



Teaching and Learning

At a training event we were told that beginner learners of EAL should be allowed to write in their first language (L1) if they can't write properly in English. Our teachers don't see the point as they can't check the work to see if it is correct. They also feel that it will hold the children back in the longer term.

What could be the benefits of such an approach?



Pupils who are at an early stage of learning EAL are generally not ready for writing. However, pupils who can write in L1 should be encouraged to engage with the curriculum through L1 writing whether you can get it translated or not. It also supports the continued use of L1 for bilingual children.

Here are a few examples of how L1 writing can be an effective learning strategy:

- writing only in L1 e.g. an essay or note-taking
- writing in L1 with some annotations in English
- writing in English with detailed L1 annotations
- writing in English with occasional keywords annotated in L1

As pupils' writing in English improves they will rely less upon their L1 skills and withdraw away from this as a learning strategy. Where possible involve adults to check the work. In addition, speaking skills tend to precede writing and the pupil may be able to explain to you in English what they have written. It is also possible to provide some generic feedback, especially if you know something about the target language. For example, commenting on layout, paragraphing, evidence of punctuation and section headings, where appropriate.