Materials for newly qualified teachers

Every Child Matters

English as an additional language and SEN

Self-study task 3

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Introduction to the self-study tasks

These self-study tasks (SST) are designed to help beginner teachers learn more about teaching pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. They can be used as stand-alone activities or to supplement and extend taught sessions on SEN and disability provided by the school or local authority.

There are 17 self-study tasks in all. Each task will take about two hours to complete, excluding practical activities.

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SST1	Inclusion and Every Child Matters
SST2	SEN and disability legislation
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Cognition and learning	
SST6	Moderate learning difficulties
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Working in partnership	
SST16	Working with colleagues in school
SST17	Working with parents/carers and other professionals

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How to use the materials

This is an online resource. Some of the tasks are for you to do on your own; others are particularly suitable to do working with a partner.

Where some of the tasks ask you to record information you need to print out the relevant material first. Other tasks may involve using the internet, which gives you access to rich sources of information about SEN and disability and online forums for additional advice.

Each task includes the following elements:

- the core standards addressed
- learning outcomes
- an opportunity to explore the concepts, definitions and research findings most relevant to the topic
- ideas for implementing the national curriculum inclusion statement in relation to the topic, including target setting, practical strategies, the role of additional adults and pupil grouping
- practical activities, including action research, pupil studies and class observation
- resources – including books and websites
- an opportunity to evaluate your progress against the outcomes and plan your next steps, and
- two extension tasks: one at degree level, and one that could be accredited at masters level.

A useful resource to support your studies is **Implementing the Disability Discrimination Act in Schools and Early Years Settings (DfES, 2006)**. It is available free to all schools and there should be a copy in your school. (If you haven't got a copy, you can order one using the link.)

It should be read in conjunction with **Promoting Disability Equality in Schools (DfES, 2006)** – which you can view, download or order by following the link.

Evidence and sources of information

As you work through these self-study tasks, try to keep a critical and evaluative attitude. Much of the understanding we have of what works, or doesn't work, in relation to meeting the needs of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities has not been fully researched.

Remember:

- many interventions suggested for one group of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities will often benefit other groups of pupils, including those without SEN and/or disabilities
- the quickest way to find out what to do is often to ask the pupil or their parent/carer what they think works.

Literature reviews of 'what works' in relation to literacy and mathematics for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, which has been investigated in some depth, are available at: **www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR554.pdf**

Other sources of information are listed at the end, under 'Resources and references'. You can use these to follow up and learn in greater depth about the material covered in this self-study task.

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Core standards addressed

C4   (a)   Communicate effectively with children, young people and colleagues.

C10   Have a good, up-to-date working knowledge and understanding of a range of teaching, learning and behaviour management strategies and know how to use and adapt them, including how to personalise learning to provide opportunities for all learners to achieve their potential.

C18   Understand how children and young people develop and how the progress, rate of development and well-being of learners are affected by a range of developmental, social, religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic influences.

C19   Know how to make effective personalised provision for those they teach, including those for whom English is an additional language or who have special educational needs or disabilities, and how to take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion in their teaching.

Learning outcome

You will understand the interface between English as an additional language (EAL) and SEN.

Activities   Timings

Activity 1	Introduction to EAL	10 minutes
Activity 2	Statistics and school management	15 minutes
Activity 3	Gathering information and the stages of learning English	30 minutes
Activity 4	Five case studies – considering similarities and differences	20 minutes
Activity 5	Points for action	15 minutes
Extension task 1	EAL and SEN	
Extension task 2	Different pedagogies?	
Resources and references		
Appendix	Possible answers and solutions	

This self-study task is only an introduction to the issues relating to SEN and EAL. For more information and opportunities for further training, visit the website of the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) at **www.naldic.org.uk** NALDIC is the UK professional body for everyone interested in raising the achievement of bilingual pupils with English as an additional language.

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Activity 1

Introduction to EAL

Approximate timing: 10 minutes

The issues for pupils from learning English as an additional language (EAL) alongside SEN often cause difficulties.

You may teach pupils, or may have met pupils during your training, who are learning English as an additional language.

Although some of these pupils will also have SEN and/or disabilities, the great majority will not.

It is not the sole responsibility of a newly qualified teacher (NQT) to identify whether pupils have EAL, SEN or both. But you need to be alert to any signs, and tell the inclusion manager or SEN coordinator (SENCO) if you are concerned.

It is clear from data that pupils with EAL often make rapid progress over a key stage, even if they begin with little English. It should not be assumed that an EAL learner has SEN unless their progress is notably slower or markedly different than for similar pupils.

It is very important to remember what the legislation says in this respect:

"Children must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they will be taught."

SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001)

This self-study task starts from two underlying principles:

- Lack of fluency in English should not be thought of as a special educational need in cognition and learning

- As a rough guide, the percentage of pupils with EAL identified as having SEN should be similar to the overall percentage of pupils identified as having SEN in the main school population

It is useful to consider some of the terminology used when discussing EAL, as it is different from the terminology used to discuss SEN. Definitions are given in table 1 on the next page.

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Table 1: Definitions	
EAL	English as an additional language. This recognises that many pupils learning English already know more than one other language and are adding English to their repertoire. EAL is the term most often used in schools.
Bilingual, multilingual or plurilingual	All of these terms refer to pupils who have access to more than one language at home and at school. The terms do not necessarily imply that the pupil is fully fluent in both or all of their languages. This terminology has changed over time. Pupils now referred to as bilingual, multilingual, plurilingual or learning EAL used to be referred to as speaking their 'mother tongue'. This was changed in the 1990s as it was thought to marginalise fathers and others. The term 'first language' is also sometimes used for the first language acquired by the pupil. The terms 'home language' or 'community language' are also used to denote that languages other than English may be used at home or in the pupil's community.
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). This term is not used in schools, but is common in post-16 settings, qualifications and in guidance, where the term 'EAL' may not be understood.
Early stage learners	Pupils who are at the earlier stages of learning EAL. This is often used interchangeably with 'new arrivals' or 'beginners in English'.
Advanced learners of EAL	Pupils who have had considerable exposure to English and are no longer in the early stages of acquiring the language. These pupils may need support to develop the cognitive and academic language needed for success in education.
Minority ethnic group	All groups other than the white British majority. Until recently, only a very small percentage of EAL learners were white, though with recent arrivals from the new EU countries, this percentage is rising. Issues of race, ethnicity and culture are not the same as the issues for EAL learners, but there are often links between them.
Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG)	A grant distributed to local authorities on a formula basis depending on the number of EAL learners and the number of pupils from 'underachieving' minority ethnic groups in their area, combined with a free school meals indicator. The local authorities must then pass on the bulk of this funding to schools.

In this self-study task, the terms 'EAL learners' and 'bilingual pupils' will be used.

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Activity 2

Statistics and school management

Approximate timing: 15 minutes

Most recent data on EAL and SEN

Read the following information on EAL and SEN.

Numbers of pupils in primary schools in England who have EAL[1]				
Date	No of schools	No of pupils	No of EAL pupils*	Percentage of EAL pupils
2007	17,361	4,107,680	447,480	13.5%

* Pupils whose first language is known or believed not to be English

First language other than English
In January 2007 the percentage of pupils in primary schools (of compulsory school age and above) whose first language was known or believed to be other than English was 13.5 per cent, an increase of one percentage point when compared with 2006. (Percentages for previous years were: 2004 – 11 per cent, 2005 – 11.6 per cent, 2006 – 12.5 per cent.)

Minority ethnic groups
In maintained primary schools, the percentage of pupils who were classified as of minority ethnic origin increased from 20.6 per cent in 2006 to 21.9 per cent in 2007. The increase may be partly due to an improvement in the completeness of the data held by schools. The percentage of pupils who were not classified by ethnic group has gone down (for 35,910 or 1.1 per cent of pupils in 2007, information was refused or not obtained).

SEN and ethnicity: issues of over- and under- representation (see Lindsay et al, 2006)
This research, carried out by the University of Warwick, was based on analysis of the 2005 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data on 6.5 million pupils in maintained schools. This shows clear evidence of both over- and under-representation of some minority ethnic groups as having SEN in general, and for certain types of SEN.

Some of the findings
Black Caribbean and mixed white and black Caribbean pupils are around one and a half times more likely to be identified as having behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) than white British pupils.

Bangladeshi pupils are nearly twice as likely as white British pupils to be identified as having a hearing impairment, and Pakistani pupils are two and a half times more likely than white British pupils to be identified as having profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), visual impairment, hearing impairment or multi-sensory impairment (MSI). Research suggests that genetic factors related to consanguinity are an important causative factor in the over-representation of Pakistani children for visual and hearing impairment, MSI and PMLD, and of Bangladeshi pupils for hearing impairment. However, this is a complex field and care must be taken not to overattribute these difficulties to genetics.

1   National Statistics, 2007

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Numbers of pupils in primary schools in England who have EAL continued

Asian and Chinese pupils are less likely than white British pupils to be identified as having moderate learning difficulties (MLD), specific learning difficulties (SpLD) or autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).

Travellers of Irish heritage and gypsy/Roma pupils are over-represented in many types of SEN, including MLD, severe learning difficulties (SLD) and BESD.

Parents' support for their child's learning in minority ethnic groups overall is as high as it is in the white population, but some parents may find it difficult to be involved because of difficulties in understanding English.

These results give a picture of the national situation regarding over- and under-representation of different minority groups in different SEN categories. There is also substantial variation in levels of identification of groups between one local authority and another.

Now think about and write down:

- possible reasons for differential rates of BESD among different black groups

- how barriers to parental involvement can be overcome when the home language is different from that of the school, and

- possible reasons for the over-representation of travellers (who are classified as a minority ethnic group) in certain types of SEN.

When you have finished, compare your notes with those in **the appendix**.

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Now think about your school.

Find out the numbers of:

- pupils with SEN
- pupils from minority ethnic groups, and
- EAL learners.

How do these figures compare to the national statistics[2] shown in tables 2 and 3? If they are significantly different, can you explain the differences?

Table 2: Primary schools				
	Maintained mainstream primary schools (England 2007)	% of pupils	The school I know	% of all pupils
Total	3,304,370			
With statements of SEN	61,280	1.5		
SEN without statements	727,170	17.7		
Minority ethnic pupils	723,130	21.9		
First language known or thought to be other than English	447,480	13.5		

Table 3: Secondary schools				
	Maintained mainstream secondary schools (England 2007)	% of students	The school I know	% of all students
Total	3,288,180			
With statements of SEN	69,510	2.8		
SEN without statements	529,780	16.2		
Minority ethnic students	678,170	17.7		
First language known or thought to be other than English	342,240	10.5		

2   Page et al, 2007

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Find out how responsibility for different groups is organised in your school.

- Is there an inclusion manager with responsibility for SEN and EAL (possibly as well as looked-after children and gifted and talented pupils) or are there two separate people – one responsible for SEN and one for EAL? If so, how do they communicate about issues that relate to both groups?

- What systems does the school use for looking at the particular needs of pupils learning EAL? How is their progress tracked?

- How are teaching assistants deployed? Do they work with both EAL and SEN learners, or do particular teaching assistants specialise in the needs of particular groups?

- Are there specialist teachers for either EAL learners or pupils with SEN? Are they part of the school's staff or do they come from outside the school – eg a specialist teacher working for a local authority support team?

It is important that the systems in schools for identifying, assessing and planning for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities work well with the systems for supporting EAL learners.

Points to remember

Bilingual learners have recognisable patterns of development that are different from learners whose first language is English.

They take up to two years to develop basic communication skills (street and playground survival language).

Some pupils may take a long time before they feel confident enough to actively take part in lessons and use the English they have learnt. A 'silent' period is natural and should not be seen as the child having learning difficulties.

Lack of progress may be due to the linguistic challenge presented by tasks rather than underlying learning difficulties. If the same task is supported with artefacts, pictures and photographs, the pupils will probably do well.

It takes bilingual learners about five to seven years to acquire the full range of academic language skills (grammar, syntax and so on) at the level required for the demands of a GCSE, BTEC or other key stage 4 course.

However, some learners are mistakenly thought to have special educational needs when their learning displays some features that are normal for bilingual learners. And, on the other hand, some EAL learners who do have SEN are not identified as such because their lack of progress is put down to the fact that they are learning English as an additional language.

When trying to identify whether a pupil with EAL also has SEN, there are two issues to guard against:

- diagnosing a learning difficulty that does not exist, or
- overlooking a learning difficulty – the pupil may not be given support at an early stage, so the difficulty becomes entrenched and harder to overcome.

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Activity 3

Gathering information and the stages of learning English

Approximate timing: 30 minutes

This part of the self-study task will help you to:

- understand the need to gather information to gauge whether or not an EAL pupil may also have SEN and/or a disability, and
- know the typical stages EAL pupils go through in learning English.

Gathering information: basic checks

Effective staff teams make sure they make basic checks before jumping to the conclusion that a bilingual learner who is not learning well has SEN.

Broadly, the same indicators will apply to concerns raised about the slower progress of any pupil. However, for EAL pupils you also need to take into account the typical features of learning displayed by EAL learners.

For all pupils:

- specialist checks on the pupil's hearing, vision and language processing need to be made to eliminate these issues first (medical records may have details of these)
- their family should be asked about events or issues that may have affected the pupil, and
- the SENCO, educational psychologist or speech and language therapist should gather evidence of the pupil's proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing (in their own language and/or in English) and the strategies they use.

Other important evidence particular to bilingual learners will include:

- the language(s) used at home and in the pupil's community
- the pupil's proficiency in languages other than English – it is important that this covers their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing
- how long they have been in the UK
- how often they make extended stays in their country of origin, and for how long
- the amount of formal education the pupil has received, and
- any relevant information about the move to the UK, including the pupil's feelings about their new cultural/linguistic/educational environment.

Take a look at the following information, which looks at the broad issues involved in identifying and assessing bilingual pupils. This is adapted from Deryn Hall's book, Assessing the Needs of Bilingual Pupils.[3] It shows avenues of enquiry to follow to find out whether or not a bilingual pupil is learning successfully at school. The 'map' offers a route through which you can explore the various factors that may be causing a difficulty for a bilingual pupil. You might find it useful to use this in further discussion with the SENCO or your mentor.

3   Deryn Hall, 1995

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Identifying and assessing bilingual learners

1 Asking questions

- Basic information (educational history, language(s) used by family and child, religion, community links)
- Screening (physical/medical/sensory)

2 Collecting evidence

- Language level (stage of learning English – new/familiar/confident/very fluent)
- First language development (use bilingual staff to gauge level of fluency)
- Reading strategies (how does the pupil gain meaning from texts; use grammatical cues; use sound/symbol cues)
- Samples of work (picture/sample of writing)
- National curriculum attainment (including early years foundation stage profile/levels, the steps given in A Language in Common and the P scales, but only if the pupil is thought to have SEN)
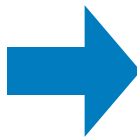
3 Planning support

- Individual or group action plan (with targets and action to be taken)
- Differentiation (appropriate tasks and access strategies planned)
- Curriculum-related assessment (look at pupil's attainment in subject areas – make sure tasks are context embedded and cognitively demanding)
- Form of support (plan support for specific lessons/use visual and concrete cues/use dual language texts/use bilingual teaching support)

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Stages in acquiring a new language

Over the years, several frameworks have been developed for assessing bilingual learners' acquisition of English. Two examples of commonly used assessment frameworks for looking more closely at language acquisition are considered in the next two pieces of reading.

Read reading 1, which is adapted from a document written in 1990 by Hilary Hester for the Centre for Language in Primary Education.

Reading 1: Stages of learning English

The following scale describes aspects of bilingual children's development through English which teachers might find helpful. It is important to remember that pupils may move into English in very individual ways, and that the experience for an older pupil will be different from that of a young pupil. The scales emphasise the social aspects of learning as well as the linguistic.

Stage 1 – new to English
Makes contact with another pupil in the class. Joins in activities with other pupils, but may not speak. Uses non-verbal gestures to indicate meaning – particularly needs, likes and dislikes. Watches carefully what others are doing, and often imitates them. Listens carefully and often 'echoes' words and phrases of others. May choose to move into English through story and reading, rather than speaking.

Stage 2 – becoming familiar with English
Growing confidence in using the English he or she is acquiring. Growing ability to move between the languages, and to hold conversations in English with peer groups. Increasing control of the English tense system in particular contexts, such as story-telling, reporting events and activities, and from book language. Continuing to rely on support of friends.

Stage 3 – becoming confident as a user of English
Shows great confidence in using English in most social situations. This confidence may mask the need for support in taking on other registers, eg in science investigation, in historical research. Growing command of the grammatical system of English and more complex sentence structure.

Stage 4 – a very fluent user of English in most social and learning contexts
A very experienced user of English, and exceptionally fluent in many contexts. May continue to need support in understanding subtle nuances of metaphor, and in Anglo-centric cultural content in poems and literature. Writing confidently in English with a growing competence over different genres.

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Reading 2 is taken from the QCA document, A Language in Common, which offers guidance on how to plan for pupils with EAL and sets out a common assessment framework with steps and thresholds for learning prior to national curriculum attainment. These steps are designed to be easy to use for mainstream teachers and are not age-specific, so they can be used throughout the 5–16 age group.

Reading 2: Assessing EAL

A common scale for assessment

All pupils learning EAL – whether they are young children, late arrivals encountering English for the first time, or pupils whose home language is not English but who have grown up in England – have to know and be able to use:

- the sounds of English
- its grammatical structures and conventions
- the meaning of words and phrases, and
- contextual understandings, including non-verbal features.

They also have to learn to integrate the four language modes – speaking, listening, reading and writing – and cannot rely on only one.

The common scale provides reference points for all pupils. It allows for the fact that pupils will show progress in different ways, and that the routes that they take as learners will differ. There is no expectation that for any one pupil there is only one way to fulfil the broad band of achievement described. Pupils will demonstrate different strengths appropriate to be assessed at the same level. Underlying the concept of the extended scale is the strong expectation that most EAL pupils will move rapidly through the early steps and the graduated level 1.

Uneven profiles

Early assessment profiles of EAL pupils are likely to be quite different from those of pupils whose first language is English, especially in terms of differences between what they can say or write, and what they know or can understand. For example, some pupils may enter school in England already able to read and write in English much better than they can communicate orally. Others may develop rapidly in spoken English, but need particular help with reading and writing. Many pupils are likely to go through a 'silent phase', as they tune in to the sounds of English and work out ways of expressing what they mean in a new or unfamiliar language.

They are also likely to progress at different rates through the early levels of achievement. There is every reason to expect that literate older pupils, even those starting school with 'no English', may leap the early national curriculum English levels within the first term of schooling.

Partly because of these uneven profiles in language use, an important feature when monitoring the progress of pupils learning EAL is to take note of their achievements in other subjects. In some of these they may be attaining highly, especially when their performance is less dependent on the use of English. Evidence from other subjects can, of course, contribute to judgements about skills in English, and work from across the whole curriculum should be taken into account when judging the overall level of achievement in speaking, listening, reading or writing. These profiles are particularly important in judging cognitive ability, which may be masked by limited competence in English.

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Reading 2 continued

Using the extended scales

The criteria should be used to make a first assessment of a pupil starting school as soon as reasonable to do so. They should then be used at regular intervals until the pupil's work meets the relevant expectations of the national curriculum levels.

Assessment of speaking and listening

The extended scale for listening

Step 1
Pupils listen attentively for short bursts of time. They use non-verbal gestures to respond to greetings and questions about themselves, and they follow simple instructions based on the routines of the classroom.

Step 2
Pupils understand simple conversational English. They listen and respond to the gist of general explanations by the teacher where language is supported by non-verbal cues, including illustrations.

Level 1 (Threshold)
With support, pupils understand and respond appropriately to straightforward comments or instructions addressed to them. They listen attentively to a range of speakers, including teacher presentation to the whole class.

Level 1 (Secure)
In familiar contexts, pupils follow what others say about what they are doing and thinking. They listen with understanding to sequences of instructions and usually respond appropriately in conversation.

The extended scale for speaking

Step 1
Pupils echo words and expressions drawn from classroom routines and social interactions to communicate meaning. They express some basic needs, using single words or phrases in English.

Step 2
Pupils copy talk that has been modelled. In their speech, they show some control of English word order and their pronunciation is generally intelligible.

Level 1 (Threshold)
Pupils speak about matters of immediate interest in familiar settings. They convey meaning through talk and gesture and can extend what they say with support. Their speech is sometimes grammatically incomplete at word and phrase level.

Level 1 (Secure)
Pupils speak about matters of interest to a range of listeners and begin to develop connected utterances. What they say shows some grammatical complexity in expressing relationships between ideas and sequences of events. Pupils convey meaning, sustaining their contributions and the listeners' interest.

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Reading 2 continued

Assessment of reading

The extended scale for reading

Step 1
Pupils participate in reading activities. They know that, in English, print is read from left to right and from top to bottom. They recognise their names and familiar words and identify some letters of the alphabet by shape and sound.

Step 2
Pupils begin to associate sounds with letters in English and to predict what the text will be about. They read words and phrases that they have learned in different curriculum areas. With support, they can follow a text read aloud.

Level 1 (Threshold)
Pupils can read a range of familiar words, and identify initial and final sounds in unfamiliar words. With support, they can establish meaning when reading aloud phrases or simple sentences, and use contextual clues to gain understanding. They respond to events and ideas in poems, stories and non-fiction.

Level 1 (Secure)
Pupils use their knowledge of letters, sounds and words to establish meaning when reading familiar texts aloud, sometimes with prompting. They comment on events or ideas in poems, stories and non-fiction.

As well as the scales shown in brief above, the document also contains the extended scale for writing. It has background to assessing English as an additional language; examples of pupils' attainment in English; and a chapter on profiling and monitoring attainment. The document can be obtained from QCDA publications or is on the web: **www.qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/ media/3359_language_in_common.pdf**

People who can help you

The people who can help you are specialist EAL/ethnic minority achievement (EMA) teachers and SENCOs or inclusion managers. EAL/EMA teachers will be able to undertake a language assessment, assess the nature of the difficulties the pupil is experiencing and form a view about whether the difficulties are due to their status as additional language learners or whether there is the possibility of them having SEN. SENCOs and inclusion managers will be able to identify indicators of SEN.

Bilingual learners who do experience difficulties with their learning may also need further assessment from a local authority learning support teacher and/or an educational psychologist.

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Look carefully at readings 1 and 2, and compare what the two frameworks are assessing.

Reading 1 gives a general view of a pupil's social adjustment and learning. It is a good example of combining the social and linguistic aspects of learning.

On the other hand, while it pays little attention to personal and social development, reading 2 gives more detailed information about English literacy acquisition and usage. Both might be useful to gauge where a pupil with EAL is in their learning of English. Which one you use should be determined by what you want to assess. The purpose of any assessment of a pupil should be clarified before you use any means of assessment.

Whatever language assessment system is used, it is important to note that it is not appropriate to use the P scales for bilingual learners unless they have SEN and/or disabilities.

Typical errors made by bilingual pupils

There are many differences in syntax and grammar between different languages. Pupils learning EAL will make errors as they uncover the 'rules' of the new language. This is part of normal additional language development and does not necessarily mean that a pupil has SEN or a language impairment. Examples are shown in the following list:[4]

- putting verbs at the end of sentences – He crayons not giving

- leaving out articles before a noun – She give me sweet

- using prepositions after a noun or inserting them where unnecessary – I told to my mum

- confusing placement of plurals especially noun-adjective agreement – bigs girls

- incorrect use of third person pronouns, particularly overuse of – he, him

- inappropriate use of 'no' or 'not' – He no play with me, I not got my pencil

- omitting auxiliary verbs – My dad going Bangladesh, He reading

- placing adverbs or adverbial phrases inappropriately – He too much cursing

- wrong use (or lack) of preposition – He hit me in my arm.

4   From Deryn Hall, 1995.

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Activity 4

Five case studies – considering similarities and differences

Approximate timing: 20 minutes

You should now feel confident in understanding some of the issues around SEN and EAL.

Consider the pupils in each of the brief case studies below and on the next page, and answer the questions for each one.

When considering what to do next for each pupil, remember that the school's responsibilities may well involve referring the pupil on – eg an inclusion manager or senior manager may make a referral to an educational psychologist.

Case studies[5]
Pupil 1: A year 6 pupil joined the school in September, having previously been to school in Bulgaria. Bulgarian is her home language. After a month in the school she is still not speaking any English.
Does she have SEN and/or a disability? What should happen next?
Pupil 2: A student arrived from China and joined the school in the middle of year 7. His spoken English has become very fluent by the end of year 9 but he still does not understand certain words, concepts or instructions.
Does he have SEN and/or a disability? What should happen next?

5   Based on guidance from Cumbria, Milton Keynes and Portsmouth local authority EMA teams.

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Pupil 3: A pupil came from the Sudan with his mother and joined an infant school in reception. By the middle of year 2 he still struggles to make eye contact with adults and other pupils, and hasn't formed any close friendships. He reacts badly to changes in routine, and still only uses a few English words in school.

Does he have SEN and/or a disability? What should happen next?

Pupil 4: A pupil arrives from Poland in January and goes into year 8. She appears to be able at mathematics, but her parents say she was slow to speak Polish and has only a few words of English. She finds it hard to listen.

Does she have SEN and/or a disability? What should happen next?

Pupil 5: A pupil born in England, who speaks Punjabi at home, has now reached the end of year 4 and is still only achieving level 2s in reading and writing assessments. She can converse with her friends.

Does she have SEN and/or a disability? What should happen next?

Now compare your answers with those in **the appendix.**

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Some possible explanations for difficulties

If a pupil with EAL has any difficulties in learning, this may be because:

- the pupil has not had enough time or opportunity to develop English language skills
- their teaching and learning have not been differentiated appropriately for EAL learners
- the pupil has developed good conversational English, but has not yet had enough time to acquire the academic language skills needed to do well in education
- the pupil is experiencing the emotional effects of racism or other stressful life experiences – this can particularly be the case for newly arrived or refugee pupils
- the culture and ethos of the school is currently not supporting the pupil's needs
- the pupil has a specific language disorder, or
- the pupil has other SEN.

On the other hand...

It is equally important not to assume that pupils with EAL are having difficulties solely because they are EAL learners, when this could be masking a SEN and/or a disability.

Some trigger points that can help you identify whether there is cause for concern include:

- the pupil's progress in acquiring language is below the expected norm both in English and their home language
- the pupil has an unusually slow work rate
- there is little response to intervention from the teacher or other pupils
- the pupil continues to show weakness in verbal comprehension
- the pupil has poor listening and attention skills
- the pupil shows specific weakness in English literacy skills – eg difficulties in reading and comprehension, or limited unaided writing
- the pupil has poor ability in their home language
- the pupil has difficulty acquiring basic number concepts
- the pupil has difficulty in subjects which are less dependent on language, (although it should be recognised that knowledge of vocabulary is necessary in all subjects), and
- the pupil is experiencing behavioural, emotional or social difficulties.

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Typical progress for pupils with EAL

Remember that for pupils with EAL who do not have SEN:

- It can take a newly arrived pupil up to two years to develop 'social' fluency in English, and up to seven years to fully develop the language needed to access the curriculum.

- It is not unusual for pupils with EAL to go through a 'silent phase' where they do not speak at all in school. This can last for up to six months. It is important not to be too hasty in assuming that these pupils have SEN, when their difficulties may be a normal part of the process of acquiring another language.

- There is no single special test which can show whether or not EAL pupils have SEN. Assessments should take into account the pupil's achievement in all areas, and their particular individual strengths and needs. Also, assessments should not be based on a 'one off' test or situation, but be built up over time to give the most accurate picture of the pupil's needs.

- It is essential to obtain as much background information about the pupil as possible – eg previous school experience, literacy in their home language, rate of initial language development in their home language. Their development in the home language is a key indicator of whether a pupil has SEN.

- Assessing the pupil's subject knowledge in their home language will only be valuable if they have used the language regularly for learning in the past and in the subject area being assessed.

- When assessing reading ability it is important to remember that pupils with EAL may often develop decoding skills but still have limited comprehension of what they are reading. In this situation, again, more time is needed to develop their English language skills.

- Pupils' accuracy in reading aloud at word level is often greater than their ability to understand what they are reading. Therefore, the gap between EAL pupils and peers whose first language is English is often greater in comprehension than in reading accuracy.

- Most pupils learning to read in a second language show relatively little difficulty in developing word-decoding skills. If a pupil fails to develop decoding skills this can be significant.

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Activity 5

Points for action

15 mins

Spend a few minutes reflecting on this self-study task and record key points for action below.

What do I want to do next to develop my practice?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How will I do this?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is my timescale for this to happen?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How will I know if I have been successful?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do I need to involve anyone else in enabling this to happen?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Extension task 1

EAL and SEN

1   Choose a 'focus pupil' who has EAL and is not making the progress you expect. Make a note of your concerns.

2   Observe four lessons taught by different teachers, in your own school or another one. Two of the lessons should include EAL learners with SEN and two should have EAL learners who do not have SEN, ideally at an early stage of acquiring English language.

3   Discuss with the teachers after the lessons how they identified that the EAL learners either also had SEN or did not have SEN, and what approaches they find useful.

4   Make a note of your discussions, concluding with a paragraph about the implications for your own practice.

5   Discuss your concerns about your focus pupil with the SENCO and the EAL coordinator. This should include considering whether the pupil has SEN and the steps you can take to ensure they make good progress.

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Extension task 2

Different pedagogies?

Can the communication strategies used by a teacher support pupils with SEN and/or disabilities and also those with EAL? To what degree do your findings support the argument that these are two distinct groups of pupils who always require different pedagogies?

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Resources and references

Documents

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DfES, 2005, Ethnicity and Education: The Evidence on Minority Ethnic Pupils, Research Topic Paper: RTP01-05

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Hester, H, 1990, Stages of English Learning, in Barrs, M et al, Patterns of Learning: The primary language record and the National Curriculum, CLPE

Lindsay, G, Pather, S and Strand, S, 2006, Special Educational Needs and Ethnicity: Issues of over- and under-representation, DfES, Research Report RR757

National Statistics, 2007, First Release: Schools and pupils in England, January 2007, DCSF, SFR 30/2007

Page, J, Whitting, G and Mclean, C, 2007, Engaging Effectively with Black and Minority Ethnic Parents in Children's and Parental Services, DCSF Research Report RR013

Primary National Strategy, 2006, Excellence and Enjoyment: Learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years, DfES, 2134-2006 DCL-EN

QCA, 2000, A Language in Common: Assessing English as an additional language

Websites

Cumbria County Council offers a flow chart that can be used as an indicator of whether an EAL learner has special needs – follow the link and click on 'ISP – SEN EAL Filter Questions':
www.cumbriacc.gov.uk/childrensservices/sats/ema/isp/sen.asp

National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) –
www.naldic.org.uk – has a useful resources section focusing on EAL and SEN issues:
www.naldic.org.uk/ITTSEAL2/teaching/sen.cfm

Portsmouth Ethnic Minority Achievement Service offers a range of resources:
www.blss.portsmouth.sch.uk/sen/res_down.shtml

Information from the DCSF standards site on supporting children learning EAL:
http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/newarrivals/1160039

Symbols that could assist a teacher to support spoken language: **www.widgit.com**

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Appendix

Suggested answers and solutions

Table 1: Definitions	
Reasons for differential rates of BESD among different black groups	• Cultural differences in communication styles • Differences between the expectations at home and school on appropriate behaviour and disciplinary approaches • Failure to challenge racist expectations in some schools
Overcoming barriers to parental involvement when the home language is different from that of the school	• Recognise the diversity of minority ethnic groups • Recruit parents from minority ethnic groups to visible and significant roles in the school community so they can be partners in developing the school's approach to communication • Support day-to-day home-school communication through multimedia approaches, including pictures, film and stories • Make materials available in appropriate languages • Provide interpreters at parents' evenings
Possible reasons for the over-representation of travellers in certain categories of SEN	• There is a disparity between traveller and majority communities on many health indicators • Discrimination in education, employment and housing • Differences between expectations of education at home and at school • Negative perceptions of traveller communities

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Case study answers

Pupil 1:

Does she have SEN and/or a disability?
She probably doesn't have SEN or a disability. It is perfectly normal for a pupil coming into a country with a different language to have a 'silent period'.

What should happen next?
This pupil will need careful monitoring. Information should be gathered on any progress in mathematics and writing. Her vision and hearing should also be checked. It would be useful to have an assessment of the pupil in their home language.

Pupil 2:

Does he have SEN and/or a disability?
It is likely that this pupil doesn't have SEN or a disability. He has been in England for two years and has acquired good spoken English skills. On average, it takes five to seven years for pupils to acquire the skills in English necessary to pass examinations and to achieve at a similar level to their peers. The pupil may be in this phase of learning.

What should happen next?
His teachers should look in detail at the areas where this pupil is having difficulties. Is it only in certain subjects? If so, is the teaching in those subjects appropriately differentiated and motivating?

Pupil 3:

Does he have SEN and/or a disability?
This pupil probably does have SEN and/or a disability – he may have serious social problems as well as language difficulties. After two years of schooling he should have achieved 'everyday' English and has not done so. Perhaps the pupil may have experienced trauma? This may need to be discussed very sensitively with his mother.

What should happen next?
This pupil should have a thorough examination of his sight and hearing, and he should be assessed in his home language. It might help to discuss with an educational psychologist ways of gathering further information to check, for example, for indicators of ASD. He might be offered support in a small social/friendship skills group and his progress should be carefully monitored.

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Case study answers continued

Pupil 4:

Does she have SEN and/or a disability?
This pupil may well have SEN and/or a disability. She may have a language acquisition problem as she was slow to talk in Polish. She could also have a hearing difficulty.

What should happen next?
Checks need to made on the pupil's hearing and she needs a detailed assessment of her spoken language, both in Polish and English.

Pupil 5:

Does she have SEN and/or a disability?
Yes, she may have SEN and/or a disability. With four or five years of schooling in an English medium she should have acquired most of the English language skills needed to work at the same level as her peers. She is weak in both reading and writing, which indicates that she may well have a literacy difficulty. Information about her progress in literacy in her first language will be helpful here.

What should happen next?
This pupil should have a full assessment of her needs, which could be done by an educational psychologist. The pupil's parents must be informed and involved.

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