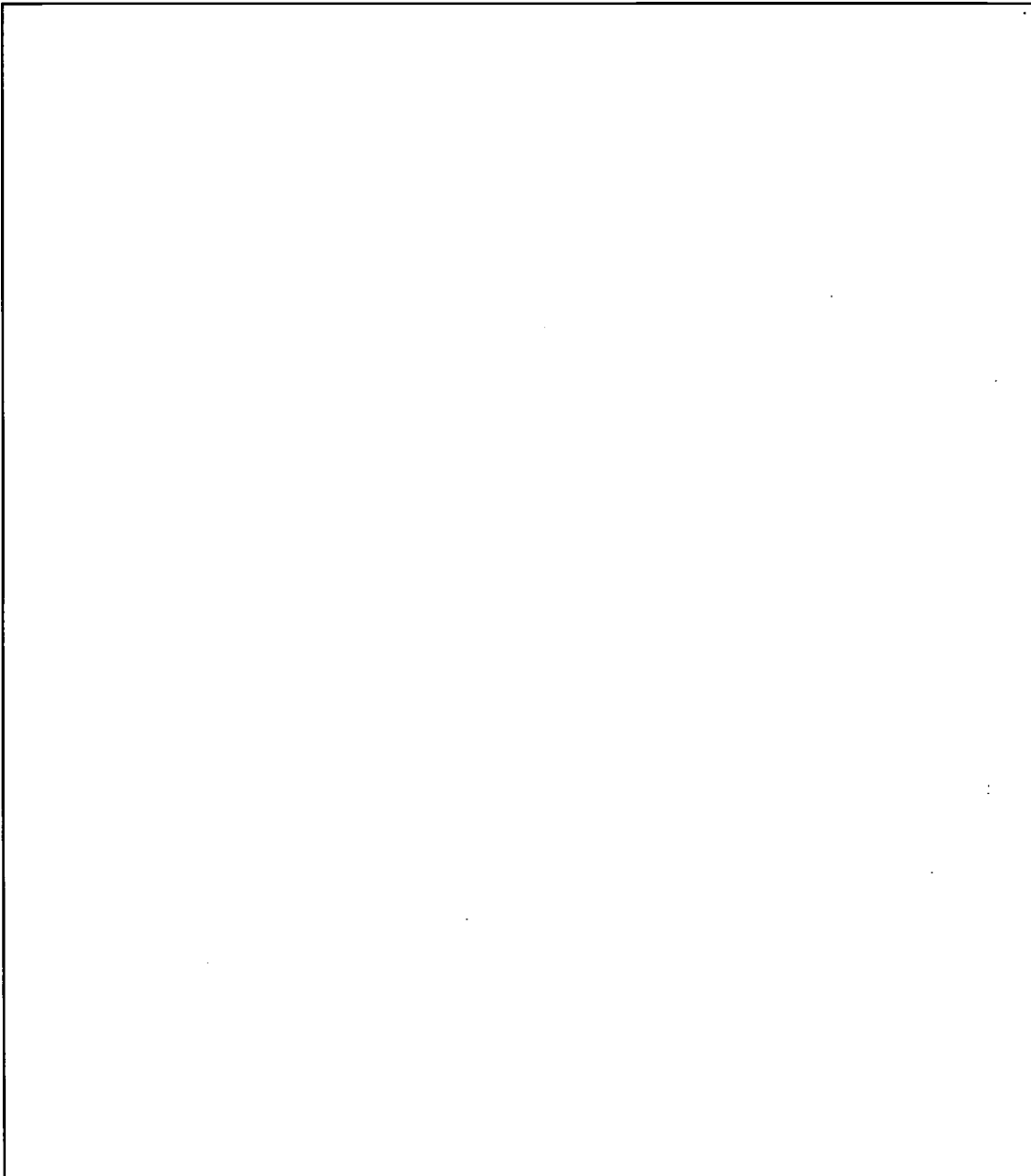
5.1 Reflecting on Module 4

As in the previous module, you may wish to begin your work on this module by reflecting on the materials and readings from Module 4. Refer back to your notes in Worksheet 4.6.1 and Worksheet 4.7.1, and consider what new understandings you have gained and what critical issues require resolution or further research.

You may also wish to consider the relevance of these understandings and issues within your workplace and consider how your practice is being affected or could be affected by this professional development.

Jot down your ideas in Worksheet 5.1.1 below.

Worksheet 5.1.1

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write their reflections on their work and professional development.

Dotted lines for handwriting practice.

5.2. Literacy practices within social and cultural contexts

Introduction

In Module 2 we explored current understandings about literacy as social and cultural practice. In this section we will revisit these ideas by exploring further the different repertoire of literacy practices that people acquire and use as a result of the social and cultural contexts in which they live and operate.

Activity

Read the following Resource Notes 5.2.1, which are taken from a case study of a Panjabi family in Southhall, Britain as they go about their daily activities and use a repertoire of literacy practices to get things done (Saxena: 1994: 96-101). The study includes the grandparents as well as the parents and son. In the following Resource Notes, only the literacy practices of the parents and son are outlined.

Resource Notes 5.2.1

Father

(Born East Africa, but brought up and educated in England from an early age):

In the morning he reads an English newspaper for national and international news before leaving for work. At work, he supervises about two hundred and fifty workers of South Asian origin in a factory. As and when required, he also mediates, as an interpreter, between the workers and the factory bosses. He also has the responsibility of making available bilingual materials published by social service agencies on safety, workers' legal rights, medical benefits, etc. in the factory.

After work, in the evening, he goes to a Hindu temple where he is a member of the temple executive committee. With other committee members, he prepares a draft letter in English about the annual general meeting to be sent out to the registered members of the temple. It was agreed that when the temple has enough funds, the committee will send English-Hindi bilingual letters and notices to its members, as one of the roles of the temple is to promote Hindi. At the moment, the temple has only an English typewriter. The committee members also prepare some hand-written notices in Hindi for the temple notice board regarding the agenda of the annual general meeting.

On the way home, he notices some new Sikh nationalistic and communal slogans on street walls written in Panjabi. He discusses these slogans with his family when he comes home. At home, his mother reads to him from a weekly Hindi newspaper published locally about some local news and some news from the Panjab. This newspaper also has a few articles on Indian Hindi films written in English, which he reads himself.

Resource Notes 5.2.1 (continued)

Mother

(Born, brought up and educated in the Panjab during and after the reorganisation period of the Panjab in India before coming to England for marriage):

In the morning, she takes her son to a nearby nursery. She brings back a note in English from the teacher about some activity which the child and the parents have contributed to. She shows it to her husband in the evening. He reads it and explains it to her in Panjabi.

After finishing the household chores, she gets a little time to read a few pages from a Hindi novel. Later, with her mother-in-law, she writes a letter to a relative in Delhi. They discuss and write the contents of the letter in Panjabi-Hindi mixed code using Devanagari script. She also writes a letter in Panjabi/Gurmukhi to a friend in the Panjab.

In the evening, before putting her son to sleep, she tells him a story in Panjabi.

Son

(Born in Southall):

In the morning as he enters the school, he sees bilingual signs. He can distinguish between Gurmukhi, Devanagari and Roman scripts. In the classroom, he is exposed only to the Roman script for teaching and learning purposes.

At home in the afternoon, his grandmother sends him with a small shopping list in Hindi/Devanagari to a corner shop next door. The shopkeeper records the goods sold to the boy in Hindi/Devanagari in his ledger.

During the day, the boy observes his parents and grandparents using different literacies for different purposes.

Dinner time

One of the topics discussed during and after dinner is why the child should learn Hindi or Panjabi.

The grandfather wants his grandson to learn Panjabi in the Gurmukhi script when he goes to school, but not in the Sikh temple. He thinks this way his grandson can learn Panjabi and retain Panjabi culture. He favours Panjabi because it is also the official language of the Panjab states. However, grandmother, mother and father think that the child should learn Hindi/Devanagari. Grandmother and father take more of a religious stance, whereas mother takes the nationalistic/secular stance. Grandmother and father think that it is important to learn Hindi to retain Hindu culture and religion, whereas mother thinks that the child should learn Hindi because it is the national language of India. A further argument put forward in favour of Hindi related to the interpersonal communicative functions of literacy: grandmother, mother and father argue in favour of Hindi by saying that with the knowledge of the Hindi script the child will be able to correspond with the relatives both in Dehli and the Panjab, whereas the knowledge of the written Panjabi would restrict him only to the Panjab. Grandfather is outvoted, and it is decided that the child would go to the Hindi voluntary classes held in the Hindu temple initially and later would also opt for Hindi in school.

(Maybin, 1994: Pp 98 -101)

As Saxena (p101) points out, this case study illustrates 'what these individual members of this family do with different literacies in different situations and how they value these literacies'. It shows the different literacy choices they make in everyday situations in which they live. As Saxena (p101) also points out, 'rather than restraining their actions, these choices provide them with multiple identities and freedom to operate in different worlds of literacies to achieve different goals'.

In relating this case study to our own educational context, we work continually with learners whose repertoires of literacy practices are as varied, complex and potentially empowering as the child's in this case study.

Some of these children's use of literacy in their family and community may closely resemble the literacy practices found in early childhood learning environments. For others this will not be the case. It has been suggested that those children whose family literacy practices are different from practices in formal educational environments will need to be taught explicitly those aspects which will be valued in education but may be unfamiliar to them. Educators cannot assume that all children will simply pick up these literacy practices. Some will need to learn them. This has important implications for the strategies you will use to teach literacy in your educational contexts.

To expand on these points read the following Resource Notes 5.2.2

Resource Notes 5.2.2

Everyday texts and school literacy learning

In some communities, catalogues, advertisements, magazines, instruction manuals and newspapers are familiar texts that are shared and talked about; in other communities, reading educational books and bedtime stories and writing lists, letters and cheques are typical everyday practices. In some communities, television is a source of both entertainment (soaps, movies, quiz shows, sport) and information (documentaries, current affairs, news). Communities have multiple uses for written, visual and oral texts and have their own ways of structuring, using and assessing speaking, listening, reading, viewing, and writing.

Before young children come to school they will have had many and varied experiences as speakers, listeners, readers, viewers, and writers. They may have been involved in writing and reading notes and lists; going shopping and recognising the print and packaging of frequently purchased items; checking catalogues to compare products and prices; recognising logos, billboard advertisements and traffic signs; following instructions for making a toy; listening to epic tales and stories; writing a message; and/or using a television guide to decide which program to watch, when and for how long.

Each of these literacy events is embedded in patterns of language use, or social practices, which include the types of questions that can be asked, listening behaviours to be attended to, and the kinds of talk by individuals and groups about reading, viewing and writing.

Resource Notes 5.2.2 (continued)

The literacy events that young children encounter when they come to school may be very different from those they are familiar with in family and community contexts. Teachers use a range of texts, predominantly for the purpose of teaching literate behaviours that are appropriate for school learning. The texts that are valued tend to reflect dominant white middle-class values. For example, some written texts (such as classic tales) are more highly valued than others (such as a book about trucks); children's television shows such as cartoons on commercial television are less valued than documentaries about wildlife. The view of the world represented in valued texts is rarely challenged or questioned on the basis of whose view of reality is represented or who might be disadvantaged by that view. Students whose knowledge about and experiences with texts closely match those valued in school are more likely to be seen as competent literacy learners. Students who are not familiar with such texts and school ways of knowing about them are likely to be seen as at risk in their literacy learning.

When teachers recognise and can draw upon students' home literacy practices, they make the students' experiences legitimate and link them with the valued curriculum. For example, relevant cartoons may be used to initiate discussion about modes of transport. When the everyday texts of the community (such as packaging, advertisements and television) are used in the school setting, teachers are able to provide opportunities for all students to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do as literacy learners.

In planning for a balanced curriculum, the range of texts available for use in the community and school is one element to consider. A balanced curriculum will provide students with opportunities to:

- *use and produce a range of spoken, written and visual texts across areas of study as they learn*
- *capitalise on their prior knowledge about texts, using the everyday texts of their community*
- *use texts for a variety of purposes and audiences as they demonstrate their learning.*

(Early Literacy : Practice and Possibilities 1997: 39)

Conclusion

In this section we have revisited the concept of literacy as a set of social and cultural practices and the idea that children come to educational settings with different understandings of literacy as an outcome of their family and community social and cultural practices. We have also looked at why some children, whose literacy practices do not match those 'valued' practices of formal learning environments, may need to be explicitly taught these practices in order to learn successfully in such environments.

5.3 Early reading and writing experiences

Introduction

In the previous section, we suggested that children entering early childhood centres will have a wide range of early reading and writing experiences, and we have alluded to some factors which contribute to differences in these experiences. In this section we will build on those factors we have already identified in the previous section, and will explore further the similarities and differences that may exist between children in terms of their experiences and understandings of reading and writing.

Activity

Use Worksheet 5.3.1 and jot down factors which you believe may have an influence in the early reading and writing experiences of children you work with. You may wish to refer back to some of the ideas suggested in section 5.2.

Worksheet 5.3.1

- *different purposes for storytelling*
- *oral rather than written traditions highly valued*
- *the amount of contact with everyday print in own culture*
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Read the following Resource Notes 5.3.1, which cover many of the factors you may have listed in Worksheet 5.3.1.

18252

Resource Notes 5.3.1

- *different purposes for storytelling*
- *oral rather than written traditions highly valued*
- *amount of contact with everyday print in own culture*
- *different purposes for using print*
- *amount of involvement in everyday functions of print*
- *kinds of literacy events in daily lives*
- *range of opportunities to experiment with print*
- *support and encouragement to experiment with print*
- *different attitudes to literacy*
- *disruption to family life through war, forced migration, personal trauma, etc*
- *parents' uses for reading and writing*
- *socio-economic factors such as employment, settlement issues, family health*
- *hearing or visual impairment*

Activity

What experiences and understandings would we expect that all children bring to the reading and writing context?

What might children from diverse cultural backgrounds bring which may be different from what we might expect?

Read the following Resource Notes 5.3.2 and then respond to the questions in Worksheet 5.3.2, which ask you to explore the pedagogical implications of the ideas presented in the notes.

Resource Notes 5.3.2

Early reading and writing experiences***All children may bring***

- *familiarity with different kinds of books*
- *knowledge and use of writing tools*
- *models of people who are literate within the family (parents, siblings)*
- *familiarity with different aspects of television and radio*
- *understandings about computers*
- *the experience of being read to from storybooks or other everyday print*
- *knowledge of religious or cultural texts*
- *a variety of understandings about the reading process in the first language or in English*
- *exposure to a variety of texts in a first language or English, including books, newspapers, food labels, street signs, graphics, TV ads*
- *an understanding of the relationship between the spoken and written word*
- *ability to recognise a page of print as something to read*
- *an understanding of the purpose of reading*
- *knowledge about what print is*
- *observations of adults at home and in the community reading for a variety of purposes, e.g., bank slips, supermarket receipts, recipe books, letters, bills*
- *some knowledge of how text works in either first or second language*
- *varying degrees of knowledge about English vocabulary, alphabet, print protocols (direction of English script, punctuation, etc)*
- *different attitudes to reading*
- *expectations about the purposes of reading and writing (for pleasure, information, access to education)*

How might some ESL learners' experiences of reading and writing be different?

- *print may not be seen as a priority for communicating ideas or messages*
- *oral literacy may be more highly valued as a means of learning and passing on information*
- *reading and writing may be for restricted uses and not highly valued as ways of communicating in daily life*
- *learners may have experienced different scripts, different sounds, different alphabets, different ways of reading a page (right to left)*
- *ESL learners may be learning to speak and read and write English at the same time, which is not the way children learn their first language*
- *ESL learners may begin to learn to write in a language in which they are not orally proficient and therefore will find it very difficult to use strategies such as 'invented spelling' and 'sounding out' words*

Now consider some of the pedagogical implications of this in the early childhood setting. After jotting down your ideas, you can check your ideas against our suggestions in Resource Notes 5.3.3.

Worksheet 5.3.2

Pedagogical implications

What do early childhood educators need to consider and be able to do in order to link the family and community experiences of children with the literacy experiences of the early childhood setting?

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

Your Notes

As educators, we need to

- *be aware of possible mismatch between children's prior experiences and the literacy activities we provide, in language of the text, illustrations, genres such as narratives and procedures (e.g., for carrying out activities such as recipes)*
- *find out how literacy is used in the family or local community and build links between these experiences/practice and the literacy activities in our centres*
- *avoid making assumptions or stereotyping families in terms of their literacy practices*
- *seek to use children's first language wherever possible*
- *be sensitive to children's feelings of cultural and language shock*
- *be aware that a child's behaviour may be a result of not understanding the content or what is expected in the learning environment*
- *confirm the value of those cultural literacies that are oral rather than print-oriented by modelling oral telling of stories*
- *use strategies which enable children to make connections between their previous experiences and their learning in the early childhood setting*
- *build into our programs ways that children and their families can share their social and cultural experiences*
- *immerse children in a rich print and visual environment, in English and other languages*
- *use explicit strategies to support the ESL child's language and literacy development in English*
- *immerse children in language and literacy experiences, especially those children for whom the early childhood setting is the only exposure to English*
- *provide opportunities to experience a wide range of books from community resources (e.g., local library) which are bilingual or written in other languages and written by authors from language backgrounds other than English*
- *provide opportunities for children to take home bilingual books and audio-tapes of stories in their first language*
- *provide opportunities for ESL learners to experiment with writing in their first language as well as in English, in a wide range of different contexts*
- *provide opportunities for all learners to talk about and compare different scripts and alphabets and different writing tools (e.g., pen, brush, computer).*

Conclusion

In this section we have explored the range of early reading and writing experiences children entering early childhood centres may have, and factors which may have contributed to differences and similarities in these experiences and to different understandings of reading and writing.

We will now go on to look in more detail at what is involved in asking children to read and write in early childhood settings.

In Module 6 we will model more explicit strategies for the teaching of reading and writing. In Module 7 we will focus on ways that we can ensure that the strategies we use are culturally inclusive.

5.4 Learning to read in English - what's involved

Introduction

In this section we will revisit some understandings of the reading process and examine how particular aspects of this process may cause difficulties for children from diverse language backgrounds learning to read in English.

We will then model an approach to analysing texts as a strategy to find out what a reader needs to know in order to understand them.

We will also look at how readers interpret texts differently, depending on their view of the world, and the implications of this for the way we explore texts with ESL learners.

Activity

This first activity examines the role of the three cueing systems in how we read texts.

Read the following Worksheet 5.4.1, filling in the gaps as you read.

Worksheet 5.4.1

Miranda's Miserable Day

Miranda was late for the important staff meeting. She couldn't afford to lose her (1) _____ and she knew that if she missed this meeting, there was a good chance that she (2) _____. She locked (3) _____ door of her apartment and rushed outside. She tried to hail a (4) _____ but her efforts were entirely unsuccessful. Finally, she decided to take the (5) b _____, which resulted in her arriving at her office twenty minutes late. She (6) drained up the stairs and into the meeting room, where she was met by a stony-faced Mr Crimp, who said, (7) " _____!"

adapted from Elaine Weitzman (1992). Learning language and loving it: 259

We are now going to look more closely at why you were able to read this extract with meaning.

In the following Worksheet 5.4.2, jot down your ideas on what you had to know to be able to complete this reading task. After you have completed this activity, we will look at the cueing systems which readers use to assist them.

Miranda's Miserable Day - reading with meaning

-
-
-
-
-

You would have employed three cueing systems to read this text, using semantic cues, syntactic cues and graphophonic cues to assist you to make meaning.

Read the following Resource Notes 5.4.1, which:

- summarise the three cueing systems integral to the reading process
- show how, as readers, we use all three systems to read the above text with meaning.

From this explanation, we will be able to move into more precise definitions of reading and see why ESL learners may have difficulty reading in English.

Resource Notes 5.4.1**1. Semantic cues**

Guessing the meaning through using knowledge of the topic and shared cultural knowledge can help you to work out what makes sense.

Knowing that the meaning is principally embodied in the vocabulary of the text is also an implicit understanding needed.

- You can often work out what an extract is about from the title and from the first sentence. Here, your understanding of the vocabulary in the title and in the first sentence allows you to predict what the rest of the extract might be about, because you are familiar with the concept of 'being late for staff meetings'. You know from your knowledge of the context that the missing word in (1) is 'job' and not for example 'a set of keys' and from your knowledge of English that (4) is 'taxi' or 'cab' because 'taxi' or 'cab' goes with 'hail'.

Resource Notes 5.4.1 (continued)

- You would be able to guess from the context and your knowledge of the topic that Mr Crimp would probably have said in (7) either “You’re late!” or “You’re fired!”

In other words you are using your semantic knowledge of the topic and the vocabulary to interact with the text and gain meaning from it.

2. Syntactic cues

Knowledge of the conventions that determine how words fit together to convey meaning can assist your reading.

- Your knowledge of English grammar tells you (2) is ‘would’ and (3) is ‘the’. If you do not have this understanding of word order and parts of speech it is very difficult to predict what the word might be.
- Similarly you are able to read ‘draimed’ with some understanding, even though there is no such English word, because you know it is acting as a verb. You can bring semantic knowledge to this word because you know what would make sense in this context and can guess that it means something like ‘rushed’.

3. Graphophonic cues

Knowledge of the conventions of print, of the way words look, and the relationship between sounds and letters can also assist in making meanings.

- Your knowledge of the context helps you to predict that (5) is ‘bus’. Because the ‘b’ is there at the beginning of the word, your knowledge of phonics and spelling helps to confirm that the word is ‘bus’. If the ‘b’ hadn’t been there, the word could have been ‘train’ or ‘tram’ and you would have used your knowledge of the context to work this out.
- Knowledge of phonics is a strategy for narrowing down possibilities when reading an unknown word, but it is not enough to help gain meaning from what is read. ‘Sounding out’ a word doesn’t always lead to understanding. A word may be easy to sound out and still mean nothing to a child. It is important to teach ESL learners other strategies for reading, as well as ‘sounding out’, to encourage them to work out what might make sense in a particular context.

Reading, then, is an interactive process of reconstructing meaning, using the three cueing systems to interact with the text.

The ability to be able to predict is critical in the reading process and is therefore an important skill to develop in the early stages of reading and writing development.

ESL learners, however, may have difficulty with predicting with understanding because

- they are unfamiliar with the sounds of the new language, e.g., ‘bush’ in English may sound just like ‘bouche’ (mouth) in French or be confused with the sounds of ‘push’ or ‘bus’
- they are unfamiliar with the way English works (e.g., the order of words in a sentence, parts of speech, intonation, etc)
- they may not have the cultural and background knowledge necessary to gain meaning from a text where the vocabulary and topics are unfamiliar.

025260

In the following activity we will look at the semantic knowledge (word meanings, background knowledge, etc), the syntactic knowledge (sentence structure, grammar, text cohesion, etc) and the grapho-phonetic knowledge which a reader or listener requires in order to understand a text. It is important to remember that listening to texts being read by an adult (which is an everyday occurrence in early childhood settings) requires much the same kinds of understandings that an independent reader would need to have in order to gain meaning from that same text.

This activity aims to increase your understandings of how much semantic, syntactic and grapho-phonetic knowledge can be assumed by a text and therefore how ESL learners can be excluded from accessing the meaning of the text because they may not have this knowledge. This activity also aims to increase your awareness of the need to select appropriate and inclusive reading materials for ESL learners to support them in the process of learning to read in English. In Module 6 we will look in more detail at strategies to support learners in accessing texts.

Activity: text analysis

Read the following Resource Notes 5.4.2. These deal with the question of the assumptions that texts make.

Resource Notes 5.4.2

When writers write materials for other people to read or listen to, they make assumptions about knowledge already possessed by their intended readers or listeners.

They assume a knowledge of the structure of English sentences (if writing in English) and about the conventions of the particular type of text they are using (e.g., recipes are set out in a different way from narratives). They also assume some knowledge of the world in general and of their particular topic; they do not spell everything out in detail. They also assume a particular world view, including ways of thinking and viewing knowledge.

Readers and listeners who do not possess all the assumed knowledge of a text may be able to work it out from the context or do without some of it and still understand the text. There is a point, though, where a reader or listener who lacks too great a proportion of this assumed knowledge will simply not be able to make sense of the text.

*(adapted from ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course,
Workshop 3, Tutor Manual DECS 1991)*

Choose a text which you use regularly with your learners. You will need to have a copy of this text with you in order to analyse the language and illustrations. It is preferable to ask a colleague to work with you so you can compare ideas.

In this activity we will try to identify some of the knowledge assumed in the text you have chosen, and in particular some of the knowledge which may not be possessed by an ESL learner in your early childhood setting.

Prior to completing this task, read through Resource Notes 5.4.3, which model a text analysis of the text *Cat on the roof*.

0261

Resource Notes 5.4.3

Cat on the roof

*One day, the cat got on the roof.
It sat and cried, "Me-ow, me-ow".*

*Pippy got the ladder out.
"It's all right, Puss," she called.
"I'm coming".*

*But, as she climbed on to the roof,
the ladder came tumbling down.*

*So Pippy and the cat
were up there together.
The ladder was flat on the ground.*

*Pippy called to her father.
Dad came out of the house.*

*"You silly goat,"
Dad said.
"The legs of the ladder
should go on hard ground.
Like this. See?
Now it'll stay still."*

Dad climbed up.

*When he was near the top,
the ladder began to wobble.*

*Over it went, and Dad
nearly went with it.
He grabbed at the roof
just in time.*

*"You said it wouldn't
tip over, Dad," laughed Pippy.*

*"This is no time to be clever,"
cried Dad,*

"Help me, will you?"

Pippy helped Dad up.

*Now there were three of them
on the roof - Pippy, Dad,
and the cat.*

*And there was no one
in the house to help them.*

*When Mum came home,
she looked up at the roof
and laughed.*

*"What are you doing up there?"
she asked.*

*"Looking for Father Christmas,"
said Dad.*

"What do you think we're doing?"

*Mum put up
the ladder,
and stayed by it
so it couldn't fall.*

*Pippy climbed down.
Then Dad came down
with the cat.*

*Mum said, "That cat gets on the
roof
nearly every day.
It knows how to get down by itself."*

Dad didn't look too pleased.

*"Thanks for telling us now,"
he said.*

*(Taken from The story box, cited in ESL In The Mainstream Teacher Development Course,
Booklet 2, 1991: 6-7)*

Resource Notes 5.4.3 (continued)

Text analysis

What prior knowledge is needed in order to understand the text?

1 Semantic*a) General background knowledge*

- *social / cultural*
 - *social organisation (nuclear family)*
 - *having a pet*
 - *living in suburbs*
 - *Father Christmas*
 - *humour / sarcasm eg*
 - “What are you doing up there?” she asked.*
 - “Looking for Father Christmas,” said Dad.*
 - “Thanks for telling us now” he said.*

b) Vocabulary

- *special uses of everyday words*
 - *legs (of the ladder)*
 - *hard (firm)*
 - *cried (shouted, yelled)*
 - *“You silly goat” (colloquialism)*
 - *too pleased (idiomatic)*
 - *no time (idiomatic)*
- *word groups*
 - *put up*
 - *tip over*
 - *grabbed at the roof*
 - *over it went (phrasal verb, but it is unusual because preposition is at the beginning.)*
- *other vocabulary*
 - *Puss* – *wobble*
 - *clever* – *ladder*
 - *stayed* – *ground*
 - *Pippy (girl’s name)* – *tumbling*

2 Language structure*a) Text structure*

- *text type*
 - *narrative / fiction*
- *cohesion (how the text is held together)*
 - *some of the cohesion in this text is provided by the presence of the pictures eg the cat and the roof - p.2 (the text doesn’t state which cat or which roof because they are shown in the picture)*
 - *reference*
 - *pronouns, e.g., it, she, he, you, we, us, itself (these items refer to nouns which precede them); refers to nouns which come after it)*

Resource Notes 5.4.3 (continued)

- *there* (meaning on the roof)
- *Dad* (referring to her father)
- *Like this* (refers to an action which accompanies the text)

NB an interesting reference activity for students might be to draw lines from the reference items to the pictures.

Time indicators

- *every day, one day, now, then, when*

other connectives

- *but* (contrast), *so* (casual)

b) *Sentence structure*

- *modals, e.g., should, couldn't*

c) *Word structure*

- *contractions, e.g., It's, I'm, it'll, wouldn't, couldn't, we're.*

Now reflect on the questions in Worksheet 5.4.3 to help you analyse your chosen text.

Worksheet 5.4.3

Text Analysis

What assumptions has the author made about the reader's semantic knowledge/contextual understandings?

a. *General background knowledge?*

-
-
-

b. *Vocabulary? eg special uses of everyday words, unfamiliar vocabulary*

-
-
-

c. *Special uses of language?*

-
-
-

Worksheet 5.4.3 (continued)

What assumptions has the author made about the syntactic and grapho-phonetic knowledge of English of the reader?

a. Text organisation: knowledge of the way the text is sequenced, knowledge of cohesion, i.e., the way the text is held together?

-
-
-

b. Sentence structure: word order? complexity of sentences? incomplete sentences? tenses?

-
-
-

c. Word structure: use of contractions, use of possessives etc?

-
-
-

d. Sounds and letters, phonemic awareness?

-
-
-

What assumptions has the author made about the reader's understanding of the illustrations? familiarity of images? images explaining text?

-
-
-

How is the text constructed (through assumed knowledge, language and illustrations) to influence or position the reader? e.g., what values are promoted? how are different groups of people represented? etc.

-
-
-

This activity emphasises that, if we are aware of the assumed knowledge and language in texts, we are in a better position to make the meaning clear to ESL learners and to prepare for a text with some prior language learning activities which the text will reinforce.

Activity - the value of stories

Story-telling is a feature of all cultures and a central feature of early childhood education. However, we still need to reflect on why and how we use stories in our centres for language development and other purposes, among which are the following:

- we use the language of stories to retell events and experiences and talk about our daily lives
- early childhood settings are ideal environments for immersing young ESL learners in the language of books, and stories are an interesting way into books
- learning will be more meaningful if children hear stories in their first language before they hear them in English
- children's self-esteem will be enhanced if learning incorporates traditional tales and contemporary texts from their cultural background
- children hearing language in texts are hearing the language which they will meet in their own reading and ultimately will use in their own writing.

Keeping in mind the issues raised from the text analysis, use Worksheet 5.4.4 to reflect once more or discuss with a colleague strategies you could use to clarify meaning in texts for ESL learners and to increase the meaningfulness of a text for a learner. Using a specific text for this activity will give you a point of focus for your reflection.

Worksheet 5.4.4

Strategies for clarifying meaning in texts

-
-
-
-
-

Read the following Resource Notes 5.4.4, which suggest possible strategies for clarifying meaning in early childhood educational settings.

Resource Notes 5.4.4

We can clarify meaning in texts by:

- *bilingual staff reading the story first in the home language or alongside the English reading*
- *making the most of illustrations (perhaps the staff and/or children adding to those available in the text)*
- *talking and asking children questions about the illustrations, to reinforce and extend understandings*
- *linking with what children already know and activating their prior experiences and learning as much as possible*
- *choosing books that spring from known experiences and familiar objects*
- *carrying out activities specifically to prepare children for new ideas or concepts*
- *giving children opportunities to explore and extend familiar and new experiences in their play.*

We can build children's knowledge of language by:

- *using the language while focussing on the pictures*
- *modelling key vocabulary and structures before, during and after the reading*
- *using strategies which encourage children to predict what the word might be, e.g., cloze activities, rhyming words for guessing*
- *giving children the opportunities to hear the same text many times, so that children can join in and become familiar with the language*
- *choosing repetitive, rhythmic and predictable texts*
- *designing follow-up activities which reinforce and exercise the language in new contexts.*

Activity

Texts are not neutral. They have been constructed to achieve a particular purpose and reality within a particular context. Advertising slogans and symbols are good examples of this.

As individuals, not only are we aware of the author's apparent purpose, we are also able to bring our own perspective to the text. This is particularly obvious when several people see the same film and often have many different interpretations of it.

For ESL learners it is important to introduce them to the idea that texts are not 'sacred', that there is not one set view of a text, and that texts can be examined from a number of different perspectives, including their own.

Read the following text in Resource Notes 5.4.5.

Resource Notes 5.4.5



Use Worksheet 5.4.5 to write down what this symbol means to you and then read the following Resource Notes 5.4.6.

Worksheet 5.4.5

A large, empty rectangular box intended for students to write their responses to the prompt above.

We would probably all recognise the McDonald's sign. We may know that it sells 'fast foods' and we probably understand what this term means. We know that we can sit in the restaurant as well as take food away. Those of us who go to McDonald's regularly will know that hamburgers and other foods are on the menu. We may know that this sign represents a chain of outlets all over the world which sell hamburgers and other 'take away' foods.

As adults, we understand how this sign achieves its purpose of attracting consumers to its restaurants.

It is likely that a young ESL learner will bring some but not all of this background knowledge to 'reading' this sign.

Conclusion

In this section, we have revisited our understandings of the reading process and have examined how aspects of this process and assumptions made in texts about what children bring to the reading task, and what they know about language, may cause difficulties for children from diverse language backgrounds learning to read in English.

We have also looked briefly at the idea that there are different readings of the same text and that understandings of a text are shaped by life experiences and by social and cultural expectations. We have suggested that texts can be read in different ways and it is an important skill for ESL learners in becoming critically literate.

5.5 Learning to write in English: what's involved.

In this section, we will revisit the understandings, skills and knowledge that native speakers of English usually develop in learning to write in the early years and examine how different understandings of or limited experience with learning to write in another language or in English may cause difficulties for children from diverse language backgrounds learning to write in English.

We will also explore the types of texts children attempt to write in early childhood settings and some implications for ESL learners.

Activity

It is interesting to note that current research indicates that ESL children move through the same stages when learning to write as native speakers of English (*Perrotta 1994*).

However, it is important to remember that, as with oral language development and reading, children bring different experiences and understandings to the writing process and progress in very individual ways and to unique timetables.

In Resource Notes 5.5.1 the table of Writing Outcomes from the Early Literacy Profile (DECS 1996: 17) illustrates the understandings, skills and knowledge learners usually develop in learning to write in the early years.

682

270

WRITING OUTCOMES FROM THE EARLY LITERACY PROFILE				
	Texts	Contextual understanding	Linguistic structures and features	Strategies
Early Literacy	E9 Experiments with using symbols to produce a drawing/scribble/ writing product.	E10 Recognises that marks can be made using writing tools.	E11 Produces personal signs or marks to represent written symbols	E12 Experiments with a variety of tools to produce writing-like behaviours.
Transitional Literacy	T9 Produces drawing/scribble/ writing for someone else to read or interpret.	T10 Recognises that written symbols within their context can be used to convey meaning to others.	T11 Demonstrates use of some conventions when drawing/scribbling/ writing for expressing ideas	T12 Uses a combination of conventional written symbols using handwriting or keyboard combinations
Pre Level 1 Literacy	P9 Uses drawing/scribble/ writing with the intention of conveying a particular idea or message.	P10 Recognises that written symbols within their context can be used to convey meaning to others	P11 sometimes uses standards, symbols and conventions for expressing ideas and information	P12 Practises using a variety of conventional and unconventional letter shapes and symbols to represent ideas and information, using handwriting or keyboard combinations.
Level 1 Literacy	L9 Produces written symbols with the intention of conveying a particular idea or message, which can be interpreted by others.	L10 Recognises that written language is used by people to convey a wide variety of meanings to others.	L11 Often uses conventional written symbols for expressing ideas and information.	L12 Experiments with and practises ways of representing ideas and information using written symbols and conventions, using handwriting or keyboard combinations, seeking help from known adults and peers.
<i>(DECS 1996: 17)</i>				

Having read the above Resource Notes, what are some influences/factors which may affect, either adversely or positively, how ESL learners achieve these outcomes?

Use Worksheet 5.5.1 to identify some of these factors.

Worksheet 5.5.1

Factors which may affect the writing development in English of ESL learners

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Read the following Resource Notes 5.5.2, which may include some of the ideas you have listed in Worksheet 5.5.1

Factors which may affect the writing development in English of ESL learners

ESL Learners:

- *may have some similar or different understandings of the different purposes of writing in their own culture as well as in English through literacy experiences in both*
- *may have limited or no understandings about purposes of writing in English because print may not be seen as a priority for communicating ideas or messages within home and community literacy practices, or writing may be for restricted uses and/or not highly valued*
- *may or may not have understandings of the relationship between spoken and written language in their home language as well as in English*
- *may have metalinguistic understandings about similarities and differences between their home language and English*
- *may be able to read some print in English before they have complete oral control over English and may use this in their attempts at writing in English*
- *may be at a particular phase in writing development in first language but not in English, or vice versa*
- *may have understandings about writing only in English*
- *may have experienced different scripts, different sounds, different alphabets, different ways of writing on a page, e.g., right to left*
- *may be unfamiliar with the English phonetic system and may have difficulty in recognising the relationship between sounds and letters in English*
- *may have difficulty hearing sounds in English and therefore may not be able to make phonetic approximations*
- *may initially mix the shapes and directions of two languages*
- *may be initially confused between two languages through exposure to some dual language texts in which two languages with different directionality appear under each other.*
- *may have difficulty using invented spelling because of lack of familiarity with English sounds and the letters that represent these sounds.*

ESL learners may bring to the learning situation a range of understandings, skills and experience of writing in one or more languages. Research suggests that there are great benefits in encouraging writing in two languages in school, that this process does not confuse children and that code-switching (moving from one language to the other in the same context) rarely occurs in written form. It also appears that ESL children go through the same stages as their English speaking counterparts in learning to write in English.

Activity

Children need to see writing as serving a useful purpose while they begin to gain control over using print. Just as gaining meaning must be the driving force behind the process of learning to read, generating meaning will be the essential driving force behind learning to write. If they are to become proficient and enthusiastic writers, children need to perceive writing as a powerful and effective tool for communicating their own ideas and experiences.

Children move through the early phases of developing control over the processes of writing at the same time that they are learning that written language changes according to different purposes or social functions.

The different types of texts that result from using language for different social functions are called genres. Genres are defined as 'purposeful staged activities in which people interact to make meaning with each other' (*Teaching and learning strategies for ESL learners R-12. Department for Education and Children's Services, SA 1993: 99*).

Each genre has

- a particular social function: e.g., to inform, to recount, to entertain
- its own schematic structure, which is a series of stages that relate to the purpose of the text: e.g., the schematic structure of a recount is orientation, events, re-orientation.
- particular language features: e.g., a recount uses past tense, focuses on individualised participants or nouns (people, animals, things), and sequences events according to time.

Because genres are specific to particular cultures, ESL learners may not have experienced the types of writing that are valued as part of literacy practices in early childhood settings. Therefore it is important to explicitly demonstrate different text types and not expect learners to simply pick them up through exposure.

Supporting learners to be able to use genres appropriate to their age and year level enables them to deal with the demands of reading and writing in different genres in their later schooling, particularly in expository texts such as arguments and discussion which are highly valued genres at higher educational levels.

Julie Martello in *Write From the Start: supporting beginning writers* (1994 December) categorises written genres for beginning writers into four broad areas (pp 7-9). It is important to remember that other writers and researchers have labelled or categorised these written genres in other ways.

These genres are outlined in the following Resource Notes 5.5.3.

Resource Notes 5.5.3

1. *Personal experience genres - about children's own experiences: these include labelling (of a drawing, photo etc), observation/comment (statements and opinions about things and events in children's lives), diary (daily account of events) and recount (a sequenced retelling of a past experience)*
2. *Community genres - used in the daily lives of people in our society: these include invitations, rules, notices, advertisements, lists, cards, letters*
3. *Narrative genres - fictional or factual stories*
4. *Factual genres - facts relating to personal experience and facts relating to the wider society, outside of one's own experience: these include descriptions (what some particular thing is like), reports (what an entire class of things is like), and procedures (how something is made or done).*

We must remember that teaching/learning a particular genre will grow out of a theme or set of activities in the classroom and is not taught in isolation to context, just as, in our daily lives, writing tasks grow out of a specific purpose related to the context in which we are operating. Ensuring that ESL children understand that texts change according to the context in which they are being used and the purpose for which they are being used is critical when learning to write in English.

Activity

Let's look at a particular genre in more detail to explore what an ESL learner needs to know in order to successfully produce this type of text.

In the following Resource Notes 5.5.4 a recipe (an example of a procedural text or genre) is provided. This recipe was made by a group of learners after a visit to the market to learn about different fruits within a topic on Healthy Foods.

Read this recipe and then respond to the questions in the following worksheet.

Resource Notes 5.5.4

Feel-good Fruit Salad

What you need

- 4 oranges
- 4 kiwi fruit
- 1 punnet of strawberries
- 1 pineapple
- 3 passionfruit

What you do

1. *Peel the oranges and cut into bite-sized pieces.*
2. *Peel the kiwi fruit and slice.*
3. *Wash and hull the strawberries.*
4. *Peel and cut the pineapple into bite-sized pieces.*
5. *Cut the passionfruit in half and scoop out the pulp.*
6. *Mix all the ingredients together and place in a large bowl.*

Summary of Text Features

What is the purpose or social function of this text?

How is the text organised? What particular function does each stage of the text serve?

What are the particular language features of this type of text?

The following Resource Notes 5.5.5 (adapted from Derewianka 1990: 27, 29) are a summary of the text features of the Procedure genre and may highlight some extra features which you have not included in the worksheet above.

Summary of Text Features of the Procedure Genre

What is the purpose or social function of this text?

To tell someone how to do or make something

How is the text organised? What particular function does each stage of the text serve?

The focus of this kind of text is on a sequence of actions.

The structure usually consists of:

- *Goal (often indicated in the main heading and/or diagram)*
- *Materials (listed in order of use)*
- *Method (steps oriented towards achieving the goal)*
- *Each stage achieves a particular function - e.g., telling us what we need, or what to do next*
- *Headings, subheadings, numbers, diagrams, photos, etc are often utilised to make Procedures as clear and easy to understand as possible.*

What are the particular language features of this type of text?

- *Generalised participants referring to a whole class of things (ingredients, utensils) as well as specific ones (the eggs)*
- *The reader or the person following the Procedure is referred to in a general way (one/you) or sometimes is not even mentioned at all*
- *Linking words to do with time (first, then, when)*
- *Mainly action words (put, stir, cut, knead)*
- *Tense is timeless ('what people do in general') eg simple present tense (you stir, you cut, you mix)*
- *Detailed factual description of participants (shape, size, colour, amount etc)*
- *Detailed information on how (carefully, with the knife, quickly); where (into the bowl, in the oven); when (after you have added the flour).*

(adapted from Derewianka 1990: 27, 29)

ESL learners will need explicit support to develop understandings of the different genres in early childhood settings and to be able to use them confidently in their learning experiences.

Conclusion

In this section we have explored our understandings of the writing process and examined the difficulties that may arise for children from diverse language backgrounds learning to write in English.

We have also explored the types of texts children attempt to write in early childhood settings and some pedagogical implications for early childhood educators in supporting ESL learners learning to use these texts.

In Module 6 we will look at strategies for supporting ESL children to write in English, as well as ways we can incorporate and support writing in community languages in the early childhood learning environment.

5.6 Suggested workplace activity: Observing an ESL learner reading

Rationale

This workplace activity aims to support you in finding out more about the reading experiences and behaviours of an ESL learner in your centre.

Activity

You will need to select a child from your centre (perhaps a child you have previously focussed on) or a young child from a friend's family. Use the questions below to assist you with your activity:

- What reading does the child do in the home environment? What texts might he or she encounter? e.g., story books, other information sources. To find out this information, you will need to be sensitive and aware that some families may find providing this information threatening. Use a bilingual education worker if necessary and explain clearly to parents why you would like this information.
- What are some of the early reading behaviours of this child in the home language or in English which you have observed in your centre?
- If the child is encountering difficulties with the reading experiences you are offering in your setting, what may be causing these? Refer back to the section 'Issues for ESL learners in learning to read in English' in this module for possible indicators.

Use Worksheet 5.6.1 to make notes on your work in this activity. Record any insights you may have gained or any issues or concerns you may have on the reading development of the child or on the supportive nature or otherwise of the reading program in your centre.

The following notes may be useful in your investigation.

Resource Notes 5.6.1

Some types of reading

- *literature-based reading*
- *labels*
- *poems*
- *newspapers*
- *information texts*
- *forms*
- *signs*
- *instructions, e.g., recipes, car repair manuals, Lego model construction information*
- *maps, diagrams and charts, atlases, globes of the world, street directories*
- *letters*
- *own and others' messages*

Some purposes for reading

- *pleasure*
- *seeking information*
- *broadening language experience and developing language skills*
- *sharing cultural experiences*
- *communicating with others, e.g., keeping in touch with remote friends and relatives*
- *official bureaucratic purposes*

Some contexts for reading

- *in play, singing and choral reading*
- *in teacher-led groups, reading to peers, or reading alone*
- *reading to teacher and other adults in early childhood education*
- *matching print with pictures*
- *using the library*
- *researching information*
- *at home with parents, siblings, elderly relatives*
- *on computer (eg Email, World Wide Web)*
- *reading as public performance*

Some early reading behaviours you may have observed in this child

- *following the text with their fingers*
- *making predictions about the text using cues such as pictures, 'beginning' words*
- *fidgiting, losing focus, turning to the person next to them and talking*
- *selecting books to 'read' or to find information*
- *joining in group reading situations.*

Notes on workplace activity

Any issues, concerns or clarifications arising from this activity

280

5.7 Between module readings

There are two essential readings for Module 5 as well as other suggested readings. The essential readings follow Worksheet 5.7.1. This worksheet can be used to make notes as you read.

Readings for Module 5:

1. Hill, S. (1995) 'Early literacy and diversity'. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*. Volume 20, Number 1, March, pp. 23-27.

In this paper, early literacy in a postmodern era is explored from the position that different socio-cultural experience, racial and gender relationships enrich, extend and enliven early literacy learning. Several key principles for planning an early literacy curriculum are discussed.

2. Rees, D, 1991, 'Some criteria for examining and selecting texts', In *ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course*. South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services.

A range of criteria for examining and selecting texts is outlined under the headings Cultural Inclusivity, Language Accessibility and Production/Presentation.

Suggested readings (*highly recommended)

Comber, B. (1993) 'Literacy and social justice'. *Critical Issues in Australian Education in the 1990s*. Adelaide: Painters Prints.

Cornell, C. (1993) 'Language and culture: monsters that lurk in our traditional rhymes and folktales'. *Young Children*. Volume 48, Number 6, pp. 40-46.

*Derewianka, B (1990) *Exploring how texts work*. Rozelle, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Early Literacy: Practices and Possibilities. South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services. 1997.

Gibbons, P. (1991) Chapter 7 'Reading in a second language'. In *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*. Rozelle, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

*Makin, L. Campbell, J. and Jones Diaz, C. (1994) 'Early Literacy Development in Bilingual Children'. In *One Childhood Many Languages*. Harper Educational. pp. 150-188.

*Martello, J. (1994 December) 'Write From the Start: supporting beginning writers'. *AECA Resource Book Series*. Volume 1, Number 4.

*Perrotta B (Summer 1994) 'Writing development and second language acquisition in young children'. In *Childhood Education*, pp. 237-241.

Wallace, C. (1986) *Learning to Read in a Multicultural Society*. Pergamon Press.

Worksheet 5.7.1

Notes on readings

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to write their notes on readings.

282

Worksheet 5.7.1 (continued)

Notes on readings

A large empty rectangular box for taking notes on readings.

EARLY LITERACY AND DIVERSITY

Susan Hill

In Australian Journal of Early Childhood, Vol. 21, No. 1, March 1995

There are more approaches to teaching early literacy than there are capital cities in Australia. For children in the early years of school there are phonic-based early intervention skills and drills approaches, whole language process approaches, genre and functional grammar approaches. There are critical literacy approaches exploring issues to do with gender, racism and other sociocultural factors. In the early years of school and before formal schooling, sociodramatic play approaches are used to explore the functions of literacy. At the national and state levels there are curriculum statements and profiles indicating the language and literacy outcomes for young children.

The orientation to literacy and the issues about how to teach literacy are like a street full of different restaurants, a food hall with approaches and strategies from across the world. There is an amazing richness and an abundance of choice. To continue the metaphor, an early childhood teacher could get very overloaded sampling it all, a bit of this or a bit of that, or teachers could get really sick and refuse to eat entirely. Choices have to be made about what to try, what to reject, how to evaluate, the value for time and money.

Early literacy educators, like myself, are living in the 1990's, where two major curriculum forces are at play. On one hand there is an accountability movement concerned with standards and a National Curriculum. There are literacy tests for all eight year old children and statements and profiles specifying literacy outcomes. This movement is also occurring in the United States and can be linked to the notions of cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1987) and a core of literacy learning based on the great books (Bloom, 1987). Schools are viewed as cultural sites responsible for a common core of knowledge, maintaining standards and reproducing the knowledge and values to advance the economy and western culture.

On the other hand post modern orientations to teaching early literacy claim that the Western intellectual tradition may not be superior to others, that young children's experiences from different ethnic, racial and gender relations play a significant role in the development of our intellectual culture. Post modernism (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991) shifts our viewpoint from a modernist view of one definitive best way to teach early literacy and invites us to critique and challenge our taken for granted practices and particularly to examine the power relationships within what we teach, who is included and who is represented in the texts we write and read.

In this paper early literacy in a post modern era will be explored from the position that different ethnic experiences, racial and gender relationships enrich, extend and enliven early literacy learning. Several key principles for planning an early literacy curriculum will be discussed.

EARLY LITERACY IN A POST MODERN ERA

For me, post modernism is like pushing the pause button on the video player and seeing a video picture of yourself as an early childhood literacy educator, as someone in a particular theme and place. By stepping out of the situation we can begin to analyse the power relationships in our teaching such as how are children positioned as learners, - as active questioners and critics, or passive recipients of the texts in the classroom? How are issues

to do with gender, race and culture represented in texts and stories such as fairytales or advertisements? A post modern orientation to early literacy means a form of critical literacy where the 'personal is always understood as social, and the social is always historicized to reveal how the subject has been produced in particular (McLarne, 1992).

A post modern orientation to early literacy means actively exploring the relationship between language and power. Who are the texts representing? Whose experiences are made relevant? Are there multiple readings of texts? Are the children positioned as passive recipients of information? What is being learnt and by whom? Whose voices will be heard in the classroom? What kind of conversations will children be having about texts? (Comber, 1993)

Exploring the relationship between language and power isn't just dull, boring, analysis and critique. It can mean singing nursery rhymes like 'Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie', then creating a new version that switches the gender of the characters and removes the violence. Language and power can be explored in the simple reading of stories like "The Princess and the Pea" which can involve discussion of the dialect and power relationships between the 'real' princess, the guard and the King.

Post modernism is about not being perfect! For example, a teacher of five year olds was reading a big book about a farmer. She selected a group of children to perform a readers theatre about the book. After the reading the teacher commented to the class on the way the farmer was portrayed as a tough male and the teacher as a smaller female in a very chintzy dress. She asked, 'Are all farmers men and all teachers women?' "Shouldn't books represent different gender roles?" asked the teacher. A five year old child then said 'You chose a boy to read the farmer's part and a girl to read the teacher's lines'. The teacher was aghast realising that in selecting characters for the readers theatre, gender stereotyping has passed her by.

How refreshing to have children act as social critics deconstructing the teacher's good attempts at non stereotypical gender roles. How intellectually exhilarating to work and to play with children where knowledge is contested and debated and where the dynamic relationships between identity and culture are so intertwined and complex. How exciting to play with the different portrayals of gender, culture and race in texts written several years ago and to speculate on how we may look back on ourselves in the future.

Post modernism in early literacy is about giving away tired arguments about whether or not to use phonics or language experience. However, what is essential when knowledge, power and interests are contested involves working our way through to a big picture, a set of values or principles to use as a guide in literacy teaching. Guiding diversity in the communities in which we work, building school and classroom communities and finding strategies that effectively engage children in early reading and writing.

FINDING AND USING THE 'FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE'

Preschools and classrooms for young children develop exciting ways to explore literacy when they draw on the knowledge and skills found in local households. In a preschool setting in Port Augusta with a large proportion of Aboriginal children, the 'funds of knowledge' in this centre come from individual family stories, photographs, old tales, video and TV, new action groups to do with Aboriginal rights and identity. Many children know a lot about money. They know how to get to the shops and to friends' houses. They know about racism well before formal schooling and they know about the strength of a group. These funds of knowledge may often be untapped in school but it is the core, upon which to build an early literacy curriculum.

In a small country school in New South Wales, the teacher worked with nine children aged 4-12 in one class. The funds of knowledge included the household or farm jobs, milking cows, killing sheep, helping injured and sick animals, fixing equipment and caring for younger siblings as the starting point. A group of five year olds at Pennington in South Australia has twenty two new arrivals from Bulgaria, Croatia and Cambodia. These children and their families tell amazing stories in their own language and stories told with interpreters.

Moll et al (1992) uses the term 'funds of knowledge' to describe the strategic knowledge and related household activities essential to a household's functioning, development and well being. The funds of knowledge relate to the social, economic and productive activities of people in a local region. For example Moll describes research by a teacher exploring the funds of knowledge in a home where parents spoke Spanish and their child was learning English as a second language. Their young child Carlos, an entrepreneur, sold candy to other children in the community. Using this information the teacher with the group of children explored what candy was made of, how to make candy and consumer issues to do with packaging and selling candy.

Setting up sociodramatic play areas with shops, veterinary clinics or restaurants supports children's learning of the functions of early literacy (Vukelich, 1993). Office play with computer terminals or restaurants with chefs hats and reservation books may build on the funds of knowledge of middle class children but may not tap the knowledge of children living in poverty. We need to investigate more carefully the funds of knowledge of children in the communities in which we work. Television shows and stories from TV may be a way to create dramatic play around advertisements and game shows. Setting up displays of toys, examining catalogues, writing to toy manufacturers about the quality of the latest toy not only builds on children's funds of knowledge but shows them how to play an active critical role as consumers.

BUILDING DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITIES

Many teachers work in classrooms and early childhood settings to build a community of democratic rights and responsibilities (Dewey 1916). Socially responsible democratic education means highlighting the relationship of language and power (Edelsky 1994). This can involve having class groups and exploring ways to make decisions. Learning about language, power and participation can mean getting involved in group activities like fairs, shows, concerts and research projects to do with the local community (Hill and Hancock, 1993). There are games that help build cohesion and these are particularly important with new arrivals who are maintaining their home languages and adding English to their repertoire.

A powerful democratic literacy community exists in Mandy Way's class at Davoren Park Junior Primary School where the twenty-two, five to seven year old children list and monitor the class budget and make decisions on what the money is allocated to and then record these decisions. The budget is displayed for all children to see and to make suggestions. This is part of the literacy and mathematics curriculum but it also involves the class in real life learning to manage budgets and helps them see that literacy is a way to keep a record of how much was spent and on what. Mandy teaches in a school where many children live in economic poverty with third generation unemployment and unemployment presently calculated at four times the national average.

At the beginning of each term in Mandy's class all jobs in the classroom are declared vacant and the class elects a panel of peers to select people for the jobs. There are always enough jobs for everyone as Mandy is encouraging collaborative behaviour with children supporting the learning of others. Each child writes a job application for a job of their choice. The class has examined models of job applications, including one by Mandy for the job she now

holds. The children see it is important to describe their skills and they attach personal references from people who know them well. Some children get the job of their choice and others have to wait their turn and apply for another job.

Children in a nearby class made decisions about ways to arrange the furniture in their classroom. They drew and wrote labels for floor plans for arranging the furniture. The children shared these plans and passed them around a circle for all to see. At a class meeting the children made and wrote down a decision about placing the chairs and tables in a doughnut shape so each person could be seen easily. The class with the teacher, were learning ways to make fair and just decisions as a group. They were using reading and writing to work through problems and to record decisions.

Rogoff (1994) sees a community of learners as people participating in shared endeavours with others. A community of learners contrasts sharply with adult run instructional transmission of knowledge approaches and the child-run approach with the notion of acquisition or discovery of knowledge by oneself.

Interestingly the success in developing a classroom community with helpful relations amongst students makes administrating and taking individual, competitive standardised tests an anomaly as the children are used to cooperating and sharing information with their classmates (Rogoff, 1994).

FINDING STRATEGIES THAT HONOUR DIVERSITY

Australia is a unique English speaking country within the Asia region. Makin, Campbell and Diaz (1995), report that there are over 100 imported languages and 50 or more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages. Australia has a very high proportion of people born in other countries - more so than any country except Israel (Makin, Campbell and Diaz, 1995, pp xviii). Honouring this diversity doesn't mean one multicultural storytelling or dressup day a year but including dolls and socio-dramatic props, texts and stories from Africa, Asia and Europe which match the cultural experiences of children in the group.

Some children require more practice and repetition of tasks other than others. Some children find it hard to coordinate physical actions to hold pens and paper. Some find it difficult to speak and some have multiple disabilities. What can teachers do to honour the diversity in learning styles and ability? Intervention is necessary but it is not as simple as removal to a special class or school. Communities cannot afford to caste out or remove people who have physical or learning disabilities. Strategies to increase inclusion, talking about differences, peer collaboration, intervening to build on the strengths of the child plus teaching the skills that are necessary for literacy success are essential in diverse communities.

Honouring diversity involves detecting bias or exclusion in picture books, television and video. Asking questions like "Why do most princesses have golden hair?" or "Are babies always cute?" leads to different readings of texts and avoiding stereotypes that serve to diminish difference and diversity.

Honouring diversity involves looking beyond behaviour that may on first appearance seems obvious. The child who loses book after book may live in several different houses. This may not excuse the behaviour but knowledge of shifting home bases affects how we tackle the problem of responsibility for property.

FINDING STRATEGIES THAT EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE CHILDREN

A range of strategies from phonics, functional grammar or language experience can be used to achieve literacy learning but these strategies require a firm base or set of guiding principles to be effective. Effectively literacy learning builds on the 'funds of knowledge' of young children. Working to develop democratic communities of learners, honouring the diversity within the group and planning for authentic and purposeful reading and writing help children see the purpose and functions of literacy.

Judging what and when to use a strategy rests on the skills and judgement of the teacher. In a busy day a teacher may find a space for reading an emotionally powerful book like 'Meggie's Magic' the story of an eight year old child who dies. This is not a place for analysis of the racial, gender and class stereotypes in Meggie's family as the human inevitability of the life and the death of a sister, touches too powerfully.

Teachers uses a range of strategies from, whole language, genre approaches, phonics, language experience, shared book and more. This does not mean that we are indiscriminately gather bits from here and there. We use what we judge as effective, what produces results, be it partner reading, look-cover-write-check or choral reading of raps and rhymes.

EARLY LITERACY AND FUN

Teaching young children about reading and writing is involving, fun, dynamic, energetic and creative. It's about building on what we know and what children know. It's about creating learning communities, honouring diversity and using literacy activities, ideas and strategies that situate power within the group.

The teacher of early reading and writing is not bland, or dispassionate but more of a questioner, thinker, fun seeker, critic and social activist. In valuing this we construct learning communities where children too are learners, questioners, fun seekers, critics and social activists. The times for early literacy are exciting and challenging.

I am indebted to colleagues Anne Glover, Helen Nixon, Barbara Comber and Lynne Badger for powerful debate and discussion about many of the issues described in this article. Thanks also to Mandy Way and the teachers and children at Davoren Park Junior Primary School.

References

Arnowitz, S. and Giroux, H. (1991) *Postmodern Education, Politics, Culture and Social Criticism*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

Bloom, A. (1987) *The closing of the American mind*. New York, Simon and Schuster.

Comber, B. (1983) Classroom exploration in critical literacy, *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* Vol 16 (1), 73-83.

Dean, A. (1992) *Meggie's Magic*, Melbourne Viking.

Dewey, J. (1916) *Democracy and Education*, NY Macmillan.

Edelsky, C. (1994) Education for Democracy, *Language Arts* Vol. 71, (4), 252-257.

Hill S. and Hancock J. (1993) *Communities of readers and writers*, Melbourne, Eleanor Curtain Publishing.

Hirsch, E.D. (1987) *Cultural Literacy: What every American needs to know*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin.

Makin, L., Campbell, J., and Diaz, C., (1995) *One childhood many languages*. Sydney , Harper Educational Publishers.

McLaren, P. (1992) Literacy research and the post modern turn: Cautions form the margins, in R. Beach, J. Green, M. Kamil and T. Shanahan (eds) *Multi disciplinary perspectives in literacy research*. Urbana, Ill National Council of Teachers of English.

Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., and Gonzalez, N., (1992) Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms, *Theory into Practice*, Vol 31, (2), (132-141).

Rogoff, B. (1994) Developing understanding of the idea of communities of learners. The Scribner Award Address, *American Educational Research Association*, New Orleans, April.

Vukelich, C. (1993) Play: a context for exploring the functions, features and meaning of writing

SOME CRITERIA FOR EXAMINING AND SELECTING TEXTS

Deborah Rees

CULTURAL INCLUSIVITY

Does the text: (both written text and illustrations)

- reflect the multicultural reality of our society by including:
 - different cultural groups' experiences?
 - characters of different cultural backgrounds in positive roles?
 - examples which draw on different cultures?
 - illustrations of different cultural groups and their activities?
- acknowledge the experience and contributions of different groups to
 - knowledge generally?
Eg Chinese - Astronomy - first to document Halley's Comet
 - to Australia's development in particular?
Eg German settlement in South Australia
- avoid ethnocentrism ie avoid implying that one culture is superior / inferior to another?
eg by not seeing Western values, lifestyles etc as the norm
- avoid paternalism ie avoid blaming a particular group for the situation they may be in and the dominant group thinking it has the right and the duty to resolve the "problem" in the best interests, it believes, of the minority group? (adapted from *Taking Stock* p 8)
- avoid stereo typing?
 - Are ethnic minority characters in literature realistically / accurately portrayed remembering that the physical appearance within any cultural group has the normal range of individual differences and the individuals within a culture will have a variety of attitudes and values, behave in a variety of ways and contribute to and participate in society at various levels? (adapted from *Taking Stock* p 17)
 - Are value-laden terms avoided? Eg primitive, quaint, modern, lady-like.
 - Are the customs, festivals and celebrations of the cultural group presented to explain their role in the life of the people rather than to focus solely on their "exotic" character?
 - Are other aspects of a cultural group illustrated, emphasising diversity within the culture rather than a cultural prop being used to define a person as a member of a cultural group eg Italians eating spaghetti? (adapted from *Taking Stock* p 17)
- avoid tokenistic inclusion?
 - Do people from minority groups contribute to the storyline, is information given about them, do they interact with others and develop as individual characters? (adapted from *Taking Stock* p 8)

Does the text: (both written text and illustrations)

- omit important information?
 - Where there is reference to important cultural information, is enough detail included to enhance understanding. eg why people migrated to Australia?
 - Are all sides allowed to express their points of view?
 - Are groups shown in traditional and contemporary settings, rural and urban?
 - Is information about pre contact history and culture given eg the Aborigines before European contact? (Taken from *Taking Stock* p 8)
- demonstrate the positive aspects of cultural interaction? eg positive cross cultural personal relationships
- model positive attitudes to cultural differences?
- highlight shared values across cultures? Eg two cultural groups mentioned in the text may share the same educational values
- focus on universal needs and see cultures as expressing ways of meeting the same needs?
eg religion, shelter, peace etc
- show that all cultures are dynamic and respond to changing needs and circumstances - that they are not “static”?
- respond to the needs of all students by:
 - giving them opportunities to empathise with and talk about other peoples’ lives and cultures so they can appreciate and accept those lives and cultures and better understand their own?
 - relating texts to their own experiences including those of being bilingual and bicultural?

LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY

1 Whole text structure

How are the ideas in the text connected and organised?

- Are connectives used:
 - to indicate cause and effect? Eg due to, as a result of, because of
 - to express comparison and contrast? eg whereas, on the other hand
 - to indicate time sequence or sequence of events? eg after that, finally, abruptly, once there
 - to indicate concession? Eg anyhow, nevertheless, in spite of
- Are lexical items used?
Eg synonyms (the use of words of equal or similar meaning) such as “home” / “dwellings” or hyponymy (the relationship between a class of things and a specific member of that class) such as “conventional vehicles” / “sedans”.

- Are grammatical cohesive ties used? e.g. reference items such as pronouns, demonstratives, definite articles
Are the referents readily identified? e.g. they can be phrases (e.g. “that fact”, “two of these”, “the eldest”) which refer back to larger chunks of information
- What language constructions are used to indicate a certain language function? eg asking for a prediction “what will happen if . . . ?” or asking about causes and effects “how can . . . be explained?”

2 Sentence structure

Will NESB students be able to cope with the written text from the point of view of:

- the length of the sentences?
eg “If an electroscope is charged on a dry day and the position of the leaves noted at intervals over an hour or two, it will be observed that they collapse slowly as they lose their charge.” (*Science and the ESL student* p 51)
- the grammatical complexity of the sentences?
 - the use of subordinate clauses (ie a group of words containing a subject and verb and forming part of a sentence)

In the above example the first two subordinate clauses are long and complex. “If an electroscope is charged on a dry day and the position of the leaves noted at intervals over an hour or two, it will be observed that they collapse slowly as they lose their charge.”

- the use of embedded clauses, e.g., “The Church, alarmed at its waning influence, and beset by the threat facing it, particularly in the education sphere, in a changing post war world, began actively to encourage men more susceptible to its influence.”
- the use of passive voice in science and history to convey objectivity, e.g., “The container was heated on a gas burner.”
In a passive sentence, the agent of the action is unimportant ie. it doesn’t matter who heated the container. NESB students may find this difficult to grasp initially.
- the use of reference items within a sentence can cause confusion, e.g., “While all of the factors that we have looked at so far are important, there are those who would say that they are only part of a wider picture.”

Relative pronouns are often omitted in definitions, e.g., “Bronze is an alloy produced from copper and tin” instead of “Bronze is an alloy which is produced from copper and tin”.

3 Vocabulary

In the text:

- is there technical / subject specific vocabulary which is likely to be unfamiliar to NESB students? eg osmosis, evaporation, combustion (science) glaciation, substratum (geography) redistribution, equilibrium (economics)
- is there non-technical vocabulary which might cause confusion because it is:
 - unfamiliar? e.g., illustrate, examine, contrast, effect, maximum, average

- familiar in everyday usage but not in the specific context? e.g. culture, seal, mouth, cloudy, law solution (science) demand, supply (economics)
- an abstract noun? e.g. questions and instructions in science contain abstract nouns which compress a lot of information - “what is the composition of dry air?”; or in history for political processes and institutions e.g. monarchy, revolution, conflict; or in other subject areas to describe feelings and characteristics e.g., humility, courage
- similar in meaning? e.g. synonyms such as the following words for “retreat” - “back down”, “back off”, “back out” (phrasal verbs), “pull one’s horns in” (idiomatic), “flinch”, “retire”, “retract”, “shrink”, “withdraw”
- are words used which assume a specific cultural knowledge? eg classical or biblical terms
- is there idiomatic / metaphorical / colloquial language which may be unfamiliar to NESB students and confusing because the meaning cannot be translated literally eg “keep your nose out of it”, “it was raining cats and dogs”.

PRODUCTION / PRESENTATION

Does the text :

- have a clear and consistent / predictable layout?
- have an acceptable amount of text per page?
- have a logical organisation of content?
- have useful headings, summaries, in margins and comments which relate to the content?
- have illustrations / pictures which:
 - are appropriate real life ones?
 - relate closely to the text?
 - have captions which explain the illustrations / pictures clearly and relate them to the text?
- have clearly labelled diagrams / tables / charts / maps?
- use consistent print style and size of print?
- have a list of contents, a glossary, and index and a bibliography?
- appear durable and well bound?
- have a cover which relates to the content?
- have information on the dust jacket which gives useful clues to the content?

ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course
SA Education Department, 1988 / Revised 1990

References

Sharing successful inclusive practices I
Written by members of the Network
Second Phase Language Learners Project
Language and Multicultural Centre, Adelaide, 1987

J McIntosh
Taking stock: Assessing teaching-learning materials for cultural bias - some guidelines and strategies.
Multicultural Education Centre, Special Programs Directorate, NSW Department of Education, 1984

Science and the ESL student
Commonwealth Schools commission, Canberra, 1986

“Strategies”
SA ESL Curriculum Guidelines
(SA Education Department, forthcoming)

200

294

References

Early Years Literacy Profile SA: Department for Education and Children's Services. 1996.

English - a curriculum profile for Australian schools. Curriculum Corporation. 1994.

Cornerstones: a training and development program in early literacy teaching and learning (Modules 2 and 4). South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services. 1995.

Derewianka, B (1990) *Exploring how texts work*. Rozelle, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Early Literacy : Practice & Possibilities. Department for Education and Children's Services, South Australia, 1997.

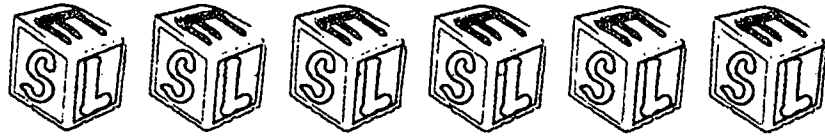
ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course 'Workshop 3' In Tutor Manual. South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services. 1991.

Martello, J. (1994) 'Write From the Start: supporting beginning writers'. *AECA Resource Book Series*. Volume 1, Number 4, December.

Perrotta B (1994) 'Writing development and second language acquisition in young children'. In *Childhood Education*. Summer, pp. 237-241.

Teaching and learning strategies for ESL learners R-12. SA: Department for Education and Children's Services. 1993.

Weitzman, E. (1992) *Learning language and loving it: a guide to promoting children's social and language development in early childhood settings*. Toronto: A Hanen Centre Publication.



Reading and writing in a
second language:

Strategies



Module 6

Focus: Reading and writing in a second language: Strategies

Overview

We begin this module with an approach to examining and selecting texts for use across different areas of learning. There are many excellent resources available which incorporate effective strategies for ESL learners, some of which are listed in the readings section at the end of this module. Although in this training package it is not possible to describe all the strategies which are suitable for use with ESL learners, we will model a number of strategies which support the reading and writing skills of ESL learners in early childhood settings.

In the second part of this module, we develop a series of activities around a text, incorporating some of the strategies modelled previously. Finally we reflect on how an early childhood learning environment can be supportive of the reading and writing development of ESL learners.

This module contains the following activities:

- 6.1 Reflecting on Module 5*
- 6.2 Examining and selecting appropriate texts*
- 6.3 Strategies for supporting the reading and writing development of ESL learners*
- 6.4 Developing activities for reading texts and extending reading and writing development*
- 6.5 Ensuring a supportive environment for the development of reading and writing*
- 6.6 Suggested workplace activity*
- 6.7 Readings*

At the end of this module you will have:

- explored an approach to examining and selecting texts
- experienced a number of strategies which support the reading and writing skills of ESL learners in early childhood settings
- reflected on how an early childhood learning environment can be supportive of the reading and writing development of ESL learners.

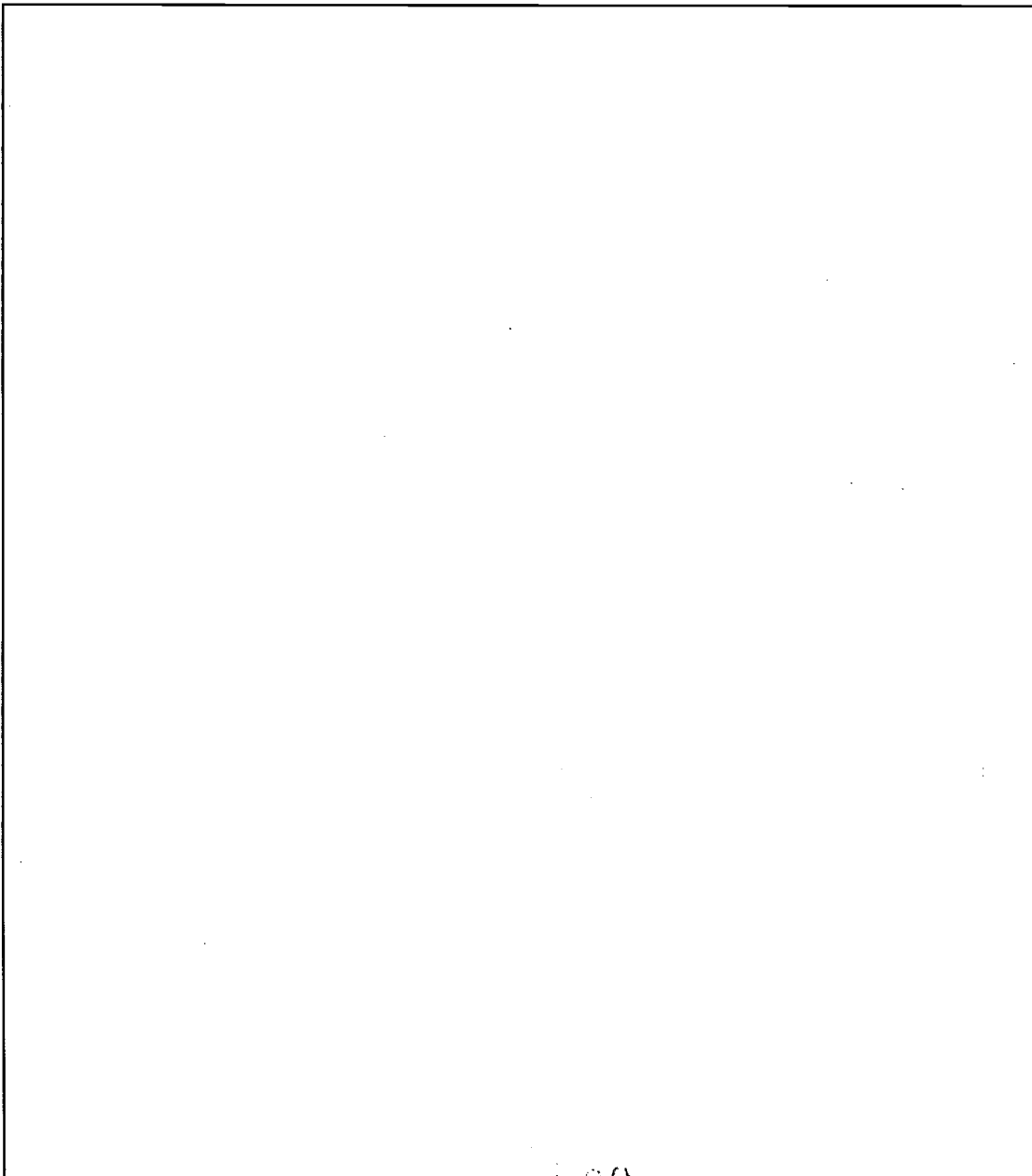
6.1 Reflecting on Module 5

As in the previous module, you may wish to begin your work on this module by reflecting on the materials and readings from Module 5. Refer back to your notes in Worksheet 5.6.1 and Worksheet 5.7.1 and consider what new understandings you have gained and what critical issues require resolution or further research.

You may also wish to consider the relevance of these understandings and issues within your workplace and consider how your practice is being affected or could be affected by this professional development.

Jot down your ideas in Worksheet 6.1.1 below.

Worksheet 6.1.1



298

6.2 Examining and selecting appropriate texts

Introduction

We begin this module with an approach to examining and selecting texts for use across different areas of learning.

The purpose of this section is to examine the criteria which we use to select texts for use in a multicultural educational setting.

After carrying out this activity you will be able to appreciate the role texts play in:

- developing or undermining an ESL child's self-esteem
- giving children opportunities to access knowledge/content.

You will also be able to look more closely at some of the literacy experiences we offer children through texts.

Please note that this activity is taken from *ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course, Workshop 4*, and has been adapted here for use in the early childhood setting.

Activity

You will need to work with several colleagues from your centre on this activity to gain maximum benefit from it.

Before commencing the activity, read the article 'Some criteria for examining and selecting texts' referred to in Module 5 as an essential reading in preparation for Module 6.

Then, in conjunction with this article, read through the two worked examples on the following pages in Resource Notes 6.2.1(a) and (b), which demonstrate a framework for evaluating the inclusivity of texts.

A framework for evaluating the inclusivity of texts: sample 1

Name of sample text: 'The Kinder Hat' by Morag Loh, illustrated by Donna Rawlins, (1985), Melbourne: Hyland House.

CULTURAL INCLUSIVITY

e.g., how does the text acknowledge the experience and contributions of different cultural groups; what is the positive or negative representation of cultural groups?

- *different types of cultures/backgrounds represented in the illustrations*
- *different language (Italian) on background pictures (labelling)*
- *main characters are from Asian background.*

LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY

e.g., how complex is the sentence structure; what demands are made in the word usage?

- *everyday language of the preschool setting*
- *most vocabulary would be known except a few: ornament, breeze, stare, weeding, amazed, suited, container*
- *new vocabulary introduced*
- *text supported by illustrations*
- *some connectives: and, but, because, while.*

PRODUCTION/PRESENTATION

e.g. how well does the quality of type, illustrations, layout support the meaning?

- *large illustrations: bright, colourful*
- *illustrations support text*
- *reasonable, not excessive amount of text on each page*
- *lots of 'discussion-prompting' illustrations*
- *culturally inclusive, non-sexist*
- *everyday common situations.*

Resource Notes 6.2.1(b)

A framework for evaluating the inclusivity of texts: sample 2

Name of text: 'Huggly-Snuggly Pets' by Gwen Pascoe and David Kennett, (1987) illustrations by David Kennett. Flinders Park, SA: Era Publications.

CULTURAL INCLUSIVITY

e.g., how does the text acknowledge the experience and contributions of different cultural groups; what is the positive or negative representation of cultural groups?

- *representation of children and adults from other cultures in the story: colour of skin, eyes, hair, etc*
- *a fun, positive, happy story*
- *animals in the story that all children should be able to relate to: fish, birds, dogs*
- *not all children would be able to relate to a pet shop as the place where you go to get your pets/animals, or animals kept in cages.*

LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY

e.g., how complex is the sentence structure; what demands are made in the word usage?

- *sentence structures are simple and repetitive, predictable.*
- *some expressions and other language items need to be explained, e.g., 'huggly- snuggly words', words we use with particular animals: furry, purry kitten.*

PRODUCTION/PRESENTATION

- *e.g., how well does the quality of type, illustrations, layout support the meaning?*
- *print large and clear*
- *rhymes and repetitive structures*
- *expressive*
- *pictures bright and colourful: clear and realistic representation of animals and people*
- *small amount of text on each page.*

With colleagues, use Worksheet 6.2.1 and the article 'Some criteria for examining and selecting texts' and select a book you use often in your centre and evaluate its inclusivity.

A framework for evaluating the inclusivity of texts:

Name of text:

CULTURAL INCLUSIVITY

e.g., how does the text acknowledge the experience and contributions of different cultural groups? what is the positive or negative representation of cultural groups?

-
-
-
-
-

LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY

e.g., how complex is the sentence structure? what demands are made in the word usage?

-
-
-
-
-

PRODUCTION/PRESENTATION

e.g., how well does the quality of type, illustrations, layout support the meaning?

-
-
-
-
-

304

There are very few texts that we use in our learning programs which are 'ideal' in terms of inclusivity. As educators, we need to find ways of adapting or modifying texts to ensure that we maximise opportunities for

- developing an ESL child's self-esteem
- giving children opportunities to access the content of texts.

Given what you have discovered about the text you have evaluated in Worksheet 6.2.1, use Worksheet 6.2.2 to reflect on whether you would:

- use the text without any modification
- abandon the text
- modify the text
- develop some strategies or activities to give ESL learners a way into the text
- develop a strategy to challenge the text in some way.

Worksheet 6.2.2

Given what you have discovered about this text, will you

- *use the text without any modification? Say why.*
- *abandon the text? Say why.*
- *modify the text? Say why/how.*
- *develop some strategies or activities which will give ESL learners a way into the text. Say what strategies or activities you might develop.*
- *develop a strategy to challenge the text in some way? e.g., identify assumptions underlying the text such as stereotypes, bias; consider who wrote the text and why.*

With colleagues, and using the article *Some criteria for examining and selecting texts*, examine a few more texts from the range of books you commonly use in your centre. After evaluating a range of texts, consider the questions in Worksheet 6.2.3.

Worksheet 6.2.3

How useful are these criteria for examining texts?

Are there any other criteria which could be included?

How useful is the framework for evaluating the inclusivity of texts?

How will such an examination of texts enable an explicit focus on aspects of the cultural contexts of the texts in introducing these texts to ESL children in your setting and to all children?

How can the texts evaluated be used to develop critical thinking in young ESL learners and in all ESL children?

To what degree can we use culturally biased materials in counteracting bias?

Conclusion

Selecting texts which are inclusive, that is, texts which are meaningful to our ESL learners' lives and linguistically accessible to children from diverse language and cultural backgrounds, is an important strategy in bridging the gap which may exist between the experiences of ESL learners and that of the writers, and enables these learners to begin to read with meaning and gain understanding from texts.

In the next section we will examine other strategies which specifically support the reading and writing development of ESL learners in early childhood settings.

6.3 Strategies for supporting the reading and writing development of ESL learners.

Introduction

In this section we look at some strategies which assist ESL learners in early childhood settings in the development of their reading and writing skills.

We model each strategy for use in a particular context and suggest other uses for this strategy within early childhood learning programs, as well as listing its advantages.

Strategies modelled are:

- using environmental print
- using everyday texts
- cloze
- a story map as a graphic organiser
- modelling, scaffolding and joint construction
- teaching grammar.

307

Activity: environmental print

In the local environment, we are surrounded by print and symbols - on the streets, in the supermarkets, on signs, on billboards, on packaging and so on. Research indicates that all young children, including those from diverse language and cultural backgrounds, develop an early awareness of the meaning inherent in this kind of print.

Environmental print occurs in contextualised situations where the reader is able to understand messages through visual clues, e.g., traffic lights, food labels, toy catalogues, fast food logos. Thus environmental print is an ideal vehicle for assisting ESL children in early childhood settings to develop early understandings of how literacy is used for different purposes in Australian society.

The following activity explores the potential of using environmental print in early childhood settings to build on children's early understandings of reading and writing. You may like to undertake this task with a group of colleagues and with children in your centre.

Use Worksheet 6.3.1 to

- develop activities to find out what children know about environmental print, e.g., go on a print walk
- list some activities for using print/texts/graphics from the environment as a learning tool in the early childhood setting, e.g. setting up a shop
- consider what children learn about the purposes of reading and writing from using environmental print.

Worksheet 6.3.1

Environmental Print

Work out how you can find out what children know about environmental print, for example, go on a print walk around the immediate neighbourhood.

-
-
-
-
-

List some activities for using print/texts/graphics from the environment as a learning tool in the early childhood setting, e.g., setting up a shop, choosing household articles from a catalogue for the home corner.

-
-
-
-
-

Consider what children learn about the purposes of reading and writing from using environmental print.

-
-
-
-
-

Read Resource Notes 6.3.1 to supplement the ideas developed in Worksheet 6.3.1

Resource Notes 6.3.1

Activities to find out what children know about environmental print

- go on a print walk to find out what children know and to build up knowledge of different uses of print in the environment, e.g., traffic lights, Neighbourhood Safety Watch, street signs, shop signs, logos
- visit the local supermarket or market and talk about the print you see there, e.g., prices, specials, labels, instruction/warning signs in English and other languages
- show a range of logos and signs and find out what children know about them and where and how they are used.

Activities for using environmental print as a learning tool

- use food labels that children would be familiar with from home to play matching games or shops
- discuss junk mail and what the print means, examining the cultural inclusiveness of these items
- read logos and print on clothing and household goods
- talk about television jingles and information they know from television - a collection of video clips may be a useful resource.

What children learn about the purposes of reading and writing from using environmental print

- environmental print represents messages or information about our society and its values
- reading and writing are used for different purposes, e.g., to provide information, to obtain information, to persuade, to entertain etc
- it is important to be able to access environmental print for a range of reasons
- looking at environmental print is one way to learn about language.

Activity: everyday texts

As has been suggested throughout this Resource Folder, using everyday texts, including television texts, in classrooms and centres draws on the funds of knowledge which many children bring to these situations. Educators are therefore valuing and building on the literacy practices of many learners, including those from cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than English. Often these children are very familiar with the jingles, advertisements, slogans etc that appear on television.

In the following activity, we will explore how slogans can be used in early childhood classrooms to teach aspects of school literacy.

The ideas for this activity have been adapted from Kavanagh, K. (1997) *Texts on television: school: literacies in the first years of school*. There are many other excellent ideas in this resource for using television texts in your setting.

You might like to involve a colleague in this activity and use the ideas you generate or the ideas in the following Resource Notes 6.3.2 with your learners.

Respond to the questions in the following Worksheet 6.3.2.

Worksheet 6.3.2

Brainstorm slogans you know from television, especially slogans you think your learners will be familiar with, e.g., 'It's only McDonalds!', 'Aren't you hungry? Hungry for a burger right now.'

-
-
-
-

Suggest ways you could use these to teach aspects of language, e.g., nouns by substituting names of other fast food outlets or stores - 'Its only Target!' or words for 'burger'

-
-
-
-
-

Suggest ways you could use slogans to draw children's attention to the purposes of slogans and the way they are constructed to achieve their purposes.

-
-
-
-
-

Read the following Resource Notes 6.3.2 which suggest some ways that you could use slogans in teaching literacy in your setting.

Resource Notes 6.3.2

Tape and watch a selection of television ads that are on during a high viewing period for your class. Have children join in on slogans that they know. Make a list of the most popular slogans. Discuss the common features, e.g., rhyming words, repetitions, play on words/humour.

Use a collection of the advertising slogans that students know as the basis for a class big book. List and discuss favourite slogans. Use the slogans as the basis for some fun cloze exercises. Try 'Aren't you hungry? Hungry for a carrot right now!' Why doesn't it conjure the same feelings as the original? Make big books that support students to develop their prediction skills, e.g., 'There's no other store like David . . . 'Woolworths the fresh food . . . '.

Discuss the pleasure and desire and needs associated with lots of advertising. What time do food advertisements come on television? How many ads for food are on during Agro Cartoon Connections? What categories of ads are directed at different people? How do we know? How do food ads tap into our desires? What are the differences between our desires and needs? What do advertisers present as kids' desires for food?

Use the list as the basis for some research. What, if any, of the slogans can other members of students' families remember from their childhood - 'Things go better with Coke!' 'There's magic in a Solomon's Carpet!' Have students collect a list of favourite slogans from other members of their families, e.g., 'Where do you get it!'

Make comparisons between slogans and refrains in stories, songs and poems.

(Kavanagh 1997:54)

NB: Some of these activities may not be appropriate for ESL learners, e.g., asking students' families what ads they can remember from their childhoods, particularly if the parents were born in other countries and may or may not have had access to television. It may be possible, however, to find out about ads (through SBS, but not necessarily on television) in other languages.

Activity: cloze

As a during reading strategy, oral and written cloze can assist in developing ESL learners' reading skills by encouraging children to use all the cueing systems when predicting words that may be appropriate to the text.

Some of the following ideas about cloze have been adapted from Priscilla Lynch (1986) *Using big books and predictable books*. Ashton Scholastic: 14-16.

We use oral cloze when we leave gaps in our retelling or reading of a story to encourage children to predict the missing word. We can also use our hands in reading activities to conceal parts of the words and pictures to encourage children to predict.

We can use written cloze after we have used oral cloze, when children are very familiar with the text. We can do this by writing up a sentence from the text, deleting one word and drawing a line to indicate where the word would go. We then read the sentence, pointing to each word as we say it (when we come to the line, we can say a word like 'something'). We ask learners to predict a word that would

make sense in the gap and, when a child does this, we re-read the sentence with the learners to check if the prediction makes sense. This process can be repeated several times if the first prediction does not make sense or if several words make sense in the context.

The most supportive way to use a cloze activity with ESL learners is to use familiar texts that the children enjoy. For young children the best texts to use are repetitive, predictable or very familiar texts. Flip books like the Spot series are another form of cloze. When children request the same text over and over, we can use oral and written cloze procedure to draw their attention away from the pictures to the way the text works.

In this activity, we will model an example of a cloze activity which is suitable for use with adults. By using this example, we can more effectively demonstrate how cloze activities force us as readers to make use of our semantic and syntactic knowledge to make sense of the text.

This example also demonstrates that there is not always a 'right' word, but there can be several acceptable alternatives which could be inserted in the blank spaces and which make sense in the context of the meaning of the text.

Read Worksheet 6.3.3 and try and fill out the blank spaces.

Worksheet 6.3.3

Written Language

There was a time when people used only sounds and body signals to get things done. They had no _____ as we have today.

_____ must have felt a need to extend the power of their _____, because it had serious limitations. One of the _____ - that speech had no permanence - was a serious _____, because people needed to _____ and pass on knowledge about what happened in _____ times, what laws they had to obey, and who owned what. Otherwise there could be no agreed _____ or system in their way of living. One way they _____ the problem was for special _____ to take on the task of memorising stories, laws, and other important _____, and then to train _____ people to take their place, as they grew old. Most groups of people on the earth probably had _____ who could _____ their laws and customs.

Even today, a delightful part of _____ among people who have only an oral language is that they have marvellous _____ to tell and _____ to, often going right back to the 'beginning of time'.

In many parts of the world, _____ still hand on their _____ in this way, either because they do not have a _____ like ours, or because they cannot _____ or _____.

Long ago, people in various parts of the _____ found another way to overcome the lack of _____ of speech by inventing a _____ form of language. They realised that if marks were made on a suitable material, those marks would preserve a _____ through time; and the message could even be carried to other people a long way away.

*(Parker and Unsworth. 1986
cited in DECS, 1991: 65)*

The following Resource Notes 6.3.3 provides the original text for your interest.

Resource Notes 6.3.3

Written Language

There was a time when people used only sounds and body signals to get things done. They had no written language as we have today.

These people must have felt a need to extend the power of their speech, because it had serious limitations. One of the limitations - that speech had no permanence - was a serious problem, because people needed to preserve and pass on knowledge about what happened in past times, what laws they had to obey, and who owned what. Otherwise there could be no agreed order or system in their way of living. One way they overcame the problem was for special people to take on the task of memorising stories, laws, and other important information, and then to train younger people to take their place, as they grew old. Most groups of people on the earth probably had specialists who could recite their laws and customs.

Even today, a delightful part of life among people who have only an oral language is that they have marvellous stories to tell and listen to, often going right back to the 'beginning of time'.

In many parts of the world, people still hand on their culture in this way, either because they do not have a written language like ours, or because they cannot read or write.

Long ago, people in various parts of the world found another way to overcome the lack of permanence of speech by inventing a graphic form of language. They realised that if marks were made on a suitable material, those marks would preserve a message through time; and the message could even be carried to other people a long way away.

(Parker and Unsworth. 1986)

314

In Resource Notes 6.3.4 some advantages, other uses and purposes of cloze procedure as an early reading strategy are listed.

Resource Notes 6.3.4

Cloze procedures

Advantages

- *encourages listeners and readers to focus on the language and structuring of the text*
- *encourages the development of searching strategies to find out the meaning of words, i.e., using cues within illustrations, skimming and scanning texts*
- *makes ESL learners aware that there could be several acceptable alternatives that could be inserted in the blank spaces and encourages them to think about what is possible in any particular text and, with practice, what is possible in English texts generally, depending on the type of text it is*
- *develops ability to use contextual clues*
- *develops vocabulary by comparing responses and discovering and evaluating alternative words*
- *develops oral language of creative guessing, justifying, explaining choices, giving opinions, etc.*

Other ways and purposes for using cloze:

- *when first introducing cloze, the same word or picture could be deleted throughout the text, if the text is predictable or repetitive, to reinforce its shape and meaning and sound*
- *put a picture without the relevant word in the gap or picture and first letter of the word*
- *it is also useful to give children a list of words to choose from to restrict possibilities and support guessing*
- *it is important give quieter children air, space and time to respond*
- *as a means for developing prediction skills*
- *vocabulary development*
- *developing awareness of graphophonics, e.g. deleting initial or final sounds*
- *developing phonemic awareness, e.g. deleting words that rhyme*
- *developing an awareness of different aspects of English grammar and structure*
- *assessing ESL learners' understanding of the language of texts we use with them.*

315

Activity: a story map as a graphic organiser

In Module 4 we discussed the usefulness of graphic organisers in supporting ESL learners in their oral language development and as an effective tool for learning.

In teaching ESL learners about reading and writing in different areas of learning, graphic organisers can be used to identify patterns in texts and represent these graphically, e.g., in a story map. The most common patterns in texts are problem/solution, cause/effect and cumulative patterns such as lists and sequences.

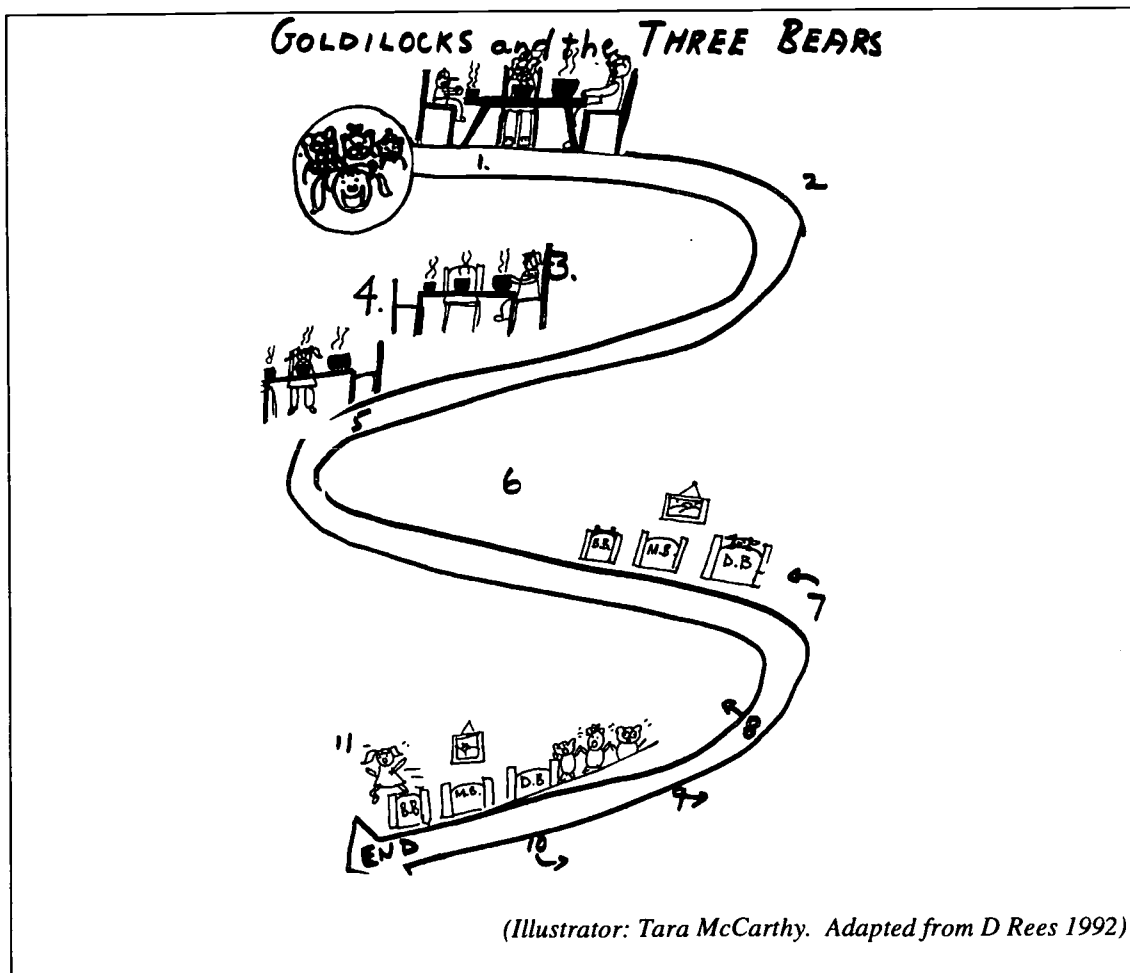
By making these patterns explicit, early childhood educators can support ESL learners in their reading and writing development by helping them gain a better understanding of how texts are linked together.

See Priscilla Lynch (1986) *Using big books and predictable books*, Ashton Scholastic for a detailed explanation of these common patterns in texts, and lists of texts and strategies which can be used to develop children's understandings of the use of these patterns in texts.

In this activity we will look at a story map as a post-reading or pre-writing strategy and reflect on the advantages of using this with ESL learners.

The story map consists of a series of pictures which illustrate the key events in a story. These pictures are represented in the same sequence as the story events occur and are linked usually with arrows or numbers to indicate what happens next, as illustrated by the following example in Resource Notes 6.3.5.

Resource Notes 6.3.5



The story map is a collaborative group activity, where the ESL learner, if not yet confident to contribute, will still be able to participate and hear important language being modelled.

The other advantage for ESL learners is that the story map is a valuable aid in supporting them individually or in a group to retell stories orally. The process of developing a story map with the learners will also allow time to become more familiar with the story and with the language of the story.

In the following Worksheet 6.3.4 a process is outlined for constructing a story map with your learners.

Worksheet 6.3.4**Constructing a story map****Process**

1. Audio tape or videotape the following process in order to reflect on the language that is generated by this activity.
2. Choose a suitable narrative you are presently using in your program; ensure that children are familiar with the text.
3. Use butcher paper or a white board and gradually build up a story map of the text together, using questions and prompts to elicit ideas from children and encouraging them to add items, structure and sequence to the story map with any details they remember.

Read the following Resource Notes 6.3.6, which provide some suggestions for ways that story maps can be adapted in early childhood settings to benefit ESL learners.

Resource Notes 6.3.6

Adapting story maps

Some ideas

- *complete story maps with bilingual staff and children in the first language*
- *use real objects/puppets/role-play to make a story and encourage children to use these props in telling the story*
- *make a story map using blocks, sticks, etc to create locations and movements to encourage using children's imagination and creativity*
- *make a story map using just single words or encourage full sentences*
- *use the map to make a group audio tape of the story with individuals, each contributing what they can, and then play the tape back to get reactions from the children*
- *base a map on a familiar event, such as an excursion or an event from home, and get children to use photos to map the event*
- *use pictures or a felt board to assist children with reconstruction (independently, in pairs or with a group, all together)*
- *make photocopies of story maps for children to take home to retell the story to family and friends*
- *encourage parents and bilingual staff to create story maps and audiotapes around stories and events from their home language and culture and around home events of special significance.*

Activity: modelling, scaffolding and joint construction

Read the following Resource Notes 6.3.7, which describe modelling, scaffolding and joint construction as appropriate strategies to support beginning writers in early childhood settings. These notes are taken from Julie Martello (1994) *Write From the Start: supporting beginning writers*. AECA Resource Book Series. V. 1, No.4.

Approaches to writing development

The strategies suggested in the current literature which are clearly different to those in current use are those of modelling and of joint teacher/pupil writing. One clear departure from past practices is that these strategies are to be used to teach explicitly about the structural, language and functional differences between written genres. So for each new genre being taught children are asked to consider how it is organised (e.g., a recipe usually begins with a list of ingredients, followed by sequenced instructions for the procedure to be followed), what kind of language is used (e.g., abbreviated commands such as 'Place dry ingredients in bowl' or 'Mix until combined') and what we use this kind of writing for in our society (e.g., to instruct uninformed others in how to make something).

While modelling (writing for) and jointly writing (writing with), teachers comment on and question children on the three aspects noted above, making clear the social function and the structural/language features of the writing. Of course, this is done using terms and concepts appropriate to the children's level of understanding.

The strategies of modelling and joint writing are particularly relevant in the early years of school because they echo the child's natural, oral language learning and meaning-making experience. In the context of early writing, they are intended to help beginning writers achieve something they could not initially do by themselves. After adult interaction and guidance children are better prepared to attempt their own independent writing in a new genre. Any new written genres introduced to young writers, while chosen for their own intrinsic worth and suitability, need to be integrated into the wider social context of ongoing classroom activities.

Modelling

When modelling, the teacher uses an example text large enough for the whole class or a small group to see and explicitly explains particular attributes of the writing. The discussion can be focused on the three features noted above (structure, language and social function), the processes of writing (drafting, revising, editing, proofreading and publishing) or the conventions of writing (e.g., directionality, punctuation). The teacher can write the text, explaining as she goes, or use a ready-made text such as a big book or teacher-made chart.

The important point about modelling written language is that it needs to be more deliberate and explicit than the modelling of oral language, because there are important differences between talking and writing and children cannot be expected to pick up all there is to know about written genres simply through being exposed to them. Current syllabuses are requiring teachers to know more about writing and to teach this to school-children in open and appropriate ways. Modelling, with its explicit focus on teaching about writing, is one effective way of doing this.

Resource Notes 6.3.7 (continued)

Joint teacher/children writing

In joint writing the teacher writes, often on a board or easel, in the presence of the class or group of children, using their ideas as the content of the writing. She guides the composition of the text through the use of questions and comments that provide 'scaffolding' for the children's successful construction of meaning. The teacher's knowledge of structure, language and social function of a written genre informs her questions and comments and guides children towards the appropriate way of making meaning in a given context.

For example, in writing an invitation the teacher might ask 'What do they need to know first?' Like modelling, joint writing can be focused on writing processes, writing genres or the conventions of writing, depending on the teacher's decisions about the needs of the children.

If the content of joint writing is based on a shared experience (teacher and children) then the process of guiding children towards a satisfactory text is facilitated further, since the teacher can ask questions relevant to the experience and ensure that all class members participate in the writing. In early school years, shared experiences such as book reading, excursions, visitors, experiments, special events and video viewing can be a productive source of writing activities. The strategy of joint writing and teacher scaffolding effectively exploits the learning potential of school experiences in relation to both context and text.

Another benefit of the strategy of joint writing, particularly for beginning writers in their first year at school, is that until children are capable of producing texts of their own they can participate in regular demonstrations of the process and functions of writing. For those children whose preschool experience has not included exposure to writing and its various functions, joint writing may be an essential prerequisite to literacy learning.

(Julie Martello, 1994 December Vol. 1, No. 4: 10-11)

Your notes:

Worksheet 6.3.5

Task

Using your understandings of modelling and/or joint construction, work with a small group of learners within the context of a learning activity, either discussing a feature of a particular text or developing a small piece of text relevant to an experience the group have shared, e.g., constructing a written comment for a photo, writing a message or describing an object.

After completing this activity, jot down in this worksheet:

- *any observations you made or responses from the children you found interesting*
- *any insights or difficulties you had in implementing these strategies.*

Activity: teaching grammar

For ESL learners throughout formal schooling, learning how the grammar of English works as an integral part of learning about literacy in areas of study, is fundamental to achieving academic success.

In early childhood settings, we can begin to develop children's awareness and understandings of how language works through 'hands-on' activities which encourage children to manipulate, move around and play with words, word groups, clauses or sentences. Through these kinds of activities, grammatical relationships in texts can be clearly demonstrated. These kinds of activities also lend themselves to children working together and talking about language.

The recipe 'Feel-good Fruit Salad' from Module 5 appears again in the following Resource Notes 6.3.8. Using this recipe, we will explore some activities which will support children to begin to develop some understandings of how language works within procedural texts.

In Resource Notes 6.3.8 the numbers have been taken away and replaced with words that link the text together. This provides more opportunities to focus on how particular words act as cohesive devices to organise the text and hold it together. However, in this particular example of a procedural text as outlined in Module 5, the order of preparation of the different fruits is not critical for the successful implementation of this recipe, e.g., the strawberries can be hulled before the kiwi fruit are peeled and sliced. However in most recipes the order of the procedure is very important in the success of the recipe. In this latter context, the words which signal sequence (e.g., first, next, then, when, after that) are an important linguistic feature of procedural texts.

Resource Notes 6.3.8

Feel-good Fruit Salad

What you need

4 oranges

4 kiwi fruit

1 punnet of strawberries

1 pineapple

3 passionfruit

What you do

First peel the oranges and cut into bite-sized pieces

Next peel the kiwi fruit and slice

Wash and hull the strawberries

After the strawberries, cut the pineapple into bite-sized pieces.

Last, cut the passionfruit in half and scoop out the pulp

Mix all the ingredients together and place into a large bowl.

Once children are familiar with the knowledge of the topic, familiar with the purpose of recipes, have made the recipe and are able to 'read' the text as a whole group, you can model the following suggested activities which focus on the text organisation and some of the language features of the text.

Some suggestions are outlined in the following Resource Notes 6.3.9. You might like to try these out with your learners, adapting them for use with a recipe you have been using in your context.

Resource Notes 6.3.9

Focus of activities	Activities
<p>Organisation of the text, including headings (schematic structure)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use picture glossaries to highlight the function of the list of ingredients (and utensils if listed) • develop picture flow charts with the children to show the procedure or order of instructions • photocopy flow chart, cut up and jumble pictures; model how to put back in the right order, focussing on words that indicate sequence; encourage children in small groups to do the same • for older learners, cut up and jumble the text; learners in pairs to put back in the right order • show and talk about different ways of organising text, e.g., numbers, pictures, sequencing words
<p>Linguistic features of the text</p> <p>With early learners, when exploring grammar, it's more useful to focus on 'functional components rather than single words because this encourages children to manipulate the groups of words that represent meaningful units and to think of a sentence as more than just a series of words' (Collerson 1997: 99)</p> <p>However, it is sometimes useful to focus on single words to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify action verbs (material processes) • identify nouns, ie. ingredients, utensils etc (nominal groups) • identify how things are done, e.g., <i>slowly, carefully</i> • identify where things are done, e.g., <i>in the oven, on the stove, in the bowl</i> • identify what is left out, e.g., repetition of the names of fruit; <i>cut the passionfruit in half and scoop out the pulp (of the passionfruit):</i> reference to the audience; no pronouns used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use strips of different coloured card to identify meaningful groups of words (or pictures or symbols) - eg <i>Wash and hull / the strawberries</i> or <i>First / peel / the oranges / and / cut / into bite-sized pieces</i> • encourage children to manipulate strips so that they see that sometimes words or groups of words can be moved without affecting meaning, and that at other times meaning is changed or the sentence does not make sense • use textas, shapes or highlighters to identify single words; and show patterns in the texts, e.g., that the action word is often at the beginning of the instruction • use cards to show how words can be added to the noun to give more information, e.g., <i>soft strawberries, sweet oranges</i> • use cloze to encourage children to use contextual clues when reading the text • use questioning or other techniques to draw attention to what is left out of the text.

Conclusion

In this section we have explored some strategies which can be used effectively with ESL learners in early childhood settings. In the next section we look at how such strategies can be incorporated into an approach which supports the reading of texts and extends reading and writing development.

6.4 Developing activities for reading texts and extending reading and writing development

Introduction

We have already examined several strategies for supporting the reading and writing development of ESL learners in early childhood settings.

These have included:

- analysing texts in terms of the assumptions they make about what the reader brings to the reading situation (Module 5)
- selecting inclusive reading materials (Module 6).
- modelling a range of strategies to support the reading and writing development of ESL learners (Module 6).

In the next section we will look at a framework for developing activities for supporting the reading of texts and the development of reading skills.

Activity

In Modules 5 and 6 we have examined how helping children to make meaning requires

- cultural (world) knowledge
- topic knowledge
- knowledge of the language of written texts
- knowledge of strategies for activating and building on prior knowledge.

The role of early childhood educators is central in helping children from culturally diverse backgrounds to use, extend and integrate this knowledge.

In the following activity, refer to some strategies already discussed to plan how you would deal with a piece of text to make it more meaningful for an ESL learner.

Your task is to work with a fictional or non-fictional piece of text to make it more accessible for and supportive of children learning English as a second language.

Read the following guidelines in Resource Notes 6.4.1 to help you in designing an activity or series of activities for dealing with a text.

Developing a reading activity

Plan how you would deal with a piece of text to make it more meaningful for an ESL learner. The following guidelines may be useful.

1. Consider

- *what the text assumes in world knowledge and topic knowledge as well as language*
- *possible teaching points raised in the text*

2. Decide on purpose: i.e. various reasons for reading the text

- *enjoyment*
- *to acquire some new information*
- *stimulus for other activities*
- *exposure to different types of texts.*

3. Decide on skills which can be developed through this text

- *predicting*
- *phonemic awareness, e.g., listening for words that rhyme*
- *developing graphophonic knowledge using familiar words in the text, e.g., initial sounds, letter recognition*
- *identifying patterns in the text, e.g., lists and sequences, problem and solution, cause and effect*
- *developing understandings about the organisation and linguistic features of the text.*

4. Decide on activities which can be linked with this text to support reading ; a description of activities or series of activities which you could implement with the children. Some possible activities might include:

- *pre-reading activities*
 - a shared experience, e.g., excursion, cooking*
 - concept map or other graphic organisers*
 - predicting what the text will be about, using clues such as the front cover*
 - games to familiarise children with new vocabulary or concepts*
- *activities to support children whilst reading*
 - predicting what will happen next*
 - oral and written cloze exercises using the pictures or familiar sentences from the text*
 - jumbled sentences*
- *post-reading activities*
 - a story map*
 - an art or craft interpretation of characters, plot or concepts in the text*
 - games, songs, rhymes or dramatic play*
 - an innovation on the text*
 - activities which specifically focus on the linguistic features of the text.*

Before you begin this task of developing your own reading activities, read through the worked example in Resource Notes 6.4.2.

Resource Notes 6.4.2

Developing your own reading activities: a worked example

Name of text: Hattie and the Fox by Mem Fox

Purpose

- *enjoyment*
- *to learn vocabulary for body parts, farm animals*
- *to illustrate the cumulative story pattern in this text.*

Language skills

- *repetition*
- *prediction based on visual clues, repetition and prior knowledge*
- *labelling of animal names, body parts.*

Activities***1. Pre-reading***

- *farm animals at dough table, block corner, sand tray*
- *puppets, feltboard*
- *picture talks about pets and farm animals to link from known to new*
- *concept map: what type of animals live on a farm?*
- *what do you think the book will be about?*
- *what do you know about chickens?*
- *songs and movement activities, e.g., pretending to be an animal, 'Old McDonald has a farm'*
- *find out which children have chickens at home and plan a visit.*

2. During reading

- *ask 'What part of the fox do you think we will see next'?*
- *cover the picture with paper for a cloze activity or repetitive parts of the dialogue such as the words 'Help, help!'*
- *use a familiar sentence as a written cloze*
- *focus on phonemic activities such as listening for words that rhyme.*

Resource Notes 6.4.2 (continued)

3. *Post-reading*

- *story maps using blackboard, children's drawings, felt cut-outs or teachers' sketches with print, e.g., Hattie saw a nose in the bushes, Hattie saw a nose and two eyes in the bushes*
- *retell the stories on audio tape with the children joining in as a chorus or taking a part; allow children to use the tape in groups or borrow to take home*
- *interpret the story creatively through art and craft activities*
- *use information texts and make direct links with this text*
- *retell the story orally and ask children to act out incidents as you tell them*
- *innovate on the text with the children by changing the animals, e.g., to Australian animals, ducks in Chinese ricefields*
- *vocabulary extension, e.g., adult and baby animals*
- *ask children what else the animals could say*
- *celebrate and share a healthy breakfast of boiled eggs, toast, milk, etc*
- *talk about other ways to solve Hattie's problem*
- *ask why the animals didn't listen to Hattie*
- *sing Old Macdonald with the animals from the story*
- *make costumes, role play the story and videotape it for children to play back*
- *find books from other cultures about animals, e.g. 'The Rabbit and the Tortoise from Cambodia'.*
- *viewing short videos or films on animals*

(Some ideas borrowed from 'Inside Stories' by Rita Bishop, Ashton Scholastic, 1988)

Having read through the worked example of a series of activities around the story of *Hattie and the Fox*, use Worksheet 6.4.1 to develop your own activities around a text you use in your centre.

Develop your own reading activities

Name of text

Purpose

Language skills

Activities:

1. Pre-reading

2. During reading

3. Post-reading

Conclusion

In this section you have had an opportunity to incorporate a selection of strategies into an approach for dealing with a text which will support ESL learners in particular to gain a better understanding of the text and to extend their reading and writing skills generally.

329

6.5 Ensuring a supportive environment for the development of reading and writing

Introduction

This section is intended as an overview of how we can ensure a supportive learning environment for ESL learners as readers and writers. It reiterates those strategies suggested previously in this module and at the same time highlights other useful reading and writing strategies.

Activity

From the following list in Worksheet 6.5.1 identify the strategies you already use, those you could easily incorporate in your program or those you would find difficult to implement. With colleagues, discuss possible approaches to areas of difficulty.

Worksheet 6.5.1

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Already use</i>	<i>Could integrate</i>	<i>Difficult</i>
<i>exposing children to variety in texts through extending the reading and writing experiences offered, e.g., recipes, letters, diaries, rules for games, directions, labels, stories, lists</i>			
<i>integrating reading and writing with talk in meaningful contexts, so that ESL learners can make connections and develop understandings about literacy</i>			
<i>supporting reading and writing by constructing meaning through interactive activities</i>			
<i>providing opportunities for learners to practise new skills they are learning</i>			
<i>making class books and other visual representations of language which incorporate familiar experiences and provide opportunities to practise familiar language</i>			
<i>providing a range of texts in both English and community languages in the home corner</i>			
<i>encouraging drawing to convey messages</i>			
<i>involving children in making bilingual signs and labels for areas and facilities in the learning environment</i>			
<i>providing information for parents in their home languages about aspects of reading and writing in early childhood centres</i>			
<i>encouraging parents' comments and enquiries about their children's attempts at reading and writing</i>			
<i>displaying scripts of other languages and actively engaging children in talking about the similarities and differences</i>			
<i>making audiotapes to accompany texts so that children can access reading in English independently and at home</i>			
<i>developing folders of children's work which they can take home</i>			
<i>providing reading and writing opportunities in the community languages of the children in your centre, using bilingual education workers</i>			

330

Worksheet 6.5.1 (continued)

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Already use</i>	<i>Could integrate</i>	<i>Difficult</i>
<i>talking with children about their writing and encouraging talking about writing</i>			
<i>providing different audiences for children's writing</i>			
<i>modelling the processes of writing in a variety of contexts</i>			
<i>involving learners in joint construction of texts</i>			
<i>ensuring tools for writing are available in all play areas</i>			
<i>providing purpose and context for introducing different forms of writing and reading</i>			
<i>labelling new concepts recently introduced (such as transport, names of animals) and displaying them so that children can access that print in their own writing</i>			
<i>encouraging children to display their writing by providing them with wall space, personal folders or scrapbooks</i>			
<i>using typewriters and computers (if available) to provide opportunities for exposure and practice with print</i>			
<i>actively constructing environmental print with children, reinforcing the purpose of literacy as a socio-cultural act</i>			
<i>allowing children to work together to contribute to make meanings with language at their own level</i>			
<i>allowing time for ESL learners to make sense of the new language and new learning environment</i>			
<i>developing children's spelling skills through helping them to recognise visual patterns in words, as well as developing their knowledge of the phonological system in English</i>			
<i>using a range of strategies (e.g., rhymes, games) in an integrated approach to develop phonemic awareness and spelling knowledge</i>			

Conclusion

In this module we have presented only a few examples from the range of strategies which can be used effectively to support ESL learners. When using different strategies, it is important to be clear about the purpose for using them, be explicit in their use and understand their advantages for ESL learners.

6.6 Suggested workplace activity: Implementing a strategy to support reading/writing development

Rationale

This workplace activity aims to support you in implementing a strategy with a small group of learners in your early childhood setting.

Activity

Your task is to implement one or more activities we have explored in this module to support an ESL child in your setting to gain meaning from a literacy experience.

You may wish to write up your activity in Worksheet 6.6.1 which is provided for your notes, and share it with a group of colleagues from your centre as a professional development activity.

Worksheet 6.6.1

Notes on workplace activity

Any issues, concerns or clarifications arising from this activity

333

6.7 Between module readings

There are two essential readings for Module 6 as well as other suggested readings. The essential readings follow Worksheet 6.7.1. This worksheet can be used to make notes as you read.

Essential Readings

1. Makin, L. Campbell, J. and Jones Diaz, C. (1994) 'Early Literacy Development in Bilingual Children'. In *One Childhood Many Languages*. Sydney: Addison Wesley Longman Australia, 1995, pp. 180 -189.

This extract from Chapter 5, 'Early Literacy Development in Bilingual Children', provides a range of suggestions for promoting early literacy development of learners from non-English speaking backgrounds in early childhood programs.

2. Derewianka, B. (1990) *Exploring How Texts Work*. Rozelle, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

This chapter of *Exploring how texts work* describes the functional approach to language, outlines its advantages and suggests how you might use a functional approach in the classroom.

Suggested readings (*highly recommended)

Cavallari, B. & Fatouros, C. (1991) *Computers in Early Childhood and ESL Classes*. NSW Computer Education Group, Conference Proceedings.

Collerson, J. (1997) *Grammar in Teaching*. Newton, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

*Derewianka, B. (1990) *Exploring how texts work*. Rozelle, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

Hayman, S.A (1991) 'Producing and using bilingual big books with junior primary ESL and mainstream children'. *TESOL in Context*. Volume 1, Number 2, pp. 30-32.

Heald-Taylor, G. (1991) 'Dictated Stories'. In *Whole Language Structures for ESL Learners*. Dominic Press Incorporated.

Jan, Lesley Wing (1996) *Modelled writing in the early years of schooling*. Victoria: Catholic Education Commission.

Kavanagh, K. (1997) *Texts on television: school literacies through viewing in the first years of school*. South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services.

*Makin, L. Campbell, J. and Jones Diaz, C. (1994) 'Early Literacy Development in Bilingual Children'. In *One Childhood Many Languages*. Sydney: Addison Wesley Longman Australia, 1995, pp. 150-188.

Teaching and learning strategies for ESL learners R-12. Department for Education and Children's Services, SA 1993.

Turner, L. (1991) 'Process vs Genre - non-issue in the whole-language classroom'. *TESOL in Context*. Volume 1, Number 2, pp. 8-13.

Worksheet 6.7.1

Notes on readings

A large empty rectangular box intended for students to write their notes on readings.

335

Worksheet 6.7.1 (continued)

Notes on readings

A large empty rectangular box for taking notes on readings.

336

A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO LANGUAGE

B. Derewianka,

Chapter 1 In *Exploring how texts work*. NSW Primary English Teaching Association, 1990

It is often said that children, as they use language, are constantly
 learning language
 learning through language, and
 learning about language.

We never stop **learning language** - from the babbling of babies to the voracious preschool years, from our early encounters with print and our first attempts at writing through to the secondary textbooks and essays, and then beyond to the new demands of adulthood, where we still continue to learn and refine the language needed in every new situation in which we find ourselves.

And it is now widely recognised that we **learn through language** - that language is absolutely central in the learning process. Our perception of the world is constructed through language, and it is through language that we are able to interact with others in our world. In schools, we could virtually say that "language is the curriculum".

But what of **learning about language**? As we use language, we develop a relatively unconscious, implicit understanding of how it works. A functional approach to language attempts to make these commonsense understandings explicit. Once they have been brought out into the open, we can use them to help us in the classroom.

WHAT IS A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO LANGUAGE?

A functional approach looks at how language enables us to **do** things - to share information, to enquire, to express attitudes, to entertain, to argue, to get our needs met, to reflect, to construct ideas, to order our experiences and make sense of the world. It is concerned with how many people use real language for real purposes. At the heart of a functional model of language is an emphasis on **meaning** and on how language is involved in the construction of meaning. It sees language as a resource for making meaning.

A functional approach to language is not concerned with a set of rules which prescribe correct and incorrect usage. Language in real life is not a complete, ideal system conforming to neat, pre-determined categories. Language is dynamic and ever-evolving. We develop language to satisfy our needs in society. Language is functional when it fulfils those needs effectively.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO LANGUAGE?

§ A functional model of language complements modern classroom practice based on **holistic** approaches to language teaching and learning.

§ Like Whole Language, it is interested above all in **meaning**, not in empty conventions.

337

§ Because meaning is found within a text as a **whole**, a functional model of language describes how language operates at the text level, not at the level of individual words and sentences in isolation.

§ A functional approach to language stresses how meanings are made **in conjunction with other people**. This strongly supports the small groupwork and conferencing practices of today's classrooms.

§ It is concerned with **real** language used by real people - not schoolbook exercises contrived purely to teach some point of grammar, or reading texts devised to teach some aspect of reading.

§ It is not interested in simply teaching language for the sake of teaching language. Rather, it demonstrates how language operates in **all areas of the curriculum**.

§ In primary classrooms today, there is an emphasis on writing for specific **purposes**. A functional approach to language attempts to show how texts can most effectively achieve these purposes.

§ Children today are also encouraged to write with a particular **audience** in mind. A functional model describes how texts will vary according to whom you are addressing and how distant that audience is.

§ Perhaps most importantly, the knowledge of language provided by a functional model helps us to identify what children's strengths are and to make **clear and positive** suggestions as to **how** they might make their texts more effective, instead of vague, superficial comments or mere corrections of spelling and punctuation.

§ If children have an explicit knowledge of what language resources are available, they are in a better position to make **informed choices** when developing texts of their own.

HOW MIGHT YOU USE A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM?

A functional approach to language does not advocate teaching about language by handling down prescriptive recipes. Rather it is concerned with providing information about the development of effective texts for particular purposes, and providing it at the point of need within the context of real, purposeful language use. A functional model of language can be drawn upon during classroom activities based on a "process" or "whole language" philosophy - wherever children are engaged in the construction of texts and opportunities are created for explicit discussion of these texts. Such opportunities might occur, for example, during the modelling of a text, during a shared book activity, during the construction of a class text, or during a conferencing session. Sometimes these opportunities can be programmed, sometimes they may be spontaneous. They can occur at the whole class, small group, or individual level.

Many teachers have found it useful to develop in the class "a language for talking about language". These shared understandings about text, reflected in the shared terminology used by the class, allow for a more productive use of time. They can be built up through group reflection on the language as it is used, starting with questions like these.

What do you think we might use this sort of a text for in our society?

What could we call it?

Remember when we were writing Explanations? Why is this text different from an Explanation?

*Look at the beginning of the text. What do you think the writer is doing here?
What does the beginning of this text tell the reader?*

Is it the same as the beginning of a Report?

What name could we give this sort of a beginning? What about a term such as “orientation” to remind us that it is setting the scene?

Which words link up to text and show us when the actions took place? We could call these “linking words”.

Thus the children are guided towards making explicit the knowledge they already have about texts. This shared knowledge and terminology, combined with the insights contributed by the teacher, then becomes a resource they can draw on in their subsequent discussions of texts.

The teachers you will meet in the chapters of this book decided to trial a variety of activities which would allow for the growth of shared understandings about texts. In particular, they drew on the curriculum cycle outlined in the support documents for Writing K-12 and the NSW Disadvantaged Schools Program materials (see References). The cycle they jointly developed, described in the following pages, provided a context for language exploration while the children were using language for real purposes in a variety of curriculum areas.

CURRICULUM CYCLE

Preparation

- Identify the major understandings and abilities to be developed in the unit of work you are preparing (e.g. finding and organising information about transport, putting forward an argument on conservation, telling a horror story). Specific topics can be negotiated with the children during the unit, and you might also negotiate some end product (e.g. big book, letter to press/government minister) to provide a goal the children can work towards and an audience they can reach out to.
- Decide which genre (or genres) would be appropriate to develop these understandings/abilities (e.g. Report, Argument, Narrative). This becomes the language focus of the unit.
- Plan a number of activities to familiarise the children with the subject-matter and the genre, ranging from hands-on, exploratory, oral activities through to more reflective, written activities.
- Locate sample texts in the chosen genre to use for immersion and modelling. Read the carefully beforehand to become familiar with their features.

Note

It's important to know how well children can already use the genre. If you are uncertain, you may find it helpful to ask them to write a text “cold”, using the genre in question, so that strengths and weaknesses become apparent and they can observe how their texts improve as they progress through the unit.

Your assessment of the children's proficiency in the genre at this stage may well influence the subsequent phases of the unit - for instance:

- if the genre is relatively unfamiliar to most of the children, the class may need to develop common basic understandings about it as a whole group
- if the class has worked previously with the genre, it may help to look at specific aspects, e.g. how to write an effective beginning

- if the children demonstrate quite different levels of proficiency, it may be a good idea to work with groups on different aspects.

Modelling

If children are to write in a particular genre, they first need to become familiar with its purpose and features through immersion in the genre and by exploring sample texts.

- Introduce a model of the genre to the class (e.g. using the OHP). Choose or compose a text which is similar to the one to be written later as a joint construction by the class.
- Discuss the purposes for which we use this type of text in our society (e.g. the purpose of a Recount is to tell what happened).
- With the class, identify how the text is structured. Each genre has a distinctive set of stages which help it to achieve its purpose. These stages make up its **schematic structure**. (The schematic structure of a Recount, for example, consists of an orientation which sets the scene, followed by a series of events which tell what happened.) It's a good idea to look at a copy of the model text with its stages clearly marked, and to give the children a photocopy of this for later reference.
- Discuss the function of each stage. (For instance, the function of the orientation of a Recount is to let the reader know who was involved, when and where the events took place, and any other information necessary to understand the events which follow.)

Note

§ Some teachers might introduce the features of a text directly to the children, while others might prefer, through careful guidance and questioning, to help the children discover the features themselves (in which case the class may need to examine several examples of the same genre).

§ During the modelling phase you may wish to compare a successful text with one which has not achieved its purpose, asking the children to work out why.

§ It may also be interesting to compare the structure and stages of the genre with one previously examined.

§ Model texts can be commercially published ones, texts written previously by students, or texts written by the teacher.

§ In the modelling phase you can also refer to language features other than the structure of the text, but it's probably most helpful to start with a picture of the text as a whole.

Joint Construction

Before children write independent texts, it is useful for them to participate in the group writing of a text in the chosen genre. A text may be jointly constructed by the whole class, by a small group, or by a teacher and child during conferencing.

- *Researching the topic.* Before writing, we need to make sure we have something to write about. We often need to research the topic. The type of research we do will depend on the genre we plan to use, e.g.
 - Report: observing/reading/making notes/watching video
 - Argument: discussion/interviews/finding evidence
 - Narrative: brainstorming/silent contemplation.

At this stage you may find it necessary to work with children on researching skills (e.g., use of library, locating information in a book, note-making).

- *Pooling information.* As well as demonstrating what form the final product may take, the joint construction of a text also demonstrates the process involved in writing a text. So, as the children build up their data banks and start pooling their ideas and information, they may need guidance in organising their jottings through the use of matrix charts, columns, headings, flowcharts, and so on.
- *Revising structure.* It may be helpful at this stage to revise the schematic structure of the genre (e.g. by referring to model texts).
- *Jointly constructing a text.* Let the children contribute the information and ideas while you act as guide, asking questions and making suggestions about the structuring of the text. Scribe the text yourself so that the children can concentrate on the meanings they are creating. When it's complete, give them each a copy as a further model.
- *Assessing the children's progress.* Some children may be keen to try an independent text, while others may feel they need further modelling. So at this stage flexibility may be needed, with different groups working on different tasks.

Independent Construction of Text

Having read and examined specimen texts in the chosen genre, and having had the experience of jointly constructing a similar text, many children may now choose to write their own texts on a related topic.

- Each child, possibly with your guidance, chooses a topic. For instance, if you've already modelled a text on "How to care for your dog", a child might choose to write a similar text on caring for cats, or goldfish, or tortoises.
- The children write their drafts, referring to models.
- Each child consults with you and/or peer (s), receiving comments on what he or she has achieved (in the light of built-up, shared knowledge about the genre) and suggestions for changes to help the text achieve its purpose more effectively.
- You may find that conferencing about drafts reveals a need for more modelling and joint construction.
- Editing and publishing the children's texts are optional final steps.

Public conferencing of some of the children's texts (in a constructive way and with each writer's permission) can encourage discussion of more detailed language features, just as shared reading of children's texts can give further opportunities for modelling the genre.

Children eventually reach the point where they can undertake writing the genre quite independently. Indeed they may choose to do so in free-choice writing sessions, for contract work or for projects. When they have gained control of the basic features, they may move on to exploit the genre more creatively.

Your Notes

A large rectangular box with a black border, intended for taking notes. The interior of the box is completely blank.

342

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTING EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

L. Makin, J. Campbell and C. Jones Diaz

In One Childhood Many Languages, Addison Wesley Longman Australia, 1995

In early childhood settings, there are many opportunities for fostering and developing all children's emerging literacy development. Many of these opportunities can be carefully planned in conjunction with parents and staff. However, it is important for staff to be able to seize the teachable moment in spontaneous and developmentally appropriate ways. The following suggestions assist in the effective implementation of the key principles outlined in previous chapters.

WORKING WITH FAMILIES

- Families will often be the best resource available. Teachers and caregivers need to utilise their language and culture skills in reflecting the child's early literacy development. Although there may be differences in print conventions between different languages, many concepts about reading and writing can be developed in any language - for example, the fact that what can be said can be written and read. Family members who read to their children at home and who talk with them about the books they read - the ideas, characters, pictures, and so on - will be best able to help their children in the language in which the adults are most fluent.
- Teachers and caregivers need to be aware of the literacy levels of the parents. Not all parents are literate in their first language. It may be difficult to know if parents are literate in both their first language and English, and it is necessary to think about ways of obtaining this information sensitively. It is important to be thoughtful when asking parents to translate material in their language, and not to assume that all parents will be able to do such translations.
- Teachers and caregivers need to be aware of the types of language interaction patterns between child and parents, child and older siblings, child and relatives. Do children have opportunities to ask questions and to find out about the world, or are they expected to speak only when spoken to?
- Not all children are socialised into the usefulness of print. They may not be exposed to environmental print at home, or see adults and older siblings interacting and responding to print.
- Teachers and caregivers need information about family attitudes towards:
 - literacy in English and the home language
 - maintaining the home language
- Parents' previous experiences of childcare or preschool will affect their expectations. In Australia, early childhood programs are very different to those in many other parts of the world. Some cultures place a great deal of emphasis on literacy learning from the earliest age, in formal learning contexts.

Caregivers and teachers should provide information to families about how the program meets their children's early literacy needs.

343

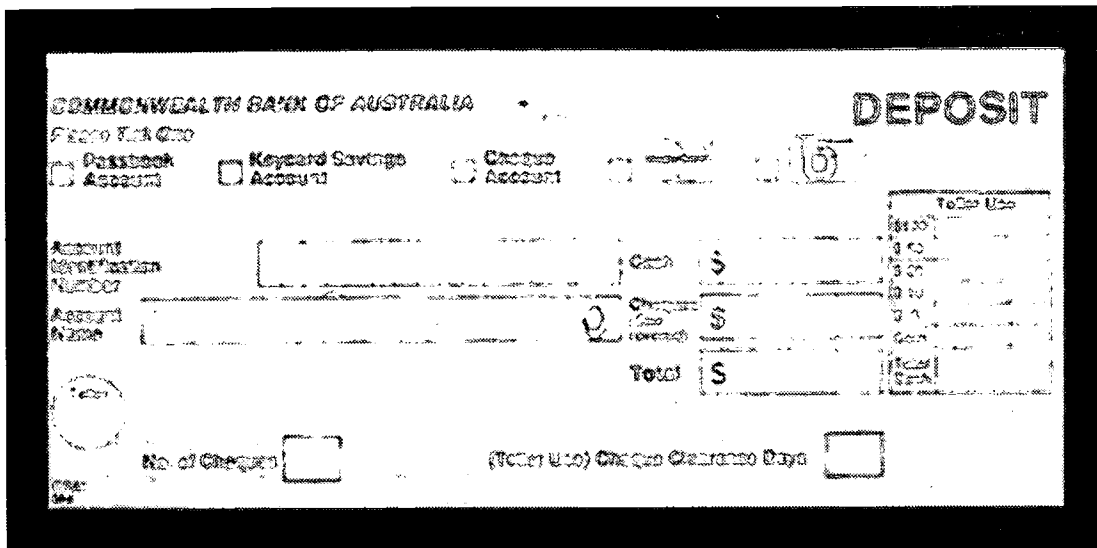
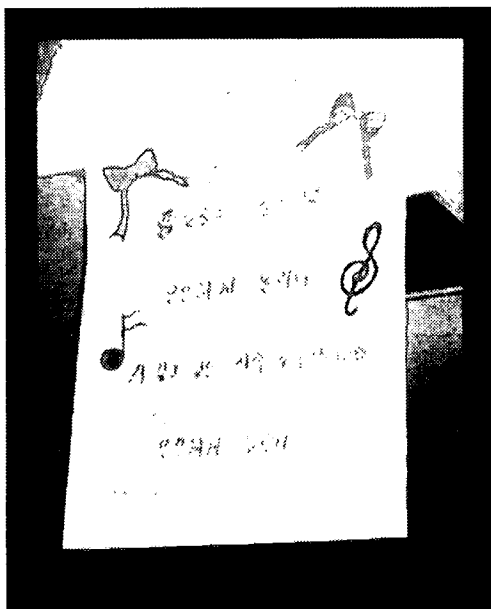


Figure 5.22: Blank bank deposit slips placed on a writing table provide a good stimulus for writing

Figure 5.23: (below) Songs can be sung and written in many languages



PROVIDE A PRINT-RICH ENVIRONMENT

- Literacy experiences can be integrated through play. Just as teachers and caregivers plan opportunities for children to play with sand, water, clay and blocks, so they need to provide opportunities for children to play with print. One idea is provision of a writing and drawing table which should be a permanent focal point in the room. It should be equipped with interesting stationery - paper in different varieties, shapes, colours, sizes and textures; pens, pencils, crayons and texts of varying thicknesses and colours; used and leftover envelopes, greeting cards and postcards. Computers and typewriters should also be available to allow children to explore print technology.
- Welcome posters and information about the program and the activities of the day in the languages of the families should be displayed wherever possible. If there is a predominant language represented, efforts should be made to have information translated.
- Familiar songs, rhymes and fingerplays in the children’s languages can be displayed on the wall.
- Environmental print in both English and the languages of the children can be included in program materials. Ask families to collect labels, packets, newspapers and magazines in their language. Environmental print found in the community, such as shop signs, street signs and bulletin boards, can be incorporated into the program environment. Signs stating, for example, ‘This way to the book corner’, in both English and other languages, can be displayed.
- The home corner should reflect the children’s cultural and linguistic background in newspapers, shopping lists, phone books, message pads, food packets, and so on, in the

languages of the families at the centre. Ethnic speciality shops stock many items from overseas that are appropriate. Not only food, clothing and furnishings, but also books, newspapers and greeting cards from Asian countries can be found in the Chinatown areas of most Australian cities.

- The reading corner should be comfortable and inviting. Easy access should be available to books that reflect the children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as bilingual books. Perhaps a listening station could be provided, with familiar stories available for children to hear on tape. Stories in the children's home languages recorded by the parent/staff who speak those languages should be available. All children can enjoy these bilingual stories. A good activity is to play a story in English and then in the home language or vice versa, and then to get the children to retell the story.
- A 'language master' can be used to expose children to different print forms, as well as to extend bilingual children's language and literacy skills.
- Children's work should be displayed wherever possible. Children's words can be translated into print forms of other languages.

A supportive environment encourages natural and spontaneous language. All children should have opportunities to interact with peers and adults throughout the day. Bilingual children should be encouraged to use their home language and to teach monolingual children some words and phrases, both in spoken and written contexts. Monolingual children should be encouraged to respect and value the language diversity in the classroom.

Children can learn a great deal from each other. One idea which has met with success in many schools is a *buddy* system in which older children work with younger ones. This has advantages for both sides. Older new arrivals can help younger children to understand concepts in a home language they both share, while having the opportunity to review basic concepts in maths, writing or reading as they are taught in what may be a very different school system. Readers interested in specific examples of how cross-age tutoring involving bilingual children can be established are referred to in Heath and Mangiola's book, *Children of Promise* (1991).

- The children's attention should be focused consciously upon language, i.e. upon words and how they can be grouped - for example, words that tell how someone speaks, such as *yelled* or *whispered*; about how people feel, such as *exhilarated*, *mournful*; or about how they move, such as *scampered* or *tippytoed*.

Different alphabets can be a focus when alphabet lists, wall displays and sign language are prominent.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

- As outlined in Chapter 4 teachers and caregivers must choose and read books in ways that are developmentally appropriate. Suitable baby books present familiar images, objects and events. Babies love books about other babies, trucks, cars, trains, animals and rhythmic language. Adults must be sensitive to babies' signals and share books on their terms. Often a good time to read to babies is just before sleep time, when they are less active and enjoy sitting on the caregiver's lap holding and talking about books (Schickedanz 1986). Babies, toddlers and preschoolers are given opportunities to learn to love books when books are accessible. They like to have their favourite books read and re-read. There are many baby-board, cloth and textured books available for babies. Books should be relevant to children's interests and to their developmental levels.

- Children need to appreciate relationships between their own personal experiences and book-based ones. This can be done by:
 - reading to children in small groups to enable all children to respond and interact with the text. Larger groups do not allow individual children to participate actively and interact with the text;
 - modelling appropriate book-handling techniques and encouraging children to use them too;
 - helping children recognise and identify letters from their own name in words, particularly when reading *big books* or in shared book sessions;
 - presenting books with well-known phrases - for example, *Once upon a time*, repetitive words and phrases.
 - presenting and discussing a variety of text types - narratives, recounts, procedural descriptions, reports, explanations and expositions can be appropriate for all ages (see Figures 5.24, 5.25, and 5.26 for examples of different text types - a *wanted* poster, a recount, and a procedure);
 - presenting books with clear visuals. Wordless picture - books and clear visuals enable children understand the context of the story;

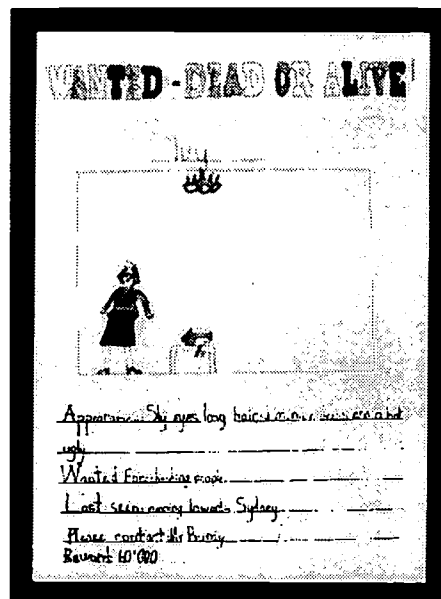


Figure 5.24: Children experiment with a range of literary genres. Nicole has produced a 'wanted' poster.

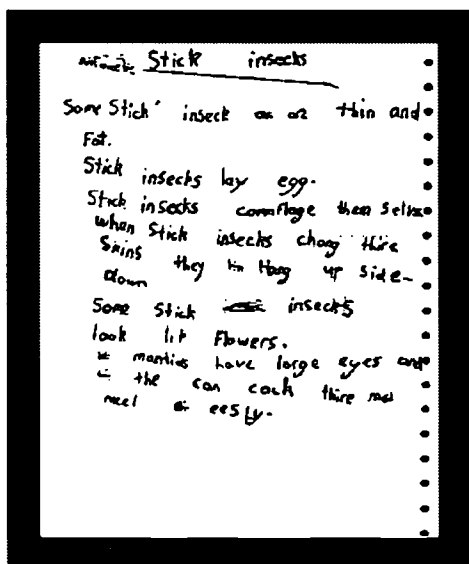


Figure 5.25: Antoinette, Year 1, writes a report.

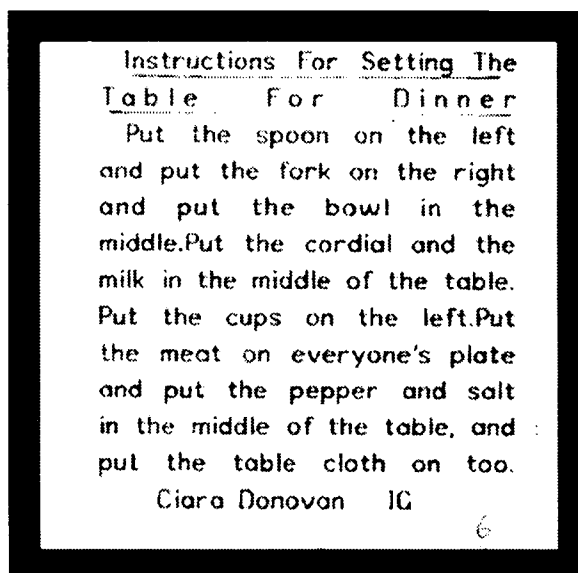


Figure 5.26: The tablecloth will pose problems for anyone following Ciara's instructions for this procedure!

- alerting the children to titles, authors, tables of contents, page numbering conventions, and so on;
 - adapting the words to suit the developmental level and interests of the child - for example, including an explanation of the meaning of an unfamiliar word;
 - substituting character names from familiar stories with the names of the children;
 - using flannel boards and real objects to help facilitate understanding of the text;
 - encouraging children to retell familiar stories by using props and other related objects.
- Books should be free of stereotypes, or be discussed with children so that they become aware of stereotypical content. Books that reflect positive images of women, Aborigines, minority groups, disability and social diversity are important inclusions in the book corner and library. However, it is important to maintain a sense of balance in the variety of books and images presented to children. It is important to consider the author's perspective, language used and the date of publication. Some recently published books which attempt to address various issues of diversity, do so in inappropriate ways. Physical, social and cultural diversity needs to be presented in everyday contexts, and not isolated.
 - With older children, books can be the source of many language activities - for example, a range of activities for a Year Two class resulted from reading *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. These included making golden tickets, writing newspaper articles, composing acrostic poems, and mapping the trip through the factory.
 - Understanding relationships among character traits, emotions and events can be facilitated by:
 - identifying and sharing emotions of the characters;
 - getting children to predict and evaluate what the characters would do in different situations;
 - encouraging dramatic play based on book events;
 - encouraging children to read independently and to each other. Children's make-believe attempts at reading should be valued.
 - Teachers and caregivers need to be aware of the different book conventions of the languages spoken by the children. All children should be aware of the different ways in which books can be read, i.e. Arabic is back-to-front, right-to-left; Japanese is back-to-front, top-to-bottom, right-to-left.
 - Bilingual books for all children should be provided, and bilingual children can be encouraged to share them in mixed-language groups as well as in same-language groups.
 - Teachers and caregivers should observe the way in which individual children naturally respond and interact with books. For example:
 - Is the child able to retell or recount the events in familiar books?
 - Does the child enjoy reading stories and books to other children?
 - Does the child enjoy sitting and listening to a story?
 - Does the child independently *read* books and stories?
 - Does the child enjoy particular types of books (e.g. books about transport)?
 - Does the child enjoy favourite books being re-read?

From these observations, plan experiences that will enhance children's love for literature as well as meet individual early literacy and oral-language needs.

PROGRAMMING

- Dramatic play areas may be set up in detail: a doctor's surgery with appointment book, receptionist and appointment cards, a receipt book, prescription pads (the waiting room will require *no smoking signs* and various pamphlets and magazines); a supermarket or grocery store stocked with food packaging, signs, a cash register and play money; a bank with deposit and withdrawal slips. Such areas encourage children to use their writing in meaningful contexts.
- Teachers and caregivers can make books with children, using photos and children's drawings - for example, *My Family, All About Me, Nature Books*. Children can be encouraged to make their own books. It will be important to read and re-read these books constantly.
- Sequencing, matching and classification activities and games can use photos of familiar events, routines, people and objects (See Chapter 4).
- Children can help make lists and recipes. Shopping lists can precede a visit to the local fruit shop - for example, 'What fruit should we buy for the fruit salad?' Favourite foods can be cooked using simple visual recipes. Children can be involved in drawing up recipes - for example, 'How do we make fruit salad?' Other lists, such as excursion lists, can include all the things needed on an excursion - lunch, hat, worksheets.
- Wall charts of daily events, jobs and routines should be displayed. For example, a chart visualising *What We Bring to Kindy* would display the different items, such as a change of clothes, a piece of fruit, a hat. Other charts include a helper's chart and daily schedule, as well as number charts in English and home languages.
- Graphs and other visual material can provide daily opportunities for children to access information.
- Children should be alerted to the different sounds and sequences in words and be helped to represent the different sounds heard in words and to break down the sounds heard in words.
- Bilingual children may be able to teach their peers words and letter names from different languages.
- Children can be helped to become aware of different spelling patterns by classifying words according to similar patterns and sequences.

SUMMARY

IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS, families, teachers and caregivers need to recognise and value the emerging literacy behaviours of young children. Bilingual children need to engage in early literacy experiences in both English and their first language in order to develop their linguistic potential. Teachers and caregivers must make careful observations of how individual children respond to and interact with early literacy experiences. In early childhood settings for children from birth to five years, children have many opportunities to explore the world of print. Teachers and caregivers need to plan and provide activities that allow children to explore and discover print. In the first years of school, exploration and experimentation need to continue, and attention should be given to the possibility of literacy in the home-language first, then in English.

This chapter has explored some of the issues and implications for bilingual children in the emergent literacy process, and outlined many suggestions for promoting early literacy development in all children but with particular reference to bilingual children.

The challenge for education is summed up by Clay (1986, p. 240):

Can education provide for young children to grow out from the diverse origins from which they come, and build upon the learning they have already completed before they come to school?

READER ACTIVITIES

1. Suggest ways in which infants, toddlers and preschoolers develop early literacy awareness in education and care settings.
2. How would you explain to parents how your program extends children's early literacy skills?

References

Bishop, R. (1988) *Inside Stories*. Sydney: Ashton Scholastic.

Collerson, J. (1997) *Grammar in Teaching*. Newton, NSW: Primary English Teaching Association.

ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course (1993) 'Workshops 4 and 5'. In *Tutor Manual*. Adelaide: Department for Education and Children's Services.

Lynch, P. (1986) *Using big books and predictable books*. Ashton Scholastic.

Kavanagh, K. (1997) *Texts on television: school literacies through viewing in the first years of school*. South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services.

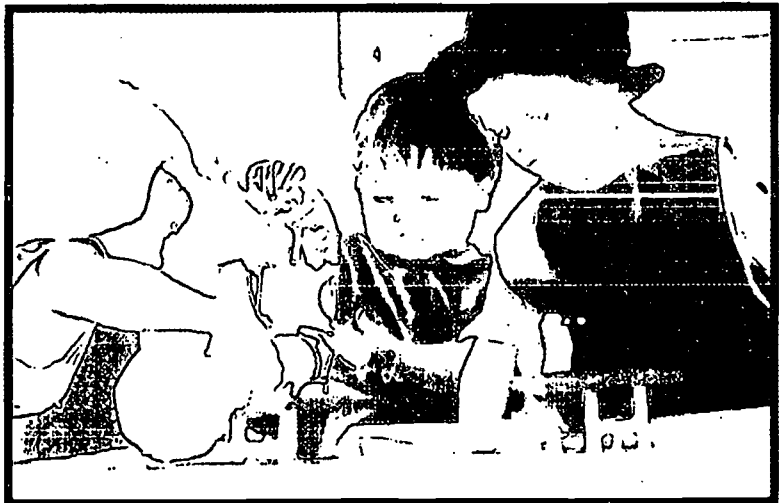
Martello, J. (1994) 'Write From the Start: supporting beginning writers'. *AECA Resource Book Series*. Volume 1, Number 4, December.

Parker, R. and Unsworth, L (1986) *Bridging the gaps: cloze for effective teaching*. Sydney: Martin Educational / Robert Anderson & Associates.

Module 7



A culturally inclusive approach
to early childhood education



Module 7

Focus: A culturally inclusive approach to early childhood education

Overview

In this module, we revisit the principles of a culturally inclusive approach to early childhood education which are embedded throughout earlier modules and explore further the impact in improving educational outcomes for all children. We identify practices already referred to in this package which can be considered culturally inclusive and focus on others which will also support the implementation of a culturally inclusive approach. We examine our practices at both a program and whole centre level and look at possible ways in which we can make them more culturally inclusive. Finally, we focus on developing a holistic learning experience for children which is more culturally inclusive.

Note: This module, both in content and processes, relies heavily on Workshop 9 in 'ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course' (South Australian Department for Education and Children's Services, 1993).

This module contains the following activities:

- 7.1 *Reflecting on Module 6*
- 7.2 *Defining a culturally inclusive approach to early childhood education*
- 7.3 *Inclusive practices discussed in earlier modules*
- 7.4 *Strategies for implementing a culturally inclusive approach*
- 7.5 *Examining our practices*
- 7.6 *Developing a culturally inclusive program*
- 7.7 *Suggested workplace activity*
- 7.8 *Readings*

At the end of this module you will have:

- developed further your understanding of the concept of a culturally inclusive approach as it relates to children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in early childhood settings
- expanded your understanding of how the implementation of a culturally inclusive approach to early childhood education will improve the educational outcomes for all children
- examined strategies for implementing a culturally inclusive approach in early childhood settings
- developed a framework for examining practices in early childhood settings in terms of their cultural inclusivity
- had the opportunity to examine a unit of work you currently use in terms of its cultural inclusivity and consider ways of adapting the unit of work to make it more culturally inclusive.

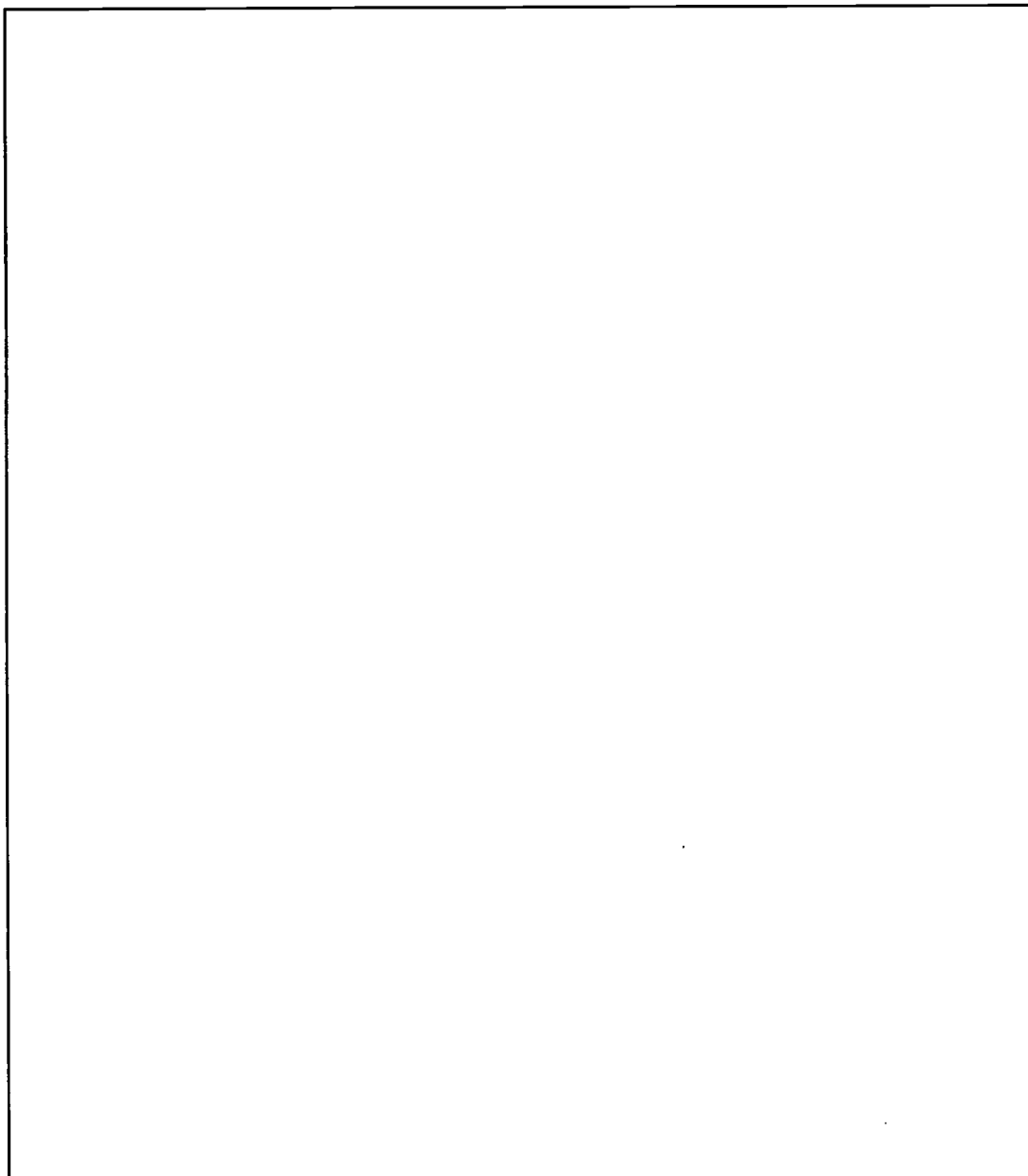
7.1 Reflecting on Module 6

As in the previous modules, you may wish to begin your work on this module by reflecting on the materials and readings from Module 6. Refer back to your notes in Worksheet 6.6.1 and Worksheet 6.7.1 and consider what new understandings you have gained and what critical issues require resolution or further research.

You may also wish to consider the relevance of these understandings and issues within your workplace and consider how your practice is being affected or could be affected by this professional development.

Jot down your ideas in Worksheet 7.1.1 below.

Worksheet 7.1.1



353

Learning journal: Module 7

Pull this page out of the folder and, as you work through this module, make notes of points that interest you, points that you want to follow up, or unresolved questions and issues. If you intend to use this for accreditation purposes, make sure that your notes communicate clearly with an outside reader.

354
000



7.2 Defining a culturally inclusive approach to early childhood education

Introduction

In this module, as in others, we use the term 'culturally inclusive approach' synonymously with 'culturally inclusive curriculum', referring to curriculum in the broadest sense, applying to all aspects of the learning environment, not just to the educational programs implemented. This concept has been an underpinning principle of this resource folder.

In this section, we explore more explicitly the concept of a culturally inclusive curriculum, some of its essential features and implications for our practice.

Activity

The following Resource Notes 7.2.1 outline some essential features of a culturally inclusive curriculum, in this case as described in the *Multiculturalism in Education Policy*, South Australian Department for Education and Children's Services (1993)

Resource Notes 7.2.1

Culturally inclusive curriculum

Essential features

A culturally inclusive curriculum is one in which:

the curriculum reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of our society

the delivery of services meets the learning needs of students from all backgrounds

all students are enriched in their understanding of other cultures

all students acquire the knowledge, skills and understandings needed to interact positively and participate in a multicultural society.

*Taken from the foreword of 'Policy Statement: Multiculturalism in Education',
Department for Education and Children's Services, South Australia, 1993.*

Are there other features you believe should be included in this outline?

For example, should there be a more explicit focus on anti-bias within early childhood settings and should this belief be clearly articulated in educational policies?

An anti-bias approach is 'an active/activist approach to challenging prejudice, stereotyping and the 'isms'. In a society in which institutional structures create and maintain sexism, racism and handicappism, it is not sufficient to be non-biased (and also highly unlikely), nor is it sufficient to be an observer. It is necessary for each individual to actively intervene, to challenge and counter the personal and institutional behaviours that perpetuate oppression.'

(Louise Derman-Sparks and the ABC Task Force in Creaser, B. and Dau, E. eds, 1995 X111)

Are there any other beliefs or principles that would be essential to include in your own policy document? Jot down your ideas in Worksheet 7.2.1 below.

Worksheet 7.2.1

<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••••••••

You may recall that, in Module 1, we looked at students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, in order to better understand what they bring to the learning situation and the factors influencing their school experiences.

From this examination, two important areas of need emerged:

- the development of English language skills
- a supportive context for learning in general and the development of English language skills in particular.

In subsequent modules, we focussed explicitly on the development of English language skills, viewing these in the context of the entire learning experience, and emphasising that supportive and inclusive practices are integral to successful educational outcomes.

Conclusion

In this module, we show how the notion of a culturally inclusive curriculum provides a framework to address the development of English language skills and the provision of a supportive learning environment more broadly.

7.3 Inclusive practices discussed in earlier modules

Introduction

We have already discussed a number of significant ways of making our early childhood programs and practices more inclusive. In this section, we will reflect back on the modules you have already completed and identify those examples of inclusive practices which we have already considered.

Activity

Refer back to Resource Notes 7.2.1 in the previous section and use these as a reference for the following activity.

Jot down in Worksheet 7.3.1 practices that you would consider to be inclusive that have been highlighted in earlier modules of this Resource Folder.

Worksheet 7.3.1

Some inclusive practices discussed in earlier modules

- *developing knowledge and understandings of what each child brings to the learning situation*
- *promoting the maintenance and development of children's home languages*
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Worksheet 7.3.1 encourages you to revisit previous modules and to highlight some of the inclusive strategies that you may have already used in your teaching practice or that may have been new to you before beginning this training and development resource. For your reference, we summarise below some of the strategies discussed in earlier modules.

Resource Notes 7.3.1

Strategies in developing inclusive approaches to early childhood education

- *developing learner profiles*
- *focussing on what learners can do*
- *making links between home and school literacy practices*
- *planning for the maintenance and development of the home language*
- *establishing a learning environment that encourages risk-taking*
- *planning for explicit language development*
- *planning for shared experiences in the classroom*
- *focussing on the role of the adult in scaffolding the child's language and meaning making*
- *developing strategies for supporting the development of language and metalinguistic understandings*
- *choosing culturally inclusive and gender-inclusive materials*
- *examining practices around the texts we use with young ESL learners*
- *using practices which encourage children to become critical readers and viewers*
- *providing opportunities which support children's development as writers in English and in their home languages*
- *involving bilingual education workers in planning and programming*
- *using practices which encourage children to work collaboratively*
- *assessing practices in involving parents from language backgrounds other than English in early childhood programs*
- *seeking to achieve positive outcomes for all children*
- *seeking ways to enable children to recognise and deal with bias and prejudice.*

Conclusion

In this section, we have revisited a number of practices already highlighted in this Resource Folder which contribute to the implementation of a culturally inclusive approach in early childhood settings. In the next section, we will consider other ways the needs of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can be responded to positively, both at the program and whole centre level.

7.4 Strategies for implementing a culturally inclusive approach

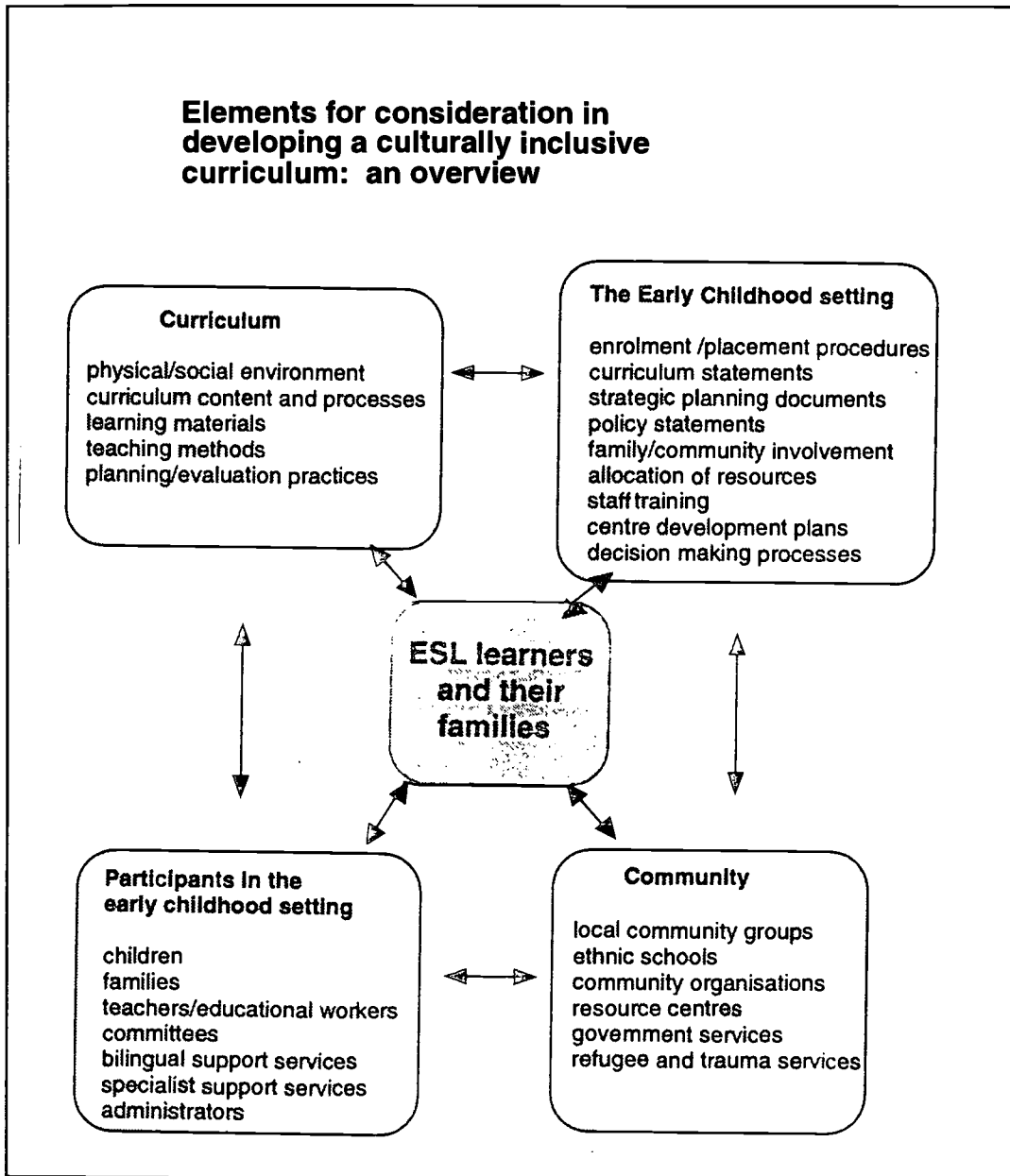
Introduction

The purpose of this section is to articulate an overview of some aims in an inclusive curriculum as it applies to various aspects of early childhood settings. We will consider the whole centre as well as its community. We will then focus on strategies for achieving these aims.

Activity

Read the following Resource Notes 7.4.1, which provide an overview of the elements that need to be considered in developing a culturally inclusive curriculum in early childhood settings.

584 360



The rationale for this overview is explained in more detail in Resource Notes 7.4.2 which follow.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Resource Notes 7.4.2

Developing a Culturally Inclusive Curriculum: An Overview***ESL Learners***

The needs of the whole child are at the core of the early childhood program. Children and their families bring to our settings a variety of experiences, skills and attitudes which contribute to their learning in a positive way if the curriculum is able to build on and value their contributions. Such a curriculum will take into consideration:

- *a range of cultural perspectives relating to ethnicity, class and gender*
- *a wide range of life experiences that will affect parents' values and expectations*
- *a range of child-rearing practices and views of childhood.*

Curriculum

Aspects of the program to be considered in implementing a culturally inclusive curriculum include:

- *the extent to which the physical environment reflects the pluralism of the community and fosters acceptance in the relationships between educators and children, between educators, and amongst children*
- *the social environment of the Centre and the extent to which educators and caregivers foster self esteem and support both social and cognitive development*
- *the content of the play curriculum and the messages, both intended and unintended, that the selection of content and processes conveys about what is important and valued*
- *teaching and learning methods: the extent to which these allow all learners to participate effectively and equitably in their own learning*
- *ways of evaluating programs to assess the extent to which they support the learning of all children*
- *teaching/learning materials and the extent to which these are culturally appropriate, and accessible and relevant to all learners.*

The early childhood setting

The early childhood setting at every level of its service delivery to children and their families is an integral part of the inclusive curriculum.

Both directly and indirectly centre policies, structures and practices determine the educational experiences and outcomes of ESL learners.

Aspects of the early childhood setting to be considered in implementing a culturally inclusive curriculum include attention to:

- *enrolment and placement procedures, including the availability of interpreters and translators, information in languages other than English, children and their families feeling welcomed, etc*
- *explicit focus in strategic planning and policy statements; that is, the extent to which the setting acknowledges the importance of addressing the needs of ESL learners and their families, as well as such issues as racism*
- *explicit and implicit focus in curriculum statements and centre philosophy statements; that is, the extent to which the philosophy and curriculum of the whole educational setting is inclusive of all learners' needs*

Resource Notes 7.4.2 (continued)

- *parent/community involvement and participation: the means by which staff keep parents informed and encourage participation in the centre's programs and management*
- *allocation of resources, including the placement of bilingual support, and the extent to which resources and allocation of finances is made available for the development of multicultural and multilingual resources*
- *training and development: the extent to which early childhood educators are supported in the development of knowledge and skills needed to cater more effectively for the needs of ESL learners*
- *transition structures to ensure the effective transfer of information and support for ESL children to support and enhance their subsequent educational experiences.*

Members of the early childhood setting

The implementation of a culturally inclusive curriculum involves and has an impact on all members of the early childhood setting. In developing inclusive strategies we need to consider the roles that various people play.

For example:

- *early childhood educators, responsible for ensuring that the curriculum and management of the learning environment is culturally inclusive*
- *children from language backgrounds other than English, as participants and contributors to the learning environment*
- *parents, as participants in the decision-making process, as resource people, as participants in the development of curriculum, as providers and recipients of training and development*
- *bilingual and other educational support workers, as those with the specialist skills and responsibilities in acting as linguistic and cultural mediators, as resource people for the curriculum, as participants in curriculum and policy review, as participants and developers in training and development*
- *management committees and school councils, as parents, community representatives and educators responsible for the monitoring and review of centre policies and curriculum and as recipients and providers of training and development*
- *members of the wider community, as resources, participants in the educational program and as the providers and recipients of training and developmental activities*
- *regional and central office staff, as those responsible for ensuring the relevant policies and practices are implemented in all early childhood settings and for further policy development.*

*Adapted for the early childhood setting from Workshop 9
'ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course'.*

Activity

The following Resource Notes 7.4.3 outline some of the aims of a culturally inclusive approach in early childhood settings. As an educator, you need to be able to articulate your own aims and your centre's aims clearly, to yourself, to your colleagues and to your parents, so that you can build strategic approaches around them. We will use these notes to go on to reflect on our own practices and on issues in our own settings.

Resource Notes 7.4.3

Some suggestions for stating aims

in developing culturally inclusive approaches

- *To acknowledge the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of all groups who form part of Australia's multicultural society*
- *To acknowledge, value and incorporate in the curriculum the experiences, knowledge and needs of all learners*
- *To enhance the individual's self-esteem and his or her respect for and understanding of others*
- *To provide an environment which challenges prejudice and stereotyping*
- *To ensure that all children and their families are able to participate positively in early childhood programs*
- *To involve the community in the development and delivery of programs*
- *To ensure equal access to the resources of the program by all children and their families*
- *To support the ongoing development of all staff so they can continue to respond to the cultural and linguistic needs of ESL learners.*

*Adapted from 'ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course'
Department for Education and Children's Services, South Australia, 1993.*

You will note that these aims are already an integral part of what we have presented in previous modules, and we have already looked at some ways we can turn such principles into practice. This activity asks you to consider where and how you might implement aims such as these in your own work.

In this activity, it is suggested that you work with a small group of colleagues so that you can explore practices and issues for your own context in a collaborative way.

The activity contains four worksheets (Worksheets 7.4.1(a), (b), (c), (d)), each sheet reflecting on two of the aims outlined in Resource Notes 7.4.3. Each worksheet identifies some possible strategies for realising those aims at the program and whole centre level. Work through these sheets with your colleagues, adding strategies of your own to those suggested.

364

<i>Culturally Inclusive Curriculum: Some aims</i>		
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Program Strategies</i>	<i>Whole Centre Strategies</i>
<i>To acknowledge the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of all groups who form part of Australia's multicultural society</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>develop strategies for learning more about the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children and their families</i> • <i>use other languages and cultural experiences in activities wherever possible</i> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ensure information relating to cultural and linguistic backgrounds of children is recorded and shared with staff</i> • <i>ensure all staff have access to information about cross-cultural communication</i> • • • •
<i>To acknowledge, value and incorporate in the curriculum the experiences, knowledge and needs of all learners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>plan for children's language development</i> • <i>observe children to ascertain needs and unfamiliar experiences</i> • • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>develop bilingual approaches in programming</i> • <i>develop critical literacy approaches which enable children to recognise assumptions, etc, in texts</i> • • • • •

Worksheet 7.4.1(b)

Culturally Inclusive Curriculum: Further aims		
Aims	Program Strategies	Whole Centre Strategies
<i>To enhance the individual's self-esteem and his or her respect for and understanding of others</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure staff pronounce children's names and languages correctly • encourage use of children's first language • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examine ways staff can plan with bilingual educational workers • provide multilingual signs around the centre • • • •
<i>To provide an environment which challenges prejudice and stereotyping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide positive, non-stereotypical images in learning resources • challenge racist comments from children, parents or colleagues • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop anti-racism policies and strategies • involve parents, so that they have clear and shared understandings of anti-racism procedures • • • •

366

Culturally Inclusive Curriculum: Further aims		
Aims	Program Strategies	Whole Centre Strategies
<p><i>To ensure that all children and their families are able to participate positively in early childhood programs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>find out real reasons for non-participation by children - don't make assumptions</i> • <i>ensure all activities are relevant, meaningful and purposeful</i> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>question how parents can be better involved in centre activities</i> • <i>provide information in languages other than English wherever possible</i> • • • •
<p><i>To involve the community in the development and delivery of programs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>find out which cultural groups operate locally and access their knowledge and skills</i> • <i>invite parents to share different cultural experiences, games, music and stories with the children</i> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>survey centre's community for needs in regard to services and programs</i> • <i>liaise with local community groups for joint events</i> • • •

Worksheet 7.4.1(d)

<i>Culturally Inclusive Curriculum: Further aims</i>		
<i>Aims</i>	<i>Program Strategies</i>	<i>Whole Centre Strategies</i>
<i>To ensure equal access to the resources of the program by all children and their families</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>let parents know resources are available for use at home</i> • <i>plan programs around both first and second language development</i> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ensure ongoing development of culturally inclusive resources</i> • <i>involve parents and bilingual education workers in decisions about resources</i> • • •
<i>To support the ongoing development of all staff so they can continue to respond to the cultural and linguistic needs of ESL learners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>conduct action research in areas of language and culture</i> • <i>share ideas, challenges and resources with colleagues</i> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>involve all staff in strategic planning</i> • <i>ensure time for shared planning and for inservice activities together</i> • • •

Conclusion

In this section we have re-examined inclusive curriculum as it applies to various aspects of early childhood settings. We have focussed on the program, the whole centre and its community.

We have looked at some aims for achieving an inclusive curriculum and focussed on some strategies for developing these aims into strategies at a program and whole centre level.

368

7.5 Examining our practices

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to examine some early childhood practices in more detail, in order to assess the extent to which they are inclusive of ESL learners and to decide how they could be made more inclusive.

Activity

Resource Notes 7.5.1(a) provide a case study of a common practice in early childhood centres, that of raising children's awareness and understanding of healthy foods. This is an ideal topic in which to develop children's understandings that healthy foods exist in all cuisines around the world, and more specifically in those cuisines of the ESL learners in the centre which might be unfamiliar to some English speaking background children.

After you have read the case study, we will use this example to develop a framework which might be useful for evaluating the cultural inclusiveness of many other practices.

Resource Notes 7.5.1(a)

Case study 1: Looking at healthy foods

In order to develop children's awareness and understanding of healthy foods to include in our diet, an early childhood educator decided to spend the small group time talking about different kinds of fruit and vegetables. She spent time developing a chart made of pictures cut out of catalogues and magazines to stimulate children's discussion through a picture talk. When she asked the children which fruits or vegetables they ate at home, the Vietnamese-Australian children in the group said they ate none of those on the chart. This particular educator made an assumption that the Vietnamese-Australian children never ate any fruit or vegetables. In actual fact the Vietnamese-Australian children in this group ate a wide variety of fruits (and in particular vegetables) but not those the teacher had displayed during the picture talk. Rather they ate many varieties of vegetables (e.g., bap cai - cabbage, cai be xanh - spinach, and rau muong - water cress) that had been brought to Australia by various Asian communities over a number of years and are readily available throughout specialist suburban grocers, as well as being commonly grown in children's own back yards.

Worksheet 7.5.1(a) below is a possible framework for you to use in assessing the inclusivity of practices used in early childhood centres.

The case study, 'Looking at healthy foods' is presented as a model for you.

Worksheet 7.5.1(a)

<i>A framework for assessing inclusivity</i>	
<i>Issues or practice in question</i>	<i>'Healthy Food' activity</i>
<i>Intention (why is it done?)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>to raise children's awareness of healthy food</i>
<i>What can happen</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>children are asked to match their experiences with the images presented by the educators</i> • <i>children develop ideas and concepts about what food is good to eat</i>
<i>What might be unintended outcomes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>invalid assumptions can be made about particular groups of children</i> • <i>particular children or groups are excluded from the curriculum</i>
<i>How can outcomes be improved or changed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>avoid making assumptions</i> • <i>find out more about home backgrounds</i> • <i>use appropriate questioning</i> • <i>network with parents and use their expertise</i> • <i>share new understandings with colleagues</i>

Now that you have seen how the framework might be used, read the following case studies in Resource Notes 7.5.1(b), (c), and (d) and assess each activity for inclusivity using Worksheet 7.5.1(b), (c), and (d) which follow each study.

Resource Notes 7.5.1(b)

Case study 2: Story time

This setting is a busy half-time centre, running sessional preschool for 30 children including 10 children from language backgrounds other than English. The children are at various stages of their English language development and six of these children speak Polish as their first language. On Wednesday morning a Polish bilingual assistant has been assigned to the centre for three hours. The staff decide that story time is a quiet time and an opportunity for the bilingual assistant to do some translating of school information for parents in the office on a fortnightly basis. On the alternative Wednesday mornings they have a Polish story group, with the whole centre listening to a story read by the bilingual assistant. On the other Wednesday mornings, the children whose first language is Polish hear stories read in English with a group of 15 other four year olds.

As bilingual assistance is limited by funding, most other activities are conducted only in English. During story time children are expected to sit quietly. The children from language backgrounds other than English are generally compliant with the task at hand. Several children noticeably 'switch off' but because they do not become disruptive the early childhood educator feels that, while the children may not understand what they are hearing, it 'is good for them to be involved anyway and learn how to sit and listen'.

Worksheet 7.5.1(b)

<i>A framework for assessing inclusivity</i>	
<i>Issues or practice in question</i>	
<i>Intention (why is it done?)</i>	
<i>What can happen?</i>	
<i>What might be unintended outcomes?</i>	
<i>How can outcomes be improved or changed?</i>	

Resource Notes 7.5.1(c)

Case study 3: Parent groups

Staff in the centre decide at the beginning of the year to have a literacy focus throughout their program. They organise several important initiatives, including a parent group to focus on giving parents practical strategies for helping their children develop English literacy skills. Staff were keen to involve as many parents as possible from language backgrounds other than English.

During planning, staff made assumptions based on several home visits and advice from the bilingual assistant that, while parents wanted the best for their children, they lacked the necessary skills and resources to adequately assist their children with English literacy development. Staff spent a lot of time organising a parent group and canvassing parents to attend the course. Staff believed that word of mouth would ensure all parents had the message. Monolingual staff encouraged the bilingual staff member to talk to parents about the course and its benefits. When staff asked parents if they would be coming the next day to the course, all the parents stated that they were coming.

On the day of the parent course however, only one parent from a language background other than English came. Staff were genuinely surprised, as they were sure they had made all the necessary attempts to ensure all parents were included.

371

Worksheet 7.5.1(c)

<i>A framework for assessing inclusivity</i>	
<i>Issues or practice in question</i>	
<i>Intention (why is it done?)</i>	
<i>What can happen?</i>	
<i>What might be unintended outcomes?</i>	
<i>How can outcomes be improved or changed?</i>	

Resource Notes 7.5.1(d)

Case study 4: NAIDOC Week

The school has a small percentage of Aboriginal students in its junior primary section. The principal asked one of the teachers to organise a week of special events to celebrate NAIDOC week (National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee). The school had over the past few years organised special activities at this time as a way of acknowledging and extending students' awareness of Aboriginal culture. The teacher went ahead and organised the making of flags, bark paintings and other craft activities and invited a guest speaker from the local Aboriginal Cultural Centre to tell Aboriginal stories. The children seemed to enjoy all the activities, but the effect on the Aboriginal students was difficult to assess. They did not seem to contribute any more to the activities than any of the others and were uncomfortable when the teachers addressed any questions towards them about their own 'culture'. Staff were also frustrated that some children whom they thought would play a central role in activities were absent during this week due to family commitments elsewhere.

372

Worksheet 7.5.1(d)

<i>A framework for assessing inclusivity</i>	
<i>Issues or practice in question</i>	
<i>Intention (why is it done?)</i>	
<i>What can happen?</i>	
<i>What might be unintended outcomes?</i>	
<i>How can outcomes be improved or changed?</i>	

Conclusion

In this section we have looked at some common practices in early childhood settings and reflected on them within a framework for assessing cultural inclusivity.

As some aspects of these case studies indicate, educators' attempts at implementing 'inclusive' strategies can sometimes not have the desired outcome. It is important to reflect and learn from these efforts in order to plan how more positive outcomes might be achieved in the future.

7.6 Developing an inclusive program

Introduction

In this section, we will use the ideas considered so far in this module to develop an inclusive series of activities which we could use with children in our settings.

Activity

Work through Worksheet 7.6.1, which consists of a series of questions that support the development of a topic or sequence of activities. This can then be trialled with your learners as your workplace activity for this module. It is suggested that you again work with colleagues to gain the maximum benefit from this activity.

You might use the questions to plan something new, or you could review a topic or sequence of activities you have already used to make it more inclusive.

In completing this activity it is important to keep in mind that we are preparing all children for a multicultural society and it may sometimes be necessary to draw on perspectives beyond those represented in your setting.

Making it culturally inclusive

The following questions are intended to assist you with the development of an activity/interest/topic/unit/theme/sequence which you are currently preparing to use in your setting.

The questions may overlap but consider each one carefully.

Briefly describe the activity and then respond to the questions below:

-
-
-
-

1. What is the activity/topic/theme around which you are planning?

-
-
-
-

2. What cultural backgrounds and significant life experiences are represented in your early childhood setting? (e.g., language backgrounds, bilingualism, migrant experiences)

-
-
-
-

3. How will you ensure that this diversity of backgrounds is adequately reflected in the content and processes of this activity/topic/theme?

-
-
-
-

4. How will children's knowledge and experiences which are relevant to this activity be drawn out, used and developed?

-
-
-

Worksheet 7.6.1 (continued)

5. *How will you encourage children to value their own experiences and backgrounds in a way that fits appropriately with this activity?*

-
-
-

6. *How will you acknowledge, both explicitly and implicitly, shared values and human needs across different language and cultural groups?*

-
-
-
-

7. *How will the activities draw on and make use of the knowledge, skills and experiences of a wide range of cultures?*

-
-
-
-

8. *How can you tap the relevant knowledge and experience to be found in the wider community to enrich this activity?*

-
-
-

9. *How will all children be encouraged to value each others' background and experiences?*

-
-
-

10. *How will you support learners so that they might all participate and achieve positive outcomes? (e.g., what are the language demands of the curriculum and how will you cater for individual needs, and learning styles)?*

-
-
-

375

Conclusion

In this section you have had the opportunity to examine a unit of work you may wish to use or currently use in your setting in terms of its cultural inclusivity and have considered ways of adapting the unit of work to make it more culturally inclusive. The processes of analysis and planning we have developed here can be used more generally in your own work setting.

The focus of this module has been on the development of culturally inclusive principles and practices to enrich the experiences of all children and in particular to support ESL learners more effectively.

376

7.7 Suggested workplace activity: Developing and implementing culturally inclusive practices within an early childhood setting

Rationale

This workplace activity aims to provide you with an opportunity to consider other ways in which your practice or your centre's can be made more inclusive.

Activity

Your task at the end of this workshop is to extend the process begun in the last section of Module 7.

Either

Trial the topic or sequence of activities you have developed in Worksheet 7.6.1 with a small group of learners.

or

Evaluate an aspect of your program or an aspect of whole centre management which you consider needs further strategies in place to make it more culturally inclusive.

Some ideas may include:

- developing means for involving parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in literacy programs
- developing means for involving parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds on management committees
- making better use of bilingual education workers
- improving enrolment procedures
- improving transition procedures
- developing better communication processes to inform parents of aspects of early childhood programs
- making literacy practices more explicit
- developing a unit of work with an explicit language focus in a particular area of study.

You may wish to use the framework 'Making it culturally inclusive' or simply use Worksheet 7.7.1 to record your ideas.

377

Notes on workplace activity

Any issues, concerns or clarifications arising from this activity

7.8 Between module readings

There are two essential readings for Module 7, as well as other suggested readings. The essential readings follow Worksheet 7.8.1. This worksheet can be used to make notes as you read.

Readings for Module 7:

1. Clarke, P. 'Multicultural perspectives in early childhood services in Australia'. In *Multicultural Teaching*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, pp. 8-11.

This article explores the nature of multiculturalism and the importance of multicultural perspectives in early childhood services.

2. Glover, A. 'Children and Bias'. In *The Anti-Bias Approach in Early childhood*. Creaser, B & Dau, E. (eds) Addison Wesley Longman Australia, pp. 1-16.

This chapter discusses the development of bias in young children and highlights the important role of an anti-bias curriculum in helping all children to develop positive attitudes towards diversity.

Suggested further readings (*highly recommended)

*Burke, D. (1991) 'Inclusive curriculum and students from non-English speaking backgrounds' in *ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course*. Department for Education and Children's Services.

Creaser, B. and Dau, E. (1994) *Who's in Charge of Celebrations? A Child Centred Approach*. ACT, Australian Early Childhood Association Inc.

Department of Education and Children's Services. *Multiculturalism in schooling and children's services*. Policy Statement, March 1995.

*Derman-Sparks, L. and the ABC Task Force (1989) *Anti-Bias Curriculum. Tools for Empowering Young Children*. Washington D.C., National Association for the Education of Young Children,.

Education Department of South Australia (1991) *Inclusive curriculum; a bibliography of materials*. Held at the Languages and Multicultural Centre Resource Centre, Newton, South Australia.

*Free Kindergarten Association (1990) 'Racism and Children's Rights'. In *Resource*, Newsletter of the Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre. Issue No. 65, December.

Free Kindergarten Association (1991) 'Social Justice in Early Childhood'. In *Resource*, Newsletter of the Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre. Issue No. 68, August.

*Paul, A. (1995) Chapter 15, 'Developing an anti-bias approach to program planning'. In *The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood*. Edited by Barbara Creaser and Elizabeth Dau. NSW: Harper Educational.

Worksheet 7.9.1

Notes on readings

Worksheet 7.9.1 (continued)

Notes on readings

A large rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to write their notes on readings. The box is currently empty.

MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA

Priscilla Clarke

In Multicultural Teaching. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books

In one sense multiculturalism is a descriptive term that reflects the reality of Australia today. The Australia of the 1990s is not the Australia of the 1930s. Multiculturalism in this sense refers to the recognition of a diverse population made up of the original owners of the land - the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, the majority Anglo-Celtic group, other large ethnic groups, such as the Italo and Greek Australians and many smaller groups such as the Timorese, Latin Americans and Vietnamese.

In the early childhood field as in the wider field, there are many critics of multiculturalism. Some feel that the concept of multiculturalism as a policy rather than a description places too much emphasis on superficial aspects of culture: they interpret culture as dressing up in folk costumes, or eating 'ethnic' food, or celebrating national days. This superficial view of multiculturalism can be seen in the 'tokenistic' approaches taken in some early childhood services who celebrate an 'ethnic day' or an international day'. Parents and children are encouraged to dress up in 'ethnic' costumes, which may or may not have relevance to their own backgrounds.

There are many who would argue that, if this is all multiculturalism is, then it is not worth considering as social policy. Some critics argue that the emphasis on the cultural identity of minority groups threatens Australian identity: that multiculturalism strengthens separateness and undermines social cohesion in the community. These critics do not explain why recognition of ethnic groups should be more dangerous than recognition of many other specific interest groups such as the Returned Servicemen's League, the Country Women's Association, or the Gay Lobby. It is also difficult to understand what Australian identity is if it does not encompass the range of people who live here, and their aspirations (Guerra 1990). Others maintain that multiculturalism encourages the maintenance of cultures which are racist and sexist. This criticism conveniently overlooks the racism and sexism of Anglo-Australian society and the fact that cultures are not static or rigid.

The fact that agreement cannot be reached in relation to the meaning of the word multiculturalism or the value of having multicultural policies does not make the concept itself meaningless or useless. All complex ideas are difficult to define and are often controversial. Social policies always provoke debate. For centuries civilisations have argued on the terms 'justice', 'equality' and 'liberty' yet there is no suggestion that the terms should be changed or not used because we cannot agree on what they mean or how they can be achieved (Guerra 1990).

Multiculturalism perspectives are essential for all levels of education, but they are particularly important in the early years when children are most vulnerable. The strength of multiculturalism lies in its respect for human dignity, a commitment that allows it to address collective and individual inequity. However, the varying expectations that different groups bring to multiculturalism place it at risk of being polarised through racist attitudes, or neutralised by the avoidance of debate or potentially contentious and sensitive issues.

In Australia these issues and beliefs in multiculturalism for all Australians are now being reassessed. At the present time there is a backlash against multiculturalism. Some

educators suggest that by changing the terminology the problems will go away, others try to adopt models from other countries, while others ignore the realities of cultural and linguistic diversity. However, refusal to meet the challenges and the failure to respond to the needs at this stage is false economy. It is now essential that we recognise and renew the fundamental rights of all to programs and services that meet and reflect the needs of all individuals and which aim to assist all children to develop to their full potential and thus benefit from society and be a benefit to society.

Given the numbers of children of non-English speaking background in Australian early childhood services, given the increasing importance to Australia of relationships with non-English speaking countries, given the fact that an increasing percentage of Australia's immigrant intake is from Asia, and given the amount of racism that could potentially build up as the recession continues, this shift from policies of multiculturalism could be an expensive mistake.

It must be understood that policies that recognise and celebrate diversity involve all Australians, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In the past there has been reticence on all sides. Those developing and implementing multicultural policies have sometimes avoided programs relating to indigenous groups because of the narrow interpretation of the term multiculturalism and because of the separate nature of funding. For their part, and rightly so, the Aboriginal groups have been concerned with the primary issue of Aboriginal rights.

Multiculturalism is important for all Australians and is something that will be of benefit for future generations. It is a long-term process based on the shared experiences of the past and present groups that make up Australian society. Guerra (1990) reminds us that multiculturalism acknowledges:

- that the multilingual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples belong to the land and the land belonged to them, and that in the face of oppression by incoming groups they struggled to retain their land;
- that since 1788 the Anglo-Celtic people have contributed to the formation of the basic institutions which have moulded contemporary Australian society;
- that non-English speaking background immigrants and their families have contributed significantly to the social and economic development of Australia;
- that Australia is a democratic society founded upon the institution of parliamentary representation and the principles of equality;
- that English is the national language and all citizens have the right to be fully proficient in speaking and reading and writing;
- that all Australians have the right to maintain and develop their first languages;
- that Australia has a legal system to which all citizens are required to conform and which is based on the principles of justice and equality before the law.

Culture must be viewed broadly. Culture is many things. It includes language, values and customs. Culture can be thought of in concrete terms such as items and objects, clothing, food, music and dance. Culture is also experienced by how people live out their lives as well as what they believe and what values are important to them. These include family roles, child-bearing patterns, communication styles, holidays and festivals. People's goals in life and their belief about human nature and humanity are invisible but ever-present aspects of culture. Culture is not something only celebrated by ethnic minority groups. Anybody who holds an affiliation to a particular group, political, social, personal, or linguistic is part of culture.

Cultural diversity needs to be serviced in all core social institutions. This is probably more crucial in early childhood services than in any other area, given the role played by culture in the socialisation of families and its role in opening doors to social participation. The task of servicing ongoing cultural diversity cannot continue to be downplayed. Cultural diversity affects staff relations, relationships among families in children's services, parent-staff relationships, program planning and training issues for all levels of staff in children's services. Cultural diversity cannot simply be reduced to the idea that everyone needs to speak English. Diversity, in this case cultural diversity, has added another dimension to the task of making children's services more responsive to the needs of all the families in their care.

WHAT ARE MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA?

Multicultural perspectives in early childhood education have been in operation in some form or another for over 15 years. (Clarke 1976; Clarke 1980; Clarke 1989; Hall 1982; Schurch and Hopson 1989). Educators in the early childhood field are justifiably proud of the programs that have been developed based on local initiatives. These include the establishment of bilingual preschool programs, the establishment of Multicultural Resource Centres, the Ethnic Child Care Development Units, the funding of ethnic supplementary children's services workers, the Resource and Advisory programs, and ethnic sponsored child care.

The field of early childhood education draws upon a long history of educational thought and knowledge based on empirical research and data. Within this field, early childhood educators may identify themselves with a variety of orientations, perspectives and styles. Yet, despite these differences, there exists a commonly accepted set of philosophical beliefs which underlie both theory and practice in the field.

There is an intrinsic relationship between the principles that underpin good early childhood practice, and those that underpin the concept of multiculturalism. Programs in early childhood years recognise that each child is a unique person, influenced by their particular cultural and family background, whose development is characterised by particular stages. Programs are designed to respect both general and specific perspectives on child development.

The 'rights of the child' (UN 1990) provides us with a basic starting point for understanding what is right for children. We need to think about what is right for children and what children are rightfully entitled to. As Kana (1991: 107) reminds us:

'Because a society knows what is right and correct does not mean that society always does what is socially just and equitable'.

There is a conventional body of knowledge about what is right for children. It is right that children grow up in a healthy and safe environment. It is right that the program be developmentally appropriate and that their physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs be met. It is also right that children experience equality of opportunity, irrespective of race, class, home language, level of family income or ability.

It is recognised that the early years of children's development are crucial for later learning. During these early years children are forming their initial social preferences and patterns and establishing their initial approaches to learning (Ramsey 1982). The early years are vital for the development of positive attitudes. All young Australian children should have access to multicultural programs and services in their most formative years as this can assist them in developing a multicultural outlook and a set of values which can inform the rest of their experience and development.

Australia, like many other Western countries, has rapidly changed in the last two hundred years through the impact of both migration and economic conditions. However, the question needs to be asked as to whether our concept of what is pedagogically right for children and families has changed to keep abreast of the nature of Australia as a diverse society.

It is necessary for all early childhood educators to incorporate the current issues in our changing society such as needs of working parents, growing unemployment, restructuring and changes to industry, while at the same time understanding and respecting the differing values and attitudes held by the many diverse groups that make up Australian society. All planners and providers of services for early childhood must understand and support the concept and deals of social justice. The Australian government's social justice policy is part of its multicultural policy. It expresses a commitment to the principle that all Australians should have a fair deal. It says that everybody is entitled to equal opportunity and equal treatment in all areas of community life. As Milne (1991: 3) states:

'Social Justice is a fundamental concept for any democratic society whether it is a multicultural society or not. Social justice has to stand in its own right and this is what we must teach young children'.

Australian children must understand and care about the nature of their society and their rights and responsibilities within it. Furthermore, they must develop ways necessary to make their behaviour match their attitudes and knowledge. Basic to this is an understanding of justice as fairness.

One of the most difficult tasks for early childhood staff who are concerned with social justice and access and equity issues is to reconcile and incorporate the many and varied views of staff and parents from minority backgrounds with what is generally believed is the right of children to an appropriate program. Early childhood centres that endeavour to provide multicultural perspectives in their programs also meet with accusations of being tokenistic and divisive. Parents complain that their children 'will be held back' by all those children who can't speak English, or they complain of money being spent on materials in languages other than English.

In many cases this criticism has not led to changes in programs, or to useful discussion which could assist the development of future programs; rather this criticism has led to the abandonment of the ideals. In other situations, problems have arisen because policies of multiculturalism have been imposed by bureaucrats on their children's services, without proper consultation or debate. These actions have resulted in some tokenistic approaches in some centres, together with resentment by staff who feel that policies are being imposed on them without opportunities to discuss the issues. Problems in early childhood centres have also arisen as a reflection of international conflict. In some areas the issues of antiracism and prejudice have come on the agenda in response to growing antagonism to some racial groups in the community, linked to recent conflicts such as the 'Gulf War'. Obviously it is essential that these issues be addressed, given the racist incidents that are happening every day, and the impact these have on families and children.

In Australia there is a move towards a new phase: main-streaming. In documents, advocating main-streaming it is rightly suggested that multiculturalism is strengthened by bringing welfare, educational, and government servicing needs from the margin into the central concerns of core social institutions. On the other hand, it may mean in practice, that special services and institutions, designed to meet the particular needs of non-English speaking background families and children, are in danger of being thought to be no longer necessary (Castles, Kalantizis, and Cope 1986).

Positive responses to diversity are all the more critical as society moves towards decentralised systems with more effective community management and participation. More attention is now being given to relations between staff and parents, between staff and the community, and between staff and the children in their care. Early childhood service providers planning and running programs face very particular challenges. Issues of the rights of children need to be balanced with the rights of parents; issues of social cohesion and identity become more difficult to reconcile.

In the early childhood field in Australia the term most frequently adopted in planning is 'multicultural perspectives'. This term involves three areas: socio-cultural issues, the maintenance and development of the mother tongue and first language; and the development of English as a second language. It is not a perspective that many people find easy to accept. Staff funded to assist children's services to develop appropriate and responsive services for families from diverse backgrounds often meet with resistance and Anglo-centric attitudes. Staff in centres claim:

'We already run a multicultural program because all our children are multicultural'

'We don't need multicultural perspectives because all the children speak English'

'Why should we do anything different, we treat all children the same'

'Migrants are lucky to live in this country and they should speak English'.

Australia has led the way in innovative multicultural programs in children's services and a number of approaches to planning programs for Australia's children are evident.

In Australia, 'multicultural perspectives':

- is a perspective not a program
- affirms the right of all to their cultural and linguistic heritage
- affirms equality of opportunity for all regardless of race, class, language, religion, ability, age, or sexual preference
- builds on the experiences of all children, families and staff
- recognises and respects the similarities and differences in everyone
- develops and extends the first languages of the children
- assists children to learn English as a second language
- promotes the employment of bilingual/bicultural staff in all early childhood services
- welcomes parent participation in the program and in the decision-making processes
- accepts that not all the values held by parents can be comfortably incorporated in a quality early childhood program
- encourages open discussion of differing attitudes
- rejects bias and prejudice and endeavours to resolve conflict
- promotes the use of non-sexist, non-racist materials
- exposes children to programs which teach co-operation and sharing with others
- seeks positive ways to resolve conflict
- seeks to empower children in order that all groups have equality of opportunity and access to social justice (Clarke 1992).

'Multicultural perspectives' acknowledges various issues such as gender and issues of disability, and highlights the celebration of diversity and supports the principles of social

386

justice. Early childhood educators working to promote multicultural perspectives in early childhood services value the opportunities to learn, share and work together with others who share a common aim of providing a range of services which cater for all those who live in our multicultural society.

CONCLUSION

Early childhood staff, parents and the community have an important role in assisting all children and families to understand and be part of the development of Australia as a multicultural society. Programs can support the individual needs of all children and families regardless of ethnicity, language, race, or ability. It is now essential that we recognise and renew the fundamental human rights of all to programs and services that meet and reflect the needs of children and families, and which aim to assist all children to develop to their full potential and thus benefit from society.

Multiculturalism is at the crossroads. Given its broad mandate, it is not surprising that the way it is interpreted is affected by regional, historical and demographic conditions. What is disturbing, however, is our failure to remember two important points. The first is that the fundamental purpose of multicultural perspectives is to prepare all children for life in a multicultural and multilingual society; the second is that communities of different origins confront different points in their quest for cultural freedoms and full and equitable participation in Australian society.

Multicultural perspectives in all early childhood programs can assist in the creation of an egalitarian society if they begin to focus on issues of cultural and linguistic diversity; of prejudice and racism; of discrimination, of access and equity. If we agree with the premise that equality of opportunity can only be achieved by providing educational opportunities for all children regardless of differences in cultural or linguistic backgrounds, then we all have an equal chance only if the centre reflects a positive attitude to diversity, and a willingness to share and build on the cultural and linguistic composition of society. This is the challenge to lead us into the twenty-first century.

Pricilla Clarke is Director, FKA Multicultural Resource Centre, Richmond, Victoria

CHILDREN AND BIAS

Anne Glover

In *The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood*; Creaser, B and Dau, E (eds); Addison Wesley Longman Australia

Children growing up in Australia are exposed to enormous diversity. Australians are not a homogeneous group; we are people who differ in all aspects of our identity. We differ, for example, in our gender, race, ethnicity, cultural heritage, mental and physical ability, age, religion and socio-economic level. There is a considerable amount of research which demonstrates that children are aware of the differences among people, and that they learn the prevailing social attitudes towards these differences at a very young age. When attitudes are negative, they can result in children expressing or acting out bias towards an individual or group.

This chapter discusses the development of bias in young children and highlights the important role of an anti-bias curriculum in helping all children to develop positive attitudes towards diversity.

YOUNG CHILDREN'S AWARENESS OF DIVERSITY

Many adults like to believe that young children are innocent, that they are free from bias and prejudice, and that they do not make evaluative judgements about people different from themselves.

It is not uncommon to hear adults claim that children don't even notice difference. Usually we hear these comments about children 'not noticing' when people are discussing the more sensitive aspects of diversity, such as race or physical and mental ability; they are less common when children's awareness of gender or age is being discussed. For example, while most adults would readily agree that a four year-old observes the obvious differences between a baby, a teenager and a great-grandfather, they are less likely to agree that the same four year-old would notice the differences between an Anglo-Australian, an Asian-Australian and an Indian-Australian. If questioned further, adults may say that of course the four year-old notices the physical differences - what is meant by 'not noticing' is that children do not *care about* the difference, that it is not meaningful.

Such claims are contradicted by the growing body of research evidence showing that young children do notice difference, and that these observations carry meaning with them. (See, for example, Katz 1976; Milner 1983; Henshall & McGuire 1986; Aboud 1988; Ramsey & Myers 1990; Palmer 1990.) As children become aware of difference, they simultaneously develop positive or negative feelings about each difference they observe. A study of two- and three-year-old children carried out to explore the development of race awareness and racial attitudes in young children clearly illustrated how early this occurs. The study recorded the following:

- Children noticed and commented on skin colour, hair and eye colour, and hair texture. They talked about their own colour and commented on similarities and differences in each other, in dolls, in stimulus pictures and in figures illustrating picture books.
- Children used racial cues to identify and classify themselves and others.
- As the children practised their categorisation and classification skills using race as a basis, many incidences of overgeneralisation occurred.

- Children explored various aspects of race, including the extent and permanency of racial attributes (particularly skin colour) and the relationship between race and gender.
- Preferences decided on the basis of racial cues were also evident. For example, all children showed same-race preference more than other-race preference when selecting dolls to wash or dolls from the doll families.

Analysis of the observations recorded indicated that most of the two year-olds used racial cues as a basis of identification and categorisation. The value attached to the cues, and the value distinctions which were developing, were more difficult to observe. However, two of the children, one as young as two years and four months, were observed exhibiting behaviours which clearly indicated the beginnings of negative racial attitudes - for example, refusing to hold different-race children's hands, never choosing different-race dolls and only choosing same-race pictures for collages (Glover 1991).

Like children all over the world, Australian children are aware of, and interested in, human diversity from a very young age. Initially, they notice and are curious about our visible differences - sex, race, body shape and physical abilities. In time they begin to notice other differences, including ethnicity, culture and class. Children aged between two and five years have been documented commenting on and asking questions about gender differences, physical differences, cultural differences including language, foods and celebrations, and physical abilities, often focusing on adaptive equipment such as splints, glasses and wheelchairs.

While it is not known exactly when children first observe identity differences, evidence suggests that most children appear to notice gender and racial cues during infancy. (See, for example, Katz 1976.) By the time they are three or four, most children are aware of the concepts of race and gender, many can identify and categorise people by racial group, and nearly all can use appropriate gender labels. They are also aware of differences in physical ability, body shape, and particular cultural practices and events.

Anecdotes collected in Australian early childhood services provide many examples of young children's awareness of human diversity. Consider the following three examples:

Jackie, a white five year-old, is speaking to Kate, the Aboriginal student teacher.

Jackie: You're from another country.

Kate: Why do you say that?

Jackie: Cos you've got brown skin.

Kate: Well, I'm not from another country.

Jackie: Yes, you are. You've got brown skin.

Kate: No, I'm not.

'Look at the black man', said four-year-old Rebecca, pointing to the African male who had entered the kindergarten building. 'whose daddy is he?' Still looking, she asks: 'Has he got a black penis?'

On the day that Anna Louise's artificial leg had to be taken to the city to be repaired, Anna Louise arrived at kindergarten riding her specially built bike.

Sean: Why has she brought her bike?

Eloise: Where's her other leg?

Ms T: Well, you know that Anna Louise has only one real leg. Yesterday her artificial leg broke, and her Mum's taken it into the city to get it fixed. Anna Louise brought her bike so that she can move around and join in all the activities.

Each of the above examples demonstrates children noticing differences, which is an essential part of the process of socialisation. In the context of social interactions, children notice similarities and differences, realise that they are distinct from other people and develop a sense of identity, as they categorise self and others, learning to which groups they do or do not belong.

As children become aware of our differences, they also develop feelings about what they are observing. These feelings are referred to as evaluative judgements. Children make judgements about what they see, evaluating differences as good (positive) or bad (negative). When the judgements are negative, we say that children have developed a bias.

Judgements are made because children's awareness of diversity develops in a social context. In Australian society, as in most societies, a framework of values is already operating - racism, sexism, and age, disability and class discrimination exist. This framework indicates to children that some differences are valued, some are not, and children continually receive messages, both directly and indirectly, which tell them what is valued, and therefore good, and what is not, and therefore bad.

As a result of the messages they receive, children learn the prevailing social attitudes towards these differences. By the time they are seven or eight, many have developed gender and race bias, bias against the disabled, cultural/lifestyle bias, socioeconomic (or class) bias, and bias against those who do not conform to society's view of attractiveness, which includes having a certain body shape.

Two recent studies (Palmer 1986; Harper and Bonanno 1993), provide vivid examples of young children making evaluative judgements based on racial characteristics. Palmer's study examined the attitudes that non-Aborigines were developing towards Aborigines. All the four-year-olds in the study, which was undertaken in rural South Australia, were shown to be making racial evaluations, the majority of which were negative in their racial orientation. Comments such as 'Blackfellas dirty' were not uncommon.

In Harper and Bonanno's study, preschool and kindergarten children were reported as saying, 'You're the colour of poo', 'Did your Mum drop you in the poo?', 'Rack off, wog. We don't want to play with you', 'Must have been born in a toilet, cos you look like poo.'

While it is both disturbing and distressing to hear children talk like this, and to see young children excluding, bullying or teasing others, it is important to recognise that attitudes can be changed and that the learning which creates bias and prejudice can be challenged.

LEARNING TO BE BIASED

Children are not born with biases. They do not come into the world already discriminating against certain individuals and groups. Children learn to be biased, and much of this learning occurs during their early years. During this time, as part of the complex process of socialisation and enculturation, they become aware of the various social groups which make

up Australian society and make judgements about each group's distinguishing characteristics. These judgements are important determinants of the later attitudes and behaviours which lead individuals to treat others differently (and unequally) on the basis of race, gender, age, ability, religion and cultural heritage.

While the development of negative attitudes and bias is undoubtedly a dynamic, complex and multifaceted process, one of the most common ways children learn to be biased is by observing existing behaviours and experiencing the effects of attitudes towards various groups in society (Byrnes 1988). All of the socialising agencies with which the child interacts - parents and other family members, carers and teachers, schools, literature and the mass media - will contribute to this process.

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Parents, siblings, extended family members, friends, carers and teachers all play an important role in the development of children's attitudes. Each helps to define and explain the child's world, and in doing so gives the child messages about 'how things are', how 'we' think about things, how 'we' do things and, ultimately, who 'we' are (Milner 1983: 57). Together, they provide the information from which children construct meaning as they attempt to make sense of their world. Within this context, children gradually become aware of the surrounding values and attitudes and usually reproduce them as their own.

According to Milner (1983), the family is the most powerful transmission agent. He suggests that it transmits values and attitudes using three processes: direct tuition, indirect tuition and role-learning.

1. **Direct tuition.** In most Australian families, parents or other family members such as a grandparent usually provide a great deal of direct tuition. They tell children what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'. They do this for individual acts (for example, not letting their children play with 'the Indian kids who live down the road'), and social, moral or political issues (for example, beliefs about immigration).
2. **Indirect tuition.** Families also transmit values and attitudes indirectly, with the teaching occurring unconsciously and unintentionally. There are a number of ways children learn through this process, including identification and modelling. Identification involves children spontaneously imitating a parent's integrated pattern of behaviour, while modelling occurs when children purposefully model their behaviour on that of the parent.
3. **Role-learning.** Role-learning involves teaching children who they are and how to behave in the world, how to behave towards others, and an understanding of the roles of others. To achieve this, children must acquire a social identity, which they do in the context of their 'own group' and its relationship to other groups.

As Milner says, each of these processes teaches children not only ways of doing things, but also ways of seeing or evaluating the world. Parents and significant others in children's lives are central to this learning, as 'they are the interpreters and instructors' (Milner 1983: 67). It is important to acknowledge here that parents can contribute either positively or negatively to the development of attitudes, depending on how they themselves evaluate and respond to other groups.

THE ROLE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES AND SCHOOLS

Places such as child care centres, kindergartens and schools, where children may spend parts of their day, will also contribute significantly to the development of attitudes and bias. As with families, services can contribute either positively or negatively. The contribution becomes negative when environments do not give children positive messages about diversity

- when, for example, resources and materials such as books, posters, dolls and dramatic play adjuncts ignore, stereotype or diminish certain groups of people.

According to the Inner London Education Authority (1985), materials facilitate bias against groups through invisibility, tokenism and /or low status presentations.

1. **Invisibility.** Groups are not represented in the materials. Example (a): characters who are physically disabled are not visible in books, posters, or picture displays. Example (b): There are no black dolls in the dramatic play area.
2. **Tokenism.** Groups are represented, but not authentically. They are there 'just for show'. Example (a): there may be just one picture of a black person amongst the people collage being displayed. Example (b): there is just one black doll.
3. **Status.** In resources such as posters and books where images of work are presented, only some groups of people are shown occupying positions that are regarded in Australian society as being of high status. Example (a): none of the books show people with disabilities undertaking capable or central roles. Example (b): images of the elderly only depict them in sedentary roles.

Each of these - invisibility, tokenism and status - gives children strong messages about which human qualities, and therefore which groups, are important and valued in the centre and which are not. These messages are fitted into the child's evaluative frame or reference, created previously when the child 'absorbed a simple polarised evaluation of the groups involved, so that one is positive, good and liked, the other negative, bad and disliked' (Milner 1983: 110).

Resources also foster bias when they present only a narrow range of lifestyles, when they do not show people from a wide range of geographic, social and cultural backgrounds, or when they omit images of the range of family groupings which exist in Australia. Bias is fostered, too, when materials present children with stereotypic images - for example, when Aboriginality is only presented as Aboriginal men with spears and the full range of contemporary Aboriginal lifestyles is not shown, or when materials and/or activities such as 'dot painting' trivialise important activities undertaken by particular groups.

While resources and materials play an extremely important role, the adult's role is critical. Lane (1988: 193) makes this point strongly:

It is no good having black dolls if black people themselves are not valued, if racist remarks and graffiti are not recognised and challenged, if factual questions about racial differences are not answered correctly, if no attempt is made to find out what children are learning, feeling, believing and if strategies are not devised to openly discuss with children, in ways they can understand, why racism is wrong.

At times, adults working with young children may unintentionally foster bias. This can occur when adults:

- make assumptions about what is common to children and their families, implying that there is one right way to live, to behave, to talk and to think, rather than many ways;
- avoid answering children's questions about diversity ('we don't talk about those things') or respond uncomfortably ('skin colour doesn't matter, we're all the same underneath'), suggesting that there is something 'wrong' with the differences observed; or
- use language which excludes particular groups ('policeman' rather than 'police-officer') or use words which are rich in connotative meaning ('black', 'white', 'old', 'broken') in negative ways.

The way in which early childhood services are structured will also give children powerful messages. Structuring includes who works in the service. Do staff represent the diversity of race, gender, age and ability which exists in the community? Who holds the power and makes the decisions about what is done in the service and how it is done?

Children will absorb all kinds of misinformation and stereotypes, both by what they see and hear, and what they don't see and hear, as they participate in early childhood programs. Silencing children, responding uncomfortably when they notice difference, suggesting that there is only one right way to be in the world, using discriminatory language and not presenting children with role models representing diversity, all facilitate the development of bias as children adopt the dominant group's view of the world, rather than create their own.

THE ROLE OF THE MASS MEDIA

Most young Australian children are exposed to a great deal of print, pictures and television through which they receive messages about their social world. The media provide for them both cognitive and emotional information about the social meanings available in the wider society, for constructing and interpreting racial, cultural and other differences (Goodall et al. 1990). As with materials and resources used in early childhood services, persuasive messages are sent when groups are not represented (or are represented in a tokenistic way), when they are portrayed stereotypically or when they fill only low status positions. For example, a study of Australian mass media undertaken in 1990 by Goodall et al. reported Aboriginal representation as very limited. According to the report, Aboriginal Australians are:

regularly associated with criminality, portrayed as self-destructive, [and] their politics factionalised ... their voices are rarely heard, they are rarely given the opportunity to speak for themselves, and are constantly interpreted to the wider community (and themselves) through white authorities (p61).

Ethnic minorities were also found to be portrayed in very restricted ways. 'Almost irrespective of the genre, Australian-produced material locates ethnic minorities in subordinate positions, or in caricature' (p61).

With television, in particular, playing an ever-increasing role in children's lives, it is essential to attend to the messages about diversity which it conveys. Australian children have many opportunities to observe and develop bias as they watch television. For example, children will see relatively few women in positions of political power, and fewer women occupying authoritative positions generally. They will see few individuals from ethnic minorities and few who are physically disabled.

Consider the following extract from the Goodall et al. study:

In 195 hours of television over a one week period, we recorded 2771 product advertisements. Of these, only 46 different ads (repeated to make a total of 127), included any 'minority characters'. Many of these were 'comic ethnic stereotypes' - particularly prevalent in food advertising - usually played by Anglo actors. The majority of TV ads that did include people from non-Anglo backgrounds represented foreigners, rather than non-Anglo Australians. Out of all these advertisements, only one one-second image of Aboriginal people appeared (three times) (p47).

The researchers concluded that:

The overwhelming majority of advertisements representing Australia exclude anyone of non-Anglo descent. In looking at how non-Anglo Australians are presented, exclusion is the most significant factor. Advertisers are marketing a false self-image to Australians, that largely denies cultural plurality. Aboriginal people and culture are presented only as tourist commodities, and non-Anglo immigrants are presented in an often racist, stereotyped manner if they appear at all (p51).

Because children are in the early stages of their cognitive development, they attend more to the observable features of groups than the internal attributes. As a consequence, they are particularly susceptible to evaluative biases about racial groups different from their own, about those who are disabled, those who do not conform to society's view of physical attractiveness, the elderly, or those who have lifestyles different from the significant people in their world. When any of these groups, or individuals from groups, are represented negatively or stereotypically, or when they are underrepresented or not represented at all, bias will flourish.

CHALLENGING BIAS

Bias is, as Lynch (1987: 37) says, 'not only unjust to those to whom it is directed, but is also inimical to the basic ethic of a culturally pluralistic society'. If we are to build a just society, in which 'everyone has a fair go' (a basic Australian tenet), then we must challenge bias where it has its roots - in early childhood. This will involve the following processes - promoting positive attitudes towards diversity, modifying negative attitudes, challenging stereotypes, fostering children's critical thinking about bias, and giving all children the courage and skills to act against bias.

While there is a good deal of research and literature about how children develop bias, there is much less research focusing on the above processes, especially those which challenge or modify children's attitudes.

Pate (1988) lists the following as approaches which have been trialled in the United States:

- *audiovisual approaches* - using films and television to help children recognise bias
- *approaches using specific materials* - using books, plays and dolls specifically designed to enable children to identify and empathise with certain individuals
- *cognitive approaches* - helping children to develop higher thinking skills to avoid overgeneralising and stereotyping
- *cooperative learning approaches* - setting up cooperative learning situations so that children share common problems, goals, tasks and success with individuals from groups other than their own
- *human relations training* - fostering positive intergroup relations through specific training
- *direct approaches* - telling children what is the 'right' thing to say or do
- *whole school approaches* - changing school or centre structures and conditions to reflect and promote diversity, implementing multicultural curricula and using multicultural materials
- *self-esteem approaches* - developing children's positive self-concept and increasing self-esteem, since it is known that the higher a person's self-esteem the less likely they are to be prejudiced against others

394

Many of these approaches are currently being used in early childhood services throughout Australia. More common is a program which combines various approaches and which is usually labelled multicultural education. Recently, multicultural education has been the subject of a good deal of criticism. Critics argue that while it may attempt to challenge bias and promote positive attitudes, it easily becomes trivialised and tokenistic. Opportunities for children to 'learn about cultures' become centred on cultural artefacts such as language, food, music, clothing and celebrations, without developing children's understanding of the values and beliefs which inform these. Children can become exposed to the exotic aspects of culture in ways that take pieces of culture out of context, far removed from the everyday experiences of groups. This leads children naturally to stereotyping individual members of the particular cultural groups about whom they are learning. For example, dot painting with young children will expose them to one form of Aboriginal art, but what does it really tell children about the everyday experiences of Aboriginal Australians? And how does it show children the diversity which exists between and within Aboriginal communities? On countless occasions when non-Aboriginal children are asked about Aboriginal Australians, their responses relate to aspects of traditional lifestyles, spears, hunting, wiltjas and so on. Their stereotypic, often inaccurate responses are not challenged by single activities such as dot painting or making didgeridoos from cardboard cylinders.

Critics also argue that introducing children to cultural diversity does not necessarily result in the social harmony desired in Australia. For example, in an early childhood program catering for Chinese-Australian and Anglo-Australian children, will the introduction of some aspects of Chinese culture, such as celebrating Chinese New Year, result in (a) the Chinese-Australian children developing positive self-images, (b) the Anglo-Australian children learning to appreciate difference and, ultimately, (c) people living side-by-side harmoniously? Critics assert that it will not, and argue that focusing on cultural differences, rather than the unequal power relationships which exist between groups, will not decrease bias and discrimination.

This is not to say that multicultural education has not had an important role to play in promoting positive attitudes towards diversity and challenging negative attitudes and bias. As Derman-Sparks (1992: 115) states:

The philosophy of multicultural curriculum was an important step forward in its recognition that children grow up in diverse cultural contexts that must be brought into and respected in the classroom and in its intention to teach children to appreciate different ways of living.

Many adults working with young children now believe that the most effective way to challenge bias is to implement an anti-bias approach. Developed in the United States, the anti-bias approach extends multicultural education, with its additional emphasis on teaching young children to recognise and challenge bias. Its framework is a developmentally appropriate curriculum which aims to provide every child with opportunities to:

- construct a knowledgeable, confident self-identity;
- develop comfortable, empathic and just interactions with diversity; and
- develop critical thinking skills and the skills for standing up for oneself and others in the face of injustice.

An anti-bias curriculum combines many of the approaches listed by Pate (1988). It includes using specific resources and materials, helping children to develop higher thinking skills, fostering self-esteem, changing structures and, at times, employing a direct approach.

An anti-bias curriculum fits well with what we understand about how young children develop bias. It recognises that young children are learning about themselves and others,

and that they do this through categorising 'the self' and the people in their world. Categorising involves learning to which group they do or do not belong - for example, I'm black, you're white; I'm a girl, you're a boy; I'm young, you're old; I'm in a wheelchair, your legs work - and an anti-bias curriculum acknowledges this as an important part of children's socialisation. It also recognises that the construction of categories is done in a world where some groups are more valued than others.

All children need to construct a knowledgeable, confident self-identity and group identity irrespective of how the dominant society views their group and their particular distinguishing characteristics. All children also need to feel comfortable with groups other than their own. They can achieve these essential goals when an anti-bias curriculum is implemented. An anti-bias curriculum challenges bias and promotes diversity by the construction of an environment for young children which:

- Reflects diversity positively through resources and materials (for example, books, posters, dolls, dramatic play adjuncts and music). Groups are represented, stereotypes are not perpetuated and offensive visual images such as golliwogs are not used. Images are accurate, and sensitive religious and cultural values are considered;
- Provides activities which encourage children to comment on aspects of diversity. Children are encouraged to explore and ask questions about the differences they notice, and their questions are answered accurately and honestly, in ways commensurate with their level of understanding;
- Provides experiences which give children contact with members of diverse groups. This may include carefully planned and monitored excursions, exchanges with other services, the inclusion of professionals (for example, doctors/dentists/health workers) from racial and ethnic minorities, and the employment of staff representing diversity;
- Challenges all negative attitudes and behaviours. Any bias or discriminatory behaviour demonstrated by staff, children and parents is confronted, regardless of how uncomfortable this may be. When discriminatory behaviour is ignored, children get the message that it is acceptable behaviour and a wonderful opportunity for positive role-modelling is lost;
- Encourages children to recognise and challenge bias themselves (including stereotyping). Children are taught to recognise when individuals or groups are being treated unfairly, and are taught the words and skills they need to take action against unfair treatment;
- Involves parents and other family and community members. Goals and programs are discussed, ways of 'doing things' are shared and adults learn from each other.

CONCLUSION

All Australians are hurt by bias. Bias in any form, whether it be racism, sexism, handicappism, ageism or homophobia, is a major threat to minorities, to democracy, to human rights, and to public order and harmony.

Demographers tell us that, by the turn of the century, Australia will be an even more racially, ethnically and culturally diverse society than it is now. If we are to become a strong, democratic and harmonious nation in which all citizens are treated fairly, we must educate our young children to accept and appreciate human diversity, to recognise bias, and to take action in the face of bias and discrimination.

Research clearly demonstrates that children are aware of difference at an early age and that difference can be viewed either positively or negatively. The positive or negative orientation depends on what messages children receive through the process of socialisation.

Early childhood practitioners are in an excellent position to positively influence attitudes, to challenge bias, and to prepare all children for a rich, full and productive life. As this chapter

suggests, an effective strategy for achieving this is the implementation of an anti-bias curriculum.

For further thought and discussion

1. Do you remember asking questions about human differences when you were young? What did you ask about? What responses did you get?
2. How did you get information about individuals and groups different from yourself? For example, if you are a non-Aboriginal Australian, how did you learn about Aboriginal Australians? Did any of your learning come through intergroup contact?
3. Have you heard young children ask questions or make comments about race, gender, age or physical ability? What did they say? How would you respond now?
4. What messages about
 - age
 - race, and
 - physical ability
 - do you think young children are getting from television?

What activities could you provide for three to four-year-olds to encourage them to explore racial diversity? What about for five- to six-year-olds?

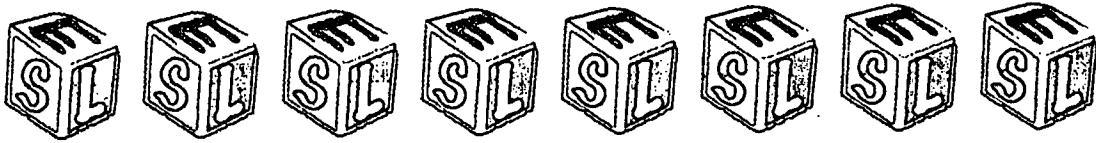
References

Creaser, B. and Dau, E. (eds) (1995) *The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood*. NSW: Harper Educational.

ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course, (1993). South Australia: Department for Education and Children's Services.

108 398

Module 8



Planning more effective partnerships



Module 8

Focus: Planning more effective partnerships

Overview

In this module we will focus on ways to establish effective partnerships which will extend and enrich the support available to ESL learners. Partnerships with parents and your local community, with bilingual education workers, ESL teachers and other specialist support services relevant to ESL learners, as well as partnerships with local schools will be examined. We will also look briefly at how these collaborative approaches can enhance the profiling and assessment processes as these apply to ESL learners in early childhood settings.

You will be asked to reflect on critical issues and to consider how you can develop and extend relationships within and beyond your centre.

The module contains the following activities:

- 8.1 Reflecting on Module 7*
- 8.2 Strengthening links with the home and community*
- 8.3 Planning for more effective partnerships with parents*
- 8.4 Working in partnership with bilingual staff*
- 8.5 Monitoring children's progress*
- 8.6 Starting school*
- 8.7 Suggested workplace activity*
- 8.8 Readings*

At the end of this module you will have:

- considered the value of developing partnerships and working more collaboratively and considered some critical success factors and tensions in developing partnerships with other professionals and with parents
- reviewed some implications for ESL learners of profiling and assessment practices
- completed the total program of personal exploration and professional development offered by this Resource Folder.

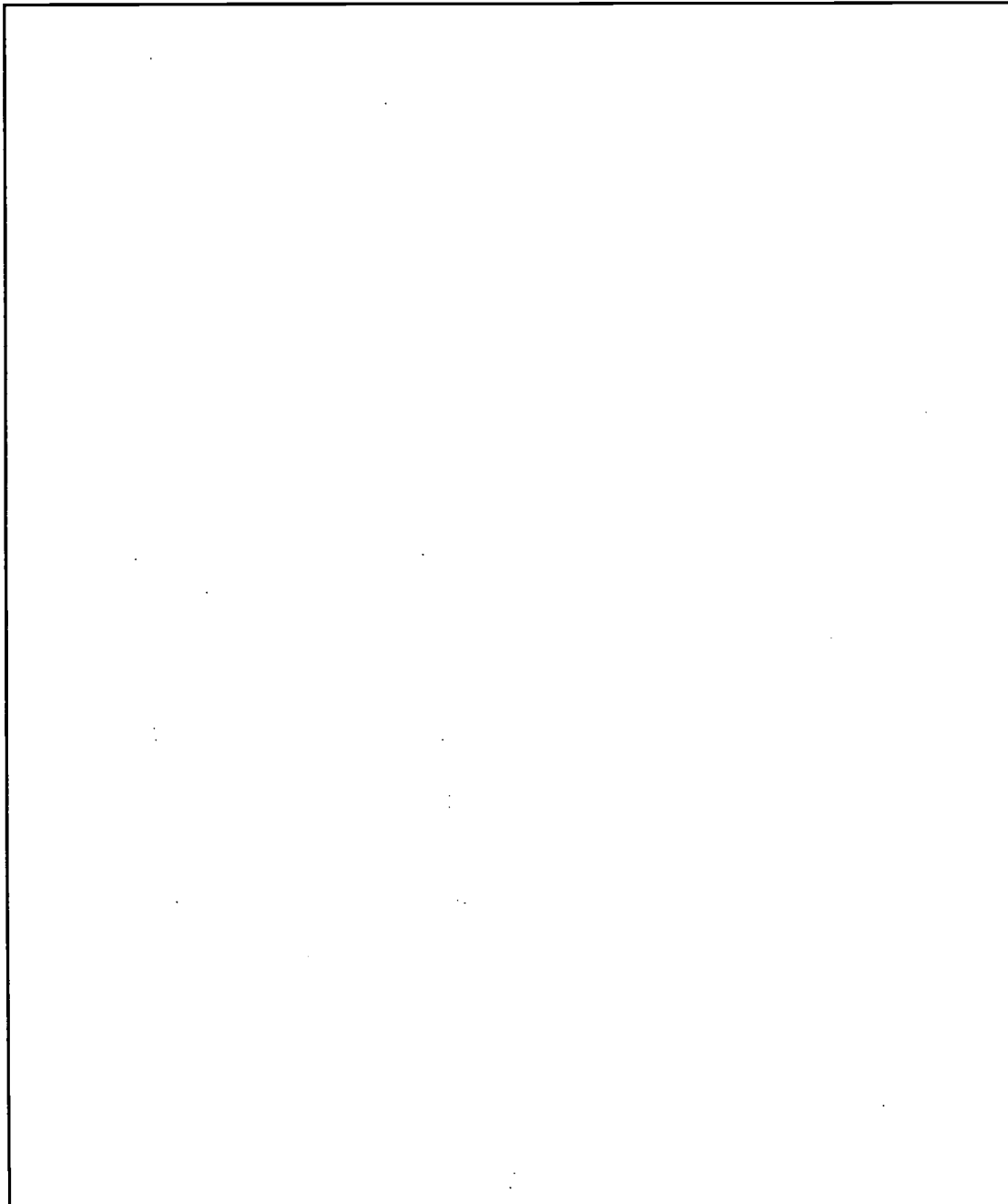
8.1 Reflecting on Module 7

As in the previous modules, you may wish to begin your work on this module by reflecting on the materials and readings from Module 7. Refer back to your notes in Worksheet 7.7.1 and consider what new understandings you have gained and what critical issues require resolution or further research.

You may also wish to consider the relevance of these understandings and issues within your workplace and consider how your practice is being affected or could be affected by this professional development.

Jot down your ideas in Worksheet 8.1.1 below.

Worksheet 8.1.1



Learning journal: Module 8

Pull this page out of the folder and, as you work through this module, make notes of points that interest you, points that you want to follow up, or unresolved questions and issues. If you intend to use this for accreditation purposes, make sure that your notes communicate clearly with an outside reader.

Dotted lines for handwriting practice.



403

8.2 Strengthening links with the home and community

Introduction

A key aspect of early childhood education is to ensure solid foundations on which the schools can build, and smooth transitions and transfer of valuable information to support children's subsequent educational experiences.

Throughout previous modules we have considered various ways of developing more effective partnerships with bilingual education workers, bilingual support services in the community, and with language communities and parents whose cultural backgrounds are other than English. In this final module we will place specific focus on making greater use of these diverse linguistic and cultural resources, both within and beyond the early educational setting, for the benefit of ESL learners in particular and for all children.

One productive partnership is obviously with the local primary schools, seeking to learn more about their programs and inviting teachers, including ESL teachers, to visit the early childhood setting to see what you do and to engage in dialogue with staff and parents. Other essential partners are the families and communities of each centre and those specialist staff working in education, health and welfare services, both within your local area and available by referral from other sources.

We will look first at children's extended families and their role in supporting our work with their children, with a special focus on the contribution parents as partners can make to ESL learners' needs for specialised support.

Activity

Resource Notes 8.2.1 outline some important reasons for building collaborative and mutually supportive partnerships which benefit children beyond the time they are in our care.

Resource Notes 8.2.1

Thinking about partnerships

The resources around us in the community need to be recognised and garnered to better support children, especially those requiring ESL support, as they move beyond the early childhood setting and into formal schooling, because we cannot assume that specialist and sustained support will be available in all settings, either to an extent or in such a way as to meet all children's needs appropriately.

The following comments from a recent study make this point very clearly:

'... there has been growing evidence that ESL provision has consistently lost ground, tempting one researcher to comment: "the nation's strategic response to the educational needs of its children from immigrant families is in significant trouble" (Cahill 1996: 89)'

(Lo Bianco 1996:51, 52)

Some basic principles underpin our work with the families of children in our care, and it may be worth revisiting these to remind ourselves of their importance.

What are the principles we need to observe if we want to work constructively with the families in our community, and which of these in particular apply to families from other home languages and cultural backgrounds?

Use Worksheet 8.2.1 to list some of the principles you consider most important. We have provided a couple of suggestions to get you started. Discussing this question with colleagues would be very useful at this point.

Worksheet 8.2.1

Basic principles in working collaboratively with families from diverse backgrounds:

- *developing trust through daily friendly encounters is vital*
- *respecting the protocols is difficult if you don't know what they are - you need to know more about parents' cultural values and beliefs*

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

•

The following Resource Notes 8.2.2 may pick up some of the other ideas you have already identified.

708

Resource Notes 8.2.2

Basic principles in working collaboratively with families from diverse backgrounds:

- *developing trust is vital*
- *home literacy practices depend on families' experiences and values, and 'judging' lack of book experiences may ignore valuable family literacy practices*
- *we need to remember that all parents want the best for their children's education but their expectations may not always match our own*
- *families' ability to participate competes with other more pressing priorities, especially where recent migration and resettlement experiences apply*
- *awareness of choice is an issue as well as awareness of support available, and parent participation and community management may not be part of families' previous experience or expectations*
- *we need to review the options we offer for involving parents*
- *parents' perceptions offer very useful insights, but before we can hope to benefit, parents need to be reassured that their perceptions and suggestions are valued*
- *we need to review our own cultural values, understandings and expectations about literacy, play, and learning activities*
- *we need to develop strategies to explore and understand families' and communities' funds of knowledge to enrich and extend our work*
- *family structures may be different from our own and require a flexible approach*
- *some families fear or distrust disclosing personal problems or family matters*
- *some families may feel that language differences prohibit or inhibit their participation*
- *some will not question authority in any way, may agree to invitations and then not turn up*
- *some families may have ambivalent or negative feelings about schools and teachers*
- *working together for successful transition from one educational setting to the next can create tensions which have to be resolved.*

What we are talking about here is developing understandings and skills which enable more effective interpersonal and intercultural communication with your own centre community.

Moll (1992) talks about acknowledging the different 'funds of knowledge' of children and parents. From a stronger base of understanding we are in a better position to draw on families' experiences as valuable resources for literacy and learning, especially when their cultural and linguistic background is different from our own, to build towards genuinely inclusive practices and towards successful educational outcomes for all children.

Strengthening our understandings about the range of culturally-determined communication styles of parents and community members enables us to work more sensitively and effectively with them.

Interpersonal and intercultural interaction involves at least three different levels of communication. These will be operating each time we engage with parents and community members, even in the briefest of contacts.

- VERBAL meaning is communicated in vocabulary and structures, as well as accent, pace, volume, stress. Do we tend to use a special style of 'teacher talk' with adults as well as children? Do we choose the best words to explain what we mean so that parents really understand?
- We need to be clear about the role of NON-VERBAL communication (gesture, eye contact, touch, spatial relationships). Are we aware how often this can be more critical than the words used?
- We mustn't underestimate the influence of CULTURAL VALUES AND BELIEFS (appropriate timing; age and gender relationships; honorifics; mediation strategies). Respecting the protocols or meeting others' expectations is difficult if you don't know what they are.

And so we need to constantly rethink our assumptions and extend our abilities in communication in order to work successfully with our staff members, children and their families and the local community.

Activity

You might like to reflect on any difficulty in communicating with a parent or local community member that seemed influenced by mismatched language or a cultural misunderstanding.

Make some brief notes in Worksheet 8.2.2 on any communication difficulty you have experienced that seems to reflect different language or cultural backgrounds. How did this resolve itself?

How did the difficulty emerge?

How was it resolved, or how do you think it could have been better handled?

In reflecting on language, literacy and learning as a social practice, we also need to remember that the educational and social activities that parents encounter in 'mainstream' Australian educational culture may emphasise values that are not part of the family's previous experience; for example, what parents see happening in your centre may be interpreted as 'spoiling the child' or 'just playing around'.

So far, we have set out to reiterate how much our ability to build close working relationships with parents depends on levels of mutual understanding and on the inclusiveness and openness of our practices.

There are very readable resources now available in the area of cultural studies and cross-cultural communication. There are also many tools and strategies for working with parents and communities which provide a focus for collaborative activities and discussions.

One note of caution is that generalisations which might be made in these cultural resources can be misleading as well as useful. For example, we have chosen case studies (in our notes and readings in this folder) to illustrate individual family experiences rather than characteristics of cultural groups, although they may provide useful indications of some of the cultural diversity you might expect to find in your own centre.

Activity

Consider the resources and tools available to you for working with ESL learners and their families, and those which it might be useful to develop for improved cultural understandings or to enhance cross-cultural communication.

Discuss this question with colleagues. They may have suggestions to offer. Then complete the worksheet below.

After this activity, as well as looking at Resource Notes 8.2.3 which follow, you might like to check the reading list at the end of the module for other suggestions.

Worksheet 8.2.3

What resources for enhancing understandings of cultures and communication do you have in your centre?

What other useful resources could you develop by working with your staff, parents and local community?

410

Resource Notes 8.2.3

Just a couple of suggestions:

- *Articles relating to working in partnership with parents (1993) available from the Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre in Victoria explore topics such as the multicultural celebration calendar; issues such as settling in, toileting and meals in childcare; developing a bilingual music program, developing pamphlets for parents on messy play; community outreach, and so on).*
- *As an example of a tool which could be used in workshops or family-based research in which parents and educators can work together, we might take the questionnaire for parents developed by the University of Missouri (see Hoffman and Kantner 1992). This questionnaire asks parents to consider questions such as how can you tell when a child begins to write? what makes a good writer? what do you remember about your early writing experiences at school? if your child were to have difficulties with reading, how would you help him/her? However, considerable care and sensitivity is required in your approach to this.*

Conclusion

In this section we have been looking at the contribution that families might make in working more closely with educators, especially in regard to ESL learners' needs for support. We have examined some of the basic principles that underpin our work with the families of ESL learners and briefly considered what resources may be available to assist us in this aspect of our work.

In the next section we will examine how developing case studies for analysis can be a valuable professional development resource. Being able to undertake this kind of analysis is an essential element in planning for parent participation in centre activities.

8.3 Planning for more effective partnerships with parents

Introduction

The case study below illustrates some of the insights and resources available to us as educators if we can come to know the families in our educational community. It highlights the rich and varied literacy experiences in the homes and communities of families from language backgrounds other than English. It has been chosen to highlight the possible tensions that can exist for families as they strive to maintain particular cultural and language practices which they value, and tensions which may arise for you in attempting to implement proactive cultural inclusivity in your centre.

From examining case studies such as this one, and from developing our own case studies, in collaborating with bilingual staff and parents with sensitive and cautious enquiry, we can understand how to form genuine partnerships with families and communities and with our colleagues, to better support children's language and learning in early childhood settings.

Activity

Read the following case study and, as evident in this extract, jot down in the different columns in Worksheet 8.3.1 the social and cultural practices demonstrated by the family members in the different contexts in which they operate.

Resource Notes 8.3.1

Case study : The Kuhn Family

Mr and Mrs Kuhn are from Cambodia, where they grew up speaking Khmer. They left Cambodia in 1979 and lived in Thai refugee camps for the next eight years before coming to Australia. Mr Kuhn worked as a farmer in Cambodia, is currently unemployed, and has become the leader for the Cambodian people who attend a local church. The Kuhns have five children of the marriage who live with them, two pre-school children and three children who attend primary school, Thy in year 6, Em in Year 4 and Joshua in Year 1.

Joshua is one of the children in the Khmer language classroom. He is enrolled in a Khmer-English bilingual program at the same school as his older siblings, who have not had the opportunity to take part in the program. Mr Kuhn and the primary school children speak both English and Khmer, but Mrs Kuhn speaks only a few words of English and did not speak during the interviews, which were conducted in Khmer through an interpreter. Mr Kuhn feels that it is important for the two pre-school children to learn Khmer at home so they won't forget it when they go to school; although he encourages the older children to speak in Khmer, they tend to speak in English most of the time. He finds that he has to use English to explain things that the older children appear not to understand in Khmer.

... religion seems to play a significant role in their family life, with many literacy practices revolving around church activities. Every week the whole family goes to church and also attend a weekly Bible study group which meets at the various members' houses in turn. The Bible used by the group is translated into Khmer, but the prayers are in a variety of languages which reflect the multicultural make-up of the congregation.

Resource Notes 8.3.1 (continued)

The children are involved in a range of activities, including drawing pictures from the Bible, singing, and Bible quizzes. The family also reads the Bible and prays on a regular basis at home, although Thy seems to be a reluctant participant in these sessions. Joshua is learning to read the Bible in Khmer so that their mother, who does not read, will be able to understand it.

Thy, Em and Joshua attend a Cambodian community school at the weekend to learn Khmer. Mr Kuhn is a teacher at the school and Thy is a reluctant participant. Joshua is also learning to read and write in Khmer in the bilingual program at school. Em comments, 'I can't really write in Cambodian 'cos I know how to write bits but there's hard things to write . . . My brother [Thy] doesn't know it.' Em comments rather wistfully that, unlike Joshua, she did not have the opportunity to learn Khmer in Year 1 at school.

Mr Kuhn says that the children do reading and writing homework. He hears Joshua read and helps him with the identification and meaning of particular words and then signs the reading card. Em and Thy do occasionally take work home, but Em points out that she has no one to help with this. Thy has not completed a required homework project, nor has he taken home his school test file for his father to sign.

Mr Kuhn enjoys reading and owns many books. He reads a local newspaper and says that the children go to the library, although he doesn't need to go as he has enough books to read at home. These include a set of encyclopaedias and philosophical and religious texts. Thy says that his father reads a lot and is good at reading; Thy, on the other hand, does not enjoy reading and prefers to play. Em has many favourite books, both fiction and non-fiction, and Joshua also has books at home: 'ABC cards and books that go up to Z'. Nevertheless, exposure to print for the pre-school children does not seem to be part of everyday life for the family.

In addition to these literary practices, story-telling is also a valued practice in the Kuhn household and the parents tell about life in Cambodia. Em explains: Sometimes they tell us a bedtime story before we go to sleep . . . My mum said, like we grow bigger, we have children, we pass them on.

During the interviews Em gives many vivid accounts of the hardship and injury experienced in the Thai refugee camp where she was born and where she spent the early years of her life. She also retells some of the stories her parents have told her about life in Cambodia before she was born. Many of these sad stories have a mythical quality in the telling. For this family, stories are a major source of the retelling of family history and transmission of the culture.

(Barratt-Pugh and Rohl 1994)

Worksheet 8.3.1

<i>Social and cultural practices evident in this extract</i>		
<i>as a family</i>	<i>parents</i>	<i>children</i>
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•

Now that you have identified the diverse range of social and cultural practices evident in this extract, consider the following questions in responding to the case study and make notes on Worksheet 8.3.2.

Worksheet 8.3.2

Your reflections on the case study

1. *What factors appear to influence this family in their choices of language and literacy activities in different contexts in their daily lives?*
2. *How could you acknowledge and build on these linguistic and cultural resources as 'funds of knowledge' in your educational program?*
3. *What might you need to keep in mind to work effectively in partnership with these parents and their language communities?*

The following resource notes indicate some points which may have been included in your own reflections.

Resource Notes 8.3.2

Case Study

- *note the level of community involvement of this family - how can you tap into this and build on this to support learners in your centre?*
- *this mother does not speak English - what are the implications for her involvement with the centre, in her children's learning, and in the wider community? how will you communicate and build a relationship with her?*
- *a bilingual program is offered in the local school but for youngest child only - is it worth investigating other options for this additional support for the children's learning?*
- *the parents wish to maintain the home language- should you discuss with them how they go about this? how will you be able to support this?*
- *the conceptual language in Khmer of the older children has not developed - is the older children's reluctance to write in Khmer simply due to never being taught? how could you find out more about this? would knowing more about the Khmer written script be useful?*
- *cultural and religious activities predominate and church and Bible study (Khmer translation) offer literacy experiences, e.g., reading the Bible in Khmer is a valued activity for parents and children - what are the implications of this for your practice?*
- *the parents are unable to help older children with their homework - what is the implication if they need assistance? what other support models might be available, e.g., peer/volunteer tutoring?*
- *the father models reading for personal use but younger children are not read to - can you explore other options to increase language input at home? can you send materials for use at home ?*
- *use of story telling is a way to pass on family history - how can you build on this resource and bring it into your centre?*

Other general implications

- *many factors may influence whether and how parents are involved in children's homework and also affect the effectiveness of this support - how can you tackle this area with the parents and with other support professionals?*
- *all families are aware of the 'differential status' and power associated with particular languages and literacy skills, and maintaining the first language may be important for religious and cultural identification and more importantly for communication between family members, especially older relatives or keeping contact with family overseas - how can you reassure and empower parents and children in their language choices and yet also ensure that they see alternative perspectives?*
- *children and adults often don't wish to speak about previous experiences if they have been traumatic, and refugee ESL children or their families may have experienced considerable trauma; there is specialist support available but it may not be known or be available locally, or families may choose not to access this resource - how can you provide access to information through your centre and also opportunities for discussion and support in a culturally appropriate way?*
- *some families have faced considerable dislocation, or have become dysfunctional, and some children may be living with families not their own, maybe as adoptees of families from different cultural backgrounds, with perhaps a history of orphanage or other institutional care - what might be some of the implications for your practice and how will you access support when required?*
- *health issues, particularly stress disorders, gastric and respiratory infection, hearing and vision disability, can have considerable impact on a family's ability to cope and children's capacity to learn - this may apply equally where relatives or friends living with the family have health problems - how will you identify and deal with these issues?*

We realise that Resource Notes 8.3.2 provide many more questions than answers, but reflecting on these questions is the first stage in developing your individual strategic responses which will be specific to each centre's context.

As we have seen above, a deepening and sensitive awareness of children's and parents' backgrounds and of cultural orientations, literacy and education levels, helps educators in understanding how community and family expectations may differ from our own.

Now we will move into looking at some general indicators of successful practices in centre planning for parent participation, to support your work with ESL learners in particular.

Activity

What are some of the indicators of successful practice in involving families from culturally diverse communities in the work of your centre? Here we can include strategic approaches to reassure parents about those aspects of your educational program which you might modify to provide more strongly pro-active support for ESL learners, as is suggested in this resource folder. For example, moving to a more explicit focus on cultural inclusiveness, bilingual education initiatives, maintaining home languages in the centre, or anti-racism.

Look at Worksheet 8.3.3 below and indicate what happens currently, what could be improved and what would be difficult for you. From discussion with colleagues, and in particular bilingual education workers, and parents if possible, add further items to the list. As you complete this checklist, consider **how** you achieve or could achieve best practice in these areas within existing resources, through collaborating and sharing with others, and how areas of particular difficulty might be approached.

Worksheet 8.3.3

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Happens now</i>	<i>Could happen</i>	<i>Difficult</i>
<i>We talk to parents regularly about what is happening and show them the outcomes.</i>			
<i>What different groups of parents believe young children should encounter is an essential element of our centre planning.</i>			
<i>We disseminate a written policy legitimising the importance of parent involvement in children's education and the life of the centre, written in the community languages as well as English.</i>			
<i>We have explicit frameworks for involving all parents, e.g., offer venue/link for training and personal development; ongoing opportunities to work with other parents; specific community projects.</i>			
<i>We achieve real two-way communication with ESL learners' homes, being good listeners as well as saying what we mean.</i>			
<i>We know how to secure extra financial and human resources for ESL learners in the centre via community links.</i>			
<i>We have strategies in place to ease transition of ESL learners and other special needs children from the centre to next educational experience.</i>			
<i>We share ESL-focus and home-language resources and activities with local schools and community groups.</i>			
<i>We help ESL learners' parents to meet their own literacy needs as required in culturally appropriate ways.</i>			
<i>Parents of ESL learners are involved from the start in planning any activities and aspects of the educational and recreational program to meet their children's special needs.</i>			
<i>Children and their families see the home language as genuinely respected and valued in the learning environment.</i>			
<i>We provide community information in home languages about the importance of maintaining and continuing to develop the home language.</i>			
<i>We look for research information and readings which can be used to reassure.</i>			
<i>We involve bilingual staff in the strategy and provide opportunities for them to communicate with parents formally and informally.</i>			

418

A wealth of resources are available in the wider community to assist you in communicating your objectives and validating your practices, including the notes and readings from this and other professional development packages, and materials such as pamphlets already prepared by interested organisations for this purpose in a range of community languages. There are local and regional libraries which will be keen to work with you, and training centres, resource centres and research centres around the country which can provide expertise and visiting speakers, as well as electronic information from databases and electronic discussion groups and networks for those fortunate enough to have email and Internet access.

Conclusion

Ongoing and regular communication is vital for building a relationship based on trust. This is the cornerstone on which the rest is built.

In this section, we have asked you to consider some of the key aspects of planning initiatives for involving parents, especially ESL parents in your centre, in their children's learning program. We have also questioned ourselves on how our centre practices reflect our principles.

This next section asks you to reflect on how you might collaborate more effectively with the bilingual staff who work in your centre and as visiting specialists.

8.4 Working in partnership with bilingual staff

Introduction

The presence of bilingual adults in your centre, whether they are paid staff or volunteers and family members, provides valuable language models and support for language learning. This section, however, refers specifically to bilingual education workers and their relationship with other staff, and with the children and their families.

Early childhood settings have variable access to bilingual assistance. It is important to be familiar with the availability of bilingual assistance for the settings/systems you work in. A preliminary discussion with your centre director or regional advisers about the processes and availability of these valuable resource people may be very useful.

Resource Notes 8.4.1

Among the issues you will need to consider are:

- *the lack of support for isolated languages and isolated ESL learners at the kindergarten level*
- *the lack of focus in existing training and development for mainstream staff in regard to bilingual approaches to education and the lack of training and recognition for bilingual assistants*
- *whether adequate resources and commitment are available to support the child in developing both their first and second languages, and how we can access these resources locally and effectively.*

(from Langmaid 1996: 36)

Activity

Before we look at how bilingual education workers can be better supported in fulfilling their role, let's look at what the work of a bilingual staff member might look like in an early childhood setting.

Complete Worksheet 8.4.1, identifying different roles or tasks and their positive impacts. If you have access to bilingual education workers in your centre, consider the range of tasks in which they might be involved in a single week and the positive contribution this makes over time to the learning and social development of ESL learners and to other children. You may wish to use colleagues, children and parents to assist in gathering this information, as different people see different aspects of this work.

Worksheet 8.4.1

<i>Tasks</i>	<i>Positive impacts</i>

A recent study by Jane Langmaid (1996) in two South Australian pre-school centres suggests some aspects of the work of Bilingual Education Workers. Some extracts from this study are included as the first reading at the end of this module. We will leave you to infer the positive outcomes.

Making opportunities to talk with bilingual education workers in your centre, even if they are only in for a very brief time each week, about their families, language communities and their own cultural background, asking what they enjoy about their work, how they came to enter the profession, what areas of difficulty they face in their work, what they would like to know more about, all this is an essential part of establishing effective working relationships.

Activity

Reflect briefly on each of the following questions in Worksheet 8.4.2, if possible involving bilingual staff and other colleagues in discussion of these issues, so that you can gather other perspectives.

Worksheet 8.4.2

Can you think of a recent situation in your centre where the work done by a bilingual staff member benefits or might benefit a bilingual child or their family?

How might the knowledge of a bilingual staff member provide other staff in your centre with insight about a particular family or culture?

What effects might a bilingual staff member's recent work in your centre have on an English-speaking child or their family?

Think about a unit of work you have recently completed. How could you have worked with a bilingual education worker in the planning and execution of this to make the best use of their skills, interests and experience?

Some suggestions for strengthening collaborative relationships with bilingual education workers and achieving better outcomes in your day-to-day work and whole centre planning are provided in the second reading at the end of this module.

422

We need to add a strong note of caution before we move on.

Bilingual staff should not be handed all issues related to working with particular children and their families as a result of sharing their language or culture. There will be many occasions where this is inappropriate (or where prior consultation is required) and where this may place them in a difficult or uncomfortable situation which might also cause damage to their future relationships and their confidence.

The following Resource Notes 8.4.2 may point to some situations which might cause difficulty or discomfort for bilingual education workers.

Resource Notes 8.4.2

- *staff sometimes cause discomfort by their apparent lack of patience, or the tone they use when speaking with parents who have difficulties with English*
- *staff sometimes 'push' parents on to them, rather than trying to speak with the parents themselves. This is often quite offensive to parents and a source of irritation, especially for those who have some command of English*
- *feeling uncomfortable in liaison between the home and centre/school when two cultures conflict*
- *feeling guilt or blame when results are not as we might have hoped*
- *discomfort about mediating in matters of behaviour management or poor attendance; explaining learning difficulties, because 'parents think that the child may be dumb or have a disability'*
- *uncomfortable when asked by parents to convey concerns to educators about unmet expectations*
- *some staff are not open to listening to bilingual education workers' concerns.*

Conclusion

In this section we have looked at the various roles of bilingual education workers within the context of supporting ESL learners, and at how we as educators can support this work through developing more productive partnerships with these valuable resource people.

We still know very little about the ways in which bilingual support for learners' cognitive development is facilitated or constrained by current organisational and discourse practice in educational settings; this is an area where you can contribute to the research yourself by documenting best practice and working through areas of tension in your own relationships with bilingual staff.

In concluding this section, we need to emphasise that as educators we have to constantly examine the structures and discourses we create and which impact on the work of these bilingual staff, if we are to ensure the best use of their special skills. Only by working constructively and collaboratively with bilingual education workers, as full partners, will our centres be effective in meeting the needs of children from language and cultural backgrounds other than English.

In the next section of this module we move into questions of how all centre staff might work more collaboratively in profiling children's progress, and we raise some issues pertaining to ESL learners in relation to assessment and reporting.

8.5 Monitoring children's progress

Introduction

There are many tools and methods available for monitoring progress and for diagnostic and formative assessment of children's strengths. These can be used to clarify where further developmental and interventionary support is required by individual children, and where this support ought to be specialised, as in the case of ESL learners.

This Resource Folder will not attempt to cover means of profiling and assessment. This is the ongoing work of Assessment Teams in your own system. We will simply point to some areas of monitoring and assessment which have special implications for ESL learners and look at some strategies which are appropriate to early childhood settings, with particular reference to opportunities for all staff across the centre to collaborate in monitoring and assessment, since developing collaborative approaches is the main focus of this module.

Activity

Firstly let's look at what we mean by assessment in the context of this Resource Folder, and some general issues in monitoring and assessing literacy and learning outcomes which we need to be aware of. At the same time, we'll look briefly at some approaches we might use to describe and report our learners achievements in our centres or classrooms.

Resource Notes 8.5.1

'Assessment' means being aware of and being able to describe and report on the full range and levels of children's language and learning experiences, both in educational settings and outside: as speakers, listeners, readers, writers and viewers. It also means being able to appreciate and understand the diversity and differences in what individual children bring in the way of language and conceptual competencies and learning achievements and difficulties at any stage within their education. For all educators, and particularly for those working with ESL learners, this means continuing to heighten and extend our awareness as 'observer', our capacities to 'nurture' language and learning (in home languages as well as English) and to critique the content and processes of the educational experiences we offer.

In monitoring and assessing literacy and learning outcomes, we also need to be acutely aware of the 'invisibles'. By this we mean all those variables which can have an impact on progress, such as interest, the complexity and clarity of the task, motor skills, social skills, tiredness, the degree and nature of support or attention provided by adults or peers, attitudinal and emotional factors such as confidence, anxiety, shyness, previous experience of success or failure, health and family factors, and so on. Partnerships among educators and parents, and with specialists and community members, provide a fuller picture and more positive outcomes for all learners.

Some approaches to assessment may include:

- *a number of staff selecting a small group of focus children each week for detailed observation. Assessment activities might be improved by subsequent discussion among centre staff as to how best to support each individual's learning*
- *portfolio assessment over a period of a term or semester with the opportunity for staff to come together and exchange views as to what ought to be included in the portfolio, and how the selected items demonstrate learning outcomes for each individual*
- *gathering a number of established monitoring and assessment tools for review by staff at your centre, since simply accepting and implementing the tools we are given by our systems may not be equally appropriate to support all learners*
- *working together to develop your own checklists of assessment tasks and indicators of progress, in order to refine assessment approaches and enhance professional skills and understandings.*

The key point is that, as educators, we need to find ways for second language learners to display what they do know rather than what they do not.

Before examining one strategic approach for finding out what young ESL learners know and can do, use the following Worksheet 8.5.1 to reflect on current informal or formal assessment practices used in your workplace and re-evaluate their usefulness with these learners.

Worksheet 8.5.1

Assessment practices/approaches currently used in your workplace

Are you able to involve parents from non-English speaking backgrounds or bilingual staff in these approaches?

Kinds of information obtained from these approaches

Do the approaches you currently use give you all the information about your ESL learners that you feel you need?

Patton Tabor, in *One child, two languages: a guide for pre-school educators of children learning English as a second language* (1997 Chapter 9), provides a very useful strategic approach and suggests a range of strategies for finding out what young second language learners can do. She also raises some key issues that educators need to be aware of in assessing these learners.

In this section we will use her ideas to help us examine some key issues in assessing young ESL learners.

Tabor's approach is as outlined in Resource Notes 8.5.2.

Resource Notes 8.5.2

Assessing the capabilities of second language learners

1 Deciding what should be assessed (what do I want to know about the child?):

- *child's capabilities in terms of cognitive, social-emotional and physical development*
- *child's capabilities in his or her first language*
- *child's capabilities in his or her second language*

2 Obtaining assessment information

3 Using the assessment information to inform curriculum, to inform parents and to inform other educators who will be working with the child

(Tabor 1997: 153-159)

Activity

The following Resource Notes 8.5.3 outline some key issues raised by Tabor for educators in deciding on what kinds of assessment information about second language learners should be obtained, and how it should be obtained. You may have already reflected upon these issues and have clear ideas about what is important to know which may be different from those applying to a learner from an English speaking background.

Resource Notes 8.5.3

The classic division of capabilities for young children into cognitive, social-emotional and physical development (Goodwin and Goodwin 1982) is certainly a starting-point for assessment of all young children, including second language learners. For second language learners, however, difficulties arise quite quickly, as the first two of these areas (cognitive and social-emotional development) as well as perhaps the third (physical development) are extensively involved in and affected by the process of second language acquisition. In other words, a child's ability to acquire and display information in the cognitive realm may be hampered for a time because of an inability to understand or use the language of the classroom. Furthermore, a child's social-emotional development may be impeded because of a transitory lack of ability in the language used by the other children. Even a child's level of physical development may be difficult to ascertain because of an unwillingness to become involved in games or play. Therefore, teachers must approach assessment in each of these areas with an understanding of the types of constraints that a second language learning child is facing. A child's performance in each of these areas must be interpreted with regard to where the child is in the developmental sequence of second language learning.

Knowing how a child is doing in terms of first language development can also be crucial in putting together a complete picture of the child's capabilities. For teachers in bilingual settings, this information can be procured in the same way that second language is collected. For teachers who do not have access to bilingual resources, however, this important information may remain a missing piece of the puzzle, unless specific steps are taken to procure it.

In addition teachers will, of course want to know how a child is progressing in the developmental sequence of second language acquisition. Even teachers who have an idea of what the milestones are in this developmental process will not have enough information without having strategies for finding out what a child understands and is able to do with the new language.

(Tabor 1997: 153-154)

Resource Notes 8.5.3 (continued)

The issues raised by Tabor can be summarised as follows:

- *an ESL learner's ability to gain or display knowledge or learning can be hampered for a time because of an inability to understand or use the language of the classroom*
- *an ESL learner's social and emotional development can be impeded because of the transitory lack of ability in the language used by the other children*
- *an ESL learner's physical development may be difficult to ascertain because of an unwillingness to become involved in games or play*
- *in order to gain a complete picture of an ESL learner's capabilities, educators need to know where a child is at in their first language*
- *educators need to know what an ESL learner understands and is able to do in English and how the learner is progressing in the developmental sequence of second language acquisition.*

After reading Resource Notes 8.5.3 consider:

- any other issues for educators in obtaining accurate assessment information about second language learners
- some implications/disadvantages for ESL learners of some assessment approaches which are mediated by the language of the classroom
- some strategies you use presently or you can introduce which will ensure ESL learners will be able to demonstrate what they know and can do.

Use Worksheet 8.5.2 to consider these statements.

Worksheet 8.5.2

Any other issues for educators in obtaining accurate assessment information about second language learners

-
-
-
-

Some implications / disadvantages for ESL learners of some assessment approaches which are mediated by the language of the classroom

-
-
-
-
-
-

Some strategies you use presently or you can introduce which will ensure ESL learners will be able to demonstrate what they know and can do?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Read the following Resource Notes 8.5.4, which may add to your own ideas documented in Worksheet 8.5.2.

430

Any other issues for educators in obtaining accurate assessment information about second language learners

- *the literacy practices of the learner may be very different from those of the classroom, and educators need time to find out about the learner's experiences, skills and understandings in using their first language*
- *children's abilities to demonstrate what they know may be hampered by previous personal experiences, e.g., migration and/or refugee experiences, being adopted, etc.*
- *some assessments assume cultural knowledge and ways of doing things which can hamper a child's ability to demonstrate what they know, e.g., asking a child to sort a pile of buttons may cause problems because of the open-ended nature of the task. The way this task is conducted and the outcomes expected are culturally specific. As well, the mathematical concept 'sort' and the word 'sort' may also cause difficulties.*

Some implications/disadvantages for ESL learners of some assessment approaches which are mediated by the language of the classroom

- *early conclusions on ESL learners' development may be quite misleading due to the second language learning situation*
- *being assessed through the language of the classroom disadvantages children who are in the process of learning a second language and have not had the time to acquire this more abstract and academic kind of language*
- *if a child does not respond as expected to an assessment mediated by language, teachers will be unsure if this is because the child has not developed the capability, has not developed enough language to know what is being asked, or does not have enough language proficiency to respond*
- *you need to be clear about the first language of the child: sometimes to find this out requires great sensitivity, especially if the families have come from a difficult political situation.*

Some strategies you use presently or you can introduce which will ensure ESL learners will be able to demonstrate what they know and can do?

- *allow time to adjust to the learning environment and to the social and linguistic constraints of the second language learning situation*
- *use informal but careful observations while the learner is in early stages of second language learning and focus on a child's abilities which can be demonstrated without the use of language*
- *if you are lucky enough to have bilingual staff, who speak the same language as the child, you can work collaboratively to assess the child's first language during the course of daily activities*
- *you may choose to work with an interpreter employed for the express purpose of finding out about the child's proficiency in their first language.*
- *after building up trust with the family, you may make a home visit, observe the child using their first language in their home and work with the parents to find out the child's experiences in their first language*

Resource Notes 8.5.4 (continued)

- *collect information from a variety of sources including observations, transcripts of oral language, samples of writing and other classroom products, conversations with bilingual staff and parents*
- *ensure that you explain to parents why you want to find out about their child's first language achievements*
- *allow plenty of time for the child to display skills in their second language*
- *ensure that the assessments allow children to display receptive skills in their second language as well as productive*
- *develop a portfolio for the child which will include information about both the child's languages*
- *work out ways to present this information to parents and other staff*
- *regularly report this information to parents*
- *use the information collected to inform teaching strategies and curriculum development.*

In finding out as much as we can about young children from backgrounds other than English, the role of bilingual staff is crucial and complimentary in ensuring that profiling and assessment of these learners is linguistically and culturally appropriate. Reading 4 at the end of this module provides a brief summary of this role and also raises some issues which might merit further discussion in your own workplaces.

Conclusion

We have only touched on some of the many issues in assessment that have implications for ESL learners. Our aim has been to sensitise you to some of the ways you might approach thinking about assessment of an ESL learner's language development within a collaborative context in an early childhood setting.

You may wish to follow up the readings suggested at the end of this module or assessment documents in your own systems to explore further issues in assessment that have implications for ESL learners

In the final section of this module we look at a partnership with the school which will benefit the children in your care as they move on to the next step of their very significant life experience with formal education.

8.6 Starting school

Introduction

Your strongest allies ought to be the teachers in the local schools who will further your work in each child's next learning experience. For ESL learners and others who may need special assistance, it is especially critical that the transition from pre-school to the junior primary years be a collaboratively managed and supportive process.

This is easy to achieve if the teachers see themselves as part of your local centre's community, and if pre-school educators feel they are welcome to participate in the learning and social activities of their neighbouring schools. The initiative will have to come from both ends, and will need to be formalised to a degree to ensure that reasonably frequent opportunities for ongoing contact are maintained, which will provide a basis for more casual individual encounters.

Activity

How do you develop and maintain relationships with local schools? Fill out Worksheet 8.6.1 in response to this question.

Worksheet 8.6.1

<i>Possibilities</i>	<i>Happens now</i>	<i>Could happen</i>

Some possibilities you may have considered, obviously with constraints on time and funding in mind, are covered in Resource Notes 8.6.1.

Resource Notes 8.6.1

- *occasional joint staff and/or parent meetings on topics of mutual interest*
- *planning joint professional development initiatives or at least exchanging professional development calendars to keep others informed and permit attendance*
- *sending centre newsletters regularly to all local schools and requesting theirs for your staff noticeboard*
- *children's visits from the pre-school centre to the school for celebrations or to share activities with a junior primary class*
- *orientation visits for individual children or small groups from the centre just prior to transition to school, hosted by children from the school*
- *setting up peer-tutoring and buddy systems between the local school and the centre for specific curriculum areas or sporting activities*
- *sharing after-school care services so that older children are familiar when centre children start a new local school*
- *sharing library or sporting facilities so that children from the centre meet children from the schools informally on neutral territory*
- *providing all parents with a letter and other statements for taking to the new school with reference to their child's progress and need for support (as required).*

Activity

The portfolios or annotated work samples your centre might collect relating to individual children could also provide the basis for a statement to a receiving teacher, indicating what the child has achieved in pre-school education. This may also provide some useful reference points to a teacher as to what can be assumed and what may need further developmental assistance.

You may also want to think about some kind of report that accompanies each child to the enrolment interview or school visit, detailing the special range of activities this child enjoys and demonstrates success in.

Choose one of the following tasks in Resource Notes 8.6.2 and complete Worksheet 8.6.2:

Resource Notes 8.6.2

- *Think about a couple of individual older ESL learners in your centre (about to move on to school) who are still in need of some assistance with their language learning. What kind of things would you want to tell the receiving teacher about each child in order to ensure that they are supported in their learning appropriately in the first term of starting school?*
- *Imagine a couple of junior primary teachers from your local school are visiting your centre for an hour after school next week. What would you want to show and tell them about how children's language and literacy is nurtured in your setting and about how the ESL learners, in particular, are supported?*
- *A new district superintendent has been appointed and is making a first visit to your centre. What would you want to prepare for them to see relating to your ESL learners, and what questions and concerns specific to regional planning for ESL resources would you want to talk about?*

Worksheet 8.6.2

Which task did you choose?

Your notes

436

Conclusion

The focus in this final module has been on developing effective partnerships and collaborative approaches which will enrich and extend your work as a member of the early childhood team.

We have looked at strengthening relationships with parents, with colleagues in schools and in particular at the complementary role of bilingual education workers in supporting ESL learners and at your role in supporting them. We have also examined collaboration in approaches to profiling learning outcomes and assessment, and in planning for transitions to school, with the special needs and difficulties of ESL learners in mind.

This is the final module in this program. There is one more workplace activity as well as some further reading to complete before you are really finished. We would like to congratulate you on the strength of your commitment and interest which has brought you this far in your personal professional development. We hope that this Resource Folder has provided some new insights and ideas which you can apply in your work.

8.7 Suggested workplace activity

Rationale

This workplace activity aims to provide you with an opportunity to consider ways in which your practice or your centre's can be more collaborative in its approaches.

Activity

Your task at the end of this workshop is to extend the process begun in the activity sections of Module 8.

Evaluate an aspect of your program or an aspect of whole centre management which you consider needs further strategies in place to make it more collaborative in its approaches in order to benefit ESL learners and others.

Some ideas might include:

- developing means for involving colleagues and parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in planning literacy programs
- achieving closer working relationships with bilingual education workers
- improving collaboration in enrolment processes
- improving collaboration in transition processes
- developing better communication processes to inform colleagues of aspects of your early childhood focus
- developing with colleagues some learning activity with an explicit language focus for joint observation and discussion
- developing with colleagues a mutually agreed approach to language assessment for a particular purpose.

Use Worksheet 8.7.1 to record your ideas.

Notes on workplace activity

Any issues, concerns or clarifications arising from this activity

8.8 Between module readings

There are three essential readings for Module 8, as well as other suggested readings. The essential readings follow Worksheet 8.8.1. This worksheet can be used to make notes as you read.

Readings for Module 8:

1. Langmaid, J. (1996). *Fostering first languages: the maintenance and development of the first languages of children with English as a second language in kindergarten programs*. An unpublished Honours Thesis towards the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education. Adelaide, University of South Australia

An extract from this thesis describing some aspects of the role of Bilingual Education Workers in preschools.

2. Strategies for strengthening collaborative relationships with Bilingual Education Workers in assessing young ESL learners.
3. Mincham, L. and Clayton, J. *Emerging Voices: the role of bilingual education workers as cultural and linguistic mediators in preschool and school-based settings*. Sub-project 5 of The Bilingual Interface Project Report. Canberra: DEETYA.

An extract from this chapter describing the work of Bilingual Education Workers in assessing young ESL learners.

Suggested further readings (highly recommended)*

Christofis, Lee (1994) *Interviewing parents from a non-English speaking background*. A workshop paper available from the Multicultural Childcare Unit, 3 Ninth Street Bowden, SA.

Derma-Sparks, Louise (1992) *Antibias curriculum tools for empowering young children*. NAEYC: 105-110 (a very useful section on getting parents involved and dealing with disagreement)

Kiriakou, E. (1995) 'Cross- Cultural Challenges in Early Childhood Education'. In *The Anti-Bias Approach in Early Childhood*. Pymble, NSW: Harper Educational.

The Multicultural Childcare Unit, 3 Ninth Street Bowden SA, produces collections of articles and posters on such topics as the anti-bias approach in early childhood settings; settling children from non-English speaking backgrounds into care; child-rearing practices and cultural diversity in child care; and working with non-English speaking families in a successful partnership.

*Tabors, P.O. (1997) 'Working with parents of second-language learners'. Chapter 8 in *One child, two languages: a guide for pre-school educators of children learning English as a second language*. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc., pp. 131-148.

*Tabors, P.O. (1997) 'Assessing the development of second-language learners'. Chapter 9 in *One child, two languages: a guide for pre-school educators of children learning English as a second language*. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc., pp. 149-170.

Suggested videos

Bilingual Staff at Work V186 (24 min). Victoria: Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre, 1991.

901 440

Your Notes

A large rectangular box with a black border, intended for taking notes. The interior of the box is completely blank.

441

Worksheet 8.8.1

Notes on readings

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for students to write their notes on readings.

442

Worksheet 8.8.1 (continued)

Notes on readings

A large empty rectangular box for taking notes.

443

**FOSTERING FIRST LANGUAGES: THE MAINTENANCE AND
DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN WITH
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS**

Langmaid, J (1996)

Engaging children with limited English language skills in activities

Gardening - a group of children approach to see what she is doing and she explains that she is planting some flowers . . . addresses two of the children in Khmer . . . gives them instructions about how they could join in The teacher approaches and asks what the children are doing. She asks what the Khmer word for digging is. She then uses this word with the Khmer-speaking children to elicit a response from them about their activity The Bilingual Assistant chats in Khmer with the children who remain at the activity (from p.1).

Clay modelling - she encouraged two Vietnamese girls to become involved in playing with the clay. She drew them to the table using Vietnamese, then introduced the activity using both Vietnamese and gestures. Once the children began to interact with the clay, she played parallel to them and discussed the activity with them in Vietnamese (from p.25).

Working explicitly on bilingual language and literacy development

Cooking - the Bilingual Assistant involved all children in cutting up the vegetables for a stir-fry. During this activity she encouraged each of the children to name the vegetables they were cutting up. She encouraged the Vietnamese children to label the vegetables, in Vietnamese first and then English. One child confused the English word with the Vietnamese word, that is, he labelled it in Vietnamese but thought he was using English. The Bilingual Assistant corrected him by confirming that he had labelled it in Vietnamese and then informing him that the English word was 'mushroom'. She repeated the word in Vietnamese and English, making each language explicit (p.25).

Maintaining home languages and cultural identity in the centre ethos

Another way this Bilingual Assistant strives to help children maintain their first language as well as their identity is to write their names in Khmer on paintings or drawings occasionally.... there is much environmental print displayed in English, Khmer and Vietnamese in [this centre]. Many labels in these languages can be found around the centre as well as welcoming signs, instruction for activities and display titles. Thus children are being encouraged to participate in reading and recognising different languages as well as writing and speaking in these languages (p.27).

Involving ESL parents in the learning activities of the centre

A Khmer-speaking parent approached the threading table. The Bilingual Assistant spoke to the parent in Khmer and explained what the children were doing.

Facilitating transitions - ensuring subsequent specialist support

Supporting a Vietnamese boy during his school visit - she accompanied him at the school for half the day and translated many of the instructions, explained things about school procedure to him in Vietnamese and worked collaboratively with him on the activities he

was required to do. She was also able to clarify with the teacher any issues that she may need to work on with this particular child (p.27).

Assessment - profiling conceptual and language development

When implementing the cooking activity, she asked each child what the rice was. She then noted which of the Khmer speaking children knew the word for uncooked rice and which used the word for cooked rice instead (p.27).

STRATEGIES

Bilingual education workers

- need to be assisted to become aware (as other staff) of the importance of providing good language models to children
- should be encouraged to avoid language mixing wherever possible, using only the home language or English in entire exchanges
- should be encouraged and helped to develop understandings of stages in language development, so that they are in position to assist in assessing and reporting on the development of the child's home language
- should be assisted (as all staff) to learn what it means to be an active listener
- should be given opportunities for casual conversation with ESL children in their own home language
- should be involved as equal partners in as many communicative activities as possible with the aim of extending all children's language experiences
- should be able to work in partnerships with other staff to assist young children in developing their social skills
- should be offered opportunities to talk about what they are doing with children and their families
- should have regular opportunities to plan activities with other staff
- should be assisted to keep aware of current policies and procedures
- should be given constructive feedback about their work performance and should be encouraged to offer their own feedback on their work and to suggest ideas which help others to work more effectively
- should be given opportunities to talk to other staff and parents about their particular skills and strengths and concerns
- should be given the opportunity to feed into the centre's overall planning and policy development
- should be kept informed about the aims and content of the total program and the specific learning objectives for that week and term
- should have the opportunity to feed back information to other staff about particular children and families in some formalised ongoing way
- should have adequate and up-to-date information regarding key aspects of the centre's learning environment and processes, e.g., for enrolment and emergencies; they should also be encouraged to suggest how this information is best communicated to the parents and community they work with.

Your Notes

447

 Mincham and Clayton: 1996

Strategies used by bilingual education workers in the above activities were broadly similar across all sectors and included:

- working individually with ESL learners, e.g., asking them to name objects, read or write and/or complete a subject-based activity such as a maths exercise
- talking to the learner and asking questions
- observing his/her interactions with others, either in the playground or in teaching/learning activities.

It is worth noting that the LOTE or mother tongue teacher was occasionally also used as an additional resource in helping to find out about home background language skills.

In terms of the initial profiling process and suggestions for ways in which this might be improved, bilingual education workers at all levels and in all contexts indicated strong support for more readily available bilingual assessment materials and resources either in the form of books, games, posters or audio-visual materials in both the home background language and English.

A potentially very useful project that could be undertaken would be the production of bilingual resource kits for teachers and support staff to use as part of the initial profiling process.

In terms of strategies for use with younger children, it was felt that observation in play or other activities, combined with more information and on-going feedback from parents, remained the most appropriate option for initial assessment for language abilities. It was also pointed out, by some, that children should be allowed time to settle into a new situation before any initial assessment is made and that, where possible, this should be done in small group situations rather than individually so that children are not made to 'stand out' or 'be shamed'.

The need for adequate training for bilingual education workers in assessment strategies and diagnostic profiling was also mentioned. Most importantly, it was felt that more time is urgently needed for bilingual education workers to be involved, not only in supporting teachers/staff with the initial profiling process, but also in working with them to program and plan teaching and learning activities based on the information obtained. [However] . . . concerns were expressed that information about children's home background language skills was often either not asked for, or only sought when problems with learning had already begun to emerge: 'It's only done when [a] student has problems with learning English'. . . 'teachers do not show too much interest in being informed of background information'.

Bilingual education workers were not confident about the extent of teachers' knowledge of home literacy practices and of the social and cultural activities and interests of families from different ethnic backgrounds within the school community. This point is interesting given that, according to bilingual education worker reports elsewhere in the survey, parents, particularly those in the school sector, are very concerned about their children's progress in learning, particularly English language learning, as well as their children's study habits, homework and the ways in which they can help support their children's learning at home. While we cannot make any judgements here about the accuracy of bilingual education workers' perceptions in regard to teachers' knowledge and understanding of home literacy practices and parental expectations, we would hope that teaching staff not only have access to such information but are also using it to support children's learning in meaningful ways.

448

Postscript

This Resource Folder has been designed as a working document, not as a final product.

It is important to note that the personalised learning program presented here is envisaged as a beginning to professional development in the area of working with ESL learners in early childhood settings and is not intended to provide all of the answers in this extremely complex area of a child's development.

Early childhood educators play a most significant role in establishing solid foundations in language and literacy and in bridging the critical stage between home and school. Our intention is to acknowledge and value this role and to enrich your capacity to work effectively with ESL learners and with all children in your care. Success in this foundation stage of educational and personal development will have enormous social and economic benefits for our culturally diverse community.

References

Barrat-Pugh, C. and Rohl, M. (1994) 'A question of either or; must fluency in English be achieved at the expense of home languages?' In *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*. 17, v 4.

Hoffman, Stevie and Kantner, Larry. (1992) 'What teachers can learn from parents' perceptions of young children's literacy learning'. In *Day Care and Early Education*, Winter, vol 20, no.2: 19-24.

Langmaid, J (1996). *Fostering first languages: the maintenance and development of the first languages of children with English as a second language in kindergarten programs*. An unpublished Honours Thesis towards the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education. Adelaide, University of South Australia.

Lo Bianco, J. and Freebody, P. (1997) *Australian Literacies: Informing national policy on literacy education*. Belconnen, ACT: Language Australia.

Mincham, L. and Clayton, J. (1997) *Emerging Voices: the role of bilingual education workers as cultural and linguistic mediators in preschool and school-based settings*. Sub-project 5 of The Bilingual Interface Project Report. Canberra: DEETYA.

Moll, L. (et al) 1992 'Funds of Knowledge for Teaching; Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms', *Theory into Practice*, Volume XXX1, No.2.

Tabors, P.O. (1997) 'Assessing the development of second-language learners'. Chapter 9 in *One child, two languages: a guide for pre-school educators of children learning English as a second language*. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.: 149-170.



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



NOTICE

Reproduction Basis



This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.



This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").