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## EMTAS Position Statement on appropriate resources to support multilingual learners

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**This Hampshire EMTAS Position Statement provides guidance relating to provision for multilingual learners, ie learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL) and the selection of resources suitable for use with those learners.**

**Its intended audience includes Head Teachers, Senior Leaders in school, EAL Co-Ordinators/Inclusion Managers, Governors with responsibility for EAL, Class/Subject Teachers and Learning Support Staff.**

### Key Considerations

#### EAL Best Practice

EAL best practice is that the language-learning needs of multilingual children are best met within the mainstream curriculum. This applies equally to

- children who are new to English (Bell Foundation EAL Assessment Framework Bands A/B);
- those who are developing competence (Bell Foundation EAL Assessment Framework Band C);
- those who are closer to or at full proficiency (Bell Foundation EAL Assessment Framework Bands D/E).

(Bellsham-Revell & Nancarrow, 2019).

Multilingual children are entitled to the same access to the curriculum as their monolingual peers; they should be learning curriculum content across the full range of subjects through the medium of English. They should not be withdrawn to learn English using materials drawn from Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) models. However, ESOL and TEFL aside, decisions that result in less effective provision for multilingual learners are sometimes made (see, for example, Franson, 2009).

The existence of TEFL and ESOL models, and a vast array of commercially-available resources purporting to be suitable for use with multilingual learners can be confusing. This Position Statement aims to clarify the different models, and equip practitioners with the knowledge to make informed decisions about which resources to choose for their multilingual learners.

## The EAL Model

The aim of the EAL model is to teach English **through** the curriculum. For example the language needed for the study of Biology is taught **through** the Biology curriculum and is part and parcel of curriculum content for that subject. The vocabulary and language structures needed by learners are identified by the curriculum content being taught. This is sometimes referred to as 'identifying the language demands of the task' and is done by practitioners during lesson planning.

In the EAL model, grammar teaching and learning is threaded throughout, not taught separately as a bolt-on. As Sharples points out

“...learners encounter the language feature in a focussed way...their attention is drawn to it...For example learners might read a short text that uses the feature several times or the teacher might give some metalinguistic commentary (Did you notice I used the passive there? Why did I do that?)”  
(Sharples, 2021, pp.30-31)

Furthermore, learners are taught alongside their peers in the mainstream classroom with their learning scaffolded and supported through strategies, approaches and resources in line with EAL best practice; they are not grouped according to their level of English or given work to do that is entirely different from other learners.

## TEFL Model

TEFL is the practice of teaching English to children and adults in a non-English speaking country OR teaching English to children and adults in the UK for a time-limited period eg during a summer school. Outside of their TEFL lessons, learners tend to have little opportunity to encounter English in natural contexts; these are therefore artificially constructed in order to teach particular vocabulary and grammar.

In TEFL classes, all the learners are in the same situation in that they are all learning English as a foreign language. Moreover, they are all graded (streamed) in that they will be learning English in classes with other learners who are at a similar stage. This is a different scenario from that experienced by multilingual learners in mainstream classrooms in the UK.

It is worth remembering that vocabulary taught in a TEFL model tends to be themed eg a series of lessons may focus on the vocabulary needed to go shopping or talk about hobbies ie vocabulary/language completely unrelated to the mainstream UK curriculum.

In TEFL, English grammar is taught explicitly ie there are lessons that focus on the past tense, prepositions, articles etc. In this respect too the EAL model differs from the TEFL model.

The above are reasons why mainstream practitioners should be careful not to choose/use materials designed for TEFL teaching with their multilingual learners as they do not equip them with the language needed to access the curriculum.

## ESOL Model

ESOL classes are aimed at adult learners resident in the UK. In a similar way to TEFL, learners are streamed (placed in sets) according to their level of English. Scenarios are used to introduce and rehearse vocabulary related to living and working in the UK.

## Modern Foreign Language (MFL) Teaching

Approaches used in MFL teaching are similar to those used in TEFL and ESOL models ie the vocabulary taught centres around artificially constructed themes such as family, pets, hobbies or holidays and there is a focus on aspects of grammar which are often taught out of context.

Practitioners should note that learners of EAL should not be withdrawn from Modern Foreign Languages (MFL); often they are competent language-learners, able to achieve in line with their monolingual peers where they have been appropriately supported.

## In summary

It is inappropriate to use the same methods and materials with multilingual learners that are used to teach Spanish, French or Mandarin as foreign languages OR that are used to teach English as a foreign language. This includes the use of online websites, apps, workbooks etc., including those that purport to support learners of EAL; their methodology is underpinned by TEFL/MFL principles. Further, such materials and approaches do not meet the language-learning needs of multilingual learners.

Some materials marketed as suitable for learners of EAL are in fact inappropriate for these students. As early as 2009, The Institute of Education highlighted this point in a series of case studies:

*“Where there are comments on materials we have mention of worrying examples such as reference to the EFL textbook Headway, which was never intended for this audience. It appears that the less confident and effective schools may pick up on material brought in from elsewhere, which is often highly unsuitable, rather than devising a curriculum strategy to meet the needs of EAL pupils.” (Institute of Education, 2009)*

Therefore, practitioners in school need to critically examine how, in their practice, they are resourcing provision for their multilingual learners. They should be mindful that much of what is commercially available is unsuitable for these learners, including materials and resources that explicitly state they are aimed at learners of EAL on the front cover.

## What to check for

Feature of resource	Notes to support reflection
Resource may state it is suitable for learners of EAL.	Don't assume this is correct or that the resource is necessarily underpinned by EAL good practice principles. In reality, it may be more suitable for use in TEFL teaching.
Resource may state it covers several years eg is suitable for children in Years 1 to 4.	The age-appropriacy of the resource is questionable; the content cannot be linked to the mainstream curriculum for all the year groups specified.
Resource is published by a reputable publisher.	This is no guarantee that the resource constitutes EAL good practice.
Advertised in reputable publication.	This is no guarantee that the resource constitutes EAL good practice. Remember that the advert will have been paid for.
Resource includes translation facility/elements are in other languages.	This may still not support a learner to access and engage with the mainstream curriculum.
Vocabulary is taught out of context ie is not linked to the mainstream curriculum eg a list of colours or the days of the week or the language needed to talk about hobbies.	Resource does not support learners to engage with the vocabulary needed for the mainstream curriculum.
There is an overt focus on aspects of grammar eg a series of activities that focus on the past tense or how to form plurals.	In the EAL model, grammar teaching is contextualised within the mainstream curriculum eg the use of the passive voice in writing in Geography; the use of the future tense for making predictions in Science.
The material covered does not relate to the mainstream curriculum.	The resource is irrelevant in an EAL context; it may have been produced to support TEFL teaching.
The resource includes low level activities eg colouring in.	The resource is not making good use of the learner's time. The resource reinforces that the practitioner has low expectations of the child.
The resource involves the child working on their own using worksheets, workbooks, computer programmes, apps etc.	The resource does not draw on collaborative approaches with peers/engagement with the curriculum in a mainstream context and instead isolates the child and their learning.
The resource enables the tracking of progress and incentivises the child to want to use it.	The 'progress' may be limited to the resource itself and may not impact on progress within the mainstream curriculum. That the child enjoys using it

	does not necessarily mean it is a worthwhile activity.
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## What makes a resource suitable for use with multilingual learners?

A resource that is in line with EAL good practice:

- links with learning objectives drawn from the mainstream curriculum
- has been created by a class or subject teacher to support a particular lesson or series of lessons
- is age and interest appropriate
- factors in an appropriate level of cognitive challenge for the learner, whether they are beginner learners of EAL or more advanced
- enables learners of EAL to engage and interact with their peers
- is an adaptation of what other pupils in the class are using ie it is similar, appropriately scaffolded to meet the needs of the learner of EAL
- supports learners to demonstrate their learning in different ways eg through the use of ICTs
- facilitates use of first language linked to the curriculum; draws on the learner's first language skills to support them to access and engage with the mainstream curriculum. See the EMTAS position statement '[The role of heritage languages within the educational landscape](#)' for more detail on this.

**Examples of suitable resources that might be externally sourced may include:**

- audio versions of texts/reader pens
- graphic novels
- translated versions of texts
- dual language versions of texts
- abridged/modified versions of texts
- use of ICTs such as Immersive Reader, Book Creator or Texthelp's Read&Write software. See the EMTAS position statement '[The use of technologies to support learners of EAL](#)' for more examples.

**Resources, whether externally sourced or developed by practitioners themselves, should feature:**

- clear instructions
- uncluttered layout
- easy to read font
- appropriately differentiated text/language
- use of clear, unambiguous visuals
- vocabulary that is relevant to the curriculum content being covered
- age-appropriate illustrations/visuals
- space for learners to annotate – in first language and/or in English.

## What actions should practitioners take next?

Review what is already being used; discard things that are not in line with EAL good practice. Consider – and avoid - cultural bias and stereotypes when making choices about the resources used.

Remember you already have available to you all the tools you need to effectively cater for your multilingual learners and accelerate their progress. These include:

- use of the Bell Foundation EAL Assessment framework (or similar) to inform planning and assessment. The framework can help practitioners to identify both the needs of learners at different stages in their acquisition of English and how to support those needs
- lesson planning which includes identification of the language demands of the task(s) ie what words/structures the students will need to actively engage in the lesson and complete the task(s) set
- planned use of first language (L1) as a tool for learning
  - o translation apps
  - o translated/dual-language versions of texts
  - o opportunities to talk in L1 with others who share that language
  - o opportunities to note-take, draft, annotate etc. in L1
  - o opportunities to demonstrate learning in orally L1
- pre-reading of texts that will be used in lessons
- pre-teaching/pre-translation (by learners with the support of their parents) of the vocabulary needed for the mainstream lesson(s) that will be taught eg producing their own subject-specific glossaries
- appropriate grouping
- peer support including collaborative approaches
- use of visuals
- clear modelling of the target language for your subject – modelling of talk, of thought processes, of writing in the target genre etc.

Be critically evaluative of any resource recommendations that are made. Choose carefully being ever-mindful of EAL best practice. Make sure resources you use/develop are linked to the mainstream curriculum. Remember that there are lots of commercially available products marketed as being suitable for learners of EAL which are, in fact, inappropriate in terms of enabling those learners to access and engage with the mainstream curriculum.

EMTAS Specialist Teacher Advisors are available to provide further support and guidance to schools. Email [emtas@hants.gov.uk](mailto:emtas@hants.gov.uk) and the Specialist Teacher Advisor for your district will be in touch.

**Hampshire EMTAS Specialist Teacher Advisor team**  
**March 2026**

## For further information

Visit the [EMTAS website](#)

See the [Guidance Library](#) on the EMTAS Moodle. This is an open access course and includes sections on meeting the needs of learners of EAL, the use of ICTs and the use of first language as a tool for learning (amongst others).

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## References

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Institute of Education (2009). *English as an Additional Language (EAL) provision in schools; ten case studies*. [Microsoft Word - EALCase studies report02\\_14May09.docx \(naldic.org.uk\)](#)

Sharples, R. (2021). *Teaching EAL: Evidence based strategies for the classroom and school*. Multilingual Matters: Bristol

## Further Reading

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Coles, S. and Dinneen, A. (2023). *Approaches to teaching and learning for children new to English* (Blog)

[Approaches to teaching and learning for children new-to-English \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

Dinneen, A (2023). *Approaches to teaching and learning for pupils who are beyond the early stages of learning English* (Blog) [Approaches to teaching and learning for pupils who are beyond the early stages of learning English \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

Pim, C. (2022). *The changing face of EAL* (Blog) [The changing face of EAL \(hants.gov.uk\)](#)

## Acronyms used in this guidance

EAL	English as an Additional Language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
L1	First language
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages as taught in schools
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language