

## ‘INCLUDING’ ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE OR DIALECT (EAL/D) LEARNERS IN YOUR CLASSROOM

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*Cindy Valdez explores some of the strategies that help to support English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) learners in your classroom, helping to address their academic and emotional needs...*

*“The [Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education] Declaration has two distinct but interconnected goals:*

*Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity*

*Goal 2: All young Australians become:*

- *confident and creative individuals*
- *successful lifelong learners*
- *active and informed members of the community.*

*Achieving these education goals is the responsibility of Australian Governments and the education community in partnership with young Australians, their families and carers and the broader community.” (Education Council, 2019)*

**In line with this policy**, my vision for all students, regardless of their backgrounds, is that they be included in their classroom lessons, and they are able to access the Australian Curriculum, so that every student feels that they have a rightful place in their learning environments. A student, regardless of their race, socio-economic background, physical or intellectual ability should be able to be part of any classroom and receive the quality education that they deserve and are entitled to. It may be a challenge, but it is achievable. During planning and programming sessions, my role as the English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) Specialist teacher/mentor has been to ask my colleagues to reflect upon the following questions. In this paper I pose the same questions with my responses.

**“How do I ensure that each student feels that they belong and is included in my classroom?”**

‘Belonging’ and ‘inclusivity’ could mean different things

to different people. Some would say that it means that each child is ‘heard’ or ‘seen’, that their thoughts and views are valued. Others would say that each child feels that they ‘fit’ in, or that they ‘get along’ with everyone in the classroom. Whatever it is, there’s a general consensus that to feel ‘included’ means that your contributions are valued; you are allowed to have, and to express, your own opinions; you are treated with kindness and respect; and last, but not least, you are seen as a **‘worthy conversational partner’** by your peers.

For me, there is another ‘layer’ to being ‘included’ and ‘belonging’ in the classroom. That is, that each individual is seen as part of a **‘community of practice’**. In a recent article I read, “*Scaffolding Practice: Supporting Emerging Bilinguals’ Academic Language Use in Two Classroom Communities*” (Pacheco, M., Shannon, D. & Pray, L. (2017). the authors described this practice as:

*“...community-focused, language-as-practice perspective of academic language builds from the foundation that a classroom is a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), or a group of individuals that engage one another with shared resources to work toward common goals. With this perspective, we frame academic language as practices, or the different ways that students and teachers use language to participate in activities that are recognized and valued by other community members” (Pacheco, M., Shannon, D. & Pray, L. p.65, 2017).*

**How do I design learning experiences that are ‘intellectually challenging’ (Dufficy, 2005) for my students?**

As we need to engage our EAL/D learners in learning that involves higher order thinking, critical thinking, collaboration and problem solving, teachers need to:

make decisions about the 'BIG IDEA' that we want all students to know about and understand; formulate 'essential questions' so that all students know 'why' we are learning what we are learning about; and design a 'rich task' to consolidate and demonstrate new learnings.

EAL/D learners will greatly benefit from participating in **High Challenge/High Support programs**. These programs aim for deep knowledge and deep learning, whilst providing EAL/D learners with high levels of targeted support via two aspects of scaffolding: '**designed-in scaffolding**' (carefully planned sequence of learning experiences), and '**contingent scaffolding**' (point of need teaching). (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).

In a classroom where a '**community of practice**' is evident, both teacher and student scaffold the academic language in order for everyone to be able to participate in meaningful and purposeful classroom talk. We often push our EAL/D learners towards being able to justify, describe and explain their thinking because as we know "academic language is not something that a student does or does not have, but a practice that a student does" (Pacheco, M et al, 2016, p. 65).

We must clarify our students' thinking by asking questions to '**extend**' the talk in an attempt to engage them in substantive conversations, "which could include attention to language at the vocabulary, syntax, and discourse levels." (Pacheco, M. et al, 2017 p. 65) In a "community of practice", the students will also extend the talk of their peers because the teacher has modelled the language.

### ***How do I scaffold EAL/D learners' use of academic language and participation in class discussions?***

EAL/D learners need to access all curriculum areas, access age-appropriate quality reading materials and access the academic language demands of every subject. This includes, for example, words with different shades of meaning, subject-specific vocabulary/language, scientific language and so forth.

How do you ensure that students are thinking, talking and writing like scientists, historians, geographers, authors, artists or mathematicians? H2

There are language and cultural implications for each subject that need to be considered. That is, EAL/D teachers need to consider the language demands specific for each subject by knowing the language structures, grammatical features and vocabulary development which need to be targeted and explicitly taught.

Using History as the example, Paul Dufficy explains that when teaching History "...an important goal is to assist young people to become historians – to appropriate the texts, the ways and the dispositions of history and historians...in the process of becoming historians, children and young people are, potentially, becoming critical, fair-minded, optimistic, curious, courageous, and angered by injustice" (Paul Dufficy, 2005 p. 41).

### ***How do I ensure that everyone is included in EVERY lesson that I teach? How am I differentiating the curriculum so that all experience SUCCESS?***

EAL/D learners need to be able to make connections to what they are learning about. Can they see their own culture and values in the unit of work? If not, how can we bring their '**cultural capital**' into the curriculum? How do we ensure the learning is relevant to our EAL/D students? The goal is substantive engagement, not compliance and completion of busy work. Both the **Learning Intention and Success Criteria** need to be made visible to EAL/D learners so that they succeed in completing an open-ended rich task throughout the unit of work.

### ***What do I want my students to THINK about?***

Teachers need to know their subject area, and the '**why**' of the unit of work. Prioritise learning outcomes and take the '**slow teaching**' approach. It's not about ticking all the boxes, rather it's about taking the time to design 'deep' learning and careful consideration given to what meaningful learning needs to happen in during each lesson.

### ***What BIG IDEAS do I want them to learn and understand?***

Deconstruct the 'big idea', focus question, essential questions and the 'why' with your learners. The 'big idea' is what you want your students to think and learn

about. It could be written up as a question. For example - to understand 'characterisation': "How do authors use emotive language and impactful noun groups to create characters that are believable?" This could then be deconstructed by unpacking the vocabulary words necessary to understand the question. To ensure that everyone is on the same page.

### *How do I design and sequence the learning?*

- **Backward map** from the rich task so you know the end to plan ahead! Decide on the order in which you would like to tackle the unit. What do my students need to learn about first to achieve the learning outcome? Stage teams will find that this could look different in each class.
- **Frontload** the vocabulary by selecting, highlighting and bringing to students' attention key words, that are pertinent to understanding the text they're about to read, view or listen to.
- **Visible thinking routines.** Find ways to make your students' thinking visible by engaging in various visible thinking routines such as 'see, think, wonder', 'beginning, middle, end' and 'What makes you say that?' to name a few. (Click [here](#) for the link to Harvard University's Project Zero)
- **Message abundance.** EAL/D learners need to hear, see and use target language multiple times and in many different ways (i.e. **message abundance**). Design learning activities that require all students to talk to complete learning tasks by, for example, engaging in visible thinking routines and communicative activities to use the target language/vocabulary.
- **Know thy students!** Give your EAL/D learners timely **feedback** on both content and language learning. Let them know how they are going with acquiring the English language in their speaking, listening, reading/responding and writing. Both the ESL Scales & EAL/D Progression will assist in this process. Click [here](#) for more information Make their **learning visible**, for example, goal setting, wall charts, conferencing, and so forth. As well, plan for engaging ways for students to demonstrate their

learning through, for example, the creation of an artwork.

- **Create your own resources** to link with the current unit of work. Create your own modelled texts as sometimes 'rich' and age-appropriate reading material is hard to find so as a team, collaboratively construct your own. Be mindful not to simplify the language too much as the inclusion of target and subject-specific vocabulary is a must! Learners of English will not learn the academic language unless they are exposed to it. Create other resources such as word/picture/meaning matching cards, cloze activities, ranking activities, margin questions (which may need to be read to your newly arrived students, and translated if possible).

Learning a new language is best acquired in an inclusive environment where each person feels safe to flourish in. An environment where a community of practice comprised of students and their teachers who all feel safe to take risks, understand that learning is messy, value connections, nurture respectful relationships, and understand that learning is best achieved when 'we're all in it together'.

## REFERENCES

Dufficy, P. (2005). *Designing learning for diverse classrooms*. Newtown: Primary Teaching Association Australia.

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (2008) *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*

Pacheco, M., Shannon D., & Pray, L. (2017). Scaffolding Practice: Supporting Emerging Bilinguals' Academic Language Use in Two Classroom Communities. *Language Arts*, 95 (2), 63-76.

## READINGS AND RESOURCES

Hammond . J., (2012) "*Hope and challenge in The Australian Curriculum: Implications for EAL students and their teachers*" *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*

<https://www.alea.edu.au/documents/item/492>

**ACARA - EAL/D Teacher Resource link:**

<http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/student-diversity/english-as-an-additional-language-or-dialect>

**ACARA - EAL/D Overview and Advice:**

[http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD\\_Overview\\_and\\_Advice\\_revised\\_February\\_2014.pdf](http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD_Overview_and_Advice_revised_February_2014.pdf)

**ACARA - EAL/D Progression:**

[http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EAL\\_D\\_Learning\\_Progression\\_Foundation\\_to\\_Year\\_10\\_09052014\\_file\\_2.pdf](http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EAL_D_Learning_Progression_Foundation_to_Year_10_09052014_file_2.pdf)

**ACARA - EAL/D Annotated Content Descriptions, Language/Cultural Considerations & Teaching Strategies: English:**

[http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD\\_Learning\\_Area\\_Annotations\\_English\\_Revised\\_February\\_2014.pdf](http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD_Learning_Area_Annotations_English_Revised_February_2014.pdf)

**Mathematics:**

[http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD\\_Learning\\_Area\\_Annotations\\_Maths\\_Revised\\_February\\_2014.pdf](http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD_Learning_Area_Annotations_Maths_Revised_February_2014.pdf)

**Science:**

[http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD\\_Learning\\_Area\\_Annotations\\_Science\\_Revised\\_February\\_2014.pdf](http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD_Learning_Area_Annotations_Science_Revised_February_2014.pdf)

**History:**

[http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD\\_Learning\\_Area\\_Annotations\\_History\\_Revised\\_February\\_2014.pdf](http://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/EALD_Learning_Area_Annotations_History_Revised_February_2014.pdf)

Australian Curriculum - Student Diversity Link:

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/>

**Harvard Graduate School of Education - Project Zero - Visible Thinking**

<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/visible-thinking>

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Cindy Valdez** has been an EAL/D specialist for over 20 years. She has predominantly worked in south-west Sydney and is passionate about inclusion, developing others as leaders in the EAL/D space, and catering for the academic and wellbeing needs of EAL/D learners, including students from refugee backgrounds.

Cindy led various action learning projects during her role as a Refugee Support Leader in 2017-2019. She is currently an EAL/D Education Leader at the NSW Department of Education, and President of the Association for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ATESOL) NSW.

