



The **PRODUCTIVE** skills

Speaking and Writing

English as a Second Language

Integrate Ireland Language and Training



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The basics in developing the productive skills of language

Fact

Reading, writing, listening and speaking are all interrelated in a language learning environment. Literacy is, however, essential for educational success.

Motivation

If pupils are given the opportunity to make choices and decisions about what they do, they will be more motivated to engage with learning activities.

Practice

Skill in writing develops only through regular experience of all types of writing

Communication

Speaking and writing are communicative tasks and imply an audience. Therefore the message must be organised so that it is communicated effectively

Teacher

The instructional 'talk' used by teachers in the classroom influences how pupils learn both language and classroom routines

Relevance

Pupils must gain control over the functional writing and speaking skills necessary for classroom learning

Performance

A pupil's language proficiency can vary from class to class in accordance with the type of task and the learning context

Speaking

The pupil's challenge

The pupil must develop:

1. Control over **vocabulary**
2. **Grammatical** accuracy
3. Control over **phonology**
[see Benchmarks p. 8]

Developing vocabulary

- Move from concrete to abstract concepts
- Focus on vocabulary in clear contexts
- Use word lists, diagrams, labels and other visual displays that remain on the wall to provide ongoing support and consolidation
- Get the pupils to provide their own words as much as possible
- Make sure that pupils (whose peers are literate) are constantly developing their own personal dictionaries in the Dossier

Developing structural accuracy

- As early communicative ability develops the pupil will move from nods/gestures to single words then incorrect forms.
At this stage, encourage communication particularly by promoting small-group activities

Developing phonological accuracy

- This should never be ignored as bad pronunciation and intonation patterns can impede comprehension and contribute to serious spelling problems

The teacher's challenge

The teacher must develop **approaches** and **classroom talk** that include:

- ◆ Repetition of key words
 - ◆ Paraphrase
 - ◆ Miming and gesture to support spoken words
 - ◆ Modelling
 - ◆ Checking for understanding
 - ◆ Summarizing
-
- ◆ Modelling grammatical accuracy without constantly 'correcting' the pupil
 - ◆ Making use of classroom routines that quickly become familiar to the pupil – circle time, roll call, tidy up, passing on objects etc. – to encourage oral participation
 - ◆ Encouraging the use of complete sentences as appropriate
 - ◆ Listening to individual pupils but provide feedback to all
-
- ◆ Ideas for working on pronunciation, intonation and rhythm are given on page **18**

Writing

The pupil's challenge

The pupil must develop:

1. Control over **vocabulary**
2. **Grammatical** accuracy
3. Control over **orthography**
(penmanship/ handwriting)
[see Benchmarks p. 8]

Vocabulary for writing

- Should emerge from Speaking activities (above)
- Context of writing activity should be clear
- Writing should be a natural 'follow on' of most classroom activities
- Pupils should learn, from the beginning, to make use of their own word lists /word walls etc.
- Pupils should be encouraged to expand and extend their vocabulary knowledge in written tasks

Developing structural accuracy in written text

- Regular opportunities to provide accurate spoken language will influence the accuracy of written text
- Drill-type written exercises can be de-motivating and may be of little value to the learning process

Control over orthography

- May be difficult for pupils from non-Roman script languages
- Plenty of practice is crucial

The teacher's challenge

◆ The teacher needs to provide or promote the preparation of classroom charts, labelled pictures, word collections etc.

◆ Charts and lists should be left on the classroom wall to allow for re-cycling, consolidation and support when needed

◆ Teacher provides plenty of feedback – as positive as possible – on all written text

◆ Rather than 'drilling' find interesting ways of practising and demonstrating structure and accuracy (projects, sequencing, displaying pupils' work on wall etc.)

◆ Teacher provides good, clear examples of letters, whole words, phrases etc. on charts, posters and labels in the classroom

**A cycle of teaching /learning focusing on the skills of
SPEAKING and WRITING**

EXAMPLE UNIT 3: FOOD AND CLOTHES LEVELS A1 & A2

		A1			A2			
Spoken Interaction	Can request basic items of food/drink in a shop. Can ask how much an item costs. Can respond non-verbally (e.g., with a nod or shake of the head) or with single-word or very brief answers to questions about the food/drink and clothes he/she likes or dislikes.				Can ask and answer basic questions about the food/drink he/she likes or dislikes and briefly report the likes and dislikes of others. Can discuss a menu and select what he/she would like. Can answer questions about items and types of clothing, e.g., what is suitable for different kinds of weather.			
Writing (if appropriate to the age of the pupil)	Can copy or write lists of different foods (fruits, vegetables, meats, etc.) Can copy or write lists of clothing according to contexts of use (e.g., outdoor, indoor, school, sports)				Can write a short text describing an event in which food plays a central role (e.g., a family celebration). Can write short texts describing his/her favourite items of clothing.			
		Teacher led	Pupil led	Whole class	Small group / pair	Informal task	Formal task	Suitable for observational assessment
1	Introduce and brainstorm the topic of clothes Speaking: Vocabulary, structure, phonology	◆		◆		◆		
2	Increase range of vocabulary and write on chart/word wall/labelled picture Speaking: Vocabulary, phonology	◆		◆			◆	
3	Chain game using all words (known and new) Speaking: Vocabulary, structure, phonology	◆*	◆*	◆		◆		◆
4	Draw, talk about and copy words or label picture (younger pupils) Talk about, sequence or write piece of text (older pupils) Speaking: Vocabulary, structure, phonology Writing: Vocabulary, structure, orthography	◆*	◆*		◆		◆	◆

*Until the pupils get to know the routines of the class, it will be necessary for the teacher to start these activities. Later, pupils will move naturally from one activity to another.

1 & 2 Brainstorming and expanding

Teacher introduces the topic by using a concrete example or resource such as a set of pictures of children in different types of clothing, a collection in a clothing bag or a dress-up doll.

Teacher prompts pupils to provide more words for items

Then prompts **further description** such as colour, size, texture, fabric, suitability for different types of weather etc.

This is red. We wear this on a cold day. This is a big jumper. This is wool.

Teacher **writes** words or phrases, adding name of pupil who provided the word (**see example 1**).

Teacher checks **pronunciation** of more difficult words and **practises rhythm** of phrases or sentences by getting pupils to clap in time.

3 Chain game

Pupils stand in a circle.

Teacher starts the chain by saying 'I am wearing a jumper'.

Pupil standing next to teacher says 'I am wearing trousers', and so on around chain with each pupil using a different word.

More difficult: (pupils can use the word wall for support)

- 1 Vocabulary can be added around chain, 'I am wearing a jumper and trousers'
- 2 Descriptors can be added, 'I am wearing a (big) (blue) (woolly) jumper', until no more are possible then the next pupil starts a new chain.
- 3 Pupils can 'describe' what another child is wearing, 'Kristina is wearing a big red scarf' (3rd person singular)
- 4 Chain can be in the past or future tense, 'I wore a hat yesterday', 'I will wear a shirt tomorrow'.

4 Writing

For younger children (depending on literacy of peer group) writing may consist of:

- Drawing what has been learnt with the teacher labelling the details (**see example 2**)
- Drawing and copying the words to label the details (**see example 3**)
- Pupil draws and teacher writes some text for the pupil to copy (see example 1)

For older children:

Teacher writes sentences based on what has been learnt, cuts them up and pupils, in pairs, sequence them.

Write a description of a favourite outfit

Write a description of the clothing for a particular situation (playing sports, beach, party etc.)

Draw a robot and describe what it is wearing

Work in pairs – one person writes sentences describing clothing (may be crazy!) and passes each sentence to the other who must draw what is described.

Suitable also for themes such as:

Our school / Colours, shapes and opposites / Transport and travel / Time / Animals and plants



Example 1

Brainstorming

Pupils and teacher provide words on a particular topic and these are written and put on the wall with pupil's name.



Example 2

Junior Infants

Draw a picture on a particular theme. Then label with the words they have learnt.

EXAMPLE UNIT 6: WEATHER LEVELS A2 & B1

		A2		B1				
Spoken Interaction		Can respond to questions about the weather he/she likes. Can take part in discussion about the weather in Ireland and about the clothing necessary for different types of weather.		Can ask and answer questions about types of weather and the effects of weather on lifestyle.				
Writing (if appropriate to the age of the pupil)		Can write sentences about the clothes that are necessary for different types of weather. Can write a short text about 'a perfect day'.		Can write a short letter describing the weather in Ireland and the types of clothing and other items that are necessary for different kinds of weather. Can write a short text describing the influence of weather on people in different parts of the world.				
		Teacher led	Pupil led	Whole class	Small group / pair	Informal task	Formal task	Suitable for observational assessment
1	Quickly review any work already done on Unit 11 People and places in other areas <i>Speaking: Vocabulary, structure, phonology</i>	◆		◆		◆		
2	Brainstorm and collect words related to weather (including Food and clothes, Transport and travel, Seasons holidays and festivals as relevant) <i>Speaking: Vocabulary, structure, phonology</i>	◆		◆		◆		
3	Consolidating new vocabulary, adding questions and descriptions <i>Speaking: Vocabulary, structure, phonology</i>				◆		◆	◆
4	Draw, talk about and copy words or label picture (younger pupils) *Draw/talk about, sequence or free writing text (older pupils) <i>Speaking: Vocabulary, structure, phonology</i> <i>Writing: Vocabulary, structure, orthography</i>	◆	◆		◆		◆	◆

*While literacy becomes increasingly important as pupils enter language support in the senior primary years, for those at A1 and A2 levels, in particular, drawing provides an authentic focus for generating practice in a wide range of additional vocabulary – shapes, colours, explanations etc.

1&2 Reviewing previous learning and brainstorming new topic



The pupils' countries of origin provide a basis for reviewing vocabulary in a range of different topic areas.

Looking at the map on the wall focuses attention and activates thoughts and language.

Comparison can be used to review vocabulary already learnt.

For example:

Teacher: Look at the map and show me the country that your family comes from.
What is the weather like in that country?
What is the weather like in Ireland?
Is that the same as the country that your family comes from?
(If different) How is it different?
What is the difference between living in a hot and a cold country? (clothing, food, time to start school etc.)

Vocabulary: This will lead to adjectives such as hot, cold, dry, wet, and comparatives (hotter, colder, wetter etc.) New vocabulary can be put on wall chart for future reference (see Example 1 above).

Extension: Vocabulary can then focus on Ireland with words such as cloudy, rainy, sunny etc. and extend into the weather for different *Seasons*. The topic *Seasons* can be further extended, in the context of weather, into the main events (Christmas, summer holidays etc. as appropriate).

3 Consolidating, adding questions and descriptions

Pupils work in pairs or small groups. If the class group is small (3-4 pupils) then they can all work together on this activity.

One (or two in a small group situation) pupil sits with his/her back to remaining pupils. A photo, picture or word card relevant to the theme is placed behind the pupil. The pupil (with back to others) asks questions in order to find out what is on the picture or card behind him/her. Other pupils may only answer 'Yes' or 'No'.



Example 4

Wall charts with important sets of words or phrases provide on-going support for many different classroom activities. An example of a useful chart is one providing the questions and other language typically used in the mainstream classroom.

Observational assessment: Teacher can observe fluency, pronunciation, accuracy in use of question forms and stress and intonation.

NOTE:

This activity can be used for a wide range of topics. Examples include *Food and clothes, Colours, shapes and opposites, People who help us, Weather, Transport and travel, Time, Animals and plants.*

Questioning can be made more challenging when the unknown word/ object/ person is closely similar to another, for example *sheep* and *cow* or *lollipop lady* and *traffic warden* .

4 Drawing and writing

Younger pupils can **draw and label or copy** short text as above (Examples 2 & 3).

Older pupils can:

- Write a **postcard** which briefly describes an experience with emphasis on the weather **(A2)**.
- Write a **short story** in which the weather is a feature and which may include reference to clothing **(A2)**.
- Write a **letter** (it is important to decide with the pupil who the 'recipient' would be) describing the weather in Ireland in different seasons with some additional comment such as comparison with the family's country of origin **(B1)**.
- Write a **piece of text** comparing the basics of life in Ireland and in another country where the climate is different **(B1)**.

Focusing on SPEAKING

The subskills of **Speaking** are:

1. **Developing vocabulary**
2. **Developing structural accuracy**
3. **Developing phonological accuracy**

1. The development of new **vocabulary** is an activity which spans all the skills of language and will be an ongoing challenge for all pupils.

Approaches to the development of new vocabulary in the language support class are provided in the teaching cycles above.

In addition to the collaborative 'brainstorming' type activities, older pupils and in particular those moving on to post-primary schools in the near future, would benefit from practice in using dictionaries effectively. Some **dictionary-based activities** are described on **page 14**.

2. Developing **structural accuracy** in Speaking is a process that should be accompanied by classroom activities which are guaranteed to involve pupils in contributing to the activity from the earliest stage, even when their contributions may be largely inaccurate. Nothing will motivate pupils more than the achievement of communication even if it is accompanied by gesture or involves finding more roundabout means of making a point.

It is important, however, that accuracy is reinforced frequently without putting pupils off communicating. **Writing**, therefore, becomes most important in the reinforcement of aspects of structure such as sequencing and tenses. Writing and speaking, as a result, are mutually supportive learning activities.

3. **Phonological accuracy** is critical for accurate spelling. If a pupil develops bad patterns of pronunciation then it is inevitable that spelling will suffer because there is no correct correspondence between sound and symbol. Pronunciation and intonation may be developed through a range of classroom activities.

In addition to learning through activities, pupils will also focus on the teacher as a model. It is important, therefore, that the teacher is constantly aware of his/her clarity of pronunciation and of correcting/clarifying pronunciation that is inaccurate.

For **pronunciation activities** see **page 18**.

Dictionary-based activities for developing vocabulary

NOTE:

Pupils in Senior Primary, particularly those near the end of primary school should develop the skills of using a learner's dictionary effectively.

It is recommended that every language support classroom should have enough learner's dictionaries for pupils to work in pairs or small groups practising the effective use of the dictionary. Most of the major publishers have produced such dictionaries and they are available from specialist language bookshops.

Dictionaries at beginner or intermediate levels would be suitable for most primary school use.

1 Making a word search for revision and review

1. Pupils work in pairs or small groups to make a word search, which will be passed to another group to see if they can find all the words.
2. Pupils discuss and write down all the words they can think of that relate to the theme.
3. They select and list 10 words.
4. Using the dictionary they try to find alternative vocabulary for the ten words they have selected (e.g. *beach/strand, holiday/vacation*)
5. They enter the words in the grid (see next page), writing always from left to right, and surround the words with random letters.
6. They write the original ten words on the lines below and pupils doing the word search are told that they will find **either** the word listed or an **alternative** word that will be in the dictionary.
7. They also provide a title for the wordsearch that indicates the theme.

(Even if pupils do not find alternative vocabulary, the practice in using the dictionary is invaluable.)

NOTE:

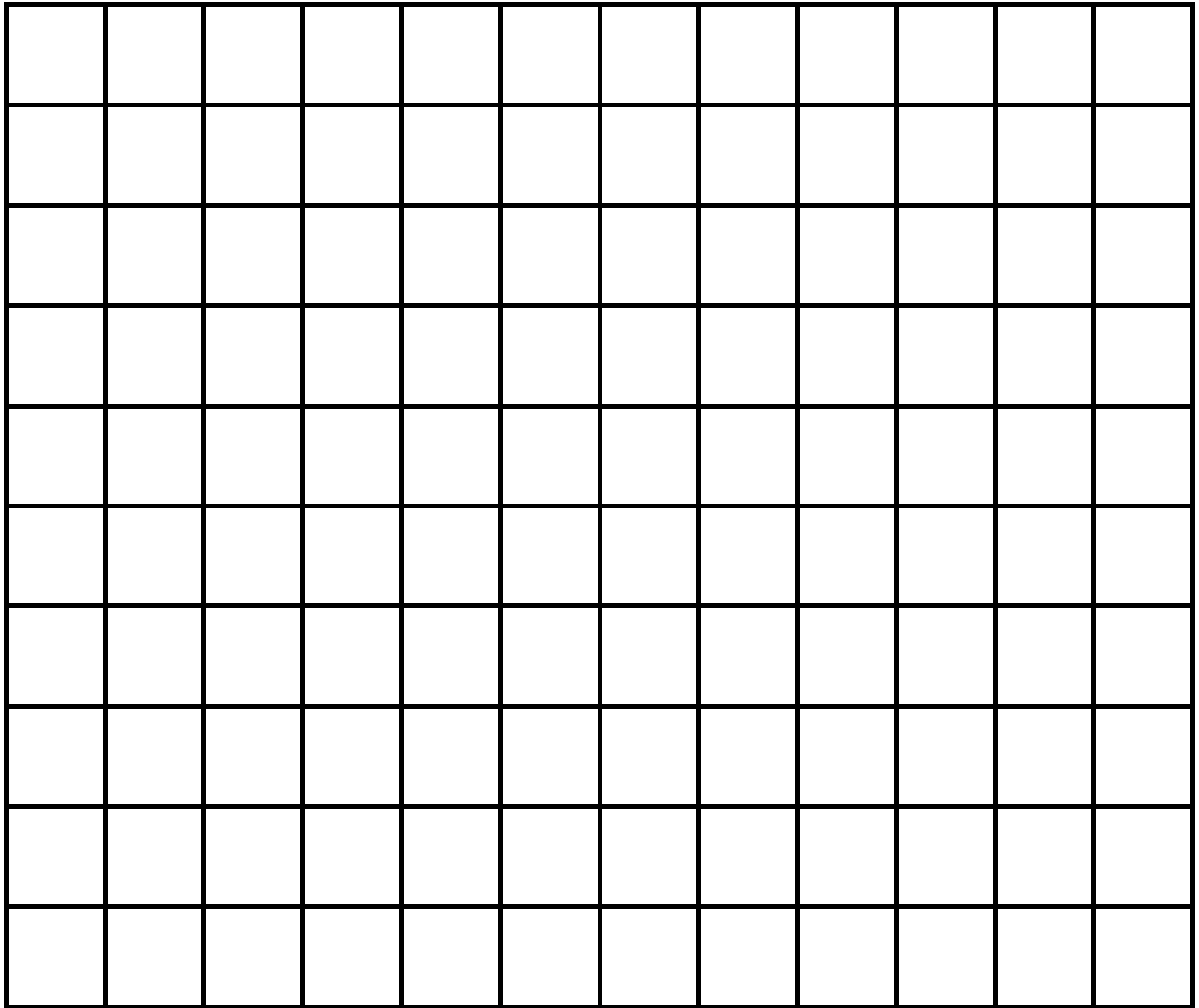
- This wordsearch activity has been made additionally challenging to encourage the use of a dictionary and to make older pupils aware that several words can mean the same thing.

The same grid can be used by pupils at any level to make a wordsearch based on new vocabulary or as a means of revising what has been learnt.

- Wordsearches can be made more difficult by inserting random letters that are also included in the words. For example:

b	e	b	e	a	c	h	e	a	c
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

This is a good exercise for practising word recognition.



Find **either** these words in the grid **or** words that mean the same as these words (use the dictionary).

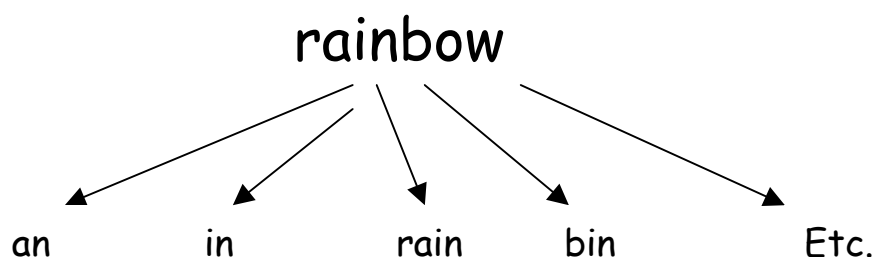
3 Word chains

- 1 Pupils work in groups (approx 4-5 per group) or whole class if appropriate.
- 2 First pupil, or teacher, writes down the first word.
- 3 Next pupil must add a word using the last letter of the previous word
- 4 The chain continues around the group.
- 5 If a pupil can't think of a word he/she can use the dictionary but must be able to explain the selected word
- 6 When a chain has been completed, see if a 'silly sentence or story' can be made from the words.

Example: treegoalibraryeariver
 1 2 3 4 5 6

4 Words from words

This is like the game 'Boggle' except that the new words are made from a single word. Teams can compete to see how many words they can make. The dictionary can be used.



NOTE:

Many other dictionary-based activities are possible but are dependent on all pupils in a class using the same publication.

Developing pronunciation and intonation

Using stories

For pupils who are not yet reading

- 1 Teacher chooses a story or rhyme which is familiar and which repeats words or phrases
- 2 Teacher reads the story/rhyme first then tells the pupils that they are going to say some of the words
- 3 Teacher reads the story and stops when a repeated word or phrase comes up
- 4 Pupils say this in chorus or individually with appropriate intonation.

Example: *There was an old lady who swallowed a fly ...*

For pupils who have begun to read text

- 1 Pupils choose a story which they know and like.
- 2 Pupils read aloud in turn and teacher encourages intonation and clarifies pronunciation.

For pupils who can read with ease

- 1 A group/pair selects a story that is familiar.
- 2 Group/pair works on a retelling of the story in their own words, making notes. They can use their imagination to change the story.
- 3 Group/pair tells the story to the class, taking turns or parts.

Using rhymes and poems

Rhymes, poems and songs provide an excellent means of practising pronunciation and intonation as they are largely dependent on rhyming words and intonation to carry the message.

For pupils who are not yet reading, they can be used as above with teacher providing some input and pupils picking up where he/she stops.

Pupils may also be asked to think of more words that rhyme.

Themes may be used to make up chants that are said in rhythm.

Example:

Taking the rhythm of a train getting faster and faster, use the vocabulary that the pupils have learnt:

Apple	Apple		
— —	— —		
Bread and butter		Bread and butter	
— — — —		— — — —	
Fish and chips	and	fish and chips	
— — — —		— — — —	

Tea and cake

— — — —

Repeat this very quickly
ending with a train whistle.

Playground chants provide language use that is often accompanied by clapping hands, turning around etc.

Example: A sailor went to sea sea sea
 To see what he could see see see
 But all that he could see see see
 Was the bottom of the deep blue sea sea sea

For older pupils

Attention can be brought to particular sounds with a chain game like ***Silly Sandwiches***.

1. Pupils in turn must make up a silly sandwich based on the selected sound
2. In turn they say, 'I made a silly sandwich with ...'
3. They can use any words that include the sound.

Examples, *I made a silly sandwich with sand, shoes, seaweed and sausages.*
I made a silly sandwich with four fat frogs and a fried fish.

Making *Tonguetwisters*:

1. Teacher writes up several words containing the same sound.
2. Pupils add more words to the list. They can look around the word charts or in their own books for help.
3. In groups or whole class, pupils make up a tongue twister with as many words as possible
4. Everybody has to say the tongue twisters until all pupils pronounce all the words correctly.

Example, to practise the final 't' sound: **cat bat hat sat mat**

Using *Circle Time* approaches to build confidence and self-esteem

Stopping the slide

There is always a danger that some children, on finding themselves immersed in an unfamiliar language, will suffer a serious loss of confidence as a result of their apparently poor ability to communicate with those around them.

Inability to communicate, or lack of confidence to even attempt to join in the different activities that surround the child, can lead to gradual but increasing isolation. Inevitably, the result for the child is loss of self-esteem, increasing unwillingness to take a 'risk' and, at worst case, an increased likelihood of aggressive responses to normal situations.

The greatest challenge for pupils learning English as a Second Language in primary school faces those at the upper end of the school and, in particular, those shortly to enter post-primary education. Inability to communicate effectively means:

- Inability to respond to a question in class
- Inability to ask a question that would promote comprehension of the topic under study
- Inability to engage with peers in collaborative work or play
- Inability to respond to the range of situations that present themselves on a daily basis in school life.

Pupils in receipt of language support in primary schools typically spend at least 75% of their week in mainstream classes. If, during this lengthy period of time, a pupil's inability to communicate is constantly reinforced as confidence drops and drops, then there is little chance that the learning that should take place will do so.

Circle Time – the underlying concept

Circle Time has already been used with great success to address the problems encountered by those children who fail to develop the normal and appropriate social and learning skills as a result of an inability to communicate successfully. This approach, therefore, has much to offer in the general social and academic development of language support pupils.

The advantages of Circle Time for language support

1. Language support classes or groups tend, in general, to be smaller than full mainstream classes. For the vulnerable pupil, despite the challenge of a Circle Time activity, the environment is safe, secure, non-threatening and, above all, positive.
2. Providing an environment in which a child can grow in confidence also means that the child can begin to involve him/herself with the activities that take place there.
3. Involvement with any learning activity demands 'thinking' about the task as it is carried out
4. The successful completion of a task (and all success is relative) has a 'washback' effect in reinforcing confidence
5. Confidence builds on confidence and will be transferred into other areas of the child's learning activities both inside and outside school

1 Providing basic communication

By strictly limiting what you want a pupil to do, and by applying the limit to the entire group so that no one pupil is expected to do or say more than any other, there is little opportunity for any pupil to feel embarrassed or lose confidence.

'Football' in different colours are used, each to ask a single question –

who? did what? where? when? how or why?

These five questions form the basis of an effective communication. If there is a particularly vulnerable pupil in the group, this activity should be repeated until it is obvious that the pupil is gaining confidence.

The activity can be revisited if a new pupil joins the class and obviously needs some time to gain confidence.

Method

1. Teacher explains both in words and by modelling how the activity words.
2. One football represents each question. The balls may be real or may be drawn on a chart. The question may be written on the ball but not all pupils may be able to read yet). The blue ball is *who?* the red ball is *did what?* etc.
3. The pupils may be responding to a story that has been read in class or they may be communicating about what they did at the weekend (e.g. *News*)
4. Teacher provides the first example by pointing to the appropriate balloon and saying, for example, *I went to the park on Saturday for a walk.* Then passes the game to the first pupil.
5. Teacher prompts pupils who have difficulties with vocabulary but does not correct tenses, for example, because the objective is to get the more vulnerable pupils to engage with the task of communicating.
6. The pupils with greater ability to communicate are also limited to the five questions but can provide more imaginative responses if they wish.
7. As pupils gain confidence and get to know what colours represent the different questions, the questions may be swapped around – by teacher or another pupil pointing to the different balls.
8. As pupils become familiar with the game and are confident in responding, it may also be played by throwing a ball of a particular colour to a pupil, who must immediately give the correct piece of information.



2 Actions and locations

This activity begins with '**thinking time**', then provides reinforcement of recently learnt **vocabulary** with a limited range of **actions** which can provide practice in vocabulary or classroom instructions.

Method

1. Each pupil, sitting down, is assigned a known word from a theme that has been learnt previously. If there is a new pupil in the group he/she may need to have some explanation of the word. (Words for food, animals, days of the week etc.)
2. Pupils have 2 or 3 minutes to think about their 'word' and each pupil says something about it. (e.g. *I like Friday, milk is good, a mouse is small* etc.) Teacher should model this as necessary.
3. Teacher goes through instructions to ensure that all pupils understand them. Instructions can be limited to 2 or 3 if the pupils have recently started or if there is a vulnerable pupil in the group. Instructions may be based on prepositions - *Milk stand beside the door*, or may practice classroom instructions - *Friday sit down* or *Mouse open your book*.
4. Pupils must follow instructions and, when achieved, teacher gives positive praise and pupil returns to seat.

3 Sound awareness chain

This activity reinforces awareness of the sounds contained within words but limits each pupil's focus to a single word at a time. The activity can be based on either word or picture cards.

Method

1. Use a collection of words which contain 2 or 3 particular sounds which have been studied in previous classes (e.g. 't' in *cat*, 's' in *snake*, 'f' in *frog* etc.)
2. Words or picture cards can be used depending on the literacy level of the class.
3. Each pupil is given one card
4. Teacher starts the chain by going to each pupil in the circle and saying 'My word is (*hat*) if your word sounds like mine, join the chain'.
5. The pupil must say the word on the card and decide whether he/she can join the chain.
6. When the first chain has finished, pupils return to their places and teacher uses the next sound so that all pupils get a chance to participate.

4 Thinking back

Getting pupils to think back briefly over the class and say what they liked best is an excellent way of developing **thinking ability** and the **expression of thoughts**. It also provides insights into what individual pupils enjoy doing and how they like to learn.

Method

1. In final few minutes before class ends all pupils return to their seats.
2. Teacher tells them to close their eyes and think about what they have been doing and find the one thing that they really enjoyed and why.
3. Each pupil, in turn, says what they enjoyed and why. For new or vulnerable pupils the teacher may need to prompt and the response may be in single words.

Focusing on WRITING

The subskills of **Writing** are:

1. **Developing vocabulary**
2. **Developing structural accuracy**
3. **Developing orthographic accuracy**

1. The development of new **vocabulary**, as indicated for speaking, is an activity which spans all the skills of language and will be an ongoing challenge for all pupils. **Brainstorming** activities and **dictionary-based** activities (described above) are both excellent means of leading into a written task. Brainstorming gets the pupils involved in the task from the outset and activates their thoughts and previous learning. Using a dictionary effectively is particularly important for pupils whose literacy in English is at a lower level than the peer group. This skill will transfer into other areas of learning.
2. Developing **structural accuracy** is particularly important in writing tasks because the pupil has time to work on written text with the objective of producing a perfect final version. The teacher must use a variety of means to make pupils aware of the importance of both accuracy and orthography (handwriting) in their written work. Accuracy will automatically be reinforced through comment and feedback from the teacher. It is advisable, however, to encourage pupils to identify and correct their own mistakes by drawing attention to them but **not** immediately providing the correct answer. The more a language learner, of any age, is encouraged to work at a problem such as a vocabulary item, or a structural/grammatical inaccuracy, the more he/she will retain the information and apply it in the future.
3. The development of **orthographic accuracy** is particularly important for pupils who do not learn to write in primary school with the peer group. In some cases they may not have developed literacy previously and in others they may have developed literacy in a non-Roman script language. The development of inadequate orthographic skills will prove a serious handicap as education proceeds. The language support teacher, therefore, has an important role to play both in modelling good handwriting and in correcting what pupils have written and providing further practice as necessary.

Correcting written text

It is important to remember, when correcting written text produced by language learners, that there are two distinct aspects to correction:

1. The text/story/account itself: Are the ideas good and have they been assembled in a clear and coherent way?
2. The English language: Is there an adequate range of vocabulary evident in the text and is it put together in a (reasonably) accurate way?

1 Using published materials

There is a wide range of published material available to support the development of the writing skills of pupils in primary education. The materials designed for native-speaking pupils are entirely appropriate for language support pupils.

Drills which provide repetitive practice should be avoided. However, there are many examples of writing tasks that support and supplement the themes of the primary curriculum while providing guided support. See Example 5 below.



Example 5
A post card reinforcing the topic 'Summer' which provides a model for writing a short note with an address format.

2 Using writing tasks to develop specific vocabulary

A combination of writing and drawing is an effective way of developing hand-eye coordination while working with particular categories of vocabulary.

Method

1. Teacher and pupils read a short piece of text, approximately 4 sentences.
2. Pupils draw a picture illustrating the text with appropriate labels.
3. Then pupils change the 'describing words' and write the new text and/or draw a picture of their new story with labels.

Example 1: Descriptive text for working on the concept of opposites

Mrs Smith was a very old lady. She was very thin and tall. She had white hair. She always carried a big blue umbrella.

Pupils change the underlined words to create the opposite description.

Example 2: Text which practises particular words which, when changed, have a different result.

Maria gets up early. She eats her breakfast quickly. She walks for the bus. The bus is late but Maria arrives at school in time.

When pupils change the underlined words there is a different result. What is it?

Example 3: Changing a familiar text

Goldilocks was a girl with long blonde hair. She went into a house where three bears lived. The bears were not there. She ate their porridge. The bears came home and found her there and ...

Pupils change the main features of the story using a range of vocabulary that is known. If they have been studying animals they could change the text as follows:

Goldilocks was a big elephant with a long trunk. She went into a house where three lions lived. etc.

2 Spontaneous text

The game of consequences is very good for the creation of spontaneous text. It also models how a story should be constructed. The model provided by the teacher can focus on a particular tense.

Method:

1. Teacher and pupils read a short story with 6 stages (see example below).
2. Pupils work in pairs or groups of 3 or 6.
3. Each group is given a copy of the story as a model
4. Each pupil writes one line of a new story which corresponds to the stage in the model. He/she folds the line over so that the next pupil can't see it.
5. When the six lines have been completed the pupils open the page and read what they have written.

Example:

Last week I went to the swimming pool with my mother.

I saw a little kitten

My mother told me to pick up the kitten

I went to the office with the kitten

I hoped that the lady would look after the kitten

When I got home I told my father about the kitten

For pupils who are **beginning to write** short pieces of text, the template on the next page could be used. Pupils should fold the page on the dotted line.

Pupils at **A1 level** could use the sample story and replace the key vocabulary.

Pupils at **A2 level** could use the model but make more changes to use their larger repertoire of vocabulary.

Pupils at **B1 level** could do the activity without any prompts.

Last week I went to _____

with _____.

.....

I saw a _____

.....

My _____ told me to _____

.....

I went to _____

.....

I hoped that _____

.....

When I got home I told my _____ about _____

.....

3 Word poems

Making poems from single words is an excellent way of getting pupils to use all the language that they know in an imaginative way. The result is a great sense of achievement, particularly for those whose level of English is still low.

Method:

- 1 Write a single word on the board. It could be a word that the pupils have recently learnt or the name of a member of the class.
- 2 Brainstorm all the words that the pupils know that start with the letters in the name, and write these under the original word.
- 3 Then, working in pairs, pupils make a short poem using, as a basis, some of the words/ideas they have collected.

Example:

M	a	r	y
man	apple	run	year
mother	an	rain	you
middle	animals	rose	yellow
	and	red	
	a	rules	

It is a new year
Mary runs in the rain
She likes red and yellow roses
She eats an apple

4 Newspaper

Many pupils become familiar with the idea of 'News' in both the mainstream and the language support class. A project for pupils who have developed basic literacy is the compilation of a 'class newspaper'.

Method:

- 1 Teacher shows a newspaper to the class and brainstorms/discusses what is in a paper.
- 2 Pupils look back through the work that they have done and talk about what they could put in a newspaper
- 3 Class is organised in pairs and each pair must discuss and decide what they will contribute to the paper. Contributions could include text, pictures, wordsearch or crosswords, etc.
- 4 Pupils work on their contributions over several sessions
- 5 Teacher brings the work together in a scrap book, or other form, and it is shown to all classes.

NOTE:

This activity could take place across a number of language support groups at the same time with all work being brought together for the final version. Younger and less proficient learners produce what they can – pictures, copied text etc.

The primary focus in this booklet of classroom suggestions and activities is on the productive skills of language – Speaking and Writing. Clearly, it is impossible to carry out learning activities that exclude the receptive skills – Listening and Reading. Many of the activities, therefore, include all four skills.



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