

Primary National Strategy

Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD): implications for children for whom English is an additional language (EAL)

Frequently Asked Questions

Should the focus for young children learning EAL be speaking and listening, not reading?

It needs to be both, for all children. The Rose Review (2006) is very clear about the importance of the four interdependent strands of language: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The CLLD programme recognises and aims to develop these four strands and takes into account the following points.

- Children should develop rich oral language, as well as a positive attitude to literacy. For bilingual learners, rich oral language includes first and additional languages.
- Early reading, word recognition and language comprehension, should be taught within a broad and rich curriculum, which fosters the four interdependent strands of language: speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- Developing fluency in reading requires experiences of rich language and literature, as well as structured and focused teaching.

Why the emphasis on phonics? There is more to learning to read than phonic work

Rose acknowledges early in the review that:

It is widely agreed that phonic work is an essential part, but not the whole picture, of what it takes to become a fluent reader and skilled writer...For example, nurturing positive attitudes to literacy and the skills associated with them, across the curriculum, is crucially important as is developing spoken language, building vocabulary, grammar, comprehension and facility with ICT. (para 37)

The remit of the Rose Review was to examine the role of phonics within this broader picture and to make recommendations about the most effective ways to teach phonic knowledge and skills to young children.

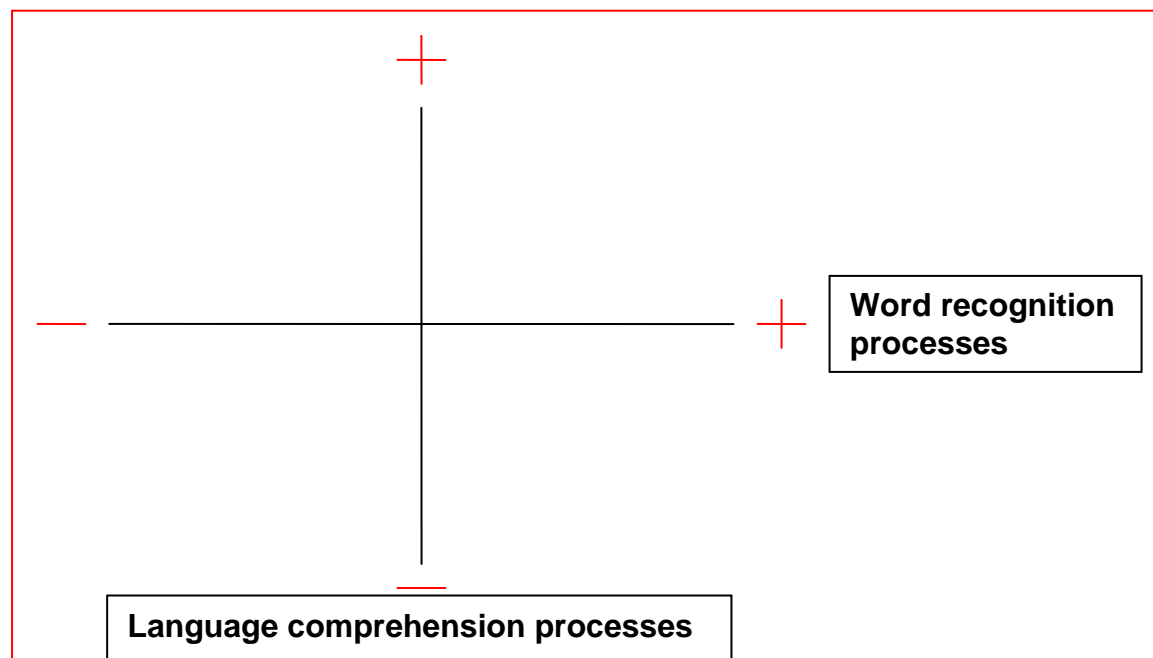
Do children learning EAL need to be taught phonics?

All children should receive high quality, systematic teaching of phonics as part of their entitlement to a rich and broad language curriculum. Successful reading requires the skills of word recognition as well as language comprehension. Word recognition is defined as the ability to read and understand words in, and out of, context, and language comprehension is 'the

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process by which word information, sentences and discourse are interpreted: a common process is held to underlie comprehension and written language.'

These two aspects of reading development are represented visually as two axes in the conceptual framework of the 'Simple View of Reading'.



Each dimension is necessary. Neither is sufficient on its own. (Rose 2006).

[See *Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years, Unit 2 Creating the learning culture*, pages 31-34 for a fuller discussion of this conceptual underpinning and its implications for EAL learners.]

Is it appropriate for young children learning EAL, for example those in Reception classes, to receive the 'daily discrete phonics' sessions recommended in the Rose review?

Yes. The advice of the CLLD team endorses the observation that high quality, daily discrete, phonics sessions should be active, engaging, paced and multi-sensory. Short sessions (15-20 minutes) of this nature every day, following the teaching sequence suggested in the CLLD programme of 'Review-Teach-Practise-Apply' will support *all* children's incremental acquisition of phonics knowledge and skills. This is achieved by:

- using a familiar structure that scaffolds new learning and shows children how it is applied in real reading and writing;
- using props such as objects and pictures to clarify understanding;
- starting with familiar words and extending to new words;
- the use of repetitive words and phrases in context;

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- enabling the practitioner to make ongoing assessments that enable him/her to fine tune each session to match the children's rate of learning.

These of course are important for all children. For children learning EAL aural, as well as oral, experiences should continue through all phases.

The ongoing assessment should include careful observation and listening to assess children's understanding, particularly as some phonemes may not occur in the children's first language and therefore they will need more focused teaching

We know that children learning EAL often acquire phonic knowledge easily. Is there a risk that they may end up as efficient decoders who cannot understand what they read?

As a result of direct instruction in word recognition, EAL learners are often able to efficiently decode words which they do not understand and so it is important that understanding develops alongside the acquisition and application of phonic knowledge. This is particularly important for young bilingual learners as well as older early stage learners who are developing language comprehension at the same time as word recognition processes.

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching for bilingual children in the primary years, 0013-2006 PCK-EN Unit 2, page 34.

This is why both dimensions of the Simple View of Reading are equally critical. It is not suggested that children are *only* taught phonics, but that this is a critical skill, particularly for beginner readers. Teachers and practitioners need to address the dimension of language comprehension equally thoughtfully. Considering each dimension separately, word recognition and language comprehension, enables the teacher or practitioner to assess each child's progress on each dimension and adjust their planning and provision accordingly. The aim is for children to develop in both dimensions, while recognising that for some children progress in each dimension may well be spasmodic and irregular, rather than a steady incline. Regular assessment of children's progress is crucial in determining the next steps in their development in a particular dimension, in line with good *Assessment for Learning* practice.

It is quite possible that EAL learners may learn to decode and encode (spell) words which are outside their current vocabulary when they are learning to read. This is, of course, true of monolingual children too, many of whom may not know the meanings of simple decodable words such as *log, tub, pod, dish* etc. This does not invalidate the skill of decoding, but means that the teacher's job is to help expand the vocabulary of all children, for example through the use of objects, pictures and verbal explanations.

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It also means that the teacher or practitioner has to select carefully the reading material that children will be tackling in guided and independent reading. This is to ensure that it does not contain so many unfamiliar words that understanding is lost, and to pre-teach any unfamiliar words that may present a problem as part of the book introduction in the guided session. Guided reading sessions provide ideal opportunities through small group discussions to extend vocabulary and to assess and develop children's understanding of what they have read, both the literal meaning and inferential meaning.

What about common words that cannot be decoded?

Alongside rapid decoding, an aspect of developing word recognition is the ability to immediately recognise, and be able, to read some of the high frequency words that form a large part of reading vocabulary. Those which are not decodable need to be taught and memorised, for example words such as *the, said, come* which occur very frequently in early reading material. However, many high frequency words are phonically decodable, for example *and, in, on, at, but, can, went, not, mum, dad*, and so children who have learnt to decode rapidly do not need to memorise long lists of common words. Children learning EAL should be provided with opportunities to use these words in meaningful contexts as using them will consolidate understanding of the common words. Guidance on teaching 'tricky words' can be found in *Letters and Sounds*.

Do young children with EAL entering Reception need to develop skills of phonological awareness before they start on a phonic programme?

There is no reason why the phonological awareness of young children learning EAL should be any less well developed than that of other children. The development of phonological awareness will have begun prior to entry into a Reception class and will be ongoing, prior to and alongside the introduction of a phonic programme. The focus for practitioners is building on children's phonological awareness in their first language to develop it in the additional language.

The Rose review recognises the value of activities and games that help 'pave the way' for systematic phonic work. This is encapsulated in Phase One of 'Letters and Sounds'. However, it is important to recognise that some of the activities that fall within Phase One, such as those which support the development of rhyme and rhythm, will continue to be suitable for children of all ages: children do not stop singing, reading poetry or saying rhymes when they start on a phonic programme. Some Phase One activities should continue to be part of the provision in addition to the systematic phonics work at Phase Two and beyond, as bilingual learners will continue to require tuning into the sounds of the additional language.

Careful assessment of each child is key, and until the teacher/practitioner introduces some grapheme/phoneme correspondences (Phase Two) in the multisensory, engaging way described above, they cannot know for sure

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exactly how children will respond: they often surpass expectations. It is probable that many children learning EAL in reception classes will, like most other children, find learning grapheme/phoneme correspondences, and how to blend sounds perfectly straightforward. This was certainly true of those who participated in the Early Reading Development Pilot in 2005-06, where children learning EAL were reported by their teachers to be achieving well.

What about the particular needs of children learning EAL?

The Rose Review suggests that 'By the time children enter school, their language skills are typically considerably advanced. They understand much of what is said to them and they can express their ideas, feelings and needs in ways that others can comprehend. Their language processes are established and though there is still much to develop, particularly in the areas of vocabulary and syntax (grammar), they can be considered to be proficient language users.' (Appendix 1, para.60)

While the above is true for many speakers of English as a mother tongue learning to read, children learning English as an additional language are learning both to understand what is said to them, and to express their ideas to be understood in an unfamiliar language. Children learning English as an additional language will require planned teaching and opportunities to understand the language they hear and read, whatever their age.

The emphasis given to speaking and listening in the programme and especially in Phase One will help practitioners to strengthen provision for children learning English as an additional language. Listening to lengthy stretches of language where both the speaker and the topic are unfamiliar makes great demands on children for whom English is a new language. A familiar speaker using imaginative resources to stimulate talk about a topic which the children already know something about will provide a more helpful context for these children. Equally, the programme offers many opportunities for planned adult-led and child-initiated small-group and partner work to encourage these children to communicate in English as early as possible.

Letters and Sounds notes of guidance, 00282-2007BKT-EN, page 6

Isn't the pace and progression set out for reading in the Primary framework too ambitious for young children learning EAL?

No. It is important to have the same ambitious expectations for children learning EAL as for children for whom English is the mother tongue. With carefully planned teaching, children will make good progress in word

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recognition *and* in language comprehension. Developing both aspects of the reading process will support their achievements in all areas of the curriculum.

How do I teach phonics to an EAL learner who is still at the silent stage?

Some children who are just beginning to learn English as an additional language spend time listening and absorbing the new language before beginning to use it. Their passive understanding will be greater than their active use of the language. During this period, it is important that practitioners continue to teach, involve the child in activities and encourage, but not force verbal participation. Gestures and other non-verbal communication may show what the child understands and knows. Once the child is speaking in English, it would be useful to reassess previous knowledge and understanding. This approach applies to learning and teaching in all aspects of the curriculum, not just the teaching of phonics.