Including and Supporting Learners of English as an Additional Language

Madeleine Graf

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Introduction

Chapter Outline

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This book is intended to be helpful to a number of audiences: students in initial teacher education (ITE), newly qualified teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) and teachers who have little experience of working with learners of English as an additional language (EAL). It is also intended to place EAL teaching within the wider spectrum of general everyday teaching and learning in Key Stages 2 and 3 and to demonstrate that while EAL learners have their particular needs these can be catered for, successfully, within the mainstream classroom. Indeed the mainstream classroom is the best place for EAL learners to learn their new language, while they are also learning the concepts, skills and values within the curriculum.

> Language support is best provided within the mainstream classroom wherever possible, as time out of subject lessons for additional language tuition may cause the learner to fall behind in the curriculum. (DfES 2005:5)

The idea for the book arose from involvement in partnership teaching, with language specialists and classroom teachers, while working in a local authority advisory team, followed by twelve years working with students in initial teacher education. It became apparent that despite college based work on inclusive practice, and a focused session on EAL learners led by specialist teachers, many students were quite unsure about how to teach the additional language

learners in their school experience classes. It also became apparent that many classroom teachers were unable to give them appropriate support and guidance because they themselves were unsure of what to do for the best.

It is widely accepted that good teaching and learning for EAL pupils is good teaching and learning for all. Walters (2007:153) tells us:

> If you have EAL learners in your classroom then planning to support their language development is a central part of your planning for learning in the classroom. This may sound very daunting but many of the things you plan for and do in your classroom for your EAL learners will benefit all the learners and many of these strategies are ones you may already be aware of.

With this in mind the initial reflections at the beginning of each chapter are intended to raise prior knowledge and experience gained in mainstream classrooms to set the scene for the ideas and issues to follow. Student teachers will be referred to a wider range of standards for qualified teacher status (QTS) than those relating explicitly to EAL learners because these standards refer to all parts of a teacher's practice and to all learners. Standards statements for both England and Wales will be given because although they are similar in intent they are phrased slightly differently.

Terminology

Throughout the book the terms home language and first language will be used interchangeably, and refer to the language customarily spoken in the home and which the child learned first. Pupils will be referred to as additional language learners or EAL learners rather than bilingual learners, although this term is widely used. Additional language learners will be learning bilingually because they will be using two languages, their first language and English in their learning. The term bilingual, in this instance, does not imply equal fluency in both languages.

The book is organized as follows:

Chapter 1: Raising the Issues

A number of important background issues need to be discussed when considering the inclusion of EAL learners in our schools. This chapter sets the scene for the inclusion of EAL learners by looking at the historical development of

EAL teaching and the legislative and population contexts. It also discusses issues of bullying and racism. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is introduced here, along with the important documents *Every Child Matters* and *Children and Young People: Rights to Action*.

Chapter 2: Language and Identity

The importance of language in our lives cannot be overstated. The relationship between language and identity is complex and an understanding of this complexity is important for teachers of all pupils, including EAL pupils. This chapter will explore some of the aspects of the development and use of language which are relevant to all learners in our primary and secondary schools.

Chapter 3: Language Acquisition

This chapter will give a general outline of first language development and will discuss the different elements of language which are involved in successful communication. It will then look at additional language acquisition and identify some of the similarities and differences.

Chapter 4: A Language Rich Environment

Language is central to learning for all. This chapter explores the idea of a learning environment which is rich in language as a desirable environment for all pupils.

Chapter 5: The Supportive Learning Environment

At the heart of good teaching is an understanding of how to provide a learning environment which genuinely supports the learner. Following on from the language rich environment which supports all learners we explore some of the aspects of the learning environment, in the classroom and school, which have a particular impact on EAL learners.

Chapter 6: Assessment and Planning

All EAL learners need to be assessed on entry to the school in order to determine how best to support them in learning English and in their cognitive development. This chapter briefly discusses initial assessment and then looks at aspects of the summative and formative assessment of EAL learners.

Chapter 7: General Strategies to Support EAL Acquisition

Here we suggest and give classroom examples of general support strategies which can be easily employed by a student or a teacher new to teaching EAL pupils. Most of the strategies are appropriate for pupils in the early stages of English acquisition and can be adapted for primary and secondary school learners.

Chapter 8: Developing Competence In English

Pupils whose English has developed beyond the early stages and whose spoken English is competent for everyday communication will continue to need help to acquire the academic language needed as they move on through secondary school towards GCSE. This chapter will look at some strategies which are simple to organize but will provide the kind of support needed for pupils at this 'developing competency' level.

Chapter 9: End Note

Concluding comments and a checklist of general strategies.

As indicated at the beginning of this introduction each chapter will have a point of reflection to set the scene and it will also have suggestions for further reading and for further enquiries related to the content of the chapter and intended to deepen or extend understanding.

A first reflection exercise

La Rivolta di Boudicca
See Figure 0.1.

- Do you speak or read Italian? If you do not, can you work out what to do with the work sheet which is used in a Year 4 class in their topic on Romans in Britain (in English, of course)?
- How does it make you feel to be faced with a work sheet in a language you do not understand?
- What clues are there on the sheet to help you to understand the content?
- What other help would you need to be able to complete the task?

La Rivolta di Boudicca

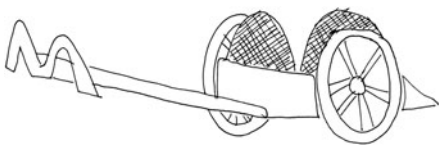
Nel 60 dC una tribù Britannica che si chiamava gli Iceni si è rivoltato contro la regola Romana. Sono stati condotti dalla loro regina, Boudicca. Hanno fatto danni terribili ai romani prima che fossero battuti.

Qui sotto sono due descrizioni della regina Boudicca scritte dai storici della storia romana. Usando tutte le informazioni su questa pagina, fai un disegno di Boudicca.

Boudicca andava attorno in una carrozza colle sue figlie. Quando è arrivata ad ogni tribù, ha detto che i cittadini britannici sono stati abituati ad essere capeggiati in battaglia dalle donne.Tacitus

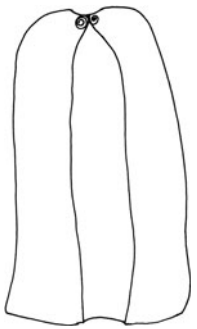
Era enorme con una voce stridula. Una massa di capelli rossi scendevano alle sue ginocchia. Portava una grande collana ritorta e una tunica di molti colori, sopra cui portava una mantilla spessa, fissata da una spilla. Dio Cassius

una spilla



una carrozza

una mantilla



una collana

una tunica

Figure 0.1 Boudicca worksheet

Further reading

Cline, T. and Frederickson, N. (eds) (1996) *Curriculum Related Assessment, Cummins and Bilingual Children*. Cleveden: Multilingual Matters