



# English as an Additional Language in Irish Primary Schools

## Guidelines for Teachers

June 2006

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# Introduction

In Irish primary and post-primary schools there is an increase in the number of children whose home language is neither English nor Irish. This document has been developed to support mainstream primary school teachers in meeting the learning needs of these children,<sup>1</sup> who come from a diversity of backgrounds, including those who:

- were born in Ireland but whose home language is neither English nor Irish
- have lived in Ireland for some time and who have oral competence in English but whose language and literacy proficiency is not sufficient to engage fully with the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999)
- have recently arrived in Ireland with oral language skills (reading and writing) in other languages
- have recently arrived in Ireland with literacy skills in other languages
- have recently arrived in Ireland without literacy skills in other languages
- come from homes where parents<sup>2</sup> may or may not be literate in the home language or in the language medium of the school.

This document will assist teachers in meeting the language *and* learning needs of the child for whom English is an additional language in primary schools, so that he/she can access all areas of the Primary School Curriculum. The phrase 'English as an additional language' recognises that English is the language used in teaching the child and that, where possible, the child will also learn Irish. The teaching of English will build on the language and literacy skills which the child has attained in his/her home language to the greatest extent possible.

## Aims

The specific aims of this document are to:

- provide information regarding children's language acquisition so that principals, teachers and school staff come to a greater understanding of the processes involved in learning a new language and how this affects the learning needs of the child in both language and literacy

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<sup>1</sup> The mainstream teacher is the teacher with whom the child will spend most of the day in school. The child may also receive additional language and literacy support from the language support teacher whose role is discussed later in this document.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this document, the word 'parents' is used to refer to those who are primarily responsible for taking care of the child, that is his/her parents or guardians.

- identify how school and classroom planning, and collaboration within the school, contribute to meeting the language *and* learning needs of the child
- illustrate approaches and methodologies, including the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- identify appropriate assessment strategies to meet the learning needs of the child and share assessment information with the child's parents or guardians.

## Structure

The guidelines are presented in four sections:

- **Section 1** provides an overview of language learning. It describes how children acquire their first language and additional languages and it explores the implications for supporting a child's language and learning in primary schools
- **Section 2** describes school and classroom planning for the needs of the child for whom English is an additional language
- **Section 3** describes different teaching methods for developing children's language learning, including ICT
- **Section 4** identifies methods for monitoring the child's progress in mainstream settings and for assessing the child's learning over time.

In developing this document the NCCA reviewed a range of web-based and other resources for learning. The NCCA acknowledges the materials provided by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT), to be found in the Appendices. IILT is responsible for managing support programmes for children who speak English as an additional language on behalf of the Department of Education and Science (DES). IILT provide professional development and resources for language support teachers and for mainstream classroom teachers.

Occasionally, these guidelines refer to specific websites where teachers may access additional support materials. However, inclusion of specific website addresses does not constitute an endorsement of these websites on behalf of the NCCA. Teachers are advised that they should always review the content of the websites mentioned prior to sharing it with children.

# Language acquisition

This section is presented under the following five headings:

- Acquiring the first language
- Acquiring an additional language
- Teaching communicative language learning through the curriculum
- Developing language awareness
- Developing cultural competence.

## Acquiring the first language

Learning a first language is a complex process. Children learn their first language and other languages spoken in the home in an incremental manner. In general, from the time a child is born he/she interacts with others by reacting to voices and sounds. The majority of children begin to communicate in their first year as they experiment with sounds through cooing and babbling and begin to detect differences in the tone of voice used by caregivers. Soon afterwards they begin to utter their first words and in general, at two years of age, they are able to form two word sentences and questions.

Between the ages of two and three there is usually a significant advance in children's use of sentence structure and their range of vocabulary. Children may make mistakes because their grasp of language structure is still in the earliest stage of development.

As they continue to grow and develop, children master more complex grammatical and conceptual aspects of their first language. Up to about the age of seven, they continue to develop their communication skills in understanding different oral<sup>3</sup> or written texts. At this stage of first language acquisition, the use of pronouns, sequencing events and determining how events are related to one another may still be difficult for some children.

Children's ability to use language is generally nurtured by their primary caregivers. As the child grows, he/she interacts with others in the extended community. Over time, the child develops an understanding of the ways in which language is used in different contexts. The

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<sup>3</sup> An oral text is a text that children listen to. It may come from a CD or a tape, or it may be spoken by the teacher.

child's literacy is developed as he/she learns about the interrelationships that exist between letters, sounds and words.

## Acquiring an additional language

The child's acquisition of additional languages also occurs in developmental stages. The child who is learning English for the first time utters one or two word phrases before he/she develops more fluency in the language. The child has to develop a sense of how English works internally before he/she can overcome the challenges associated with speaking or writing. Sometimes this means that the child does not communicate orally in class for some time. This non-communicative period is known as 'the silent phase' of language learning.

### **The silent phase**

The 'silent phase' is a natural part of the language learning process. During this phase of learning, the child takes time to become familiar with the words and rules of the new language, and to observe and take in information about the new environment.

During this time the child may use other strategies for communicating with others, for example signals or other body language. IILT has developed observational prompts and checklists to help teachers to monitor the child's interaction with others during this phase of language development (see Appendix 5).

The teacher can assist the child's involvement in classroom activities by using simple and routine phrases in English to accompany his/her actions. The child's initial involvement may also be prompted when interacting with others in the class. Additionally, peer-tutoring (i.e. student/student teaching) should increase the child's participation in classroom learning activities.

In English, the child develops listening skills before speaking skills and reading skills before writing skills. The errors made at this stage of language acquisition are a natural part of learning.

The child's oral and written work will help the teacher to determine his/her needs and the support required. Children who are literate in their home language should be encouraged to sustain the development of this literacy. It is important for the child to continue to develop his/her language and literacy skills in the home language. An increasing number of libraries provide books in a variety of languages and these may be used by parents to support the child's language and literacy skills in the home language<sup>4</sup>. Families may have satellite access to radio and television programmes in their home language. Schools can reflect the language and cultural diversity of their children by including different languages in the print environment of the school. Some ideas on how this might be realised are included in *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Teachers* (Government of Ireland 2005, p. 45).

## Teaching English through the curriculum

The Curriculum and Examinations Board (1987), the precursor to the NCCA, in its *Report on the Board of Studies for Languages* defined language as:

- the chief means by which we think – all language activities, in whatever language, are exercises in thinking
- the vehicle through which knowledge is acquired and organised
- a central factor in the growth of the learner's personality
- one of the chief means by which societies and cultures organise themselves and by which culture is transmitted between and across cultures.

The teacher can help to develop the child's language and his/her engagement with the curriculum by:

- using **gestures** to illustrate actions and activities (pointing, miming)
- using **visual cues** to support the development of oral interactions (photographs, posters, pictures)
- **displaying printed phrases** that are commonly used by teachers and children (flashcards)
- writing and sounding out words and phrases the child can use **to look for clarification** (for example; 'Can you explain that again please?'.)
- **simplifying texts** that contain complex sentences and ideas

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<sup>4</sup> Research illustrates that children who have literacy skills in their home language are able to transfer some of these skills to the learning of an additional language (Lindholm-Leary, 2005).

- providing opportunities for children to create their own monolingual or bilingual **dictionaries** and enabling the child to use dictionary skills where appropriate
- displaying flip charts and posters used to **record new words**, groups of words or word structures
- setting aside time for **independent and guided reading** (described on p. 18)
- asking questions about errors that the child has made during the **writing process** and discussing with him/her how the errors might be corrected.

Children acquire greater fluency in the language when they have opportunities to use it and to reflect on how it works. Teachers can help to raise the child's awareness of language including words, grammar and the conventions of genres which are particular to the English language, using the above strategies.

## Developing language awareness

Using the child's oral and written work, the teacher can understand how the child develops second language literacy. The teacher may notice similar errors made by children who share the same first language.

Whatever the child's home language, he/she will be able to transfer some of the skills learnt in acquiring it to learning English. However, grammatical conventions and the phonological system may differ greatly between the home language and English. If this is the case, the child may experience an extended silent phase before speaking or writing in English. Additionally, if the script and directionality of reading and writing in the child's home language differ from English, he/she may have to develop the spatial strategies necessary for reading from left to right. The teacher should encourage the child to use knowledge of his/her own home language

- to determine the meaning of words
- to explore the similarities and differences in sounds between English and the home language
- to explore where possible grammatical conventions in the home language that may be the same or different from English
- to make comparisons between the script and letter sound relationships used for the home language and that of English.



The child's awareness of English can be developed at a number of levels by:

- examining the relationship between letters, sounds and words (building phonological awareness)
- exploring the relationships between different words within sentences (sentence structure awareness)
- investigating how texts change according to their functions as reflected in different genres (genre awareness).

As the child's language proficiency develops, he/she will benefit from opportunities to think and talk about the language used in oral, visual or written texts. For example, when looking at a text during the SESE: History class, the teacher may ask all children to think about how the auxiliary verb 'would' is used in a sentence like '*in times gone by, we would all walk to school*'. Raising awareness of *how* language works will help develop literacy skills and can be incorporated into the teaching and learning of all subjects in the curriculum.

## Developing cultural competence

The child who has recently arrived in a school may not be familiar with classroom roles and responsibilities. It is important for teachers to introduce the child to the cultural norms of the school and the classroom.

### **The social aspects of learning in a new environment**

Initially, when children are in transition from one culture to another they may not wish to engage with others when parents or caregivers are not present. For this reason, talking with parents will help the teacher to ascertain the child's prior experiences and to assess the child's learning potential when he/she is new to the class.

The teacher will want to find out from parents whether the child's learning in the home language was interrupted or continuous and to ascertain, as sensitively as possible, the contexts in which the child has arrived in Ireland. If, for example, the child has experienced any form of trauma in the past this can impact on his/her language and literacy development.

Ultimately, the child should be enabled to access all subject areas of the curriculum including the Irish language. However, if the child enters the school in more senior classes he/she may be exempt from learning Irish<sup>5</sup> as the school deems it more appropriate for this child to concentrate on learning English, the medium of instruction. Additional ideas and methods for promoting cultural sensitivity in a diverse classroom are identified in *Intercultural Education in the Primary School: Guidelines for Teachers* (Government of Ireland 2005, chapter 2).

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Education and Science: Circular 12/96, revision of Circular 18/79 on exemption from the study of Irish.

# School planning and classroom planning

This section discusses planning to teach English as a second language:

- School planning
- Classroom planning
- Support for planning.

## School planning

Each school's Board of Management is responsible for developing the school plan. Children for whom English is an additional language should be represented in the school's plan by noting:

- the diversity of languages and cultures of children in the school
- what is required by legislation in relation to supporting all children (Education Act 1998, Equality Act 2004)
- the specific language and literacy learning needs of the child for whom English is an additional language
- arrangements for the mainstream classroom teacher and the language support teacher (where there is one in the school) to work together.

Information and advice on planning for schools is provided by the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) and School Development Planning Support (Primary) (SDPS). Further suggestions may be accessed through the websites of the PCSP ([www.pcsp.ie](http://www.pcsp.ie)) and SDPS ([www.sdps.ie](http://www.sdps.ie)).

## Curriculum planning

The following are suggestions for teachers to address the needs of children for whom English is an additional language in their curriculum plans. Teachers should:

- be cognisant of the **centrality of language and literacy** to learning across the curriculum
- ensure that the child is in an **age-appropriate class** so that his/her cognitive *and* language development is enhanced through interaction with peers

- focus on **planning for the progression** of the child's language and literacy learning over time and between classes
- adopt a **cross curricular approach** to teaching and learning, so that children may be enabled to use the same language in different contexts in the classroom
- draw on **experiences and examples taken from the local environment** and extending the child's learning from the immediate and known to the unfamiliar and unknown
- develop appropriate oral, aural, written and ICT **resources** to assist the child in his/her language learning
- develop good practices for **informing parents** regarding the school's policy for catering for the needs of the child for whom English is an additional language.<sup>6</sup>

### Organisational planning

Organisational planning concerns how the school is organised to meet the learning needs of all children. Schools in which there are 14 or more children for whom English is an additional language are entitled to provide a language support teacher (DES, 2000) to help develop the children's language and literacy skills. The language support teacher works with each child for a period of two years. Where the language teacher and the class teacher can coordinate planning this will enhance the language learning experience of the child as the work on developing the child's skills in language may be aligned with the work of the mainstream class teacher and vice versa. Children will need continued attention and guidance from the mainstream teacher once the language support teacher's support has been withdrawn. Organisational planning should consider:

- **the professional development** requirements of all teachers so that the cultural, cognitive and linguistic needs of all children are recognised
- **the coordination of all the support services** within the school so that there is a cohesive and collaborative approach to meeting the needs of the child
- the **methods of monitoring** the child's needs and assessing progress
- the **time** available for all teachers concerned with the child's learning to discuss and plan for ongoing progress.

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<sup>6</sup> Information on how schools might inform parents regarding their child's learning is presented in the final section of this document.

## Procedures and practices

The following procedures and practices will be of assistance to children who are learning English as an additional language:

- establishing **buddy support systems** that enable the child to rely on support from another member of the child's class
- facilitating access to the **school or classroom library** so that the child is encouraged to read as much as possible
- **involving parents** from a variety of linguistic communities in the school as much as possible within the life of the school, for example to assist with interpreting while a new child is enrolled
- **sourcing or creating teaching materials, including rhymes and stories** written in English about aspects of the child's culture of origin.

## Classroom planning

Classroom planning will involve:

- planning for integrating language and curriculum learning
- developing a cross curricular approach to language and curriculum learning
- liaising with the language support teacher
- promoting a reading culture in the classroom.

Each of these activities is described in the following paragraphs.

### Planning for integrating language learning and curriculum learning

Programmes for teaching English as an additional language are based on the principle that the child learns more effectively if he/she can apply knowledge of words and phrases from one curriculum area to another. This is why planning a thematic approach to teaching and learning is beneficial for the child. The teacher will approach planning for integrating in a variety of ways. In any approach the teacher will:

- Identify the appropriate learning objectives from the Primary School Curriculum, and select relevant strands, strand units and topics.
- Identify the language and literacy needs of the child by looking at samples of the child's previous work (if any such work exists). The Primary English Language Proficiency

Benchmarks may also be useful in assessing the child's language proficiency (see Appendix 5)

- Develop appropriate subject learning and language tasks to progress the child's learning in both the language and the curriculum area
- Regularly gather information on the child's progress with language and other curriculum areas in order to support future planning

### **Developing a cross curricular approach to language and curriculum learning**

Research has identified the advantages of cross-curricular teaching for language and literacy learning (for example, Gibbons, 2003). Cross curricular teaching using key themes or topics provides opportunities for the child to:

- **encounter, comprehend and use vocabulary** and phrases that are associated with a particular topic in a number of different contexts, both oral and written
- **transfer reading skills** learned in one subject to other subjects in the curriculum
- **experience repeated, sustained interaction with ideas and language** associated with particular topics, thereby providing the child with opportunities to develop a wide repertoire of vocabulary and phrases to use
- **make cognitive links** between different subjects and help to develop higher order thinking skills
- **communicate with peers**, particularly when the teacher makes use of collaborative and project-based learning approaches (these are further explored in the next section).

### **Liaising with the language support teacher**

The mainstream teacher and the language support teacher can work collaboratively to:

- **communicate with the child's parents** to build up a profile of the child's prior learning
- determine the child's **language and literacy development needs** after a settling period<sup>7</sup>
- **identify topics** which ensure that the child's learning in the mainstream classroom is reinforced and strengthened by the language support teacher and vice versa
- become familiar with the **methods and activities** which the language support teacher uses to develop the child's language and literacy
- **jointly assess** the child's cognitive, social and language development over time

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<sup>7</sup> The child may require a period when he/she grows accustomed to his/her new environment within the school.

- determine how **information should be shared with parents** and others concerned with the child's learning
- encourage parents to **strengthen the child's literacy** through reading.

### **Reading culture in the school**

The *Primary School Curriculum* encourages schools to promote a reading culture, to create an “*atmosphere in which books and reading are seen as valuable and pleasurable*” (1999, p.18). Research on second language acquisition in school contexts emphasises the central role that reading has in enabling children to learn a new language. In order to further support the child's literacy, the teacher can:

- **identify and revise sequences of sounds and words** that are challenging for the child to articulate or comprehend
- **display multilingual texts** throughout the classroom and the school
- **encourage children to read and discuss each other's writing** so that they can reflect on their own work and become competent peer editors
- **promote the use of ICT** in reading and research
- **build the child's sight vocabulary** through sustained recording of new words and phrases which are revisited and recycled in different subjects in the curriculum and displayed in the classroom
- **promote critical literacy** so that the child becomes increasingly aware of the need to question the factual nature of a variety of text genre
- **maximise the time available** for children to engage with and learn about reading.

Three complementary teaching methodologies for reading in the classroom are presented in the following table: shared reading, independent reading and guided reading.

Type of reading	Possible approaches	Description
Shared reading	Using a Big Book	Shared reading raises children's awareness of the different features of the book and strengthens literacy. For example, the teacher may develop the child's phonological awareness by modelling the reading process and prompting reflection through questioning. This strategy may also be used in senior classes to highlight some of the typical characteristics of different text genres.
Independent reading	Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)	Children may choose their own reading material and read for an agreed period of time each day. This encourages older readers to gain more autonomy in their reading, to apply dictionary skills and to compare different genres in reading. Children may keep reading diaries in which they record what they have read.
Guided reading	Collaborative reading groups	Guided reading involves a parent, the teacher, or another support person within the class, leading a group in reading. The children are grouped for a short period according to their language and literacy needs. This enables the teacher to identify a specific aspect of the child's reading which can be strengthened in the group. During guided reading, many aspects of reading may be targeted, for example highlighting letter sound relationships, investigating the use of pronouns and/or focusing on the features of specific text genres.

#### **Reading strategies**

## Support for planning

Both the SDPS and PCSP assist schools in planning for, and implementing, the *Primary School Curriculum*. In collaboration with the NCCA, the SDPS and PCSP have developed 'Suggested Prompts to Assist in Drafting a Whole School Plan for English.' These are accessible on the NCCA website ([www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)). The prompts were developed to assist teachers in reflecting on and identifying the learning needs of children for whom English is an additional language. Additional support is provided by IILT. The key materials developed by IILT include the publications identified below.

Publication	Function
The primary English language proficiency benchmarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The benchmarks enable the language support teacher to identify the capacity of the child in English once he/she is admitted to the school. They also inform the language support teacher and the mainstream class teacher of the language proficiency level of the child so that they can develop appropriate teaching and learning tasks. Additionally, they identify when the child might be considered to have the language capacity necessary to engage with the Primary School Curriculum to the same extent as children whose first language is English.</li> </ul>



European Language Portfolio	<p>There are three sections in the European Language Portfolio:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ the <b>language passport</b> allows the child to record his/her prior language and literacy experience of other languages and monitors the child's development in English</li><li>▪ the <b>biography</b> identifies progress that the child makes in attaining the English language benchmarks;</li><li>▪ the <b>dossier</b> provides examples of the child's written work.</li></ul>
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***Relevant publications***

# Teaching methods

This section presents teaching methods which promote learning for children who are learning English as an additional language.

## Collaborative learning

The Primary School Curriculum (Introduction, p. 17) notes that collaborative learning broadens and deepens the child's understanding of a problem through discussion and clarification. Engaging in discussion provides children with the opportunity to use any language that they have learnt and to begin to reuse vocabulary in different contexts. In addition, they gain an appreciation of working with others and in engaging with the conventions of group work such as turn taking and listening, and responding to others. Advantages and challenges for implementing collaborative work arrangements in the class are identified and discussed briefly below.

<b>Benefits of collaborative learning</b>	<b>Challenges associated with collaborative learning</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enables teachers to plan for and implement differentiated language and literacy learning tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Involves extensive planning and practise to ensure that learning takes place.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitates interaction among children and promotes respect for ethnic and linguistic diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sometimes allow more vocal or self-assured children to dominate group interactions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allows the teacher to monitor each child's knowledge, skills and attitudes as he/she interacts with peers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expands the demands on monitoring as the teacher becomes more engaged with groups of children.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promotes the child's learning autonomy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can sometimes lead to an over-reliance on the stronger members of the group.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourages the child to speak to and listen to other children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leads to situations where much of the discussion and learning that takes place within groups may be beyond the teacher's control.</li> </ul>

### ***Implementing collaborative work arrangements in the classroom***

It is important to ensure that the work assigned to each member within the group is valued and contributes to the realisation of a shared goal, even if individual learning outcomes are differentiated. This might be achieved by assigning roles to the children within the groups. In doing this, the teacher will ensure equity (gender, ability, etc.) as roles and groups are

assigned. This will help the teacher to provide opportunities for all children to assume positions of leadership within groups. Some group roles are identified below.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Resources person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ makes sure that the group has all of the materials necessary to do the work and is responsible for distribution and collection of crayons etc.</li> </ul>
Timekeeper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ensures that the task is being done within the time identified.</li> </ul>
Reporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ shares what the group has done and how well the group worked as a team. The reporter may be asked to indicate how the work might be improved the next time.</li> </ul>
Clarifier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ represents the group and talks with the teacher to make sure that the group understands the task at hand.</li> </ul>
Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ makes sure that each member of the group is involved and may monitor turn taking in the group with the teachers supervision and training.</li> </ul>

***Roles within collaborative groups***

When assigning the roles to the children, the teacher will model the duties and responsibilities associated with each. The teacher can also provide some communication methods that children can use to interact with others in the group and to seek clarification. For example, the teacher may provide a poster sheet with the following clarification questions.

- How is this word spelt? Can you help me to write that please?
- What does this sentence mean? Can you explain it to me please?
- Can you please repeat what you said?

While monitoring the development of each child's roles and responsibilities, the teacher notes the strategies that are used to complete tasks, provides particular language and learning support for the child, and ensures that he/she is involved with the other children.

While children are engaged in group work in the junior classes, it will be important to focus on the cultural norms of turn taking to facilitate communication. For example, the teacher can assist the children to say and practise turn taking phrases such as 'it's my/your turn to speak'. Additionally, the child who is experiencing the silent phase should be included in collaborative work. By using observational and listening skills, he/she will develop his/her language skills and gain more knowledge regarding how classroom work is structured.

The following exemplars show a variety of techniques for collaborative learning in groups of students of mixed ability and groups of students with similar needs.

## Exemplar 1 – A map search (Fifth and Sixth class)

### Mixed ability groups

Mixed ability grouping: organising children of varying levels of language competence in groups allows each child to participate at his/her own level in an activity. The child learning English experiences language in a real context, among peers, as he/she develops towards being an active participant in his/her own language and literacy development.

This exemplar focuses on planning for differentiation in language teaching and learning with particular reference to SESE: Geography.

### Activity

Children in mixed ability groups are asked to conduct a map search. The activity is designed for a geography lesson in Fifth and Sixth classes. Teachers can adapt this exemplar for other subjects in the curriculum or to cater for the language and learning needs of children in junior classes.

### Objectives

Curriculum area	The child should be enabled to <sup>8</sup>
SESE: Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ become familiar with the names and locations of some major natural features in Ireland (p. 79)</li> </ul>
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ discuss ideas and concepts encountered in other areas of the curriculum (p. 53)</li> </ul>
Language (these objectives are specific for children acquiring English as an additional language)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use spatial language, cardinal directions and the vocabulary associated with natural physical features.</li> </ul>

The document *Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Teachers* p 31 provides advice on the use of ICT in peer tutoring.

<sup>8</sup> Each of the curriculum subject objectives identified in the exemplars are specified in the Primary School Curriculum. The learning objectives for language are those which the teacher identifies to strengthen the English language skills of the child for whom English is an additional language.

### **Step 1 – Planning the task**

- Organise groups to include children of mixed ability and provide each group with a small map of Ireland.
- Assign responsibilities to each child.
- Provide an illustration of the physical features that the children have to locate on their maps, for example a mountain, a river or a lake.
- Distribute a task sheet to each of the groups. For example, the sheet might ask children to work together to locate and record different physical features, such as 4 mountain ranges, 4 rivers, 4 lakes, 4 bays, 4 headlands and 4 islands.

### **Step 2 – Working in small groups**

- Children work together to identify the counties and regions where the physical features are located.
- Each child should have a written record of the area where the physical features are found (Depending on the language experiences and needs of the child, the teacher may allow for collaborative labelling of pictures of the physical features).

### **Step 3 – Presentation**

- Each group makes an oral presentation of the findings for each group using a map of the country. This presentation may be done by the child for whom English is an additional language only if his/her competence in oral language is advanced enough to ensure that this will be a rewarding experience. This child may participate in other ways, for example by being invited to identify the location of particular physical features.

### **Differentiated extension activities**

#### Shared extension

- Children design their own posters or PowerPoint slides illustrating geographical features which they label and share with others. These can be used to promote other map searches.

#### For the children learning English as an additional language

- Match words with pictures

- Make a simple sentence using the physical features concerned using local examples such as *This is the River Lee. It flows through Cork city* and examples from the countries of some of the children in the class and elsewhere.

For independent work

- Research how one of these physical features is formed and how it may change over time.

## Exemplar 2 – A guided reading exercise (Third and Fourth class)

### Groups of students with similar needs

At times, the teacher may wish to support and develop the specific language or subject area skills of an individual or group. In forming groups of students with similar needs the teacher may wish to

- introduce and practise the steps associated with completing a task
- focus on the vocabulary or grammar required for an oral or written piece of work
- familiarise a small group of children with a specific oral or written genre associated with a curriculum area
- develop reading skills that other children in the class may already have mastered through a guided reading process
- provide guidance in the drafting, editing and redrafting of written work
- discuss progress attained in learning and set future learning targets
- develop the early English literacy skills of the child who has little or no prior literacy in his/her home language
- provide the additional assistance required by children who have reached high levels of proficiency in speaking and listening, but need to strengthen their writing or comprehension skills for a particular subject in the curriculum.

### Activity

Children are guided in their reading about past and present festivals in other cultures. This activity is appropriate for children in Third and Fourth classes. It is based on objectives

identified in the history curriculum but can be adapted to other subjects, especially those that use written text to convey meanings.

## Objectives

Curriculum area	The child should be enabled to
SESE: History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ become familiar with the origins and traditions associated with some common festivals in Ireland and other countries (p. 44)</li> <li>▪ explore, discuss and record some of the ceremonies, stories, legends, poetry, music, dances and games associated with these feasts and festivals (p. 44)</li> </ul>
Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ appreciate the diversity of people within communities and the importance of mutual respect, empathy and understanding for living together in peace and harmony (p. 50)</li> </ul>
Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ enact spontaneously for others in the group a scene from the drama, or share with the rest of the class a scene that has already been made in simultaneous small-group work (p. 31)</li> </ul>
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use more than one strategy when reading unfamiliar text</li> <li>▪ refine his/her reading skills through hearing the teacher read aloud. (p. 36)</li> </ul>
Language (these objectives are specific to children for whom English is an additional language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ explore one genre of non-fiction text</li> <li>▪ sequence events according to cues given in the text</li> <li>▪ identify the action words in the text</li> <li>▪ recognise the constituent roots in compound words</li> <li>▪ recognise the meaning of prefix 're' followed by the verb.</li> </ul>

The *Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Teachers* p. 81 provides advice on the use of concept maps to strengthen understanding of texts.

### Step 1 – Planning the task

- Identify a suitable text that can be adapted to meet the reading needs of the children. Consideration may be given to use of a text which reflects the cultural heritage of a child or children in the group as this may help contextualise the material for them. Texts may be adapted to ensure, for example, that
  - sentences are short and simple
  - words which are not core words are identified and excluded if necessary
  - similar tenses are used throughout the text

- Prepare the children in advance by discussing the pictures which accompany the text
- Introduce new vocabulary necessary for the exercise - the teacher, or child, may record these words on a flip chart or poster or on the PC and then identify them while reading
- Provide background information about the festival concerned, for example by locating the country where it takes place on the class atlas or on the globe. Use the text in conjunction with a topic covering 'seasons, holidays and festivals' (a topic identified in support materials produced by IILT).

### **Step 2 – Guided reading of the text**

- The teacher reads the text through while the children listen
- The teacher reads the text pausing as appropriate to
  - focus on different cueing systems
  - develop concepts about print
  - identify literary features associated with this non-fiction text, for example the use of sequencing cues such as 'a few days prior to', 'at the beginning of the New Year', etc.
- Point out how morphemes help to provide meaning in reading words, for example focus on the prefix 're' in the words rebirth, rearrange, renewal
- Raise awareness about the root words in different compound words, for example explore the components of words such as 'outdoors', 'household' etc.
- Each child reads the text quietly and independently at his/her own pace
- The teacher assesses the child's reading and identifies appropriate reading strategies and pronunciation skills to assist the child's progress.

### **Step 3 – Synthesising the learning**

- Pair work or group activities which will be determined by the children's language and literacy needs may be organised
- Children may be asked to reread the text and to underline all the action words included or to take the text and cut out the different paragraphs, put them into the wrong sequence and ask the group to reorder them correctly (this will improve concepts of how texts are structured). It may be appropriate to invite children to act out some of the paragraphs
- Children who are new language learners might be asked to reassemble key sentences on software programmes such as those accessible from [www.cricksoft.com](http://www.cricksoft.com) (go to the teaching ideas section and then to EAL)



- Encourage children to explain how some non-fiction texts are sequenced by making a time line of the significant activities associated with the festival. Children may use a web based tool for making their timelines, for example [http://teachers.teach-nology.com/web\\_tools/materials/timeline/](http://teachers.teach-nology.com/web_tools/materials/timeline/).

### **Extension activities**

- Listen to and give reactions to music associated with the festival celebrations
- Dramatise one of the sequences of the celebration for others in the group or for other children in the class. The other children have to guess which actions are being portrayed
- Compare the festival with, for example, Halloween in Ireland
- Children write about or draw pictures associated with celebrations from their own cultures (the teacher may assist with recording children's writing and drawing)
- Using the Internet, the child/children can conduct research about celebrations in different countries.

## **Exemplar 3 – Describing an object (Junior and Senior Infants)**

### **Jigsaw technique for groups of students of mixed ability and groups of students of similar needs**

The jigsaw technique for collaborative learning may be used for groups of students of mixed ability or of similar needs. Each child will gather information to share with others in order to form a jigsaw.

There are different forms of jigsaw; they vary from simple tasks designed for children in junior classes to more complex jigsaw tasks for children in senior classes. Each group is given work on a similar theme, but the task or the learning objectives for each group task may vary slightly. Once the children have completed their own task, they discuss the outcome or learned with members of another group.

### **Activity**

Children are asked to discuss the features of an object and then share their findings with other children. This activity is developed for an infant class of approximately 30 children. It is based on Exemplar 2 in the English *Teacher Guidelines* (p. 43).

## Objectives

Curriculum area	The child should be enabled to
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>choose appropriate words to name and describe things and events (p. 18)</li> </ul>
Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discover the relationship between how things feel and how they look (p. 19)</li> </ul>
SESE: Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>describe and compare materials, noting the differences in the colour, shape and texture (p. 27)</li> </ul>
Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>practise care and consideration, courtesy and good manners when interacting with others (p. 21).</li> </ul>
Language (these objectives are specific to children for whom English is an additional language)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extend the use of adjectives</li> <li>practise the construction, 'I'm going to...'</li> </ul>

### Step 1 - Modelling the process

- The teacher invites the children to help her/him in describing a small bucket. A framework such as the one below may be used.

Questions to elicit responses	Children's response
Opening remarks	I have a bucket
Describe it – What does it look like?	It is round and red. It has a red handle.
Texture – What does it feel like?	It is smooth
Material – What is it made of?	It is made of plastic
Function – What can you do with it?	I can play with it
Plans – What are you going to do with it?	I'm going to fill it with blocks!

#### *Structuring the exercise*

### Step 2 – Working in small groups

- The teacher distributes 6 objects (for example, an apple, a teddy bear, a tin whistle, a mobile phone, a desk calendar, a plastic bucket) to different groups of children
- The children use a similar format as that identified above to describe their objects
- The teacher monitors the children to ensure that all of the members of the group are engaged in appropriate forms of turn taking
- Each child has an opportunity to describe the object

- As each child describes his/her object the teacher models possible phrases and words for the child for whom English is an additional language to support his/her oral interactions with peers.

### Step 3 – Jigsaw with others

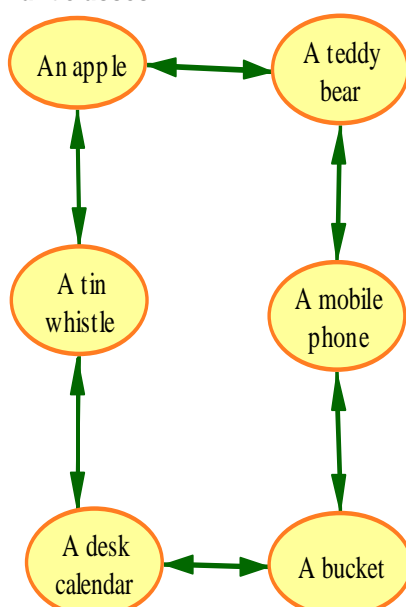
- Once each child in the group has had an opportunity to describe the object, the teacher invites children to describe their objects for members of other groups
- Each child finds out about another one, two or three different objects. For example, a child who has described an apple may now be requested to find out about a teddy bear and a tin whistle
- Rather than finding out about two other objects, the child for whom English is an additional language might be asked to find out about one. This allows for differentiated learning to take place.

### Extension activities

- Children choose another object and don't let others see what it is. They describe its colour, texture and function. Others have to guess what object has been described
- With the teacher's help, children make single worded captions to describe the object
- Children identify initial letters of the words
- Children make a list of all of the colours used to describe the objects
- Ask children to describe two items in their homes.

The interactions between the children in the different groups might look like the communication arrows in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1: A sample jigsaw task for Infant classes**



## Exemplar 4 - Democracy in Ireland (Fifth and Sixth class)

### Jigsaw for senior classes

A more complex use of jigsaw (below) allows the teacher to design and implement differentiated learning tasks to meet the language and learning needs of groups or individuals in the class.

1. Using a cross curricular approach, the teacher first identifies appropriate language and curriculum objectives for different groups of children. These objectives form the basis for the development of appropriate learning tasks which are allocated to the different groups
2. Another group of children might be asked to use a Venn diagram to compare a bicycle with a motorcycle and to complete a writing activity based on their findings.
3. Once the differentiated learning groups have completed their tasks, a member of each one joins a 'home group'. Learning within the differentiated groups generally prepares the child for participation within the home group. In this way, language is recycled and the child has a greater understanding of the context within which the home group discussion takes place.
4. Within the home group each child is asked to explain the nature of the tasks which he/she has completed. The group might further examine collaboratively how individual tasks were completed. As children share their work with members of the 'home group' they contribute to the formation of a new and cohesive project. The home group may be asked to collate the work of each of its members creating a group project. The shared nature of this form of jigsaw is illustrated in **Figure 2**.

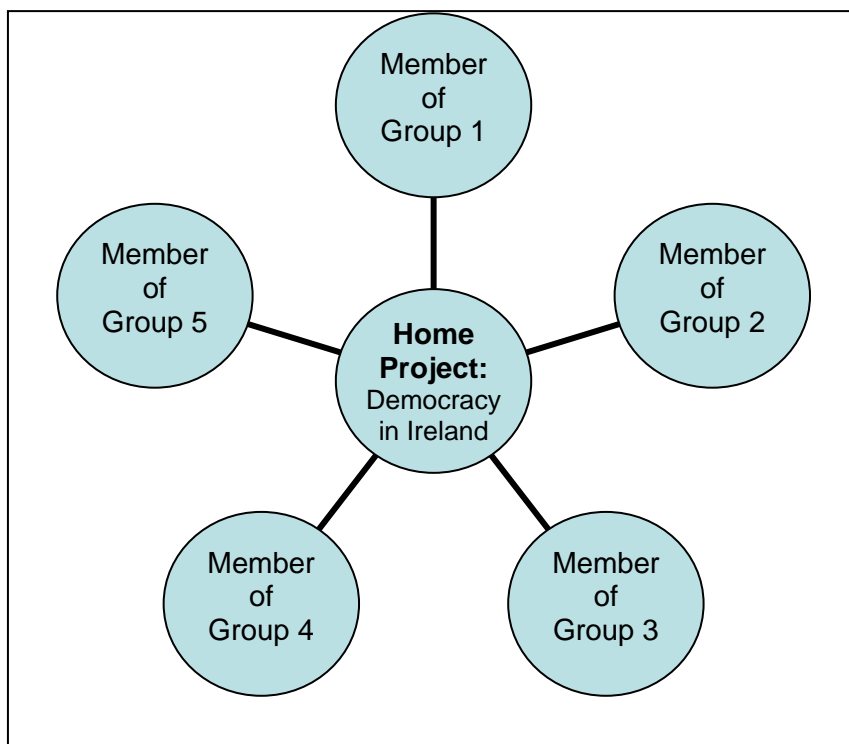


Figure 2: *Forming a home group*

### Activity

Children work in groups to complete a project entitled 'Democracy in Ireland'. This activity is aimed at meeting the needs of all children in a Fifth class or Sixth class. This exemplar is based on the methodology for implementing project work in primary schools as identified in Exemplar 25 of Social Personal and Health Education (p. 92). It provides further guidelines for exploring democracy so as to differentiate for the variety of learning needs of the children in the class. Jigsaw grouping ensures that each child contributes to the completion of a shared project.

### Objectives

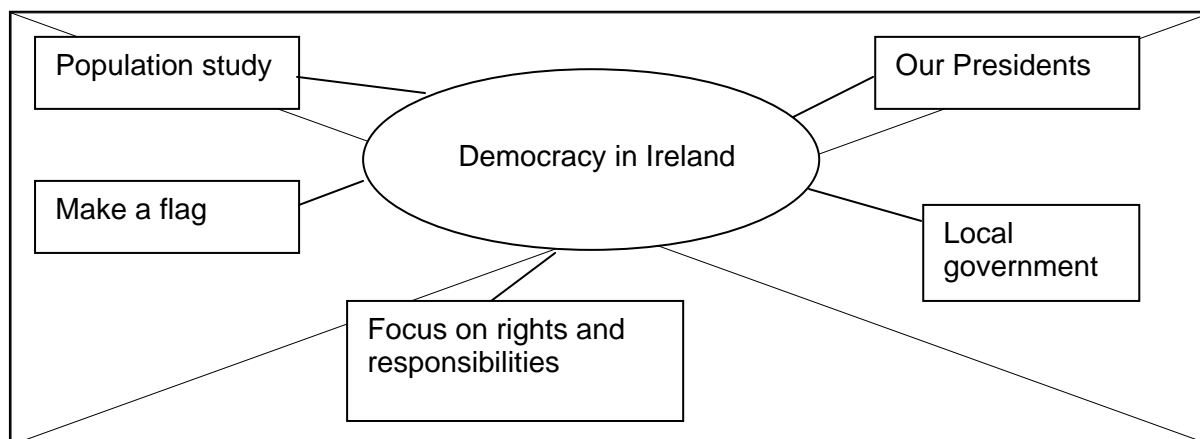
Curriculum area	The child should be enabled to
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>begin to explore the concept of democracy (SPHE p. 65).</li> </ul>
<b>Group 1: Violet Group: Task for children for whom English is an additional language - Make an Irish flag</b>	
Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>make drawings based on themes reflecting broadening interests, experiences and feelings</li> </ul>
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>estimate and measure length using appropriate metric unit (p. 102)</li> </ul>
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>read and interpret different types of functional text (p. 54)</li> </ul>

Language of Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use language associated with shapes and size – equal sized, twice the size of, three times the size of, rectangle, vertical, horizontal, wide (width), tall (height)</li> <li>▪ directions - draw, divide, measure, colour and cut.</li> </ul>
<b>Group 2: Green Group – What your local government does</b>	
SESE: Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ learn about and come to appreciate the peoples and communities who live and work in the locality and in a contrasting part of Ireland (p.72).</li> </ul>
Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ recognise and explore the positive contributions made to the local community by various organisations, ethnic, social or community groups and individuals (p. 64)</li> </ul>
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ retrieve and interpret information presented in a variety of ways (p. 54)</li> </ul>
<b>Group 3: Blue Group - Focus on rights and responsibilities</b>	
Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ explore rules and regulations in home, school and society and the importance of adhering to them (p. 59)</li> </ul>
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ discuss ideas and concepts encountered in other areas of the curriculum (p. 53)</li> <li>▪ sketch an ordered summary of ideas and draft a writing assignment based on it (p. 55)</li> </ul>
<b>Group 4: Orange Group – Population study</b>	
SESE: Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ study some aspects of the environments and lives of people in one location in Europe and in another part of the world. (p. 75)</li> </ul>
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ collect, organise and represent data using pictograms, single and multiple bar charts and simple pie charts (p. 109)</li> </ul>
<b>Group 5: Red Group - Our Presidents</b>	
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ take part in cooperative writing activities (p. 52)</li> <li>▪ develop skills in information technology (p. 52)</li> <li>▪ develop study skills such as skimming, scanning and summarising (p. 54)</li> </ul>
SESE: History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ acquire some knowledge of the major personalities, events or developments in certain periods (p. 70)</li> </ul>

### **Step 1 – Identify the topic and assign different learning tasks**

A cross curricular approach will meet the differentiated learning needs of all children. As children can be assigned different tasks within groups, the individual child's learning needs and language ability can be catered to.

- The topic identified is *Democracy in Ireland*. The tasks assigned will be selected referring to the strands, strand units and objectives in the Primary School Curriculum as identified in the concept map below
- Use the topic to develop suitable areas of work for different groups as identified in **Figure 3**.



**Figure 3: Developing learning tasks**

- Discuss the concepts and vocabulary associated with democracy
- Develop clear task sheets, such as the one provided below, for each of the groups in the class. Identify appropriate resources, reading materials, text books and website addresses where selected groups may access relevant information to complete their tasks
- A sample task sheet for the 'violet group' is identified below. The teacher works with the children to read and comprehend the text and to talk through the task.

### **Step 2 – Task sheet for the Violet Group: this group will comprise children who have basic literacy skills in English**

The teacher will work with the children. Prior work will include the relevant mathematical vocabulary. This may have been the focus of an earlier mathematics lesson.

- Read the first paragraph describing the Irish flag from [www.eu2004.ie](http://www.eu2004.ie) (See Appendix 1)
- Use a dictionary to find and explain words you don't know
- Use the instructions below to guide you in making the flag
- Draw a horizontal line 12 cm long
- Make a rectangle by drawing two vertical lines of 6 cm at each end of the first line. To close the rectangle draw another horizontal line of 12cm

- Divide the large rectangle into three equal sized rectangles. Each rectangle should be 4cm in length and 6 cm in height
- Colour your flag and cut it out
- Design a flag for your class/give directions on how to make the flag
- Use the information about the flag to write a mathematics problem, for example, 'if this flag is 10cm wide, what is its height?' (Note that within the text it indicates that the Irish flag is twice as long as it is high).

### **Step 3 – Creating a shared project**

- Once same needs groups have completed their tasks the children from the same needs groups join their home groups
- Each member of the home group shares his/her finished work with the other members of the group. This enables the group to jigsaw their learning so that each completed task will contribute to the overall project
- Collate all individual work from within the home group to create a multifaceted project about *Democracy in Ireland*
- Display the work of each home group.

### **Step 4 – Extension activities**

- Explore the concept of democracy in the classroom by developing classroom rules that appreciate and respect linguistic and cultural diversity
- Extend the concept of democracy further by promoting elections and identifying classroom representatives.



## Exemplar 5 – Writing a short drama script (Third to Sixth class)

The purpose of this activity is to make children aware of the different writing genres and conventions associated with them. Children for whom English is an additional language may face particular challenges in comprehending the nuanced differences of genres used to convey information in different areas of the curriculum.

This method uses similar approaches to the writing process as discussed in the Primary School Curriculum (*English Teacher Guidelines* p.76).

### Activity

The teacher leads children in creating a short script which they later expand upon themselves. This exemplar is adapted from Drama Activity, Session 3 in the *Teacher Guidelines for Drama* (p. 89). It may be used from Third class upwards and may be adapted to meet the language learning needs of the child.

### Objectives

Curriculum areas	The child should be enabled to
Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use reflection on and evaluation of a particular dramatic action to create possible alternative courses for the action (p. 29)</li> <li>▪ begin the process of using script as pre-text (p. 28).</li> </ul>
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ observe the teacher modelling different writing genres (p. 37)</li> <li>▪ express feelings and attitudes through improvisational drama (p. 44).</li> </ul>
Social Personal Health Education (SPHE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ explore how feelings can influence one's life (p. 42).</li> </ul>
Language of Drama (Further objectives for children for whom English is an additional language)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ask for assistance – to explore ways of providing or declining assistance</li> <li>▪ identify how feelings influence intonation</li> <li>▪ investigate tag questions - didn't I?</li> <li>▪ identify features of oral language which would not be used in written texts</li> <li>▪ investigate punctuation in context.</li> </ul>

### **Step 1 - Modelling the process**

- The teacher creates a scripted dialogue with the children (on the black/whiteboard, a flip chart or poster) and asks them to suggest how they might ask for help and how they might respond to such a request. The following dialogue involves three people and focuses on building a go-kart.

Ahmed: Can you come over here and give me a hand with this?

Sam: Sorry, but I'm busy right now.

Marjatta: Don't worry, I'll help you. What is it you want?

Ahmed: Great, why don't you give me a hand to put this together? When we're finished we can take a ride in it together!

Sam: Oh, look I'm free now – let me do it instead.

Marjatta: I don't think so! After all, I volunteered first, didn't I?

- The teacher explores with the children some other contexts where the same vocabulary might be used, for example in interactions between children and teacher, child and parent or among children.

### **Step 2 – Working in small groups**

- Children learn language and literacy in a social context. It is important that teachers provide opportunities for children to work collaboratively while completing a writing task
- The teacher asks children to explore through role play how the dialogue would change if one of the characters adopted a kinder approach while speaking with the others
- Children are assisted in creating their own scripted dialogue
- Different groups may be asked to experiment with the stress and intonation used and to identify the corresponding emotions of the characters (if children are in the silent period of language learning they might match emotions expressed to appropriate pictures)
- The teacher observes the intonation patterns that are used and may suggest changes.

### **Step 3 – Practising independently**

- Where a child's proficiency in English is more advanced, providing opportunities to practise independently will help him/her to master the nuances in different text genres

- The child (sometimes with assistance) uses the scripts that have been developed to write his/her own short pre-text<sup>9</sup> and may write a short narrative, supported by pictures if necessary, to explain the feelings of each one of the characters
- The child practises the scripts with family members and shows how placing an emphasis on a particular word may help to convey the speaker's emotions.

### **Extension activities**

- Children may be asked to generate their own short dialogues which might be used to create dramas
- Collaborative work might focus on developing and extending texts developed independently
- Practise matching pictures of different emotions with phrases
- Explore how further pre-texts can become the basis for generating written drama scripts
- Some additional pre-texts are provided in the Drama Curriculum, *Teacher Guidelines* (pp. 86-91).

## **Exemplar 6 – A science field trip (Third to Sixth class)**

### **Do, talk, record**

*Do, talk, record* is an approach that involves children in authentic and experiential language and curriculum learning encounters. Engaging in real tasks will help the child to recall new vocabulary, to use new structures and to remember new phrases which are associated with the task. Through doing, talking and recording the child uses different senses and relies on different intelligences to learn. The tasks given to the children will match their language and literacy proficiency skills.

Children are first invited to 'do' something interesting. For example, they could visit a site and make suggestions regarding a proposed design for a local playground.

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<sup>9</sup> Pre-texts are generally short scripts that children can use to expand their ideas into more formulated drama scripts or texts.

Children are then encouraged to ‘talk’ about what their plans for the playground might be. During the ‘talking phase’ they identify and learn new vocabulary and grammatical structures associated with new area of learning.

Children are finally asked to ‘record’ what their plans for the playground would look like. Depending on their language and literacy skills, they might be asked to tick a box to identify a picture or word, to develop a flow chart of a process which they have observed or to provide an oral or written account of activities and experiences. Recording can be done on paper, using a digital camera and transferring to the PC and preparing a script to go with it and making a short video presentation

### Activity

Children participate in, talk about and record a learning activity during a field trip. This exemplar is adapted from Science, *Teacher Guidelines* (p. 68). It is targeted at children in Third and Fourth classes, though it can be adapted to suit all classes.

### Objectives

Curriculum area	The child should be enabled to
SESE: Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ observe, identify and explore a variety of living things in local habitats and environments (p. 42)</li> <li>▪ group and sort living things into sets according to certain characteristics (p. 42).</li> </ul>
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ explore different genres (p. 26)</li> <li>▪ experience an abundance of oral writing activity when preparing a writing task (p. 28)</li> <li>▪ write about something that has been learned (p. 30).</li> </ul>
SESE: Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ record and communicate experiences and observations using simple drawings, plans, displays, models and sketches (p. 41).</li> </ul>
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ count the numbers of objects in a set (p. 40)</li> <li>▪ sort and classify objects by two and three criteria (p. 58).</li> </ul>
These objectives are specific to children for whom English is an additional language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ record vocabulary associated with science and plants</li> <li>▪ increase language awareness through an exploration of the structures used to form and answer questions</li> <li>▪ use pictures and graphs to extend simple sentences</li> <li>▪ the teacher might use the activity to focus on strengthening the child’s phonological awareness by linking new words encountered with their initial sounds and letters.</li> </ul>

## Step 1 – Introducing and implementing the trip

Using an experiential and communicative language learning activity will engage the child with new words and grammatical structures.

- Provide children with directions for completing tasks and mime activities to ensure that all children can follow them
- Familiarise children with the names of plants before the visit takes place
- The children point to objects identified by the teacher
- The children make a sketch of an area in which the study is conducted – label the sketch for significant geographical and environmental features
- The children work with a partner on a quadrate, for example, 1 square metre
- Investigate and identify the different types of plants and/or minibeasts in the area, for example, using the recording chart identified below

Plant name	Information about the plant
Guess (estimate) the number of plants.	
What are the colours of the leaves / petals?	
Describe the shape of the leaves / petals	
Estimate the height of the plants	

**Recording chart**

## Step 2 – Encouraging talk and reflection

Specific language and subject support for the child is provided by enabling vocabulary extension, by highlighting the conventions used to form questions and by guiding the child to form sentences from pictorial graphs or from tables.

- Provide the children with appropriate vocabulary to describe the area where the survey takes place
- Identify geographical features in the environment: mountains, streams, etc
- Match actions and hand signals with words
- Support the child's questioning by modelling a series of questions such as: *What is the name of this plant? What is this called?*
- Spell words to support the child's note taking

- Question children as they engage in their activities: Can you see a ....? Do you have a ...? Have you found a ....? Where are the....? Who can identify a ....?
- Encourage children to formulate their own questions of other children: *did you find a ...?* etc.
- Discuss the experience that children have had once they are back in the classroom. Digital photographs taken by the children may be used to prompt memories and descriptions.

### **Step 3 – Recording what children have learned**

- Label pictures of drawings and sketches with single words
- Review the words learned and categorise them. Save all the new words and phrases learned (for example using a flip chart) so that they can be revisited
- Use the graph completed in the DO phase to formulate simple sentences
- Draw a series of pictures to show what was done during the activity.

### **Extension activities**

- This task may be extended into other subject areas such as Geography (see SESE: Geography p. 52 for additional ideas).
- Ask representatives of the local language communities to accompany you during the activity and to develop bilingual or even multilingual charts for plants, animals and minerals found in the local environment. This may serve to extend knowledge of pronunciation in English
- Use writing by other children in the class as models for the children learning English to develop skills in different reading and writing genres
- Focus on the rime and onset to heighten children's reading skills
- Create a project resulting from the learning which has taken place, for example by making a documentary video about the experience
- Strengthen questioning techniques by interviewing a representative of the local Council regarding environmental issues in the locality. Record the event by publishing it on the school website or classroom newsletter.
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## Further Do, Talk, Record Activities

Do	Talk	Record
<p>A visit to the farm (Senior Infants, exemplar SESE: Geography, <i>Teacher Guidelines</i> p.49)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discuss what children know about farms before they go on a visit – compile a vocabulary list</li> <li>▪ Prepare question sheets for the children before a visit is undertaken Children use it as a means of focusing on language and curriculum learning</li> <li>▪ Recall the experience through structured dialogue in groups or whole class Recall can be assisted through such questions as <i>Who was involved? What did they/we do? When did they/we do it?</i> etc</li> <li>▪ Highlight particular phrases and grammatical structures encountered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a personal picture, word or bilingual dictionary</li> <li>▪ Draw a series of pictures to sequence the events of the trip. Use of a timeline may be helpful in assisting children to learn about sequencing of events – see <i>History Teacher Guidelines</i> p. 6-8).</li> </ul>
<p>Guided discovery approach to games (2<sup>nd</sup> class exemplar Physical Education, <i>Teacher Guidelines</i>, p. 44)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support discussion through structured dialogues. Focus on vocabulary and structures children need to discuss effective ways of hitting a ball</li> <li>▪ Identify and practise the roles of each player in a game e.g., <i>the bowler throws the ball, the batter hits the ball</i> etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Match pictures to actions: rolling, stopping, throwing, catching, moving and other actions. Write down and numerate rules of a game created (pair work). Mix up the rules and ask children to order them correctly.</li> </ul>
<p>Mathematical trail (3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> class exemplar SESE: Mathematics, <i>Teacher Guidelines</i>, p. 47)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify the vocabulary necessary for completing the task</li> <li>▪ Ask and answer questions relating to aspects of the trail</li> <li>▪ Prepare question sheets for the children before a visit is undertaken</li> <li>▪ Support the development of language through clarification strategies, e.g. - <i>What is that called? What is that shape? Where are the digits?</i> etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make a pictogram</li> <li>▪ Draw and label shapes observed on the trail</li> <li>▪ Record the numbers of particular items encountered on the trail</li> <li>▪ Identify and record the vocabulary associated with mathematics.</li> </ul>
<p>Materials and change (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class exemplar SESE: Science, <i>Teacher Guidelines</i>, p. 128)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Categorising objects into the types of materials of which they are made, for example <i>this spoon is made of metal.</i></li> <li>▪ Predicting and hypothesising - <i>If you place this over the heat it might...</i></li> <li>▪ Discussing findings - <i>wood is a good insulator</i> etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Divide objects into a T chart of insulators and conductors of heat and energy (a T chart allows children to categorise information into two groups on each side of the T).</li> </ul>

## Exemplar 7 – Moving to music (Infant classes)

### Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a strategy which is particularly appropriate for children with limited oral proficiency in the target language. The strategy (see Asher, 1982) is based on the principle that children first learn their first language by listening to its sounds and structures. When the young child is learning an additional language he/she goes through a receptive phase when active listening takes place, yet the child does not form words and phrases until he/she has already grasped much of the information regarding how the new language works.

An aim of TPR is to mirror this natural approach to language learning. Teachers are encouraged to facilitate the child's early stages of English language acquisition by developing suitable listening activities, which encourage the child to react in a physical way rather than by providing an oral or written response to instructions.

Some ideas for TPR activities might include those identified here.

Curriculum area	Types of activities	Level of proficiency in English <sup>10</sup>
Physical education	Ask children to run on the spot for 20 seconds.	A1
Music	Follow actions in an action song, for example - do the Hokey Pokey.	A1
Language	Listening to and following directions.	A2
SESE: Geography	Information gaps, for example children work in pairs; one reads directions for getting to a particular place while the other child listens and follows the directions on a map.	B1

#### *Total Physical Response activities*

### Activity

Listen to and participate in an action song. This exemplar is adapted from Music, *Teacher Guidelines* (p. 64). This activity is targeted at children in infant classes. For this activity the teacher will require a tape recorder or CD player and photographs of children engaged in different actions.

<sup>10</sup> As identified in the English language primary language proficiency benchmarks (IILT, see Appendix 6).



## Objectives

Curriculum area	The child should be enabled to
Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ respond imaginatively to short pieces of music through movement</li><li>▪ show the steady beat in live or recorded music (p. 20).</li></ul>
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ experience, recognise and observe simple commands (p.16)</li></ul>
Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ become aware of his/her immediate world through the senses (p. 16)</li></ul>
Physical Education Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ respond imaginatively through movement to stimuli such as words, stories, poems, pictures, music (p. 18)</li></ul>
These objectives are specific to children for whom English is an additional language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ respond physically to commands given by the teacher.</li></ul>

### Step 1 – Planning the task

- Mime or model the actions associated with a particular song
- Provide visual cues for each part of the body to be incorporated into the song.

### Step 2 - Carrying out the actions

Children participate in the whole class action song by using the following accompanying actions:

- Stamp your feet
- Touch your nose
- Wiggle your fingers
- Blink your eyes.

### Step 3 – Extending the learning

- Ask children to complete the actions which are represented in pictures or photos.

### Extension activities

- Play games such as 'Simon Says'. Use the activities included in the song so that children begin to reinforce their understanding of the actions taking place
- Ask those children to invent their own chants for TPR activities. Peers may enact the actions
- The Physical Education, Drama and English curriculum may provide additional ideas for how to incorporate TPR activities. For example, in more senior classes children might enact emotional or physical reactions to events such as winning the lotto (Drama: *Teacher Guidelines*, p. 39)

### Focusing on language awareness

The child's confidence and competence in using English is strengthened as he/she becomes increasingly aware of how the language works. Language awareness is a feature of the Primary School Curriculum and it may be achieved by raising the child's awareness of the conventions and structures of English at different levels. How language awareness is developed will depend on the learning needs of the child.

Provided below are some examples of how language awareness may be integrated with the curriculum. Many of the activities identified will benefit all of the children in the class.

Different levels of language awareness	Suggested activities
Sound and word (grapho-phonetic cues, building phonological awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Identifying phonemes in sound and in print</li><li>▪ Looking at and exploring particular clusters of vowels or consonants</li><li>▪ Exploring the relationship between sounds and letters in English</li><li>▪ Comparing sounds and writing systems</li><li>▪ Practising tone and stress in different contexts</li><li>▪ Expanding access to vocabulary through concept mapping of words</li><li>▪ Playing word games such as crosswords and word hunts</li><li>▪ Creating dictionaries, making concept webs, classifying words alphabetically</li></ul>

Words and sentences (syntactic cues, building an awareness of language structure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exploring word order in sentences</li> <li>▪ Comparing structures in the child’s home language and in English</li> <li>▪ Exploring the effect on sentences of using singular or plural nouns</li> <li>▪ Investigating the role of pronouns in the formation of sentences</li> <li>▪ Expanding and/or simplifying sentences</li> <li>▪ Identifying collocations or clusters of words that are often found together</li> </ul>
Sentence and genre (contextual cues, building higher order language awareness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Using contextual cues</li> <li>▪ Using gesture and facial expressions</li> <li>▪ Identifying key ideas in visual, listening and written texts</li> <li>▪ Paraphrasing paragraphs and texts</li> <li>▪ Exploring social conventions of different genres</li> <li>▪ Comparing the effects of culture on language in the home language and in English (in senior classes)</li> <li>▪ Interpreting mood, attitude and emotion in a variety of listening, visual and written texts, for example as exemplified in a short drama.</li> </ul>

***Activities to facilitate the integration of Language Awareness***

## Exemplar 8 – Developing phonological awareness (Third and Fourth class)

### **Phonological awareness**

Teaching phonological awareness helps the child’s language and literacy development. During the initial stages of acquiring the English language, some children may experience difficulty in pronouncing certain sounds or in linking the sounds of English with their appropriate spelling. For the child in more senior classes who is new to the language there may be more of a challenge in acquiring these sounds naturally. For this child it is advisable to explore how the sounds of English are formed and provide him/her with opportunities to practise them. In the exemplar below, an exploration of phonological awareness is integrated with a Geography task.

## Activity

The activity encourages the children to identify and record words associated with the built environment. This activity is based on objectives identified in the Geography curriculum for Third and Fourth classes but may be modified to suit children in more junior or senior classes.

## Objectives

Curriculum area	The child should be enabled to
SESE: Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explore, investigate and come to appreciate the major features of the built environment in the locality and in a contrasting part of Ireland (p.54).</li> </ul>
These objectives are specific to children for whom English is an additional language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recognise that letters have different sounds depending on how they are used in context.</li> </ul>

## Step 1 – Create a concept web

- The children work collaboratively throughout the activity using one of the grouping methods identified earlier
- Children create a concept map of words associated with a building in their locality (for the use of concept mapping, refer to the Information and Communications Technology, *Guidelines for Teachers* pp. 80-86).
- In rural areas where children are not able to visit other buildings, schools may wish to use the internet and conduct virtual tours through different buildings. For example, take a virtual tour of Áras an Uachtarán (see [www.oasis.gov.ie](http://www.oasis.gov.ie) )
- Figure 5** uses a concept web that is developed once children have made a tour of their school. This enables preparation for an exercise conducted outside of the school.

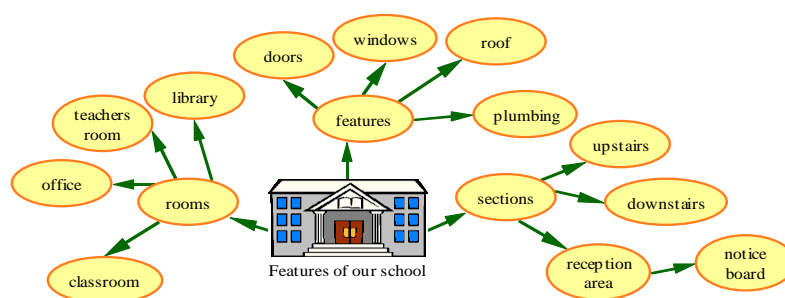


Figure 5: A concept map for organising vocabulary

## **Step 2 – Developing phonological awareness**

- The teacher may notice that a child (or a group of children) has difficulty in pronouncing initial consonant blends (onset) and in decoding these in reading contexts
- The teacher identifies the blends concerned: for example; sch - school, st – stairs, etc
- The child (or children) concerned writes out the words and underlines the initial consonant clusters, he/she practises sounding out these words and identifies other words with similar initial sounds.

## **Step 3 – Extending the learning**

- Create spelling list of words based on words with similar initial consonant blends
- As the child encounters words with similar consonant blends in the following days, he/she identifies them in the context they arise thus raising awareness of how the consonant clusters appear in other contexts.

## **Extension activities**

- The teacher displays examples of differing initial consonant clusters around the class. The child explores the rime involved in the word and explores aspects of contrasting long and short vowel sounds evidenced in the onset.

## **Language structure**

As the child's competence in oral language communication develops, he/she unconsciously uses the language structure to interact with peers and teachers. The child's oral language proficiency is enhanced when he/she begins to appreciate how oral language may be used for different purposes and how it works in different contexts. In the same way, when children investigate how written texts are structured they are enabled to gain a greater sense of how the different parts of the language work together.

Opportunities to explore how written language is structured are afforded when the teacher and child work through the teaching and learning cycle and through the writing process. Rather than 'correcting' the child's writing mistakes in grammar and punctuation, the teacher may question and support the child as he/she uses different words, grammatical structures and punctuation. This assists in raising the child's awareness of how English is structured.

The teacher also leads the child to a greater understanding of the differences between spoken and written forms of language and the particular structures or punctuation that are

used in particular subjects. This is critical as the child begins to engage with the cognitively demanding tasks associated with the curriculum.

### **Cognitive development**

It may be challenging for children learning English in more senior classes to comprehend and use language associated with particular subjects effectively. The child must acquire literacy in English but also needs to learn about the language conventions associated with each subject in the curriculum. For example, science lessons often rely on diagrammatic or graphic illustrations to convey information. Depending on his/her prior learning, the child for whom English is an additional language may not have the visual literacy skills that are required to interpret information presented in such formats. To improve the child's capacity to interpret graphic information, the teacher should enable the child to

- observe or participate in an experiment
- monitor the changes that occur
- record the changes
- talk about what has happened
- design appropriate images for the process
- order the graphics appropriately.

The child should become familiar with the process that informs the development of diagrams before being enabled to interpret information from such diagrams.

### **Tips for supporting the child's learning**

There is scope for teachers to build up a repertoire of techniques that they find successful in their own classrooms. The following additional methods can be adapted to suit the learning contexts of each school and to meet the specific language and literacy learning potential of all children.

<b>Method</b>	<b>How does it work?</b>
Preparing for content instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teachers consciously reflect on the language being used in oral and written communication in the classroom and simplify this if necessary.</li> </ul>
Building background knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduce new concepts and lexica associated with subjects in the curriculum before embarking on new units of learning or individual lessons.</li> </ul>
Scaffolding understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practise 'thinking aloud' to identify successful strategies used to improve reading comprehension and to raise awareness about the</li> </ul>

	different genres in the curriculum.
Reinforcing vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop children's language retention and development skills by using flip charts or posters to record word lists and concept maps. Children's independence in language learning is encouraged by helping them to record information using other forms of graphic organisers too. Additional graphic organisers may be accessed from the internet, for example from <a href="http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer">www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer</a></li> </ul>
Making links to foster learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforce vocabulary, language and literacy development by making links and connections in cross curricular projects, as suggested in the Primary School Curriculum. This allows the child to recycle language.</li> </ul>
Supporting learning by using a variety of approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilise a variety of different teaching techniques that incorporate a range of learning intelligences. Employ visual cues, graphics, kinesthetic activities, auditory and oral modes of conveying learning.</li> </ul>
Creating a print rich environment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use examples of work generated by all children in the classroom to support the language development of the child learning English.</li> </ul>
Providing a classroom culture for reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide lots of time for children to engage in reading and assess reading skills on an ongoing basis.</li> </ul>
Enabling access to homework tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give children clear and concise information on homework assignments. Modify homework tasks if necessary.</li> </ul>

***Supporting the child's learning***

# Assessing the child's progress

*This section will be amended to reflect any developments in the NCCA's work supporting assessment in primary schools.*

This section includes the following information for schools and teachers

- Building a profile of the child's prior learning
- Monitoring language and social development during the silent phase
- Teacher observation
- Portfolios
- Teacher designed tasks and tests
- Criterion referenced benchmarks
- Using standardised tests
- Sharing information regarding the child's progress with parents.

For the child for whom English is an additional language, assessment will focus on the development of the child's language and literacy and/or the child's learning with subjects in the Primary School Curriculum. Where appropriate, the assessment methods used should be informed by the different dimensions of learning identified in the Primary School Curriculum. These are presented below.

## ***Dimensions of learning***

<b>Dimensions of learning</b>	<b>Relevant focus of assessment for the child learning English</b>
Cognitive dimension	The cognitive dimension of assessment entails an identification of the child's progress in language and literacy as well as in the subject areas.
Creative dimension	The creative dimension of assessment concerns the child's inquisitive and spontaneous interaction with people, concepts and environments that may be new and unfamiliar for the child.
Affective dimension	The affective dimension of assessment takes into consideration the child's sense of belonging as well as his/her preferred learning styles and how the child engages with learning tasks.
Physical dimension	The physical dimension of assessment takes into consideration the child's developing fine and gross motor skills.
Social dimension	The social dimension takes into consideration the child's growing capacity to interact with peers and others in a new socio-cultural context.



## **Developing a picture of the child's prior learning**

The support provided by the school will be based on any information available relating to the child's prior learning experiences, including language and literacy learning. Initial contact with the child's parents should be conducted sensitively.

To determine the future learning needs of the child, it will be important to know whether he/she has previously attended school and if any samples of the child's previous school work are available. The teacher may also be able to ascertain whether the child's attendance in other schools was sustained or interrupted. Interrupted learning may have affected the child's cognitive and social development and this will impact on the methods that the teacher uses to involve the child in the classroom setting. It is also important to identify the language(s) that the child uses while at home and while communicating with other members of the community.

The NCCA has developed a short prior-learning log, which will help schools in creating and maintaining this picture of the child's learning (Appendix 2). Once the child has become familiar with his/her new school environment, the mainstream teacher and the language support teacher (if there is one in the school) may wish to assess the child's English language and literacy proficiency. IILT have developed a short entry assessment test (Appendix 3) which may assist in this process. Directions for administering the test and for interpreting the results are available from IILT.

## **Assessment during the silent phase**

As discussed earlier in this document (p. 8), a child who is learning a new language in a new cultural context may appear to withdraw and experience a silent phase. During this silent phase it is important to monitor the child's on-going social, cognitive and linguistic development. The length of this phase will vary, but over time it should be possible for the teacher to note increased interaction between the child and others in the classroom. This interaction may take the form of the child looking at and copying the actions of other children, engaging in nonverbal forms of communication such as using gestures or calls for attention or using his/her home language as a means of communication.

The observation chart developed by IILT (Appendix 4) can help teachers to monitor the child's development during the silent phase. This, together with any anecdotal observations and records will assist in identifying any further assessment that the child may require.

## Teacher observation

Teacher observations of the child's work, his/her interactions with peers and the strategies that the child uses to engage with a task are assessment methods regularly used by class teachers. They are very effective in identifying progress made by the child and in the identification of future learning needs.

The teacher can use a range of observation methods which vary in terms of what aspect of learning/behaviour is being observed, whether or not a single child or a group of children are being observed, and the purpose of the observation (for example, to determine the frequency with which a child displays a behaviour or for how long he/she spends at a task/activity, or to identify difficulties the child is experiencing in understanding a particular concept). Assessment information gathered by the teacher through observation may be recorded in a number of ways. These include using anecdotal records and teacher narratives.

Observing the child during a **reading activity**, in any curricular area, can provide information on the child's literacy in English. As the child reads, the teacher assesses

- how he/she decodes printed texts
- whether he/she has an adequate understanding of the texts.

Teacher observations of **peer and collaborative talk** provide important insights into the child's capacity to attain learning objectives in both language development and in curricular areas.

The teacher may also wish to observe and monitor the child's interactions when **working collaboratively** with others to assess his/her personal and social development. Some cultural differences may lead the teacher to focus on explaining new cultural practices which are associated with the classroom and the school.

Observations of the child while he/she is involved in **writing activities** will enable the teacher to assess whether the child uses successful strategies to plan for and engage in writing for different purposes. These observations provide opportunities to support the child's ability to think about how English is used and to engage in self-assessment. The writing process can be practised in all curricular areas ensuring that the child's literacy skills may be continuously monitored and developed.

Compiling anecdotal notes during, or directly after observations, ensures that teacher observations are substantiated by written accounts of behaviours and practices observed.

## **Portfolios**

Portfolios consist of chosen samples of work that the child and/or the teacher identify for inclusion in a representative body of work. These samples should show how the child's learning develops over time. The teacher may use some of the suggestions contained in *Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the Primary School Curriculum, Guidelines for Teachers (Chapter 2)* for examples of how ICT may be used in the development of electronic portfolios. The child who is at the initial stages of learning English should have an English portfolio containing

- drawings or sketches associated with early or pre-literacy
- samples of writing the child has generated in his/her home language as a result of project work or other classroom based activities (if the child is literate in his/her home language)
- examples of first letters and words written in English
- word lists in English or early bilingual dictionaries which assist the child to use language within his/her immediate school and home environment
- attempts at writing using one or more sentences
- samples of writing using the writing process.

An assessment of the child's portfolio will help the teacher and the child to see progress over time. The child is encouraged to look at how his/her work has developed and, in conjunction with the teacher, to identify new learning goals. Provided below is an example of one teacher's reflections on her student's (Maurice) progress in English using a portfolio.

Subject	Language and literacy development
English	<p>Maurice began class with no language skills in English. He is now able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use appropriate sentence structures to create simple sentences.</li> <li>▪ describe his work</li> <li>▪ use opportunities provided during the writing process to self correct his errors in writing.</li> </ul> <p>He has made sustained progress with his writing. So far, the samples of writing, which he has created with assistance from peers and with my guidance, have been limited to personal narrative experiences.</p> <p>The next phase of his work will include a simple book review and will also include work that is independently generated.</p>

***Language and literacy development in English***

Depending on the school's assessment policy, a component of portfolio assessment may entail an ability to use the 'dossier', which is part of the European Language Portfolio developed by IILT. The dossier consists of a record of the child's learning experiences with the topics that the language support teacher uses to facilitate the child's learning. The dossier will complement other forms of portfolio assessment and will add to the inventory of informal assessment resources available to the teacher.

Portfolios may also be used for on-going assessment in other areas of the curriculum. Provided below is an example of how the teacher might use a portfolio to inform assessment of the child's learning in history and how this assessment tool may also be used to monitor the child's language and literacy skills.

Subject	Curriculum knowledge, skills and attitudes	Language and literacy development
History	<p>A review of Abiba's portfolio shows that she has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ grasped concepts associated with working as an historian</li> <li>▪ developed several time lines illustrating her understanding of how events change over time.</li> </ul> <p>An observation of her work shows that she may need to improve in the area of working collaboratively with others.</p>	<p>Abiba has developed a word list of terms associated with historical events.</p> <p>Her writing shows that she has gained an increasing ability to use and sequence tense correctly.</p> <p>The use of graphic organisers is an area that should be improved. This will be addressed partly with the use of ICT.</p>

***Portfolio assessment***

Where facilities and resources facilitate, the teacher may also support the child in developing an electronic portfolio of work. This might include samples of presentations or written work and of audio/visual work created by the child.

## Teacher designed tasks and tests

Teacher designed tasks and tests are beneficial in assessing the child's learning in particular areas of knowledge, skills or attitudes. Tasks designed for and assigned to children for whom English is an additional language should emphasise clarity and simplicity of direction. The criteria should be clearly identified and explained before the task is given to the children.

Teachers may use a variety of tasks to assess the child's language and curriculum learning. Some of these might include the following:

- Improvising group dramas or 'scenarios'
- Asking children to reassemble jumbled words, sentences or texts
- Asking children to respond to verbal or written directions given by the teacher or peers
- Creating a new ending to a familiar tale or imagining what might happen next
- Asking children to complete cloze passages<sup>11</sup>
- Identifying the appropriate operations to be carried out in Mathematics word-based problems
- Drawing graphics that record Science experiments
- Using classroom texts to assess the child's reading ability.

An additional means of assessment involves the use of criterion-referenced benchmarks.

## Criterion referenced benchmarks<sup>12</sup>

Criterion referenced benchmarks provide a framework for assessment for and of the child's learning. Their use ensures that the combination of assessment approaches add objectivity to assessment of the child's learning. This form of assessment compares the child's learning to a standard of performance rather than to a norm achieved by other children.

ILT developed the criterion referenced *Primary Language Proficiency Benchmarks*, (see Appendix 5) to identify the progressive language proficiency levels of children who are learning English as an additional language in Irish primary schools. The benchmarks are linked to learning outcomes identified in the Primary School Curriculum and are adapted from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF). They are presented in the form of proficiency statements, which are referenced to the discrete

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<sup>11</sup> Careful consideration should be given to the objectives for testing using cloze passages and multiple-choice tests. The tests should measure the skills and discrete languages areas taught by the teacher. For example, a cloze test might focus on the use of verbs or verb tenses used in a context which have been learned previously by the child.

<sup>12</sup> Note that while criterion-referenced benchmarks may be useful in identifying the child's language and literacy needs, they are not a component of the Primary School Curriculum.

language skills of listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing. They use graded ability levels, namely 'A1, A2 and B1' which match progressively challenging 'can do' statements.

These benchmarks enable the language support teacher, with the assistance of the mainstream classroom teacher, to match the child's language and literacy performance to a graded list of proficiency benchmarks. They are used to

- assess language development over time
- identify future learning goals and objectives
- determine when the child has the capacity to access the curriculum independently.

The *Primary Language Proficiency Benchmarks* serve the dual purpose of assessment for learning and assessment of learning.

### **Using standardised tests**

A standardised test is an assessment instrument that contains 'standardised' procedures for its administration, its use and for scoring the results obtained. Standardised tests are commercially produced and contain objectively scored items. They provide information on how well children perform in relation to a normed group of children, and may not be suitable for children for whom English is an additional language.

Teachers need to examine the test instrument to determine whether it matches the child's proficiency in English. Teachers might also question whether the child will be able to follow the written or oral instructions for the test. If the child's proficiency in English does not enable him/her to engage successfully with the test instrument, then the teacher may decide not to administer the test.

Teachers should be cautious about interpreting the results of children whose home language is not English and they should not to interpret these results as illustrating the child's true potential. Children who achieve low scores on language and Mathematics tests may have the potential to attain higher levels of achievement than those that are reflected in test results.

Schools may decide to involve the child for whom English is an additional language in standardised tests once he/she has obtained the linguistic competence necessary to engage

fully with the Primary School Curriculum. Anecdotal evidence might suggest that some children attain this level within one year or two years of attending school. This is particularly the case in junior classes. However, for the majority of children, especially those in senior primary classes, the progression to a sufficient level of language proficiency in English may take up to five years or more.

In the interim, as the child acquires sufficient language proficiency, teachers may use a range of informal monitoring and assessment techniques in order to ensure that the teacher obtains a more complete picture of the child's achievements.

### **Reporting the child's progress**

According to the *Education Act (1998)*, the school principal and teachers must evaluate their students regularly and report to parents on their progress.

Providing information to the child's parents regarding the child's learning forms an important part of the link between school, home and the community. This can be challenging if the parents lack the English language skills necessary to communicate fully with the teachers. Schools can adapt strategies that maximise the potential for mutual understanding and an exchange of views.

While planning for a meeting with the child's parents, teachers may wish to explore how they might:

- Work collaboratively with the language support teacher and the home school community liaison co-coordinator in preparation for the meeting
- If possible, engage the services of a translator from the community with whom the school has already established a professional relationship. This person may assist in communicating information to parents if they do not speak English and inform parents of the range of approaches that are used in monitoring and assessing the child's progress in schools
- Invite parents to view concrete examples of the child's work, such as records of project work, displays and presentations so that they can see what progress has been made
- Encourage parents to take a continued interest in the child's learning by promoting the maintenance of literacy in the home language.

The assessment tools and policies adopted within schools will be more effective when they result from collaborative decision making between the mainstream classroom teacher, the

language support teacher and other colleagues in the school. IILT have developed reporting cards for parents which utilise 'smiley faces' to indicate the child's achievements (see Appendix 6 for an example; they are available in a more extensive format from the IILT website <http://www.iilt.ie>).

It is important to provide parents with practical insights into how their child's learning has changed over time. This may be done by sharing concrete examples of how the child's work has progressed, as evidenced for example in the European Language Portfolio or other portfolio work that the child has completed. Please refer to the Appendices for further ideas regarding how the child's learning might be assessed in the classroom.



# Summary

These guidelines have been developed to support teachers in mainstream classrooms in implementing the Primary School Curriculum for all children, in particular those children for whom neither English nor Irish is a first language.

The approaches and methodologies provided will assist teachers in their classroom planning to enable these children to access the Primary School Curriculum at an appropriate level.

The NCCA will add to its work in this area by developing further web-based exemplars which will focus on good practice in teaching, learning and assessment from junior infants to sixth class. The exemplars will include video clips, digitised material and samples of children's work.

We would welcome any feedback you may have on the guidelines and how you have used them. Feedback may be sent by email to [info@ncca.ie](mailto:info@ncca.ie) inserting English as an Additional Language in the subject line or by post to NCCA, 24 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

## Glossary

**Anecdotal records:** Observing the child's language, cultural, social or behavioural practises over time, enables the teacher to maintain a record of the child's achievement and progress with language. Information from these anecdotal records, when combined with other assessment information, can provide more detailed information for parents and for other teachers.

**Buddy system:** Buddy systems help schools to provide a child for whom English is an additional language with a peer learning guide. In some circumstances, the buddy may also act as a language interpreter. Buddy systems enable both children to benefit from the experience by learning about one another's home language and cultural background.

**Comprehensible language input:** Research has indicated that it is easier for the child to learn an additional language when he/she is able to understand most of target language used during communication. Thus, the child builds on what is already known while he/she is introduced to new words, phrases and structures.

**Differentiated learning needs:** Within any class group there may be considerable variation between children's learning styles, their pace of learning and their language and literacy proficiency. To meet children's different learning needs, teachers differentiate both the content of language and literacy instruction and the teaching methods used.

**English as an additional language (EAL):** The use of the term EAL in the Irish context refers to children for whom English is not their home language. In using this term, the NCCA takes cognisance of the child's prior home language and literacy learning and recognises that this language is neither Irish nor English. The focus is on providing children with the language necessary to enable them to participate to their fullest potential in experiencing the Primary School Curriculum in the mainstream classroom.

**Lexica / lexicon:** For the purposes of teaching in the mainstream setting, a lexicon is the body of words or terms which is associated with a particular subject area or experience. It incorporates the vocabulary associated with the subject but pays particular attention to how the vocabulary is used in particular situations.

**Phonological awareness:** Through word games, songs, rhymes, riddles, poetry, drama and other activities, children can explore the relationship between the sounds and letters that make up the English language sound and writing system. Children may build on their phonological awareness by comparing sounds in their home language with those of English and by making connections between words/sounds that they already know and those that are new. Phonological and phonemic awareness is discussed in the English Curriculum (p. 14).

**Silent phase:** Many children who are introduced to a new culture and new language may experience what is known as the silent phase of language development. During this phase, which may last from a few days to some months, children listen to the new language and become familiar with its conventions while they remain silent. The teacher may assist the child's linguistic development at this stage by providing opportunities for the child to participate in simple classroom routines.

**Total physical response (TPR):** During the early phases of English language acquisition, the teacher can support the child's language skills by linking actions with verbal cues. For example, the teacher may lead the children in singing and performing action songs and action rhymes. At this phase of learning, the child increases his/her knowledge of the language by listening to and carrying out verbal instructions. Total physical response allows the child to react to spoken language through action without having to speak or produce responses, This helps the child to gain a greater understanding of the conventions of English before engaging in spoken interactions with others.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1 - The Irish Flag



The national flag of Ireland consists of three equal-sized vertical rectangles of green, white, and orange. The flag is twice as wide as it is tall. The green side is by the flagpole. The flag is flown at all government buildings and is frequently seen outside many private buildings such as hotels and supermarkets.

These days, it is usually accompanied by the EU flag. Many people who haven't been to Ireland will recognise the flag from its enthusiastic waving by Ireland fans at international soccer and rugby matches.

The orange stripe represents the Northern Irish Protestant tradition, while the green signifies the older Gaelic and Anglo-Norman, mainly Catholic, element in the population. The white represents the hope of peace between them.

The tricolour was first unfurled at a public rally in 1848 by the nationalist Thomas Francis Meagher, who declared: "The white in the centre signifies a lasting truce between the 'Orange' and the 'Green', and I trust that beneath its folds the hands of the Irish Protestant and the Irish Catholic may be clasped in generous and heroic brotherhood."

It was adopted as the national flag of Ireland upon independence from Britain in 1921. Its position was formally confirmed by Article 7 of the Constitution of 1937.

<http://www.eu2004.ie/templates/standard.asp?sNavlocator=3,242,457> accessed 30.08/04

## Appendix 2 – Prior learning log

Areas of interest		Notes
Has the child attended a school in Ireland?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the child attended a school in another country?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Has the child's learning been continuous?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Was the child's home language also the language of instruction?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Can samples of the child's prior work be provided?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Do parents/guardians wish for their child's home language or literacy to be used in class?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	



## Appendix 3 – Initial interview assessment for new pupils (IILT)

√ appropriate box as interview proceeds

\* response may not be accurate but indicates a reasonable level of comprehension

		No response	Some comprehension but unsure response	Response indicating comprehension*
1	What is your name?			
2	How old are you?			
3	<b>What is your age?</b>			
4	What language do you speak at home?			
5	Where do you live?			
6	<b>Have you brothers and sisters?</b>			
7	<b>What games do you like to play?</b>			
<b>Only proceed to 8 if the pupil has answered some or all of questions 1-7</b>				
8	How did you come to school today?			
9	<b>Did you go to school in another place? (if applicable)</b>			
10	<b>Tell me about your last school</b>			
11	<b>What was your best subject?</b>			
12	<b>What did you not like in school?</b>			
13	<b>What will you do today after school?</b>			
14	<b>What would you like to be when you finish school?</b>			

## Interpretation of initial interview assessment

### Questions 1-7

Inability to answer a single question between 1-7 indicates that the pupil

- 1) has little or no English language proficiency or
- 2) may be passing through a non-verbal period. If you suspect that 2 may be the case, apply the ***Observation checklist for the non-verbal period*** over the following weeks.

Ability to answer some or all of questions 1-7 indicates some level of proficiency. Observation is necessary over the following weeks with the use of further checklists to identify the pupil's proficiency in relation to the ***Language Proficiency Benchmarks***.

If the pupil is unable to proceed to question 8, the likely level of proficiency is in the **A1 range** in the ***Language Proficiency Benchmarks***. However, it is inevitable that proficiency levels will vary across different skills areas. For example, the pupil may be at **A1 level** in some activities which are based on *spoken interaction*, but may not be capable of reading or producing written text. In this case, broad achievement at A1 level provides the first set of learning objectives.

### Questions 8 - 14

- These questions are progressively more difficult and involve the use of past and future tenses as well as the conditional. If a pupil identifies the different tenses but replies inaccurately, then he/she may have some competence at proficiency level A2 but is generally at A1 level.
- If the pupil both identifies the tense used in the question and responds accurately, then he/she may have spoken interaction proficiency in the A2/B1 range. It is necessary to apply further observational checklists in the following weeks to ascertain, in particular, where deficiencies exist in other skills such as reading or writing.
- It is important to remember that, for any pupil, language proficiency will not be consistent at the same level across all skills areas and units of work. Therefore learning objectives should be set in accordance with observed and noted individual strengths and weaknesses.

# Appendix 4 – Monitoring development during the silent phase (IILT)

## Checklist for observing progress in ESL learners during the non-verbal (silent) period





Name of pupil: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

The pupil is – *(Write the date of observation in the relevant column)*






	Not at all	Occasionally	Regularly
Using his/her mother tongue with teacher/peers despite their inability to understand			
Making eye contact with the teacher			
Watching other pupils closely			
Imitating other pupils' actions			
Using facial expression to communicate feelings			
Bringing particular objects, books etc. to teacher			
Responding to cues acted out by teacher or other pupils			
Attention getting by interacting with other pupils or teacher (e.g. handing them objects)			
Requesting help by making signs, pointing etc.			
Indicating dislike of an object or activity			
Protesting by making sounds or appearing aggressive			
Imitating non-verbal behaviour of other pupils			
Repeating and rehearsing words or phrases			
Experimenting with sounds of English			
Following instructions given verbally			

# Appendix 5 – Sample global benchmarks of language proficiency (IILT)

Global benchmarks of communicative proficiency – Listening and Reading (for details see Language Proficiency Benchmarks)

		<i>A1 BREAKTHROUGH</i>	<i>A2 WAYSTAGE</i>	<i>B1 THRESHOLD</i>						
<b>U N D E R S T A N D I N G</b>	<b>Listening</b> 	I can understand words and phrases about myself, my family and school and simple questions and instructions.	I can understand most instructions given inside and outside school, can follow topics covered in the mainstream class, and can understand a simple story.	I can understand detailed instructions given in school, the main points of topics presented and stories read aloud in the mainstream classroom, and films about things I am familiar with. I can follow most conversations between other pupils without difficulty.						
	<b>Reading</b>  <small>(if appropriate to the age of the pupil)</small>	I can recognize the letters of the alphabet and can understand signs and simple notices in the school and on the way to school. I can understand words on labels or posters in the classroom and some of the words and phrases in a new piece of text.	I can understand short texts on familiar subjects and can use the alphabet to find items in lists (e.g., a name in a telephone book).	I can understand descriptions of events, feelings and wishes and can use comprehension questions to find specific answers in a piece of text. I can also use key words, diagrams and illustrations to help me understand texts I am reading. I can follow written instructions for carrying out classroom activities.						
		<b>A1</b>			<b>A2</b>			<b>B1</b>		
		With a lot of help	With a little help	With no help	With a lot of help	With a little help	With no help	With a lot of help	With a little help	With no help
<b>Listening</b> 										
<b>Reading</b> 										

**Global benchmarks of communicative proficiency – Speaking and Writing** (for details see Language Proficiency Benchmarks)

		A1 BREAKTHROUGH			A2 WAYSTAGE			B1 THRESHOLD		
S P E A K I N G	<b>Spoken Interaction</b> 	I can say <i>hello</i> and <i>goodbye</i> , <i>please</i> and <i>thank you</i> , can ask for directions in the school, and can ask and answer simple questions.			I can answer questions about my family, friends, school work, hobbies and holidays. I can keep up a conversation with my classmates when we are working together, and can express my feelings.			I can talk fluently about school, my family, my daily routine and my likes and dislikes. I can take part in classroom discussions and can hold conversations with other pupils about things I am interested in. I can repeat what has been said and pass the information on to another person.		
	<b>Spoken Production</b> 	I can give a simple description of where I live and people I know, especially members of my family.			I can describe my family, my daily routines and activities, and my plans for the immediate or more distant future.			I can retell a story that has been read in class or the plot of a film I have seen or a book I have read. I can describe a special family event (religious festival, birthday, new baby, etc.) and can explain my opinions and plans.		
W R I T I N G	<b>Writing</b>  (if appropriate to the age of the pupil)	I can write my name and address and the name of the school. I can write labels on pictures and copy short sentences from the board.			I can write new words in my European Language Portfolio and can write short texts on familiar topics (e.g., what I like to do when I'm at home). I can write a short message (e.g., a postcard) to a friend.			I can write my daily news, a short letter, a summary of a book or film, an account of my feelings about an event or situation, and a short dialogue to be performed by puppets.		
		<b>A1</b>			<b>A2</b>			<b>B1</b>		
		With a lot of help	With a little help	With no help	With a lot of help	With a little help	With no help	With a lot of help	With a little help	With no help
<b>Speaking</b> 										
<b>Writing</b> 										

# Appendix 6 – Reporting information to parents (sample, additional cards available from IILT)<sup>13</sup>

## Parent – Teacher Meeting Report

Name of pupil: _____	
Class: _____	Date: _____

### Punctuality and attendance:



1

2

3

4

5

6



Time school starts: \_\_\_\_\_

### Interaction with other pupils:



1

2

3

4

5

6



### Interaction/answering in classroom activities:



1

2

3

4

5

6



### Reading:



1

2

3

4

5

6



### Writing:



1

2

3

4

5

6



### Speaking:



1

2

3

4

5

6



### Listening:



1

2

3

4

5

6



<sup>13</sup> While using these report cards, teachers should ensure that parents/guardians understand the icons used.