

Thanks to Nottingham
Schools, UK

Beginners to English

Contents

1. A “Beginner Friendly” school
2. General advice
3. Teaching strategies
4. Using students’ community languages
5. Beginners to English student record

What makes a school ELL friendly?

Every year a number of new English Language learners enter our schools. Many schools will already provide an environment where students new to English will rapidly make sense of what is happening around them, and consequently rapidly develop basic communication skills. It might be helpful to carry out a school review to see where you are already providing the scaffolding that makes the processes and content accessible and identify areas where you could improve provision without a great deal of work.

	Always/ usually/ rarely/ etc.
The school provides visual clues that provide initial help for students new to English: e.g. school meetings use drama, mime, posters, and other large visual formats etc.	
Routines and daily procedures e.g. lining up, moving into groups, tidying up etc are organised in a way that can be quickly understood simply by looking and copying other students. Students are encouraged to support each other in carrying them out.	
The environment supports autonomy: e.g. There are pictures of items as well as labels stuck on empty shelves so that students can easily find where to put things away. Displays are at student level and help students to make sense of the processes of the classroom and the curriculum.	
First and other languages: Community languages are visually represented within the school/classroom. Students know greetings in other languages and the teachers know a few basic greetings and instructions.	
Speaking and listening: The school has audited the amount and nature of peer interaction.	
Strategies are used in most lessons to ensure that everyone participates in talking e.g. barrier games, buzz groups	
Good speaking and listening are assessed, noticed and praised	
Groupings: Students are grouped in a variety of ways during the school day so that students get the chance to work with many other students in the class at some point during the week.	
Planning: The curriculum is language conscious and teachers set language goals in terms of vocabulary and sentence patterns so that the language learning potential of each topic can be exploited. These issues are part of the planning of weekly lessons.	

Multicultural education:

The key here is trying to develop curriculum that provides time and opportunity for students to explore their prior knowledge, and to begin to build up resources that reflect their languages and cultures. Students need to feel it is worthwhile to share what they know and believe.

Nature of contact with parents:

Do parents feel they are partners in the education process? Are there ways to tempt parents into school? Do parents know what the school does and the kind of experiences their children enjoy, e.g. are there photo books that can be borrowed (with short captions maybe in first languages) which explain the life of the school, and provide insight for parents as to what goes on in classrooms, playground, etc?

Silent period

Most beginners go through a “silent period” during which they settle in and adjust both to school life and to the sounds and rhythms of the English language. If we provide the sort of environment that is suggested above then the silent period of beginners will be short, and they will show a lot of evidence, even though they do not speak, that they are confident and have growing ownership of the environment.

Environment

The provision of an environment that is generally inclusive and supportive is more effective for the rapid progress of students new to English than any formal teaching of language particularly if this is done in isolation. In fact any formal language teaching will be ineffective, if not accompanied by these elements.

General Advice

Students who are new to English are often completely silent while they are adjusting to their new situation and are attuning their ears to the new language, so:-

Don't worry

- Don't worry if they are shy and seem unwilling to join in, they need plenty of listening time first.
- Don't worry if they will only speak in their first language, this is natural and helpful. Even advanced learners of English can benefit from using their first language - it can enhance their understanding and their acquisition of new concepts.

Find out about the students

- Find out about their names (How do you pronounce them? Do they have different surnames from their parents? (This is common in many cultures))
- Find out about their first language - (What is it called, How is it written? Can they read/write it?)
- Find out about their cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Find out about their diet, health and previous educational experience.

Remember

- Remember everything may be new for the students and they may suffer from culture shock.
- Remember they may have different skills, concepts and knowledge from the other students in the class. They may have seen the Himalayas but never have been to a New England beach.

Do

- Do ensure that the students work with other students who are sympathetic and helpful. At least one of these students should be able to speak their first language if at all possible.
- Do encourage the students to speak, read and write in their first language.
- Do draw on the students' knowledge of the geography, language, religion, customs, cuisine, etc. of their country of origin.
- Do use other students to help and teach the newcomers - students are often good teachers and teaching someone else often helps to reinforce learning. The use of small group work will encourage this.
- Do ask the students' parents to talk about their school work/experience in their first language.

Don't

- Don't talk too much - the students can only understand a little at a time.
- Don't force the students to speak English - many students need a long time listening to a new language before they are ready to speak it.
- Don't think they are disobedient if they don't do what you tell them - they may not understand even quite simple instructions for several months.
- Don't correct the students if they are telling you something important - just repeat what they have told you in correct English.
- Don't ask parents to speak to their students in English at home - they need to continue developing their first language as well as English.

Teaching strategies

Use the students's first language skills

- If possible, provide dual language books and worksheets (check with the ELL department).
- provide tapes of stories in the students' first language.
- provide notices and labels in their first language.
- ask bilingual staff or parents to read to the students in both first language and English.

Comprehensible input

Provide lots of visuals to ensure that the students understand new language items. Real objects and demonstration are most effective - these could include walks round the school and its surroundings, as well as objects brought into class, science experiments, cooking, model making, etc. However, photographs, pictures, videos, etc. are also extremely useful (and much more manageable!) and for older learners diagrams, maps, etc. can also help.

Oral activities 1 - naming objects - chain drills

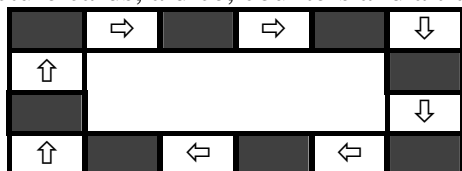
- Show the students some objects and tell them what they are called
- Take one of the objects and ask the first student "What's this?" - S/he says "It's a ____"
- The first student then asks the second, who asks the third, etc.

Oral activities 2 - Kim's game

Put a number of objects on the table and name them with the students.
Put a cloth over the objects and pick up (in the cloth) one of the objects.
The students have to name the object in the cloth.

Oral activities 3 - The Multigame

materials - a set of picture cards, a dice, counters and a track e.g.



rules

Students take it in turn to take a picture card; if they can name the object in the picture they can throw the dice and move their counter. The first player to get round the track is the winner.

Reading and writing

Reading and writing work with students will depend on their age, ability to read/write their first language, their ability to read/write Roman script, etc.

Principle 1

Encourage students to use their first language literacy skills will enhance their acquisition of English.

Principle 2

Understanding is the basis of all language learning; it is essential in the reading process so we should base all reading on a well understood context, using words within the students' spoken vocabulary rather than on teaching letter sounds or names of the letters of the alphabet. If necessary we can create a meaningful context using pictures, objects, activities, etc.

Principle 3

Oracy precedes literacy, so we need to ensure that students use the words they are to read in oral activities before they read them.

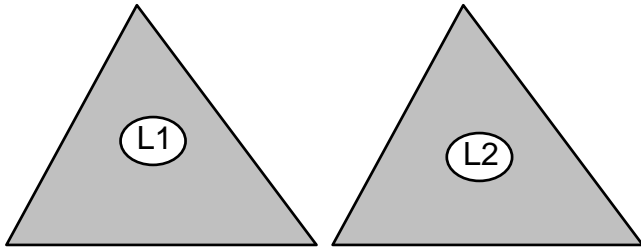
Lesson Plan

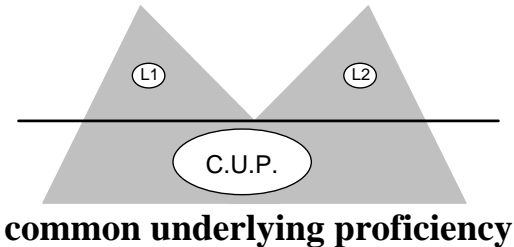
The following is a very simple lesson plan that follows these principles.

1. Look together at a picture (e.g. of a house). Point out key objects that you want the students to be able to name (e.g. roof, chimney, door, window). Ask what the words for the objects are in the students' first language(s) and see if they can write the words in their first language.
2. Use a language activity (e.g. a language game) to ensure that the students have the words in their spoken vocabulary.
3. Introduce the students to reading the words by using a reading activity e.g. matching words to pictures (this could be made into a pairs (Pelmanism) card game)
4. provide writing work based on the words that have been taught:-
 - match word to picture
 - match word to word
 - label drawings
 - simple Yes/No questions based on pictures (Is this a door?)

Using students' community languages

Some teachers believe that the quickest way for students to learn English is to concentrate solely on English and to ignore the community language that the students bring with them to school. These teachers try to prevent students speaking in their first language and even tell parents not to speak in their mother tongue to their students but to use English at all times. This general approach leads to English gradually taking over from the students first language.

<p>Languages often seem completely different.</p> <p>In the diagram, the L1 (first language) mountain is separate from the L2 (second language) mountain.</p> <p>If languages have no connection (or very few); it would seem that learning more of one language would have no effect on learning the other.</p>	
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 <p>common underlying proficiency</p>	<p>However modern thinking is that underlying all languages are a large number of general language skills that can inform and develop both a student's languages. These underlying skills are called the common underlying proficiency. (This concept was developed by Jim Cummins).</p>
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Examples of skills and understandings that might form part of this common underlying proficiency include

- hypothesising, wondering
- counting
- rank ordering - 1st, 2nd
- comparing - happier, best
- predicting
- sequencing
- story telling (suspense, audience, description)
- awareness of ambiguity, jokes, puns, word play
- emphasis
- literacy

These skills are all higher language skills and increasing our ability in any of these skills in one language helps us to develop the other. So maybe our aim in English language teaching should not be to teach English alone but to develop both the students' languages alongside each other.

BRINGING L1 (FIRST LANGUAGE) INTO THE MAINSTREAM CLASSROOM

ETHOS

How do students **feel** about using their first or heritage language in the class? Are they **shy** about speaking anything but English? Is the "**OK-ness**" of using first language reinforced e.g.:-

1. Are there **notices** in various languages in the classroom?
2. Are there any **dual language books** in the classroom?
3. Are **adults** invited into the classroom to speak, formally or informally in languages other than English?
4. Are **other languages talked about** in class - e.g. does the teacher discuss similarities and contrasts between heritage languages and English?
5. Are students encouraged to talk about their experiences in **supplementary schools**, etc. and to share their work there with the class?
6. Are bilingual students asked to **translate instructions**, etc. into other languages to help students who are new to English?
7. Are students encouraged to **write** in their first language? Do they use **transliteration** if necessary? (Transliteration means using Roman (English) script to write other languages)
8. Are students encouraged to bring in letters, **magazines**, newspapers, pictures, stories written by family members etc.?
9. Are students grouped so that they can use their first language (never, sometimes, for specific activities, often, always)?
10. Have you considered inviting parents in to share about their culture, language etc?

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES USING FIRST LANGUAGE

1. Translating words

- Ask students to translate single words from a lesson into their home.
- **NOTE - The challenge of translation:**- Translation is a very advanced language skill. If we can find ways of utilising this skill in the classroom we can not only develop students skills in both their languages but also ensure that they have really understood curriculum concepts - you can only translate what you really understand! Merely asking a student "What is the word for that in your other language?" can be a very challenging and useful question to check and deepen understanding. The teacher doesn't have to share the same language as the student for this to be helpful. Difficulties that arise are good opportunities to involve other students, parents and other family or community members in the education of the students.

2. Presentations

- Put students into groups with others who share the same language and ask them to prepare a **presentation** to give to the rest of the class. The presentation should be in two languages. The presentation could be about an aspect of the class topic or an aspect of the students' cultural heritage, etc.

3. Story telling

- Put students in groups that share the same first language. Students tell a **story** to each other in their first languages then write it in English - this can be used for prediction work, e.g. the teacher tells half a story and the students then discuss how it should end in L1* and then write their prediction in L1 or in English.

4. Lists of key words

- Write a list of **key words** from a topic or book in English. Ask the students to tell you the translation of those words in their first languages. Write the translations against the English words, using English script. Ask the students to ask their parents to write the words in the correct script.

5. Examples of other languages

- Bring and encourage students to bring **examples** of other languages into class. Include newspapers, magazines, taped music, taped radio programme, stories, letters, etc. Ask students to talk about them to the class. This can be extended into written work. Students can describe the content of a magazine article etc. in English or could give their opinion of it.

6. Summarising

- Students work in pairs in one student speaks to one another for 2 or 3 minutes. The listener then **summarises** what has been said for the teacher or class. Pairs who share a common L1 can speak in L1.

7. Knowledge about languages

- Encourage the students to share their **knowledge** about their first language - script, basic phrases and greetings, who they talk to in which languages, where their language is the official language, etc.

* L1 i.e. first language

For students who are literate in L1

1. Translating key words

- Ask students to **translate** key words in L1 - at first encourage them to do so orally to the teacher or other students, later ask them to write it in L1 or in community language. They could use transliteration (i.e. using English letters to write L1) if they are unable to write their community language using the proper alphabet.

2. Use dual language books

- Ask two students to read a **dual** language book to the class, one student reads the English text the other the community language text.

3. Translating and re-translating

- One student translates some English into L1, another student, without hearing or seeing the original English translates the piece back into English. This re-translation is then **compared** to the original and any differences or interesting points are analysed.

4. Translating from different languages

- The teacher provides the same text in **different** languages. Students work with someone with whom they do not share a language. They work together to translate it into English.

5. Writing in two languages

- Students **write** stories, essays or other work in L1 and then in English.

Language levels for Key Stages 1 and 2

LAU A New to English	Silent receptive stage, knows almost no English, needs support of gestures/ mother tongue/pictures/etc. in order to follow instructions/ stories/etc.	
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Greetings/social language – hello, goodbye, please, thank you, etc.	
Responding to – What’s your name? Do you want a? Are you having sandwiches? etc.	
Naming –What ’s/are this/these? Is it a? Are they ...?	
School vocabulary – toilet, hall, classroom, teacher, dinner time, playtime, playground, etc.	
Classroom objects – pen, pencil, felt tip, table, chair, door, scissors, rubber, glue, etc.	
Colours – red green blue yellow black white	
Numbers – 1-10. How many have you got?	
Instructions – stand up, sit down, get a felt tip, hang up your coat, sit on the carpet, etc.	

<i>By end of this level students will have achieved</i>	<p>1.1 Uses gestures to respond to greetings and questions about themselves</p> <p>1.2 Vocab. – Can name frequently used classroom objects (book/pen/ door/etc.)</p> <p>1.3 Instructions: follows simple instructions based on classroom routines (e.g. Take your coat off)</p> <p>1.4 Communication – Echoes words/expressions drawn from class routines/social interactions to communicate meaning.</p> <p>1.5 Structures (single words): Responds to simple questions (Do you want a drink?) with yes/no responses and expresses some basic needs using single words or phrases in English</p> <p>1.6 Writing : - Can write own name and familiar words</p>	
Step 1 Beginner bilingual <i>A little access to curric. thro English</i>		

Street – car, truck, bus, sidewalk, road, supermarket, etc.	
House (outside) – roof, door, window, path, gate, wall, chimney, etc.	
House (inside) – kitchen, bedroom, stairs, up/downstairs, living room	
Furniture – sofa, bath, bed, table, television, video, lamp, carpet,	
Body – arm, hand, finger, leg, foot/feet, etc.	
Face – mouth, eyes, nose, ears, hair, teeth, etc.	
Clothes – socks, shoes, trainers, trousers, shorts, skirt, pants, shirt, blouse, coat, etc.	
Family/people – man/woman boy/girl mother/father brother/sister son/daughter grandma/dad	
People/jobs – Teacher, police officer, firefighter, etc.	
Animals (domestic/farm) – cat, dog, horse, cow, rabbit, (pig), fish	
Animals (wild) – elephant, lion, tiger, shark, whale, snake, camel, fish, bird,	
Parts of – tail, ears, hump, wing	
Food – breakfast, dinner, tea, rice, meat, vegetables, potatoes, carrots, peas, apples, oranges, plate, knife, fork, spoon, chopsticks, bowl, etc.	
Asking for things – Can I have a/some please? Can I go to please?	
Possession – Have you got 3 heads? I’ve got a It’ s mine/yours/hers/etc. It’s my book. Who’s got?	
Describing problems – I’ve got a headache. I’ve lost my pencil, I’ve cut my finger	
Locating objects – Where’s the ? Can you find ...? Prepositions of place – It’s on/in/under the	
Actions – What are you doing? I’m jumping, running, walking, etc. Is she writing?	
Describing – big small hot cold happy sad	
Polite English – I’m sorry. Excuse me.	

<i>By end of this level students will</i>	2.1 Copies talk that has been modelled	
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<p><i>have achieved</i></p> <p>Step 2 Early bilingual</p>	<p>2.2 <u>Vocab.</u> – can name the most common objects/actions in school, home, street, etc. but many <u>obvious</u> gaps</p> <p>2.3 <u>Instructions</u>– can follow day to day instructions but needs support for more complicated instructions</p> <p>2.4 <u>Communication</u> – initiates conversation, but communication is hindered by differences from standard Eng. In almost every sentence</p> <p>2.5 <u>Structures (phrases)</u>: uses ¾ word “telegraphic” sentences using verb stem only (me want book)</p> <p>2.6 <u>Stories</u>: can follow a well illustrated story – answers straightforward who/what/where questions with single words/short phrases</p> <p>2.7 Shows some control of English word order</p> <p>2.8 Pronunciation is generally intelligible.</p> <p>2.9 <u>Writing</u>: attempts to express meanings in writing, support-ed by oral work or pictures but uses only isolated words or short phrases.</p>	
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<p>Time Days of the week, Months of the year telling the time (What time is it? It’s quarter past 5, etc.) today, yesterday, tomorrow, next week,</p>	
<p>Computation – add, take away, times, more than, less than, difference, etc,</p>	
<p>Expressing likes/dislikes – Do you like?</p>	
<p>Describing cont. – colours – purple, pink, grey, orange, brown, etc. Using 2 adjectives – a big green ball More/less Same/different</p>	
<p>Describing ability – I can/can’t... Can you?</p>	
<p>Weather – rain/rainy, sun/sunny, cloud, wind, freezing, hot, cold, etc.</p>	
<p>Math – measuring – How long is it?</p>	
<p>Math – shapes – triangle, square, circle, rectangle</p>	
<p>Math – money</p>	

<p><i>By end of this level students will have achieved</i></p> <p>Step 3 Developing bilingual</p>	<p>3.1 <u>Vocab.</u> - names objects/activities not in the immediate environment but obvious limitations in ability to elaborate - knows only main words (e.g. bike but <u>not</u> pedal mudguard etc.)</p> <p>3.2 <u>Instructions/input</u> - can follow general instructions and teacher input but misunderstandings are obvious</p> <p>3.3 <u>Communication</u> – conveys meaning through talk and gesture and can extend what they say with support. Speaks about matters of immediate interest in familiar settings – mostly uses only a single tense (usually the present tense) and word endings (e.g. -ed, -es, etc.) often missing</p> <p>3.4 <u>Structures (simple sentences)</u>: speech includes subject-verb-object sentences, is beginning to ask questions using inversion (Is he, am I, etc.) -, speech is sometimes grammatically incomplete at word/phrase level</p> <p>3.5 <u>Stories</u>: Can re-tell stories but the story often appears to be disjointed because of limitations in vocabulary, tenses, etc. – differences from standard English are still apparent.</p> <p>3.6 <u>Writing</u> : With support can express meaning using simple sentences but with grammatical and spelling errors and lack of coherence</p>	
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Reporting – I went, He hit me, ... Did you/What did she..	
Narrating – Red Riding Hood saw/took/said	
Describing regular events – What does a chemist do? What do you do after school?	
Comparatives – I'm older than her. Who's the oldest? It's 2cm longer than ..., etc.	
Math (fractions) – half, quarter, etc.	
Predicting (future with going to) – What are you going to do?	
Predicting (future with will) – What will happen next?	
Obligation – You must(n't)/ought to/shouldn't/have to/etc.	

<p><i>By end of this level students will have achieved</i></p> <p>Step 4</p> <p>bilingual</p> <p><i>Access to curriculum through Eng but language learning needs seen occasionally</i></p>	<p>4.1 Vocab. – can understand most general vocab used by teachers but has some difficulties with subject and culturally specific words, etc</p> <p>4.2 Instructions/input – can usually follow general instructions/ teacher input/stories but sometimes misunderstands words and structures that are key to the story line, etc.</p> <p>4.3 Structures (coordinated sentences): can use simple connectives (and, but, when, etc.) and can use more than one tense e.g. uses the past tense (I wrote) and future (I'm going to write) though not always accurately.</p> <p>4.4 Stories –re-tells stories but more simply than original, lacking detail be-cause of gaps in vocab, etc. some differences from standard English are still present</p> <p>4.5 Communication – Speaks about matters of interest to a range of listeners and begins to develop connected utterances. What they say shows some grammatical complexity in expressing meaning, sustaining their contributions and the listeners' interest.</p> <p>4.6 Writing : Can express meaning using simple sentences unaided using simple grammatical structures but grammatical and spelling errors and lack of coherence still obvious</p>	
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