Engaging EAL students in their learning involves best practices that are sensitive to the students’ specific needs and provide a safe and inviting environment where they are willing to take risks and involve themselves in their language acquisition. The strategies included here are good teaching practices for all students, including those just learning to speak, read, write and understand the intricacies of the English language.

Shirley Barclay – Colony Supervisor/EAL Support

Sun West School Division

**The EAL Toolkit**

**50 Strategies for the Effective Teaching of EAL Learners**

1. **Buddy Up**
* If a pupil is learning English as an additional language, you could ‘buddy’ them with a strong speaker and listener.
* This could be part of an induction programme, for specific activities such as group work or extended writing, or as an on-going strategy.
* The buddy-ing could be made explicit to students or left ambiguous, a decision probably best left to the teacher’s discretion.
1. **Picture Rules**
* An EAL students’ entry into the classroom could be eased by providing them with the class rules set out in picture form.
* Equally, if you have rules displayed in your classroom then supplement them with diagrams/pictures.
* If proving successful in individual classrooms, the strategy could be extended to whole school rules.
1. **Dictionary**
* Provide foreign-language dictionaries in your classroom and encourage students to use them.
* A simple starter could be for the whole class to look-up and translate key words.
* Native speakers could then teach correct pronunciations to each other (English *and* other languages).
1. **Images**
* Supplement writing on PowerPoint, SMART Board, worksheets etc. with images.
* Google images provides a quick and easy means to find suitable pictures.
1. **Establish Routines**
* Establishing a routine is a best practice because having a familiar, set pattern of behavioral expectations eliminates the need for the brain to worry about what to do next and allows it to focus on learning content
* Ensure that you make use of:
	+ Classroom routines
	+ Graphic organizers
	+ Oral routines
1. **Sentence Starters**
* Provide sentence starters (also a good way to get everybody down to writing). E.g.:
	+ One side of the argument is...
	+ Another side of the argument is...
	+ Therefore my conclusion is...
* In addition, sentence starters can be used to model academic language.
1. **Talk to Support Staff**
* Find out what works with particular students by talking to the other people who work with them.
* Discuss future planning and how the support staff can work most effectively in your lessons.
* Ask them to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses in learning EAL.
1. **Role Models**
* Use group work to help EAL students hear positive English language models.
* This may also be helpful to the student in internalizing the ‘hidden’ rules of language inside and outside the classroom
1. **Pre-teach Vocabulary**
* It is very useful to pre-teach key vocabulary.
* This is particularly true if students are working or reading from textbooks, either individually or as a class.
* Provide extra visual aids. Assist in reading text in advance with students.
1. **Open Questions**
	* Open questions have many benefits.
	* One may be the opportunity for EAL students to verbalize their reasoning.
	* This gives the teacher a chance to analyze how they are using language in the subject – i.e. Are there certain (subject) conventions which they are circumventing?
2. **Rehearsal**
	* Prime EAL students that you will come to them for answers.
	* Ask them in the interim to orally rehearse these with a (helpful) peer.
	* This technique may be usefully applied to all students.
3. **Concrete Starters**
	* Use concrete rather than abstract starters. This may allow EAL students greater access to the beginning of the lesson.
	* e.g. Matching words, matching words to pictures or grouping similar words.
4. **Whiteboards**
	* Mini-whiteboards offer a good link between talk and writing.
	* Students are able to ‘sketch’ and play with their written answers thanks to the impermanence.
	* Errors can be wiped away!
5. **Questioning**
	* Differentiating questioning helps to engage students throughout the classroom.
	* In planning you could develop questions with your EAL students in mind.
	* Or, develop a set of question stems you can adapt for students learning EAL.
6. **Support Teacher/EA** (if you have someone available)
	* If appropriate, ask classroom support person to run the starter activity while you work with a pupils learning EAL.
	* Or, ask a student (or 2-3) to plan and deliver a starter each week whilst you work with the pupils.
7. **Thinking Time**
	* Build thinking time into the lesson – “30 seconds silent thinking from now.”
	* This allows all students to reflect on questions and content.
	* Students learning EAL may further benefit from the extended time for processing.
8. **Model Speaking and Listening**
	* Model speaking and listening exchanges.
	* This could be done with another adult or with a student.
	* A particularly powerful way might be if the class sit in a circle and you model with a partner in the middle (like a Goldfish Bowl).
	* Showcase the importance of active listening.
	* **Remember:** Modelling + Observation = Improved Performance
9. **Speaking and Listening Success Criteria**
	* Make the success criteria for successful speaking and listening explicit.
	* Supplement this with posters on the classroom walls reiterating in writing and pictures.
	* Your co-created chart could include things such as:
		+ You must …
		+ You should …
		+ You could try to …
10. **Listening Frame**
	* Provide a listening frame to students whereby it is clear what areas you would like them to make notes on.
	* This could be extended asking students to prepare a suitable listening frame after they have listened to the text/article/clip once.
11. **Listening for Key Words**
* Set explicit listening tasks around key words – either for the whole class or individual students.
* For example :
	+ Make a tally chart of the number of times the teacher uses certain words
	+ Use a bingo chart of key words to cross off during a talk or clip
1. **Pre-Highlight**
	* Run-off an extra copy of texts or handouts with key-words or passages already highlighted
2. **First Language**
	* Pupils should be encouraged to use their first language where appropriate.
3. **Plan in first language**
	* Encourage students to talk or write in their first language when attempting to answer a question or planning their response.
	* The steps in the process are:
		+ Think about it
		+ Plan in first language
		+ Attempt in English
4. **Make talk purposeful**
	* Ensure that the talk built into lessons is purposeful.
	* Remember that EAL students often don’t “get” idioms, etc. and are often confused by them.
5. **Allocate Roles**
	* Allocate specific roles in group work.
	* This ensures students know exactly what is expected of them and provides them with a concept to ‘perform’ to (i.e. Question setter, challenger, note-taker).
6. **Matching or Grid Activities**
	* Provide matching or grid type activities for students.
	* Give some model answers to show what is expected.
	* Set the difficulty so that some investigation and collaborative work is required
7. **Writing Frame**
	* Provide students with a list of words and phrases appropriate for use in the writing task set. Examples:
		+ Write a news report on the water cycle
		+ Good evening viewers
		+ Precipitation
		+ In the mountains...
		+ Clouds
		+ The sun shining on the sea...
8. **Purpose for Teaching**
	* At the onset of a lesson, tell pupils what the purpose of your teaching is and what is expected of them upon the completion of the lesson. This gives time to plan and gives them a target to aim for.
9. **Presentation Tips**
	* Explicitly model and explain how to present to the rest of the class.
	* Include basics such as standing up, facing the audience, speaking at the right speed and volume.
10. **Genre Modelling**
	* Provide students with a detailed model or scaffold of the particular ‘school genre’ you are working on.
	* This could be the essay, story writing, report, experimental procedure etc.
	* Two ideas are:
		+ Use student work from previous years as a model. Highlight the genre structure within.
		+ Provide a detailed ‘structure-framework’ for the students that breaks down the genre into important parts. This could be supplemented with sentence starters/content cues for each section.
11. **Vocabulary and Meaning**
	* This strategy is in two parts.
		+ Part 1 – Give students a list of key words in English and ask them to translate into their first language using a dictionary.
		+ Part 2 – Give students a table of meanings of (some of) the initial English words. Ask students to complete the table by correctly matching the words to the meanings.
12. **Belonging**
	* Safety and belonging are prerequisites for learning and development.
	* Because of the communication gap, EAL learners need to be made to feel safe and that they belong.
	* Strategies to give EAL learners a sense of safety and belonging in the classroom may include (amongst many):
		+ Bilingual dictionaries
		+ Letting the student know in advance if you are going to ask them a ‘public’ question.
		+ Reacting positively to mistakes (including your own) and using them to further learning.
13. **Different Types of Language**
	* There are three types of language:
		+ **Communicative Language**
			- The language of conversation
			- Develops first – in face-to-face settings
		+ **Cognitive Language**
			- **D**evelops through investigating, exploring ideas and solving problems.
		+ **Academic Language**
			- Passive voice, ideas and concepts as agents
			- vocabulary with Greek or Latin roots
			- The latter two are required for educational success. The model could provide a framework for tasks or structuring
14. **Prior Knowledge**
	* Eliciting prior knowledge is useful for the teacher and all students.
	* Some ways to establish prior knowledge:
		+ KWLS charts
		+ RAN Organizers
		+ Quick sharing of ideas (could use snowballing)
		+ A picture with question – “How might this connect to…”
15. **Compare and Contrast**
	* Encourage EAL students to compare and contrast their first language with English.
	* This could be facilitated by:
		+ providing grids or frames
		+ asking them to look for patterns or surprises
		+ giving answers in English and their first language, then looking at them together
16. **Analogies**
* Analogies connect one source to another source.
* For example, a car is like a cat because it has a body and is bought by humans.
* Using analogies assists EAL students by connecting information. It offers an alternative to logical reasoning that aids understanding of words and concepts
1. **Idioms**
	* Idioms may prove difficult for non-native speakers as they rely on historical/cultural as well as linguistic knowledge.
	* Take care to explain idioms when using them (or ask students to explain).
	* Using idioms as a tool to explore language may be fruitful…
	* ‘It’s raining cats and dogs’ contrasts with ‘It’s raining pestles and mortars’ in Urdu.
2. **Recasting**
	* Students may remain in their comfort zone when developing EAL.
	* A way to avoid this is recasting.
	* If a student gives an answer or statement that is grammatically incorrect, praise them for the content of their answer and then recast it to them as the prefix to a follow-up question.
	* Example:
		+ ‘We play football yesterday’
		+ *‘Super answering of the question.* ***When you were playing football yesterday****, what happened in the game?’*
3. **Vocabulary Sequence**
	* Here is a model of how to teach new Vocabulary:
		+ Model it in context
		+ Use it in questions
		+ Repeat it
		+ Draw attention to it and use it in other contexts
		+ Display it
		+ Provide opportunities for children to practise it
		+ Give specific positive feedback about its use
		+ Encourage children to reflect on the way they use it
4. **Barrier Games**
	* Barrier games are a speaking and listening strategy requiring students to give and receive instructions across a physical barrier.
	* For example, two students sit at a desk with a wooden board or folder upright in between.
	* Pupil A must instruct the Pupil B how to do something (i.e. replicate a drawing that Pupil A can see but Pupil B cannot).
	* This structure can be used in varying ways according to the aspects of language you wish students to attend to or think about.
5. **Starting Points**
	* Ensure starters are culturally familiar
	* to all students. This will help engage
	* and motivate EAL learners from
	* the beginning.
	* Example:
	* When starting to study Henry VIII: an image of Henry could be replaced with a variety of pictures of kings and leaders. Then the connection to Henry VIII is made.
6. **Listening Assistance**
	* Listening can be assisted in a number of ways. When setting up tasks in which students are to listen, try to ensure the talk is:
		+ Face to face
		+ Supported by actions
		+ Purposeful and immediate
		+ Interesting, useful and relevant.
	* You could share these criteria with students prior to the activity and ask how they are going to ensure their talk facilitates the listening by doing them.
7. **Drama**
	* Using drama lets students practice speaking and listening in a variety of roles and situations.
	* Follow-up work can include:
		+ analyzing the effect of role/circumstance on language
		+ investigating the impact of purpose or motive
		+ examining how behaviour and language interact
8. **Diagrams**
	* Simple and effective.
	* Diagrams put verbal or written language another way that aids in understanding.
9. **Word Relationships**
	* Draw attention to the relationships between words.
	* Examples could be:
		+ Homophones (a relationship of similarity *and* difference)
		+ Roots e.g. muscle, muscular
		+ Suffixes e.g. –ing, -ed, -er, -ism (prefixes too
		+ Antonyms, synonyms
		+ Verb tense
10. **Model Writing**
	* Set a question and then model a written answer. Do talk alouds as you are modelling.
	* Include elements such as:
		+ Rewriting at sentence level
		+ Rewriting at word level
		+ Making meaning precise
	* This could be developed by providing a written answer and asking students to rewrite, talking through the rationale for what they have done after they have completed the task.
11. **Word Taxonomy**
	* Delineate key words for students by placing them in a taxonomy.
	* Example:
		+ Naming words: *cell*, *cytoplasm*, *hydrogen*
		+ Process words: *diffusion*, *digestion*, *reflection*
		+ Concept words: *electromagnetism*, *energy*, *particles*
12. **DART**s
	* **DARTs** are **directed activities related to texts**.
	* Examples include:
		+ sequencing
		+ prioritizing
		+ matching pictures to text
		+ matching phrases to definitions
		+ matching examples of cause and effect
		+ filling in gaps in text
		+ the use of true/false statements
		+ matching concepts to examples
		+ sorting to determine which information is not needed for a piece of work
		+ grouping information together to identify similarities and differences between key words and phrases
13. **Give It Time**
	* Processing in two languages—or even one—takes time if we want genuine comprehension to take place.
	* **Consider:**
		+ **Wait time**: more than three minutes of processing time before answering or beginning an assignment decreases fear and increases engagement.
		+ **Extra work time**: extra time is what many students need in order to access their first-language knowledge and express themselves fully.
		+ **Scaffolding time**: The more complex the content, the more scaffolding time is needed to fill foundational knowledge gaps. Build extra time into lessons to make sure all students have the prerequisite comprehension for completing tasks to achieve maximum learning.
14. **Assess Regularly to Inform Student Learning**
	* Assessment is an essential tool for reflective teachers. It allows us to take a student’s particular needs into account at the planning stage, ensuring for an effective delivery of the lesson objective.
	* Effective (but quick) assessment tools:
		+ **Thumbs up -** ask your students to give a thumbs, thumbs horizontal, or thumbs down. This gives clear visual feedback to help you determine next steps.
		+ **Illustrate it** – have students illustrate new vocabulary words. It will give you an opportunity to assess their conceptual understanding.
		+ **Explain it** – have the students reteach the concept to the class. The process of trying to express their understanding of the material reinforces their understanding of it. It also affords you a valuable opportunity to assess the success or otherwise of your lesson.