

Using learners' first language (L1) abilities

It is important to use the first language abilities of EAL learners, because their progress in acquiring English is closely linked to the levels of their L1 language and literacy skills. They may have many useful language and literacy skills, acquired in their first language, which will help them to learn academic English. Another important factor is that it is easier to understand concepts in your first language and transfer your knowledge to your second language. Also, learning academic subjects in their first language helps the learners to acquire English. Finally, maintaining and developing their first language alongside improving their English will help bilingual learners acquire the cognitive advantages of bilingualism.

Types of activities using L1

- ◆ Use of bilingual academic dictionaries
- ◆ Use of subject specific books in the first language
- ◆ Pair and group work, e.g. discussions, research, projects with speakers of the same first language
- ◆ Translated lists of key words and phrases for beginner EAL learners
- ◆ Compiled key words and phrases lists to be given to advanced EAL learners to translate and learn prior to teaching them a subject topic
- ◆ Learners taking and making notes in their first language
- ◆ Learners annotating English texts and diagrams in their first language
- ◆ Learners compiling subject specific bilingual glossaries
- ◆ Learners writing a first draft of pieces of extended writing in their first language

Practical ideas for using L1

- ✓ **Top tip:** encourage learners to use and maintain their L1 skills
- ? **To consider:** Grouping learners in threes and fours, including learners with English as a Mother Tongue (EMT) and if possible placing EAL learners with a peer who shares their language

Make EAL learners feel proud of their first language

- ◆ Whenever possible make references to the learners first language
- ◆ Ask them to teach you and the class some words in their L1
- ◆ Encourage further development of first language by providing texts in the different languages, e.g. fiction and non-fiction books, magazines and newspapers

Bilingual Flash Cards

- ◆ Sets of flash cards including words in the EAL learners' first language
- ◆ For concepts use descriptions of the English words in the first language. Giving some examples will also help the EAL learners.
- ◆ Use of the flash cards include labels, displays, word banks and personal 'pocket' sets/ fans.

Keyword lists

- ◆ Build up a bank of keywords in various languages to use with new arrivals
- ◆ Use reliable translations, if possible supplied by speakers of the EAL learners' first language
- ◆ Do not waste your time and energy to translate complicated words and phrases using Google
- ◆ Ask advanced EAL learners to help with compiling keywords translation lists
- ◆ Teach and practice new vocabulary in context, it is much easier to understand and remember the new words

Parent-school partnership

- ◆ Use parents' linguistic skills to support their children together
- ◆ Involve parents in school lessons, activities and events

Completing work in EAL learners' first language

- ◆ Completing KS4 GCSE work can be very demanding especially for newly arrived EAL learners, but writing their essays in their first language can help. Then the work can be translated into English with teachers' support.

Other

- ◆ Encourage EAL learners to take GCSE exams in their first languages (if available)
- ◆ Liaison with community language schools, e.g. Chinese, Polish, Gujarati, Bengali, Arabic, etc.

Good for EAL, Good for All: Can I use L1 with the whole class?

Not really, but it is a good idea to:

- ◆ point out the advantages of the EAL learners' bilingualism
- ◆ make sure EMT learners are clear that EAL learners are allowed and encouraged to use their L1 and that this will help them improve their English
- ◆ try and learn a few words in the EAL learners' language and encourage EMT learners who are interested to do so as well.