

EAL Pocketbook











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Introduction



The Bullock Report (1976)

‘No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of home as he (or she) crosses the school threshold.’

Imagine suddenly being in another country where you don't understand the language or know the social rules and customs. You are far away from your home, family and friends.....

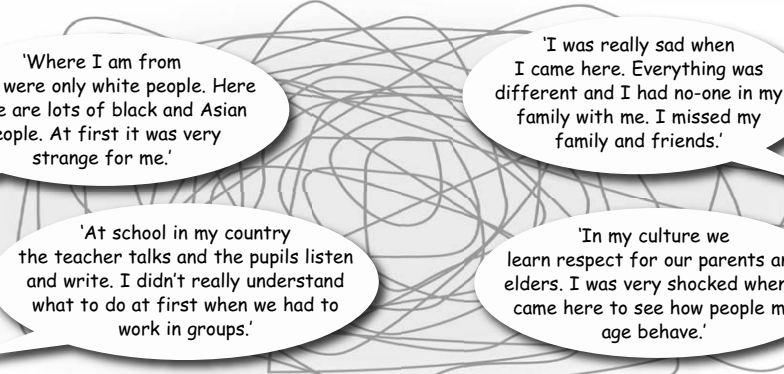
.....One of the most important things you can do for a newly arrived pupil is to create a warm, welcoming classroom environment.

This chapter gives you an idea of some of the experiences and feelings EAL learners may bring. It suggests ways that you can make sure EAL learners are included and supported by other students. You will gain some ideas about how you can reflect their cultural and linguistic identity in the physical and learning environment.

A ball of confusion



For many pupils who arrive from other countries, coming to school in the UK can be very strange. The education system and schools may be organised differently. The subjects and curriculum may be very different and the style of teaching may be more (or less) formal. There could be other differences to do with culture, religious practice, society and, of course, language!



'Where I am from there were only white people. Here there are lots of black and Asian people. At first it was very strange for me.'

'I was really sad when I came here. Everything was different and I had no-one in my family with me. I missed my family and friends.'

'At school in my country the teacher talks and the pupils listen and write. I didn't really understand what to do at first when we had to work in groups.'

'In my culture we learn respect for our parents and elders. I was very shocked when I came here to see how people my age behave.'

More confusion



'In my country it is polite to look down when an adult is talking to you. In this school the teachers say look at me - it feels rude.'

'I am a Muslim and I wear a hijab to cover my head. There are no other Muslim girls from my country here. The other girls in my class made fun of me.'

'I am from a very small village. I was so surprised to come to this city with all the tall buildings and when I saw the school it was Wah! So big.'

'No-one speaks my language in my class. At first I was too embarrassed to say anything in English, so I didn't speak for the first six months.'

'People are very separate here and don't speak to each other in the street. In my country everyone is friendly. It makes me feel homesick.'

A golden hello



Learning can only take place if a pupil feels safe. So how can you help a new arrival feel welcome? Students need to feel secure and valued and that they belong:

- Don't panic! Your classroom is the best place to be for learning
- Learn how to say the pupil's name correctly. Demonstrate that their identity is important
- Don't worry if at first the pupil doesn't speak. Listening is the first step to learning a language. Encourage them to talk or respond in other ways, such as by using gestures
- Smile! and show the pupil that you are pleased they are here
- Learn how to say a few phrases in the pupil's first language. Let them see that you are making an effort as well
- Find out about the pupil's home country, religion and culture. This will help you to understand something of their world
- Teach the rest of the class how to say hello in the pupil's first language. Encourage other pupils to show the new arrival they are welcome
- Make sure you give the pupil as much of your attention as you do the other pupils. This will let them know they are as important as everyone else

Look around you



You communicate powerful messages through your classroom environment. Students need to see themselves reflected positively in their surroundings in order to feel valued and to have a sense of belonging. You can show that you value EAL learners in a number of ways:

- Put up a multilingual welcome poster on the classroom door
- Display positive images of people, objects and places from the pupil's home country
- Write signs and labels in the student's first language as well as in English
- Have dual language books, audio books and dictionaries in the classroom
- Use stories, poetry and drama from the pupil's culture
- Celebrate religious and cultural events from the pupil's home country
- Make sure images and objects reflect the student's culture, eg foods, types of transport, housing, tools and utensils, textile designs
- Reflect the positive contribution of other cultures in all areas of the curriculum

We are family



People generally get on with people like themselves. As an educator, you have an important role in helping students to understand and respect differences and be able to get along with people who are not *'just like them'*.

Examine commonalities as well as differences so pupils can see what connects us as humans.

Generally avoid using tokenistic, negative and stereotyped images and resources. However, with older students you can use these materials to critically evaluate and deepen their understanding.

Encourage pupils to look at the differences *within* cultures as well as between them. This avoids being simplistic and stereotyping.

Challenge stereotypes and generalisations. *'Is this always the case?'* *'In every situation?'* *'For every person?'* *'When is it not the case?'* *'Where does this idea come from?'*

Respect



Respect is an important word for many pupils. It is crucially important for EAL learners that their classmates show them respect, especially when they are still in the early stages of learning English, which their peers may see negatively. You set the tone for good relationships between students from different backgrounds.

Consider how you group pupils for collaborative learning. Ensure that they have opportunities to work with different people.

Always challenge racist comments and behaviour. Show pupils that you will not tolerate it and make sure they understand why.

With paired and group activities, consider where you will place a new arrival. Select some empathetic pupils but encourage an ethos where *all* students are supportive of each other's learning.

Model the behaviours you expect from your pupils. Be explicit with them about how to show respect to others.

Hello buddy



Creating class buddies can be very supportive to EAL learners when they are new to the school. It can help to promote positive relationships between pupils from different ethnic groups. There are different models of how to organise buddies:

Model	Pros	Cons
Buddy speaks same language as EAL learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EAL learner can be understood and can understand more• EAL learner can feel less isolated• Can reinforce the buddy's learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Might negatively affect buddy's learning• Can seem as if buddy has sole responsibility
Buddy speaks English only	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can increase understanding of different cultures• Can help EAL learner learn English	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buddy can't translate• Buddy may be perceived as sole supporter and feel pressured
A group of buddies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disseminates responsibility. If one buddy is absent there are others to do the job	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buddies may feel less personally responsible
A rotating group of buddies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone gets a chance to buddy the new arrival• EAL learner gets to know more peers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buddies and new pupil may not get as much time to develop friendships

What can I do for you buddy?



To be effective buddies need to be prepared for their role and clearly understand it. Some possible roles for buddies are to:

1. Encourage other pupils to be friendly and supportive.
2. Encourage the EAL learner to make friends and be more independent.
3. Be advocates who ensure that the EAL learner's concerns are heard.
4. Report back to the teacher on how well the EAL learner is doing.
5. Make sure the EAL learner is included in group work.
6. Check that the EAL learner understands the teacher's instructions.
7. Make sure the EAL learner understands any homework set.
8. Demonstrate activities to the EAL learner.



About the author



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Alice has over 25 years' experience in the field of education. Her varied roles include teacher, leader, trainer, governor, writer and coach. She is currently an independent coach and consultant working under the name of alicecoaching. A passionate belief in equality for all pupils and empowering teachers and learners to be their best is at the heart of Alice's work. She works with schools, teachers and young people.

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