



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

The English Language Learning Progressions Introduction

A resource for mainstream and ESOL teachers

Acknowledgments

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ESOL specialists are specialists in teaching English to speakers of other languages.

These progressions explain what ESOL specialists and mainstream teachers need to know about English language learners in order to maximise their learning and participation. They will help teachers to choose content, vocabulary, and tasks that are appropriate to each learner's age, stage, and language-learning needs. While these progressions are intended primarily for teachers of classes where there are English language learners, they are also useful for teachers of many other learners. This may include learners for whom English is a first language but who would benefit from additional language support. The information and analyses of language, language development, and texts that are provided in these progressions are thus relevant for all teachers.

The English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) provides a nationally consistent set of progressions for teachers to use to:

- identify stages and patterns of progress in the language development of English language learners in years 1–13;
- analyse the complexity of oral and written texts;
- monitor and report on English language learners' progress.

The progressions are presented in four booklets: this introductory booklet and booklets for years 1–4, 5–8, and 9–13. Each school will receive only the booklet(s) for the year levels of their students.

This introductory booklet presents some information and understandings about learning an additional language (based on current research in the field of second language acquisition¹) and discusses the implications of these for mainstream classrooms and ESOL support.

The remaining three booklets, for years 1–4, 5–8, and 9–13, describe typical patterns of progress for English language learners as they acquire an additional language (New Zealand English). The booklets provide descriptors of progress in oral language (listening and speaking) and annotated examples of text progressions for written language (reading and writing). These descriptors and annotated examples illustrate a range of increasingly complex oral and written texts. (For exemplars of learners' oral language at a range of year levels, please refer to the accompanying DVD, *Oral Language Exemplars for the English Language Learning Progressions*.) The progressions are split into the three year-level bands so that the examples given will be appropriate for the learners in each age group.

Each booklet includes a glossary of terms.

The booklet *The English Language Learning Progressions: Years 1–4* focuses on learners in years 1–4, who are typically five to nine years old. Some English language learners in this group may have begun school in New Zealand at the age of five. Others may have arrived in New Zealand when they were six, seven, eight, or nine, with or without previous experience of formal education (in English or in any other language). The English language level of learners in years 1–4 may be anywhere from the Foundation Stage to Stage 2 of the progressions, so this booklet includes examples of oral language, texts for reading, and learners' writing that are appropriate for this age group at these three stages.

¹ The term "second language acquisition" (SLA) is widely used within the field of applied linguistics to refer to the ways in which people become proficient in a language that is not their first language. The term "language acquisition" is used in a number of ways. In this book, "language acquisition" is used to refer to the incidental and informal acquisition of language, and the term "language learning" is used to refer to formal instruction.

The booklet *The English Language Learning Progressions: Years 5–8* focuses on learners in years 5–8, who are typically nine to thirteen years old. Learners in this group will include new learners of English as well as learners who are progressing through the later stages of the ELLP. Some may come from a refugee background and may have limited or no prior experience of school. The English language level of learners in years 5–8 may be anywhere from the Foundation Stage to Stage 3 of the progressions, so this booklet includes examples of oral language, texts for reading, and learners’ writing that are appropriate for this age group at all of these stages.

The booklet *The English Language Learning Progressions: Years 9–13* focuses on learners in years 9–13, who are typically thirteen to eighteen years old. The English language level of learners in years 9–13 may be at any stage of the progressions, so this booklet includes examples of oral language, texts for reading, and learners’ writing that are appropriate for this age group at all of the stages. As in the earlier years, some of these learners, especially some of those from refugee backgrounds, will have had little or no formal education and have limited or no literacy in their first language(s). These learners are likely to need intensive support for long periods.

The English Language Learning Progressions will help you to find answers to questions like these:

How do I know where to start with a learner?

How do I know whether a text is easy or difficult for my learners?

How do I know if my learners are making the expected progress?

What are the important things to know about learning in an additional language?

What do learners need to know, understand, and produce at different stages of English language acquisition?

How do I decide what to teach, what materials to choose, and what types of learning tasks to design?

How do I help my learners to become effective listeners, speakers, readers, and writers?

What are the next steps that my learners need to take in order to make progress?

The ELLP should be used in conjunction with:

- general guides to literacy teaching, such as *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, and *Effective Literacy Strategies in Years 9 to 13*;
- ESOL teaching resources, such as the Selections series teachers’ notes, *Supporting English Language Learning in Primary Schools* (forthcoming), and the *English Language Intensive Programme Years 7–13 Resource* (ELIP);
- ESOL assessment resources, such as the *ESOL Funding Assessment Guidelines* and *ESOL Progress Assessment Guidelines*, which describe tools and processes for formal and informal assessment to support teaching and learning;
- *Language Enhancing the Achievement of Pasifika* (LEAP) (forthcoming), an online resource for teachers of Pasifika students.

(For further information about ESOL resources, see the Ministry of Education pamphlet *ESOL Resources for Schools, Teachers, and School Communities*.)

What are the important things to know about learning in an additional language?

There has been extensive research into all aspects of the acquisition and learning of English as an additional language. Teachers can refer to research cited in *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis* (Ministry of Education, 2003d).

Here is a brief list of some important points that are relevant to these progressions.

- A language can be seen as having two major aspects: social language and academic language.
 - Social language is for communicating in interpersonal contexts and can be either spoken or written. It may take place at school (in social exchanges in and out of the classroom) or outside school. It may include “functional language”, which is used for buying something at a shop, making an appointment, getting information, and so on.
 - Academic language is for learning and communicating in educational contexts. It can be either spoken or written, and its main purpose at school is for learning within the curriculum.
 - Social language is sometimes called basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), and academic language is sometimes called cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS usually take less time to acquire than CALP. In a school setting, learners will probably acquire social language more quickly and easily than academic language.
- Learning an additional language is a long process. It generally takes between five and seven years for a learner of average intelligence who has strong foundations in their first language to reach the same level as a **native speaker** of the same age and acquire academic proficiency in an additional language. (The length of time depends on many factors, including the age at which they begin learning.)
- It's common for a language learner to initially be better at oral language than written language (or sometimes vice versa), depending on what type of exposure the learner has had to the language they are learning.
- It's very important to support and encourage the use of a learner's first language when they are learning an additional language. The learner who maintains their first language and continues to develop their first-language CALP generally achieves better in the additional language than the learner who has not maintained their first language. When a learner can access concepts that they already understand in their first language, it's easier for them to learn new language and content. Teachers should encourage thinking and discussion in the first language and provide bilingual support where possible.

Learners usually acquire social language more quickly than academic language.

Learning a new language takes a long time – often between five and seven years, or even longer.

The words in bold type are defined in the glossary on pages 49–53 of this booklet.

Supporting the use of the first language promotes achievement.

- A language learner follows a natural developmental pattern as they acquire an additional language. There is ongoing debate and disagreement about the order in which they acquire some specific aspects of language. But it's generally accepted that additional language acquisition roughly parallels first language acquisition, with some important differences (some of these differences are discussed on pages 6–8, 21–22, 27–29, and 33).
 - In the early stages of additional language acquisition, most learners will go through three phases. First, they will go through a “silent period”, usually a few weeks at the most, in which they soak up the sounds of the new language and assign meanings to these sounds but produce very little of the **target language** themselves. Next, they will produce mainly **formulaic chunks**, which are groups of words that learners think of as one item, often without understanding the individual words (for example, they learn to say “How are you?” as a way of greeting people). They may also use chunks based on simple sentence patterns that have been modelled for them, for example, “My mother’s name is ... My father’s name is ... My brother’s name is ...” After that, the learner will produce original chunks of language, using simple structures and vocabulary. In the early stages of learning an additional language, the learner’s language will contain many errors in language structures and meanings.
 - In the later stages of language acquisition, learners gradually develop a bank of vocabulary and an understanding of the structure of the language and rely less on formulaic chunks and models. They learn more quickly and effectively if they are taught explicitly about language, for example, through targeted vocabulary teaching and explanations of how texts work at word, **phrase**, **clause**, sentence, paragraph, and whole-text levels.
 - The language learner gradually gains a range of skills that helps them to comprehend and produce more complex texts. Given enough time and support, their skills eventually approximate those of a native speaker. The length of time that a learner takes to get to this point may vary depending on many factors, including the learner, the teacher, the learning environment, and the quality and duration of the teaching programme.
- A language learner needs to be taught features of language that are appropriate for their stage of development. It's generally ineffective to try to teach them something before they're developmentally ready to learn it. Teachers, therefore, need to know about the language-learning process and to use teaching methods and materials that have a strong foundation in second language acquisition theory.
- Many language learners will eventually be able to communicate effectively but may continue to need support to develop accuracy and/or depth of word knowledge in their written and spoken language, especially those who begin learning English in their teenage years or later.
- It's important neither to overestimate nor to underestimate a learner's potential or the progress they have made. Differences in achievement between language learners and their native-speaker peers shouldn't usually be interpreted as evidence of learning failure. Teachers should carefully monitor progress, taking into account each learner's starting point and other individual factors.

Language learning follows a developmental pattern.

Many learners first go through a “silent period” and just listen before they are ready to try out the new language.

Even when learners can communicate effectively in their speaking and writing, they may continue to make mistakes in their use of vocabulary and language structures for a long time.

Informed teachers, who understand how additional languages are learned, are more effective.

- It's natural for a learner to use **interlanguage** as they acquire an additional language. This means that they will blend words and structures from their first language into the language they are learning. (They're also likely to switch between one language and the other, a process sometimes called code switching).
- Another aspect of interlanguage involves the learner "**overgeneralising**" or trying to apply a rule they have learned where it doesn't fit. For example, a learner might know that English past-tense verbs often end in -ed and say, "I broked it." Native speakers of a language can also make this type of mistake and use non-standard forms, such as "had sunken".
- Making connections between their first language and the target language is beneficial to language learners. Learners who have access to bilingual support and who are encouraged to process ideas in their first language are likely to make faster progress, especially in the earlier stages of learning a new language.
- Learners of different ages bring different concepts, knowledge, experiences, and strategies to their language learning. It's important to teach different cognitive and **metacognitive** strategies to help them learn.
- Each learner has a unique set of cultural and personal knowledge and experiences, so teachers should avoid making assumptions about learners from diverse language and cultural backgrounds.
- A learner's language acquisition and learning are more effective when the teacher's practice is informed by theory.
- Language teaching must focus predominantly on meaning, but it is most effective when it also includes a "focus on form". This means looking at the forms of words and grammatical structures as well as the meanings. Such learning should occur in a relevant context. Language teaching and learning needs to be explicit and structured, not just incidental, and language learners need to receive consistent and informed feedback on their progress.
- Learners should have opportunities for language learning, including learning with an explicit focus on language form and meaning, in all curriculum areas.

Factors that affect individual language learners

The stages of language acquisition mentioned above are common to all learners of English as an additional language. However, the combination of factors that affect the progress of language learners is unique to each individual learner.

Each learner has a unique set of family and cultural experiences, knowledge and understandings, and attitudes and perspectives. These have an impact on their language acquisition and learning as well as on their general learning and understandings.

Each learner's starting point and rate of progress will be determined by a number of factors, including the following.

- The strength of the English language learner's oral language and literacy in their first language(s)
- The age of the learner
- The learner's previous education
- The match between familiar and new approaches to teaching and learning

- The similarities and differences between English and the learner’s first language(s)
- The learner’s language-learning experience
- The learner’s exposure to English
- The learner’s opportunities to interact with native speakers of English
- Affective factors
- The learner’s cognitive learning ability
- Physical disability.

The strength of the English language learner’s oral language and literacy in their first language(s)

In general, if a language learner’s proficiency in all modes of their first language is strong, then it will be easier for them to learn a new language.

The age of the learner

There are advantages and disadvantages to being younger or older when learning English as an additional language. Younger learners are often more open and flexible in their approach to learning. Older learners usually bring explicit academic, cognitive, and linguistic knowledge and experience, which can be an advantage but can also be a hindrance at times. Refer to *Non-English-Speaking-Background Students: A Handbook for Schools* (Ministry of Education, 1999b), which discusses these points on page 17.

The age of the learner affects how they approach language learning.

The learner’s previous education

In general, learners who have had consistent formal education are better able to learn a new language.

The match between familiar and new approaches to teaching and learning

It can be difficult, especially for some older learners, to get used to being taught in unfamiliar ways.

The similarities and differences between English and the learner’s first language(s)

If an English language learner’s first language is closely related to English, it’s easier for them to learn English because their knowledge of sounds, structures, and word families in their first language is transferable (see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, page 128). Language elements that may differ from English include sounds, script, vocabulary, structures, meanings,² and the ways in which texts are organised.

The learner’s language-learning experience

In general, the more languages a learner knows, the easier it is for them to learn a new language. The stronger their oral language and literacy in their known languages, the easier it is for them to develop oral language and literacy in a new language.

The learner’s exposure to English

English language learners will have had different amounts and types of exposure to English – either through formal study or through less formal means such as listening to music, watching movies, and participating in social contexts. If a learner has already had some exposure to English, they are “on the way”, even if they are not aware of any familiarity with this language.

² For example, direct translation is sometimes impossible because words with the same basic meanings may be used in different ways.

The learner's opportunities to interact with native speakers of English

When a learner has opportunities to interact with native speakers of English in both social and academic settings, their language acquisition is enhanced.

Affective factors

A learner's personality traits and learning dispositions (such as their confidence, attitudes, perceptions, and ability to take learning risks) influence their learning.

Significant affective factors include the learner's:

- life experience
- being shy or outgoing
- motivation to learn and acquire language
- self-esteem and self-perception
- previous exposure to trauma.

Other affective factors related to the school and home environment will also have a bearing on a learner's achievement. These factors include the learner's relationships with teachers and with other learners and the well-being and stability of their family.

The learner's cognitive learning ability

A small percentage of new language learners are limited by a cognitive disability and will require special support for language learning.

Physical disability

A few learners will need additional support for language learning because they are affected by hearing, sight, or other physical disabilities.

Different kinds of language learners

There are many different kinds of English language learners. Although they share some similar needs, each group has distinct needs as well, many of which are based on their age and their goals for learning English. There are six main kinds of English language learners in New Zealand schools.

- **Some learners begin school at the age of five or six, with minimal or no previous exposure to English.** They may be recent migrants or come from homes where little or no English is used.
- **Some learners begin school after the normal commencement age, with no previous formal schooling in any country.** They may be refugees or migrants from areas where education is not readily available.
- **Some learners begin school after the normal commencement age and have had severely disrupted schooling.** They may be refugees, they may have moved more than once between countries or within New Zealand, or they may have had to work instead of going to school.
- **Some learners have arrived from overseas with school experience equivalent to that of their New Zealand peers, except that they have learned in a language other than English.** Some of these learners may be more advanced in reading and writing in English than in listening and speaking. Their achievements in their first language could be less advanced, equal to, or more advanced than those of their first-language peers.

- **Some learners have had most or all of their education in New Zealand but still have difficulties with the English-language demands of mainstream classes.** They may be from homes where English is spoken only a little, or not at all, even if they have been born in New Zealand. They are usually confident with oral language among their peers and cope well with the language demands of their social lives. They may have low levels of academic English (both oral and written) and may have few literacy skills in their first language.
- **Some learners have learning difficulties or delays for reasons other than language and cultural differences.** These reasons might include psychological illnesses, emotional distress, cognitive disabilities, or undetected sight or hearing disabilities.

Note: Before seeking to confirm a suspected specific learning difficulty, the teacher should consider the learner's achievements in their first language compared with those of their peers. The teacher will only be able to confirm a specific learning difficulty in consultation with personnel such as a bilingual resource person, a Special Education educator, or a trained bilingual assessment expert.

What if the learner seems to have a learning disability?

Effective teaching and learning

Most of the following suggestions apply to effective teaching and learning in general, but some are specific to additional language learning. Teachers should use instructional strategies that are relevant and appropriate to the learning context. (Refer to chapter 4 of the two *Effective Literacy Practice* books for information about instructional strategies.)

- Learning should be carefully scaffolded, and the teaching and learning programme should be organised in an effective sequence. Teachers can scaffold learners by:
 - making the nature and purpose of the task clear and sharing the learning goals with the learners;
 - breaking the task into manageable chunks;
 - making explicit the way a text works at word, sentence, and whole-text levels and/or making the components and language features of the task explicit;
 - giving them opportunities to co-construct a new text or to complete a new task co-operatively;
 - providing opportunities for practice;
 - letting them work independently to construct a new text or complete a new task.
- Learning is generally more effective when a link is made between a familiar topic or context and an unfamiliar one.
- Learners' starting points need to be established through informed and accurate diagnostic assessment. Effective teaching and learning is based on sound information, not on assumptions that may either over- or underestimate a learner's capability in a particular area.

Scaffolding the learning is vital.

- Teaching and learning should focus on the forms and the meanings of language at different levels. Learners should have opportunities to learn about language at word level (such as nouns), clause level (such as **relative clauses**), sentence level, paragraph level (such as organisation of ideas), and whole-text or **discourse** level (such as the structure of a speech).
- Learning tasks should integrate the modes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, although often a task will focus on one mode. (For example, a task could focus on listening, but the learners might also have to write answers to questions and report back orally to the class.) The range of texts used for teaching and learning should include written, oral, and visual language. Both social and academic English should be included in the programme. Visual language is often a very important part of printed or electronic text so, like oral and written language, it needs to be taught explicitly.
- Language teaching and learning is never free of content. It should always be designed to support learning in contexts outside the language classroom and to promote the transfer of learning to new situations. For English language learners who they have placed at early stages of the progressions, teachers should choose topics that include basic general concepts and that are linked as closely as possible to curriculum areas. The topics teachers choose for learners at later stages should be closely linked to curriculum areas. The topics and materials should always be appropriate for the age of the learners.
- Lessons should include opportunities for learners to have repeated but varied opportunities to engage with the same material. The learners also need to experience a variety of interactions in the lessons by working with the whole class, in a structured group, in a pair, and independently.
- Experience-based learning promotes understanding and engagement. It's useful to make the context of new language clear through field trips, experiments, or the use of visual and manipulative materials (such as maths equipment or jigsaws), especially in the earlier stages of language learning.
- Learning is more effective when learners are taught how to learn and encouraged to transfer this knowledge into a range of curriculum areas and to apply it to new learning tasks.

The learning setting, the curriculum context, and the content of English language programmes will vary according to the ages and needs of the learners and the philosophy, resources, and practices of individual schools. However, the fundamental purposes of teaching English as an additional language should remain the same: to help learners access the language for learning at school and, at the same time, to help them learn English for social interaction.

The most useful content for English language learners

These progressions do not specify topics or content for teaching English language learners. The topics and content that teachers choose should reflect the needs of each learner in relation to what their peers are learning and what they are expected to achieve in the mainstream.

However, there is some content that learners at the Foundation Stage need to master before they can progress to speaking, listening, reading, and writing at later stages. They need to learn the basics of English language structures, the forms and sounds of written and spoken language, **high-frequency words**, and the language that will enable them to interact with others in classroom and other social contexts.

All English language learners at the Foundation Stage need to learn a core vocabulary for general concepts, including words for numbers, colours, shapes, time, body parts, feelings, family members, common objects in a range of familiar settings, safety instructions, and so on. Beyond this stage, the choice of vocabulary needs to take into account what each learner needs to know and do in their mainstream classes.

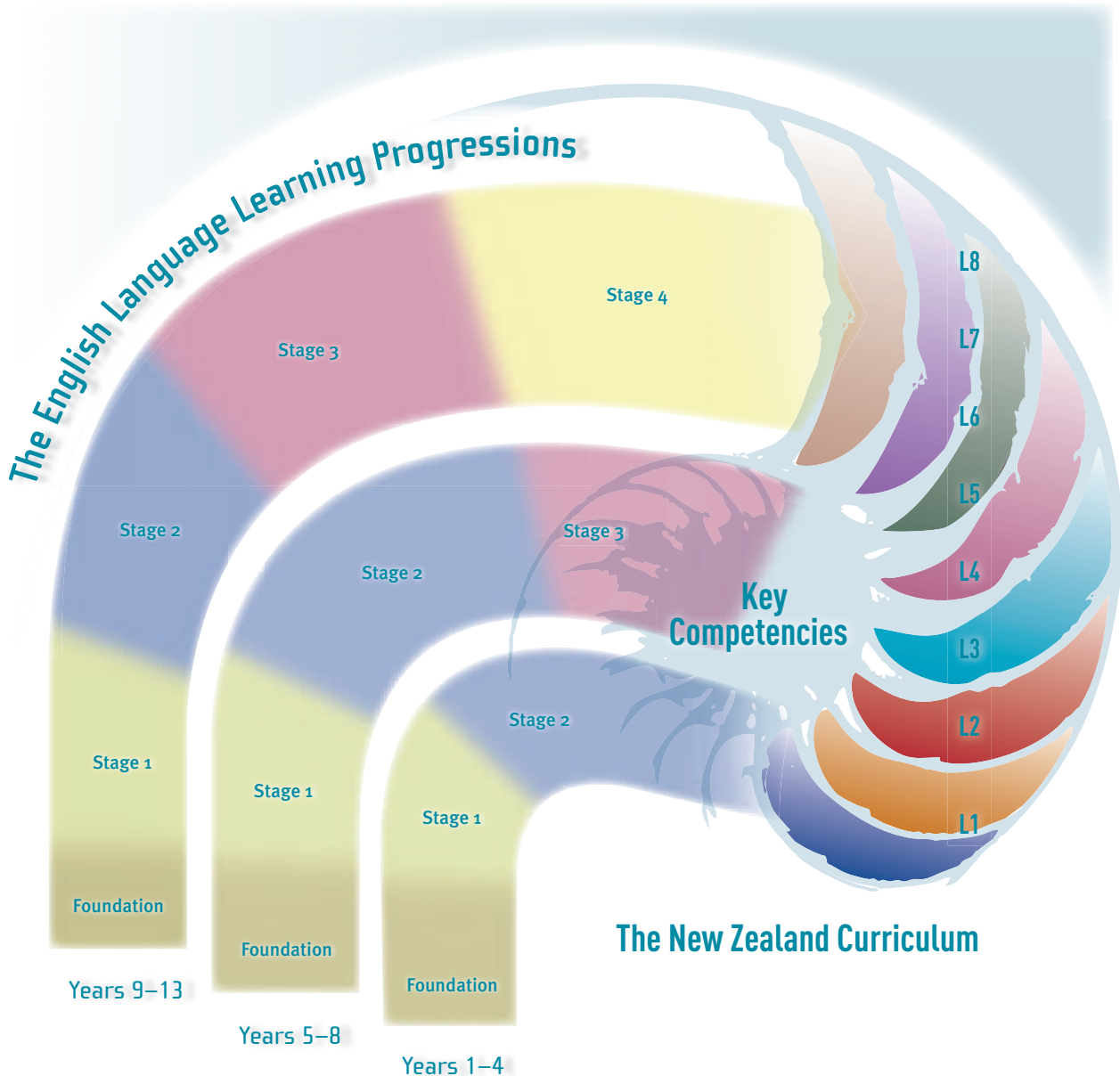
Learning is enhanced when teachers provide opportunities for English language learners to access new information through concepts they understand in their first language. Providing bilingual support where possible can help to bridge the gap between the familiar and the unfamiliar.

The Ministry of Education publications *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, and *Effective Literacy Strategies in Years 9 to 13* describe teaching and learning practices that support literacy learners, including learners for whom English is an additional language. Pages 126–130 of *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8* are especially relevant.

The English Language Learning Progressions and related resources

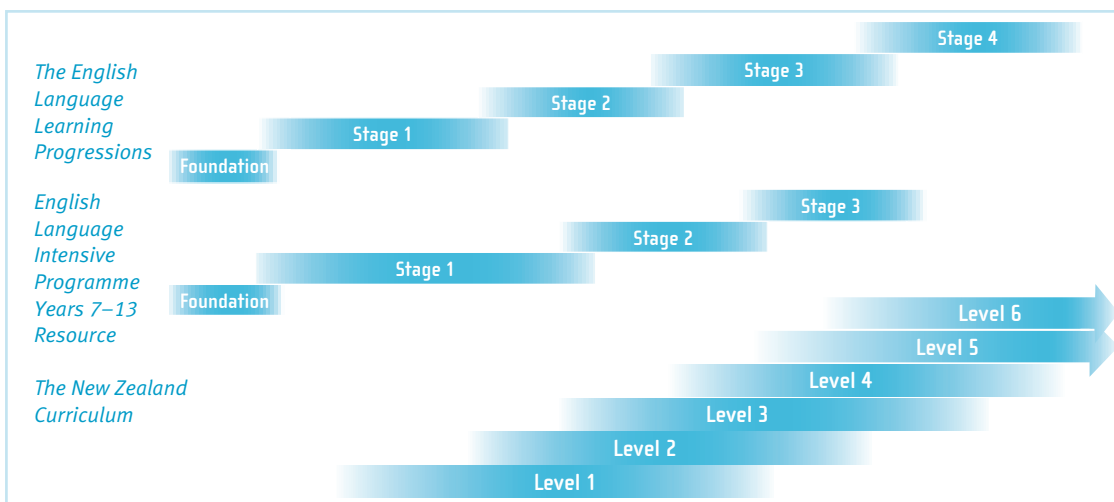
The ELLP stages and the New Zealand Curriculum levels

The New Zealand Curriculum was designed for native speakers of English, and so its progressions follow a pattern based on learners' normal cognitive, social, and physical development when learning in their first language.

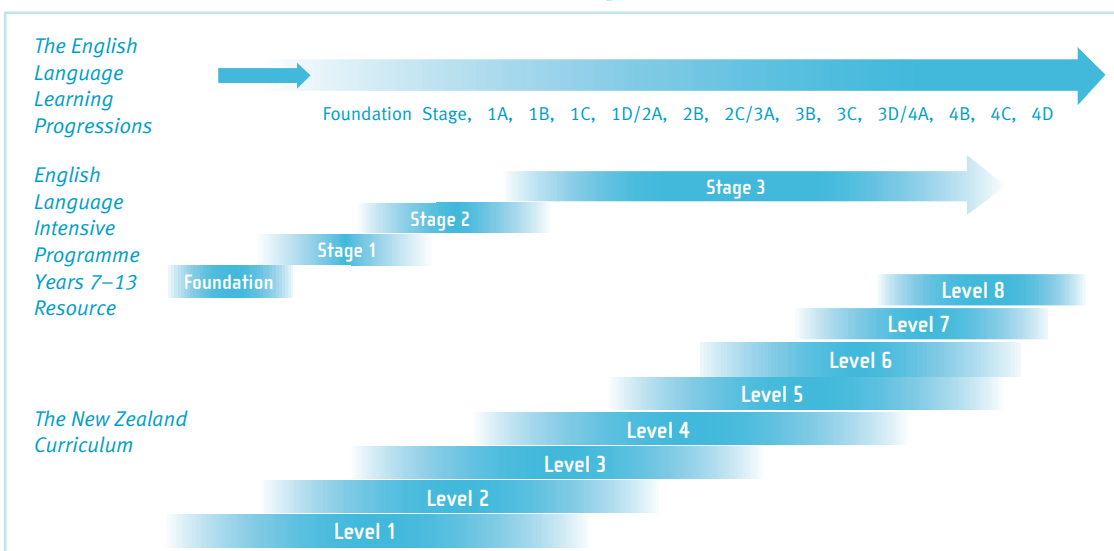


The oral language, reading, and writing progression diagrams on page 13 show the relationships between the stages of the English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP), the New Zealand Curriculum, and the *English Language Intensive Programme Years 7–13 Resource* (ELIP). For writing, the stages of the New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars for English (Written Language) are also shown.

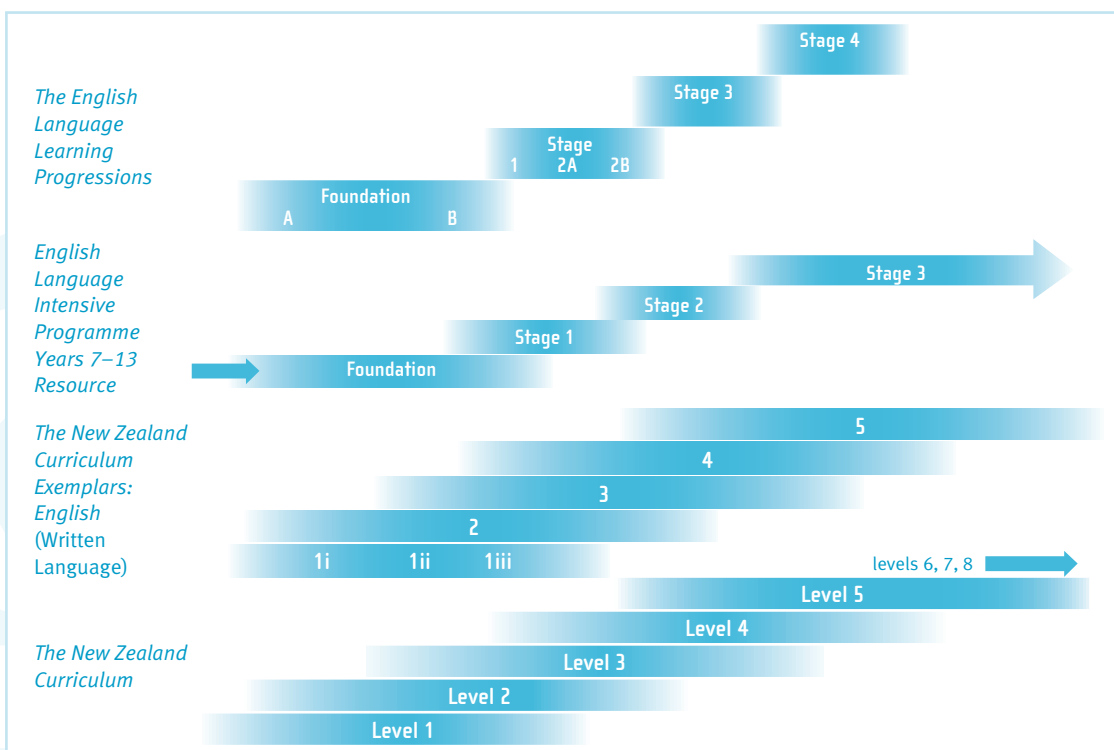
Oral language – speaking and listening



Reading



Writing



The draft document *Literacy Learning Progressions: Meeting the Reading and Writing Demands of the Curriculum* provides a tool to help teachers implement the New Zealand Curriculum. These progressions describe what reading and writing competencies learners need in order to be able to progress further across all learning areas. They set out what is expected at particular points in children's schooling, based on the demands of the curriculum at those points, starting with school entry and ending at year 10 with literacy expectations for learners about to work towards the National Certificate of Educational Achievement. Learners from language backgrounds other than English will be working towards proficiency in these reading and writing competencies. However, their pathways and rates of progress will differ from those of speakers of English as a first language.

English language learners enter school at all ages between five and eighteen and show a wide range of English language proficiency.

Because English language learners may enter the school system at any age between five and eighteen years old and may be at any stage of English language development, the stages in the English Language Learning Progressions don't align exactly with the New Zealand Curriculum levels. Instead, the progressions recognise that English language learners' development progresses towards (and eventually reaches) the language proficiency required to meet the demands of the curriculum at the appropriate level for their age.

Each ELLP stage is likely to represent a year or more of language development (although the Foundation Stage may be shorter if a learner has literacy skills in their first language), and learners will vary in how long they are working within a particular stage. Learners may be working at one stage in oral language and at a different stage in written language, or they may be at different stages in their reading and in their writing. In individual tasks, the learner's performance is likely to be affected if the content of the task is unfamiliar or if they find the social context intimidating.

How are young beginners different from older beginners?

The younger the learner, the sooner they are likely to reach an English language level similar to native speakers of the same age. But there are still factors (such as lack of cultural and vocabulary knowledge) that make learning a new language a very complex task for a young learner. They may have less to "catch up on", so that they will merge into the mainstream curriculum more quickly than older beginners, but they still need intensive support.

The starting point for older learners will depend largely on their level of literacy in their first language and on their previous exposure to the English language. Older learners in particular, at all stages of the progressions, need to be taught the language for learning across the curriculum that native speakers of the same age are expected to know. This means that English language learning should be supported in mainstream classes, by mainstream teachers, as well as in ESOL programmes, by specialist teachers. The *English Language Intensive Programme Years 7–13 Resource* provides resources and clear guidance on language-teaching points for learners in years 7–13.

Knowing where to start with a learner

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching. By focusing on giving useful feedback (a key component of formative assessment) throughout the learning process, teachers can work with their English language learners to close the gap between their current performance and what is expected of their native-speaker peers. (See chapter 3 in *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4* and *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, and see also the Assessment kete on Te Kete Ipurangi at www.tki.org.nz/t/assessment, for further information on assessment for learning and the Ministry of Education Assess to Learn [AtoL] programme.)

In order to know where to start with their English language learners, teachers need to assess these learners for diagnostic purposes. In order to make decisions about “where to next” in teaching and learning, teachers need to assess learners for formative purposes. These progressions help teachers to make judgments about English language learners' starting points and progress in oral language, reading, and writing. Generally, learners are likely to:

- be starting at different points in listening, speaking, reading, and writing;
- make uneven progress across the **modes**;
- be initially more proficient in the receptive skills (listening and reading) than the productive skills (speaking and writing);
- show reduced English language proficiency when tasks are more challenging and/or when the context is unfamiliar.

A range of tools and processes for diagnostic assessment can be found in the *ESOL Funding Assessment Guidelines* (which contains references to additional supports), the *ESOL Progress Assessment Guidelines*, and the Assessment kete on Te Kete Ipurangi.

Both mainstream teachers and ESOL specialists need to use sound assessment processes to gather information and interpret it in order to place learners at the appropriate stages of the ELLP progressions and to monitor their progress accurately.

Teachers need to modify mainstream curriculum content and learning and assessment tasks to suit the proficiency of different English language learners. The *ESOL Progress Assessment Guidelines* describe some formal and informal assessment tools and processes that can be used with these progressions to monitor and report on a learner's progress.

The Progressions



How these progressions describe language learning

The English Language Learning Progressions form a map of the typical characteristics of spoken and written texts at different stages of additional language learning.

Learners will not always show consistent improvement: they'll go backwards and forwards, depending on the task and situation.

The progressions indicate the general direction of language learning rather than giving a rigid or comprehensive description of a learner's progress.

These progressions identify the kinds of language input that learners at different stages are likely to comprehend (using their receptive skills – listening and reading) and the language output that they're likely to produce (using their productive skills – speaking and writing). Progressions in oral language, reading, and writing are presented to show how language input and output develop from simple to complex. There are links between a learner's development in speaking, listening, reading, and writing – for example, vocabulary development is important in all four. Vocabulary development is described through reference to word lists, which arrange words into groups depending on how common they are (their frequency).

However, it is not surprising if a learner's oral and written language development do not appear to move forward along neat, parallel lines. A learner's progress in oral and written language will be influenced by a variety of factors, including general factors (see pages 6–8 above), many of which relate to:

- the sociocultural context of the classroom learning;
- the sociocultural background and resources of the learner.

A learner's performance in specific learning tasks will also be influenced by a variety of task-related factors, including:

- how prepared they are for the task;
- the level of difficulty of the task;
- their familiarity with the content (their prior cultural and conceptual knowledge of the content as well as their knowledge of the words and grammar).

If a task is difficult for a learner because of any of the factors mentioned above, their performance may drop back below the stage that they appeared to have reached at a previous point. The progressions are intended to indicate the general direction of language learning rather than to present a rigid or inevitable progression.

Developing Independent Learners

The following section discusses the importance of teaching learning strategies that learners can learn and practise in order to be able to select, use, and integrate them independently. This will raise their metacognitive awareness, helping them learn how to learn so that they become increasingly independent learners. The other three booklets include specific suggestions for teaching learners to use independent learning strategies for both oral and written language.

Metacognition

Metacognitive awareness is like a “seventh sense” that successful learners consciously and unconsciously apply to their learning.

Nisbet and Shucksmith, 1984

Learners who have metacognitive awareness understand how they approach a particular learning task. They can monitor the progress of their learning and can think about their own thinking and learning processes.

There is a close relationship between cognition (thinking and learning) and metacognition (*thinking about* thinking and learning). Metacognition means being aware of how cognition is occurring. For example, when learning vocabulary, a learner might first ask “What does this word mean?” (using cognition) and then ask “What’s the best way for me to remember these words – maybe by drawing an image or by saying them aloud to myself?” (using metacognition).

Three different types of metacognitive knowledge have been identified (see Biggs and Moore, 1993):

- *knowing what*, or having knowledge about your own learning processes (declarative knowledge);
- *knowing how*, or having knowledge about what skills and strategies to use (procedural knowledge);
- *knowing when*, or having knowledge about when and why to use various strategies (conditional knowledge).

Why we should encourage learning to learn

When English language learners are aware of their own skills and strategies and how they can use and combine them for various learning purposes, they become more independent learners. It’s particularly important to teach learning strategies that are appropriate for New Zealand classrooms when an English language learner’s current learning environment differs from what they are familiar with in their own culture.

Using “learning to learn” strategies can improve a learner’s achievement.

Learners are able to learn a language more successfully when they consciously make themselves aware of:

- what they are learning;
- why they are learning it;
- how to learn it;
- how to apply or transfer the learning to new contexts.

English language learners need to be explicitly taught to use learning prompts and strategies and to self-monitor their use of those prompts and strategies in all areas of learning so that using them becomes second nature.

Teaching the use of learning strategies

When teaching learning prompts and strategies, ensure that:

- the learners are aware of why the specific prompt or strategy is appropriate to the task and of the benefits of using it;
- the prompt or strategy is modelled (by the teacher or by other learners who are familiar with the strategy, under the guidance of the teacher);
- learners have opportunities for guided practice, either individually or collaboratively, before they use a strategy;
- during the modelling and guided practice, the focus is on the prompt or strategy rather than on any content to be learned;
- responsibility for using the prompt or strategy is gradually transferred to learners.

How we can apply this in the classroom

Learners need to be taught how to use learning prompts and strategies and then encouraged to use them. Teachers should explain each prompt or strategy, describe its purpose, model how to use it, give learners chances to practise using it, and then encourage them to use it at different points in the learning tasks until it becomes part of how they learn.

Some uses of metacognition are very simple, for example, prompting yourself to ask questions about whether you understand how to do something or asking yourself what to do when you don't understand the instructions for a task. Others are more complex, for example, having a bank of strategies for coping with difficult words in a text, checking the different aspects of editing when proofreading a text you have written, or having a strategy for when people find your spoken language difficult to understand.

Learning prompts and strategies can be taught to learners of all ages. The teacher needs to know which strategies to choose to model and practise in the classroom. There is a wide variety of metacognitive processes that can be applied in the context of learning in an additional language.

Many older learners already have a bank of learning prompts and strategies, but they may not be consciously choosing and using these. It's important to bring strategy use to their conscious attention and capitalise on their existing strengths while at the same time broadening and deepening their awareness. Younger learners need explicit teaching and prompting early in their learning.

Learning to learn is closely linked to assessment because self-assessment and metacognitive awareness are mutually supportive. Peer assessment can also contribute to learning to learn.

During the early parts of the Foundation Stage and Stage 1, many learning prompts and strategies can be presented through pictures and diagrams, in combination with oral explanations and prompts to use the strategies. In Stages 2 and 3, prompts can be both oral and written, and learning strategies can include graphic, oral, and written elements.

How we can teach learning prompts and strategies

It can be helpful to separate learning prompts and strategies into those that relate to completing a task and those that relate to understanding the content. Task-related prompts can be given before, during, and after a task.

The booklets provide examples of prompts and strategies that can be used with English language learners of various ages. Further examples of learning prompts and strategies for use with both younger and older learners can be found in the Ministry of Education publications *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, *Effective Literacy Strategies in Years 9 to 13*, *Refugee Handbook for Schools* (also online at www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/esol), and the *English Language Intensive Programme Years 7–13 Resource*.

Placing a Learner on the Progressions

Any one assessment task gives only a snapshot of the learner's ability at a specific time. Their performance will be affected by personal factors and factors associated with the learning environment and the task. For example, a Chinese English language learner is likely to show greater proficiency when reading a text on Chinese New Year celebrations than when reading a text at a similar level on native insects of New Zealand.

Decisions about where a learner fits on the progressions, therefore, should be made on the basis of a range of assessments, which include informal observations and other formative assessment procedures as well as summative assessments.

Judging the “best fit”

The features of language that are listed in the ELLP matrices illustrate the typical language that a learner is likely to produce or encounter at each stage. They do not form a comprehensive list of every possible language feature.

English language learners will not necessarily comprehend or produce texts that include all the listed features of texts at a particular stage. Even within the same task, they may produce a text that shows some features of language development at different stages. Placing a learner on the progressions is about deciding which stage is the “best fit” for them in each language mode.

Teachers need to take account of a learner's age as well as their proficiency level when deciding where they fit on the progressions, when designing tasks for them, and when setting expectations for their achievement.

How often a learner's progress should be recorded

A learner's placement on the progressions should be recorded at three points during the year. Their starting points (in both oral and written language) should be recorded after their diagnostic assessment following enrolment. Then teachers should make at least two further records of their progress during the year.

For ESOL-funded learners, these judgments could coincide with the ESOL funding assessment. However, teachers should use different texts for the two different purposes to ensure that assessment for ESOL funding uses tasks and texts at cohort level and assessment based on the ELLP uses tasks and texts at the English language proficiency level of the learner.

ESOL funding assessments are based on learners' performance in cohort-level tasks, where “cohort” means learners of the same age performing at the normed national level. Assessment using the ELLP should involve tasks that are likely to be within the range of proficiency of the learner. (See page 47.)

The Record of Progress form at the back of each of the other booklets offers one possible format for recording a learner's progress.

Oral Language – Listening and Speaking

Oral language is sometimes assumed to be less complex than written language. Spoken language that occurs in face-to-face contexts and is about things that the learner can see is often easier to comprehend than written language that refers to abstract concepts or unfamiliar ideas. However, oral language can also involve abstract concepts and ideas that are new to the learner, and (unlike written language) it can't usually be reviewed by the listener. Oral language is often as complex as written language and is sometimes more difficult to process. It challenges the learner in different ways from written language.

Children learn to speak their first language before they learn to read and write it, and it's widely known that they will learn to read and write more easily if they have first developed a rich bank of oral language. However, unlike a native speaker of English, an English language learner hasn't necessarily established an oral language base in English as part of their development before they start school. An English language learner may, therefore, not have an existing basis in oral language on which to build English literacy skills.

What's different about speaking and listening in an additional language?

There are many interrelated factors that may influence an English language learner's proficiency in oral language, including:

- the content of their previous English language instruction (if any);
- the teaching approaches used in previous English language instruction (if any);
- the age at which they begin (or began) learning English;
- their level of confidence in speaking English.

English language learners in New Zealand are learning English in a context where it's the everyday language of the majority of the community. All new English language learners face significant challenges when speaking and listening to New Zealand English. At the same time as they are learning the vocabulary and grammatical structures of the new language, they're also working to gain control over other features of oral language. They need to learn the sounds of English words, the subtle meanings conveyed by changes in tone and speed, and the differences in meaning that a change in stress can make. (For example, “*refuse*”, with the stress on the first syllable, is a noun that means “rubbish”, but “*refuse*”, with the stress on the second syllable, is a verb that means “to say no to something”.) These are called the **prosodic features**³ of a language. Prosodic features combine with **non-verbal language** features, such as facial expressions, to create and convey meaning, and both are culturally determined dimensions of the language. It takes time to learn the significance of the prosodic features of a new language.

Some learners will need to adjust their prior learning of one variety of English (such as American English) in order to learn New Zealand English, which has its own distinct features of pronunciation and vocabulary. For example, New Zealand English includes some words from te reo Māori.

³ *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, by David Crystal, discusses different aspects of spoken and written language. It explains how the prosodic features of each language differ and how they are interpreted and expressed in different cultures. Prosodic features are also described in *Exploring Language*, Ministry of Education, 1996.

Why can some learners read and write in English before they learn to speak it?

Some learners who can already read and write in their first language may learn to do the same in the new language before they are able to comprehend it orally. This is especially likely if they first learned English at school in a context where:

- English was not the language of the community;
- teachers focused more on written English than on oral English;
- there were few opportunities to listen to or speak with native speakers of English.

Learners will generally understand more than they can say – their receptive language will be more advanced than their productive language.

Many English language learners who come to New Zealand schools are from backgrounds like this. Because they have some knowledge of the language structures and vocabulary, they have an initial advantage over learners who have never learned English. However, these learners, in particular, will need their teachers to provide explicit support for their oral language development.

Learners need to develop oral language in all the learning areas, not just in English.

On the other hand, there are learners who can communicate effectively in English in social contexts but who have very little experience in understanding and speaking English in curriculum contexts. These learners will need their teachers to provide explicit support to help them extend their bank of spoken English to include the English vocabulary and structures needed for classroom learning.

There are also English language learners who will begin learning oral and written English at the same time. They will be learning the grammatical structures, vocabulary, sound system, and writing system of the new language all at once and will need explicit support in all aspects of language learning.

A small number of older learners have had no formal schooling, usually because of having been in or having to flee from conflict zones. These learners have the added challenge of developing initial literacy and learning English at the same time. To help them begin to catch up with their peers, they need individualised, intensive support over a much longer period than learners who are already literate in their first language.

When English language learners begin to speak English, their first language is likely to have a strong influence on their grammar and pronunciation. But if they begin learning English at an early age, they may eventually show few if any indications (such as in stress patterns or accent) that it's not their native tongue.

Why should we wait longer before expecting a response from an English language learner?

Many factors can affect a learner's speaking proficiency. Each time a learner speaks, what they say will be affected not only by their knowledge of the language but also by the sociocultural context, for example, whether they know the person they are speaking to. The English language learner may also need to explore and discuss the differences between non-verbal and prosodic features of their first language (such as body language and intonation) and those of English, as these features are often culturally specific. Because of the complexity of oral language production, teachers (and other listeners) often need to allow additional "wait time" to give learners a chance to initiate, respond, and interact with others.

English language learners need continuing access to oral input in their first language and encouragement and opportunities to think and talk in their first language.

English language learners should be encouraged to continue to develop oral language skills in their first language and to use critical-thinking skills (and other oral language skills) in their first language to help them develop oral language in English. Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) develops better when the first language develops alongside the additional language. (See page 4 above for more information about CALP.)

How oral language progression is shown

The oral language matrix on pages 25–26 shows what types of input learners are able to process and what types of responses or output they are likely to produce at the five stages of the ELLP.

Learners in years 1–4 will be working within the band from the Foundation Stage to Stage 2 in oral language. A competent year 8 learner, after approximately three years of learning English, might be moving into Stage 3. The demands and content of their learning tasks would reflect the year 8 curriculum demands.

Stage 4 is the point at which the English language proficiency of learners in years 9–13 begins to merge with that of their native-speaker peers. The degree of language complexity and the range of texts used at Stages 3 and 4 would depend on what was required of the learner's year-level peers. For example, learners in year 11 working towards NCEA Level 1 might be asked to produce an extended oral text and make distinctions between formal and informal language features. Learners in year 13 working towards NCEA Level 3 might complete a similar task using a wider range of features.

Teachers should use the oral language matrix on pages 25–26 to help them decide what stage a learner has reached along the learning pathway described in the ELLP. In the early stages, a learner's first language is likely to affect their production of English in a number of ways.

The oral language progression that follows is set out in two matrices. The first matrix (Output) indicates the **verbal** and **non-verbal language** that learners are likely to produce at each stage of the ELLP. Learners may produce only a selection of the suggested output at any one time, and whether what they say is appropriate or not will depend on the context and the purpose for speaking.

The second matrix (Input) lists what learners at each stage are likely to understand of what they hear with varying levels of support. At the early stages, processing all aspects of spoken language at the same time is a significant challenge because the listener can't review spoken language unless it's recorded or repeated. Teachers can use this matrix to help them to speak appropriately so that learners at each stage can understand them. Teachers can support learners to increase their comprehension of input by **elaborating on** or expanding oral text.

Output and input levels should not be seen as parallel because, for most learners of a new language (as noted on pages 5 and 15), receptive understanding is usually ahead of production for quite a long time.

The oral language matrix: output

	Interpersonal context	Content	Delivery	Non-verbal responses	Language structures
<i>The learner may:</i>					
Foundation Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> respond in face-to-face social or curriculum contexts respond with a mixture of their first language and English participate in limited interactions in pair, small-group, and whole-class contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> say a few words in English give a formulaic but appropriate response use a gesture or facial expression to indicate that they do or don't understand remain silent or give an inappropriate response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not respond at all or pause for a long time before responding have pronunciation that is strongly influenced by their first language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> respond with a relevant action, gesture, or facial expression respond with silence, which may indicate respect for the speaker, a lack of comprehension, or a lack of confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> say single words echo phrases that they hear respond in their first language
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> respond with a mixture of their first language and English participate in limited interactions in pair, small-group, and whole-class contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> retell the main ideas or messages from their reading or listening and present one or two ideas use a gesture, facial expression, or phrase to indicate that they do or don't understand initiate communication (e.g., by making requests or comments or by offering information) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pause and hesitate when speaking make some distinctions between minimal pairs in English (e.g., "pin" and "bin", "ship" and "sheep") have pronunciation that shows features of their first language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> follow an instruction or complete a task respond with silence, which may indicate respect for the speaker, a lack of comprehension, or a lack of confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use mostly high-frequency words and leave out structural words use non-standard vocabulary and sentence structures use the subject-verb-object structure if they have had a chance to plan what they are going to say
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> respond in an appropriate or relevant way for the audience and the purpose for communicating participate in different interactive group situations, such as pairs, groups, and whole-class discussions use English confidently and appropriately in a range of situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask questions, give instructions, negotiate disagreements, buy something in a shop, arrange appointments, or explain a problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use a larger vocabulary and give detailed responses speak fluently, with occasional pauses and hesitation pronounce most words in a way that is usually clear to the listener, although they may retain some features of their first language make distinctions between minimal pairs in English (e.g., "pin" and "bin", "ship" and "sheep") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begin to make use of non-verbal features of the English language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include structural vocabulary to produce fairly coherent and accurate standard English rely less on formulaic chunks and use more independently generated language structures
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> respond in a way that is appropriate or relevant for the audience and the purpose for communicating choose appropriate vocabulary (e.g., making distinctions between technical, formal, and informal vocabulary) speak in a variety of contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> take turns, initiate conversations, and talk for a long time, both when they have had time to plan what they will say and when they speak spontaneously use language devices (e.g., puns and irony) appropriately for effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pronounce words so that the listener can usually understand them easily (although depending on the speaker's age and other factors, their pronunciation may retain some features of their first language) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consciously choose non-verbal features of the English language to use in their own communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use increasingly varied and complex language structures in standard English, with few inaccuracies use features of natural spoken language (e.g., saying "coming" instead of "I am coming")
Stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> choose appropriate language for different audiences, purposes, contexts, and effects (e.g., making distinctions between formal and informal contexts). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> take turns, initiate conversations, and talk for a long time, both when they have had time to plan what they will say and when they speak spontaneously use sophisticated language devices, such as irony, satire, and euphemisms, appropriately for effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pronounce words clearly and speak accurately and fluently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use non-verbal features of spoken language, such as pauses, changes in pitch or volume, and gestures for effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use increasingly varied and complex standard English language structures, with few inaccuracies.

The oral language matrix: input

	Interpersonal context	Content	Delivery	Language structures	First-language support
	<i>The learner may understand:</i>				<i>The learner needs:</i>
Foundation Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – language use in face-to-face contexts, often with support from pictures or objects – limited interactions in pairs (student to student and student to teacher) – limited interactions in small-group contexts – limited interactions in whole-class contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – basic concepts expressed in simple English (e.g., colours, shapes, time, dates, numbers, body parts, feelings) – some basic instructions and simple questions – models of different types of oral texts (see <i>English Language Intensive Programme Years 7–13 Resource</i> and <i>Supporting English Language Learning in Primary Schools</i>) – words that are significant to or for them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – slow and clear speech, using simple language – direct address, with key words repeated often – gestures and facial expressions that accompany simple instructions, information, or questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – individual words and some short chunks of language (formulaic chunks) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – extensive first-language support (e.g., through bilingual helpers or bilingual picture dictionaries and first-language texts)
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – limited interactions in pairs (student to student and student to teacher) – limited interactions in small-group contexts – limited interactions in whole-class contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – curriculum content that reflects what their peers are learning in mainstream classes – simple, repetitive texts, such as songs, rhymes, poems, and raps – one or two clusters of ideas in familiar curriculum and social contexts – carefully scaffolded texts in unfamiliar curriculum contexts – simple oral texts, which may be presented on CDs, CD-ROMs, or DVDs (e.g., the CD <i>Junior Journal 34 and 35</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the meaning of gestures, facial expressions, and changes in volume or tone – slow and clear speech, using longer phrases of simple language, with key ideas repeated – standard New Zealand English, including slang and idioms that are limited and/or explained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – simple sentences and longer common phrases – short passages of natural speech, such as in conversations and instructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – extensive first-language support (e.g., through bilingual helpers or bilingual picture dictionaries and first-language texts)
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – interactions in pairs (student to student and student to teacher) – interactions in small-group contexts – interactions in whole-class contexts – interactions through extended speech (e.g., listening to a debate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – curriculum content that reflects what their peers are learning in mainstream classes – some commonly used colloquial expressions and some Māori words and phrases – extended speech in familiar curriculum and social contexts – extended speech in unfamiliar contexts with support – oral texts, which may be presented on CDs, CD-ROMs, or DVDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – short passages of standard New Zealand English in a range of accents, spoken at a natural speed – extended speech that allows pauses for them to process what they have heard – the meaning of non-verbal language features (body language and prosodic features) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – some complex sentences – complete and incomplete sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – continued first-language support wherever possible, from bilingual helpers, bilingual dictionaries, and first-language texts
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – extended passages of natural speech – multiple speakers in interactive contexts (e.g., a group or panel discussion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a wide range of curriculum and social content – extended passages of natural speech in familiar and unfamiliar curriculum and social contexts – extended oral texts, which may be presented on CDs, CD-ROMs, or DVDs (e.g., the Choices audiotape <i>Danger!</i>) – figurative language, as long as it is clearly defined and explained (e.g., puns and metaphors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a range of accents, including those of speakers for whom English is an additional language – the purpose and effect of non-verbal language features – both standard and colloquial language – language spoken at a natural pace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – connected text with several ideas or text sequences – longer passages of speech spoken at a natural pace and without planned pauses (e.g., talks by visiting speakers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – continued first-language support wherever possible, from bilingual helpers, bilingual dictionaries, and first-language texts
Stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – multiple speakers in interactive contexts (e.g., a group or panel discussion) – multimedia texts presented without interpersonal support (e.g., a video with no teacher support). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a wide variety of texts, including multimedia texts – long and complex speech in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts – speech in situations that have an immediate context (e.g., a workshop or sports game) and in situations that don't have an immediate context (e.g., a history documentary) – sophisticated language devices, such as irony, satire, and euphemisms, as long as these are clearly identified and explained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the purpose and effect of non-verbal language features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – complex, extended speech with a wide variety of structures at levels similar to a native speaker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – continued encouragement to use their first language to enrich their learning.



Learning to read in a new language is different from learning to read in a first language, and it's important to have specific knowledge about the differences in order to teach English language learners effectively.

Levels of text complexity

As a learner makes progress in reading (either in additional or first languages), they're able to comprehend increasingly complex texts. It's important for teachers to be able to recognise what makes a reading text easy or difficult for a particular learner so that they can choose the right text for that learner. There are many aspects of texts that may be considered when determining their level of complexity, including topic, vocabulary, sentence length and construction, **cohesion**, layout, length, and support from illustrations.

What makes a text easy or difficult for a learner?

One system of text levelling (used in the Ready to Read series) is the colour wheel. There are suggested levels for shared, guided, and independent reading printed on the colour wheel on the back of Ready to Read books. The colour wheel is divided into nine colour segments that indicate a gradient of complexity, beginning with Magenta (the emergent level), which is followed by Red, Yellow, Blue, and Green (the early levels), and Orange, Turquoise, Purple, and Gold (the fluency levels). Each text's colour wheel level is determined by considering a wide range of features, such as the amount of text, the vocabulary, the support from illustrations, the complexity of the sentences, the number of characters, the familiarity of the context, the text structure, the layout, and so on. Ready to Read books are used mainly by junior classes in primary schools.

There are also a number of other ways to determine the complexity of a text. Many of these involve analysis of vocabulary, for example, the Elley Noun Count, which is used to assign "reading age" levels to *School Journal* texts.

Most of these methods analyse text features that are relevant for English language learners. However, there are aspects of these interpretations of complexity that are inappropriate for these learners (such as the assumption that a very simple text must be for a very young reader). Teachers also need to consider some other text features, for example, idioms and other kinds of colloquial language, which may be difficult for an English language learner.

Making the most of a text

When teachers carefully choose a text, build on learners' experiences linked to the text, and engage in meaningful conversations about the concepts in the text, learners are able to engage more purposefully in building their understanding and their knowledge of new structures and vocabulary. It's important to draw specific attention to text features in a deliberate and explicit way when teaching English language learners how to read in English.

Teachers need to plan the steps in reading instruction carefully to ensure that pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading activities are appropriate and effective. English language learners need to be able to respond thoughtfully and to be actively engaged in a range of text-based experiences. Pre-reading instruction and activities are particularly important for English language learners as they can help to activate the learners' prior knowledge, not only of the topic but also of the relevant vocabulary. Pre-reading instruction also enables teachers to highlight potential language difficulties. Elaborating on meaning in a text by providing supplementary visuals or explanations can often increase comprehension for learners.

Reading for different purposes

Reading a text to gain information or for other curriculum purposes requires a different approach from reading for personal interest or recreation. Within any curriculum area, learners are required to read different types of texts for different purposes. The different ways of reading texts for different purposes need to be explicitly taught. Teachers can find guidance on how to foster reading for personal interest, how to approach “reading to learn”, and how to teach reading comprehension in the publications listed on pages 54–55.

Text-processing strategies

Right from the start of learning to read in English, learners should focus on the three key aspects of reading: **decoding**, making meaning, and thinking critically (see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, page 24). These aspects need to be integrated when learners are reading for a purpose. Decoding in itself is not reading, so if a learner is able to decode a text but can't read for meaning, they can't yet read. In order to read effectively and efficiently, English language learners need a repertoire of reading processing strategies. They need to be able to attend and search, predict, cross-check, confirm, and self-correct (see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 38–39). Learners who have limited control of the strategies may sometimes apply a processing strategy in a way that is not appropriate for their reading purpose. For example, they may sound out every single word when their purpose for reading is to gain a general understanding of the main ideas in the text.

By the end of the Foundation Stage, learners will be able to decode and make meaning from simple texts, and they will use critical-thinking skills appropriate to their age. They're likely to rely on support through their first language to aid their comprehension.

Learners at the end of Stages 1 and 2 will have developed the ability to gain meaning and identify the main ideas of phrases rather than just individual words. They will have gradually developed confidence, fluency, and depth of comprehension as they read increasingly complex texts in an increasing variety of contexts. They will master a wider range of vocabulary and gain an understanding of increasingly complex language structures.

Through Stages 3 and 4, learners will show increasing proficiency in all aspects of reading. They will decode text fluently, sometimes pausing to use strategies such as inferring the meaning of an unknown word from the context or consulting a dictionary. They will develop ways to gain more meaning from text, for example, by distinguishing between facts and opinions, and they will think more critically about texts, for example, to consider how the text constructs the world or why it uses irony.

Effective readers, including English language learners, decode, make meaning, and think critically.

English language learners who have literacy skills in their first language should be encouraged to continue reading in their first language and to use critical-thinking skills (and other skills used for reading) in their first language in order to better access and process concepts in English. Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) develops better when the first language develops alongside the additional language. (See page 4 above for more information about CALP.)

English language learners need access to dictionaries and reading materials in their first language, and they need encouragement to think and talk in their first language about new ideas. They also need texts in English about culturally familiar topics as well as about less familiar topics.

Drawing on sources of information

Learners need to draw on various sources of information in order to make sense of what they read. They draw on:

- their prior knowledge, including their background knowledge and experience and their literacy-related knowledge;
- visual and grapho-phonetic sources of information in the text, using knowledge about printed text (and especially about the relationship between particular written shapes and spoken sounds);
- syntactic sources of information in the text (using their knowledge about the structure of the English language);
- semantic sources of information in the text (using their knowledge of the meanings of words and images).

(See *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 28–31.)

Learners need to be able to draw on, integrate, and co-ordinate information from these sources simultaneously in order to decode and make meaning from text.

When a learner has limited prior experience of a context or lacks specific knowledge of a concept, they may have difficulty in reading texts on some topics. They may rely heavily on one source of information (for example, their grapho-phonetic knowledge or their prior experiences) without fully understanding the text. For example, a recent immigrant from an urban Asian background may have difficulty in making sense of a text about sheep shearing in Central Otago. On the other hand, when reading about a topic they are very familiar with, a learner may rely on their background knowledge to make sense of the text rather than fully comprehending it.

Factors affecting progress

English language learners develop proficiency in reading at very different rates. There are many factors that affect the starting point for learners and that have a strong influence on their rates of progress. Perhaps the most important factor, especially for learners beyond the first two or three years of schooling, is the level of literacy that they have attained in their first language. Learners who have had no previous formal education and who can't read or write in their first language will take much longer to learn written English than learners who are literate in their first language. The older an English language learner is when they begin schooling, the greater and more noticeable the gap will be between them and their native-speaker peers and the greater their need will be for intensive, long-term support.

A learner's level of literacy in their first language strongly influences their rate of progress in reading in English.

Assessing and reporting on reading

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching. By focusing on giving useful feedback (a key component of formative assessment) throughout the learning process, teachers can work with their English language learners to close the gap between their current performance and what is expected of their native-speaker peers. A teacher can assess and report on a learner's progress in reading by using standardised tests conducted at regular intervals and by making informal judgments about the learner's comprehension of reading texts at different levels of complexity. It's unwise to make broad judgments about "reading ages" or "reading levels" based on the occasional use of a reading assessment tool. Reading proficiency is influenced by many factors (such as the learner's familiarity with the content of the texts, the cultural knowledge required to understand the texts, the quality of the teacher's scaffolding, and the learner's motivation). A single assessment provides only a snapshot of a learner's proficiency in relation to the task at the time, although it may also indicate areas of strength and weakness in reading.

Judgments about progress can only be made over time and based on a variety of assessment methods.

Making decisions about a learner's progress is complex because it requires ongoing diagnostic assessment to gain information about what a learner needs, integrated with summative assessments that define a point the learner has reached. Assessment of reading development should include making informal observations about the learner's attitudes and approaches to both extensive reading and reading for deeper understanding, how much reading they are doing, their ability to choose appropriate reading materials for different purposes, and their awareness of reading strategies. For further information on reading assessment, see the *ESOL Progress Assessment Guidelines*.

The reading progression

The following matrix gives a broad overview of the features of texts that are suitable for learners at the five stages of the ELLP. There is no matrix provided to indicate reading behaviours at the various stages because the interplay between the level of complexity of a text, factors affecting text difficulty for individual learners, and learners' text-processing skills is too complex to be presented in this way.

In order to determine how complex a text is for a particular learner, you will need to think not only about its length, vocabulary, and sentence structure but also about how familiar the learner is with the content. If a certain text is very interesting to a learner, they may be able to comprehend it even if it looks too difficult for them at first glance. Learners are also able to cope with more complex texts when they are supported and scaffolded by a skilled teacher than when they are reading independently.

The matrix is indicative only; it is not a complete inventory of text features, and some features of later-stage texts may occur in texts at earlier stages.

Sample texts for reading at different age levels are provided in the accompanying booklets.

The reading matrix

	Topic development	Language structures	Vocabulary	Layout	Examples can be found in:
Foundation Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts are very short. They contain one or two simple ideas and use a lot of repetition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts contain single words or short sentences, usually in the subject–verb–object order. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts use repeated high-frequency words and some words that are lower frequency and topic-specific and that are strongly supported by the context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts have only a few words per page and are well supported by illustrations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Years 1–4, pages 22–23 – Years 5–8, pages 22–23 – Years 9–13, pages 22–23
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts are short and often present ideas in a simple sequence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts contain simple and compound sentences with a variety of sentence beginnings. There are usually no more than two clauses per sentence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts use varied high-frequency words and some words that are lower frequency and topic-specific and that are strongly supported by the context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts have about three sentences per page and are well supported by illustrations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Years 1–4, pages 24–31 – Years 5–8, pages 24–31 – Years 9–13, pages 24–31
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Topics are developed in more depth and assume more background knowledge. – Text types are more varied: they may be reports, arguments, procedures, explanations, recounts, or mixtures of these. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts contain simple, compound, and some complex sentences. Sentences are sometimes expanded with prepositional phrases or other structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts use varied high-frequency words and some words that are lower frequency and topic-specific or technical and that should be clear from the context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts have several sentences or short paragraphs per page and may be supported by illustrations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Years 1–4, pages 30–35 – Years 5–8, pages 30–35 – Years 9–13, pages 30–35
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Topics are developed to more complex levels in a variety of ways, using connectives to signal the relationship of ideas, e.g., cause and effect or sequence. – Texts may interweave more than one text type. – Comprehension requires more inference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts contain a variety of sentence types, some of which may be more complex. They may include passive constructions and direct speech. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts use some lower-frequency and technical words that are not easy to infer from the context. – They may use some idiomatic language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts are arranged in paragraphs and may be supported by diagrams, illustrations, or photographs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Years 5–8, pages 34–41 – Years 9–13, pages 34–43
Stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Topics are developed in great depth and may be very technical. – Texts may include many different time settings or multiple voices. – Texts may interweave more than one text type. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts include a variety of sentence structures. They may include embedded and relative clauses and passive constructions. – Each sentence may contain several concepts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts use low-frequency words and technical vocabulary. – They may use similes, metaphors, and idiomatic language without explanation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts are arranged in paragraphs and may use subheadings. – There may be no illustrations, or there may be some that require high-level interpretation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Years 9–13, pages 40–51



There are many similarities between the ways in which native speakers and English language learners develop writing skills. However, there are also noticeable differences in their patterns of progress. (For example, native speakers hardly ever misuse the **articles** “a”, “an”, and “the”, but this is a common error for English language learners.) The differences result from English language learners bringing different knowledge, approaches, and experiences to writing in English.

It’s important to remember that progress is individual and depends on a number of factors specific to the learner and the context of each task. Factors that affect progress include the English language learner’s previous education in their first language, their prior experiences, and culturally specific ways of representing the world through writing.

The better English language learners are prepared for writing, the better their writing will be. Like all writers, they need to understand the purpose for writing and know who their audience will be. They need to be reminded of what they already know about the topic and to have time to plan ideas, including time to plan in their first language. They need to be familiar with the typical features of the kind of text they’re planning to write, and they need to have a bank of **general vocabulary** and vocabulary for curriculum contexts that is appropriate to the writing task. English language learners should also have opportunities to unpack model texts to see how the English language works in a variety of written texts – first in a group context and later independently.

Writers often produce more accurate, comprehensive, and effective texts when they are writing on a familiar topic. Texts on unfamiliar or complex technical topics are likely to have more errors and to communicate a less effective message.

Some errors in an English language learner’s writing may be attributable to their developmental stage and some to their level of proficiency in English. The attitude of the learner towards editing and proofreading their work will also have an impact. The nature and quality of their English language instruction will be another factor affecting a learner’s writing development.

Young beginner writers generally take a shorter time to reach cohort level in writing than older beginners, whose level of proficiency in English is often more distant from that of their native-speaker peers. Older learners continue to need considerable scaffolding and support for a longer period of time because the demands of writing change across the year levels and increasingly require learners to master academic writing in a range of curriculum areas.

English language learners should be encouraged to continue writing in their first language and to use critical-thinking skills (and other writing skills) in their first language to help them develop their writing in English. Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) develops better when the first language develops alongside the additional language. (See page 4 above for more information about CALP.)

Writers produce better texts when they are clear about their purpose and the audience and know about the features of effective texts and the writing process.

English language learners need continuing opportunities and encouragement to think, talk, read, and write in their first language about new ideas. They also need opportunities to write in English about culturally familiar topics as well as about less familiar topics.

The writing progression

The following pages contain descriptors of texts written by English language learners. The three booklets that set out the English Language Learning Progressions in years 1–4, 5–8, and 9–13 include samples of English language learners' writing in each year group, arranged to show a typical progression in writing development. A learner makes progress in writing in many ways, including by:

- increasing their awareness of their purpose and audience;
- learning to develop topics in more depth;
- learning to use a wider range of text types appropriately;
- increasing their use and control of language structures;
- learning more vocabulary;
- increasing their control of script;
- improving their spelling;
- using a wider range of appropriate punctuation.

As a learner's writing improves, they become able to produce longer texts in a wider range of forms.

In some ways, the sample texts in the three booklets for years 1–4, 5–8, and 9–13 are similar to those in the early levels of *The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars: English* (Written Language), which represent the writing of native speakers of English. However, although there are many parallel features between the writing development of English language learners and that of native speakers of English, there are also many differences. The nature of these differences depends on a range of factors, including the learner's age, their level of literacy in their first language, and the characteristics of their first language.

The samples have been analysed to highlight some typical features of English language learners' writing at each stage and to demonstrate how to notice both writing strengths and learning needs in a piece of writing. Using the writing progression descriptors, teachers can make judgments about the stages that their learners have reached. More importantly, teachers can also see where their learners should be heading and what priorities they should set for teaching and learning.

Surface and deeper features of texts

The texts have been analysed in terms of both deeper features (topic development, language structures, and vocabulary) and surface features (script control, spelling, and punctuation). There is a crossover between some deeper and surface features. For example, if a learner leaves “-ed” off a verb or adds it inappropriately, this may be interpreted as a spelling error, which is usually seen as a surface feature. However, it may indicate lack of knowledge of the past tense form of the verb, which is a deeper feature. Similarly, punctuation is usually categorised as a surface feature, but if a text includes run-on sentences or “sentences” with no main verb, it's likely that the writer lacks knowledge about the structure of an English sentence.

Deeper features also include text organisation, sentence structure, and the extent to which the text fits the purpose for writing. The writer's choice of vocabulary may fall into either category – deep if it indicates lack of knowledge of word families or surface if it's just a spelling mistake.

Teachers need to analyse errors carefully to discover what is causing them.

Best fit

Assigning a text to a stage is complex and requires careful judgment and a “best fit” approach, based on a range of criteria. A learner’s written text may have some features that seem to fit into a lower stage and some that seem to fit into a higher stage.

The decisions that a teacher makes about where a learner’s text fits are generalisations, but they should always be informed by the teacher’s knowledge about language. Teachers need to make their judgments on the basis of an analysis of the text at whole-text, sentence, and word levels, taking into account both deeper and surface features.

Information about supporting writing development can be found in *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4, Supporting English Language Learning in Primary Schools* (forthcoming), *The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars: English (Written Language)*, *asTTle: Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning*, and ESOL Online.

There are many different ways of describing progress in writing. The following very broad matrix is generalised to all types of text. It gives an overview of important aspects of English language learners’ writing progress rather than identifying every aspect in detail. Teachers also need to be aware that a learner’s writing will always be affected by the context of the writing task and by the prior knowledge and skills the learner brings to it.

Specific indicators for different text types can be identified, for example, in the asTTle Writing Progress Indicators.

The ELLP writing matrix focuses mainly on how writers within each broad stage of development typically organise and develop a text. It indicates the ways that a learner’s writing develops, as they move through the stages, in terms of their use of structures (at whole-text, paragraph, sentence, and phrase levels) and word forms in their texts. Appropriateness (in terms of purpose and audience) of content, vocabulary, and stylistic choices are also important indicators of progress.

Judgments about what stage a learner is at can never be “absolutely accurate”; they can only indicate the “best fit” for that learner.

The writing matrix

	Topic development	Sentence development and language structures	Vocabulary development	Script control	Editing, spelling, and punctuation
Foundation Stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts may be exact copies of a model. – Original texts are very short (two or three ideas) with minimal topic development. – Ideas may be presented randomly. – Towards the end of the Foundation Stage, ideas may be organised in an order appropriate to the text type. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sentences show frequent or repeated use of a restricted range of modelled (learned) structures. – Sentences are simple or compound (e.g., linked with “and”). – There may be a range of different errors, some attributable to the learner’s age and some to their proficiency in English. These errors may include a lack of agreement of subject and verb (“he go”), incorrect word endings, omitted or overused articles (“the China”), incorrect verb forms, or overgeneralised use of a grammar rule (“I broked it”). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Most words are high frequency, and there is little topic-specific vocabulary (unless it has been provided). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Letter formation is developing but is often variable. – Towards the end of the Foundation Stage, writing usually shows appropriate use of upper- and lower-case letters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The writing may show evidence of self-correction. – Some words are spelt correctly, and there are attempts to spell words as they sound. – There are often errors in the use of simple punctuation.
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts are longer (at least 6–8 sentences), with some organisation of the ideas. – The main ideas may be expanded with details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sentences are mainly simple or compound (e.g., linked with “and”). – The writing shows a reduced reliance on formulaic structures. – Words like “because” indicate that the learner is beginning to expand texts by using complex sentence structures. – Texts include linking words to signal the development of ideas (such as markers of time in a narrative or of cause and effect in an explanation). – Errors in words and structures are likely to be frequent and obvious. – Texts by learners who are literate in their first language may show attempts to use more complex structures but will often have intrusive errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts use a greater range of vocabulary. Most familiar vocabulary is likely to be accurately spelt or show phonemic awareness. Attempts to use unfamiliar vocabulary show evidence of phonemic awareness. – Texts use some learned topic-specific vocabulary. Words may be chosen to create an effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The script is generally readable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There is some evidence of editing, usually teacher-directed. – Many high-frequency words are spelt correctly, but there may be intrusive errors. – Writing may show some awareness of additional punctuation features and control over full stops.
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Topics are developed in stages, using an appropriate paragraph structure. – Ideas are linked and organised, although they may simply be listed at times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts include a range of different sentence beginnings and structures (such as use of relative clauses). – The writing shows an increasing use of subordinate clauses. – The writing may use modal verbs (e.g., “might”, “should”). – A range of errors in language forms and structures is likely to be evident (e.g., run-on sentences or inaccuracies in, or omissions of, elements of a complex verb phrase). – Texts may show overuse of a recently learned structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The writing shows a strong personal voice developing through deliberate choice of appropriate vocabulary. – There may be some evidence of less appropriate language choices, perhaps from direct translation, e.g., use of “companion” instead of “friend”. – Texts may have insufficient topic-specific or formal vocabulary for the task or context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The script is controlled and legible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The text shows some evidence of accurate editing. – The writing shows evidence of attention to specific points, such as distinguishing between homonyms (“their” and “there”; “to”, “too”, and “two”; and so on). – Contractions are used appropriately.
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Topics are developed according to the purpose of the task. – Topics are sustained and organised logically and coherently in stages. Ideas are linked with appropriate use of a range of connectives (e.g., “however”, “therefore”). – Texts may follow a model closely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Texts include varied and complex sentence structures and/or sentence types appropriate to the writing purpose, often with errors. – Some incorrect structures are still likely to be seen at times, such as inaccurate use of articles or lack of subject–verb agreement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Words are chosen from an expanding bank of general, technical, and academic vocabulary in a range of curriculum and topic areas. In less familiar topic areas, the vocabulary may revert to more general or vague word choices (e.g., “things”). – Words are mostly chosen appropriately to meet the purpose for writing and to create specific effects, such as using literary devices for humour or consciously choosing features of persuasive language. – Direct translations may lead to inappropriate word choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The writing style is now established, and there is little likelihood of the learner changing how they form their letters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The writing shows evidence of independent, accurate editing. – Surface features are generally controlled consistently, although in unfamiliar topic areas or under time pressure in formal assessments, control may be reduced.
Stage 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – See the NCEA and asTTle websites for descriptions of advanced writing. 				





In order to make progress in both oral and written language, a learner needs to learn new words. Vocabulary needs to be taught explicitly, and an English language learner should ideally learn the most useful words first. There are different ways to decide which words are most useful, for example, by considering how common they are (their frequency) and their relationship to the learner's prior knowledge.

Sources for vocabulary lists can be found on page 43 and on pages 54–55.

There are things that both teachers and learners can do to make vocabulary acquisition more effective. The *English Language Intensive Programme Years 7–13 Resource* presents a range of strategies for teaching and learning vocabulary.

How many words a learner needs at different stages

Paul Nation, a New Zealand expert in vocabulary teaching and learning, cites research which estimates that, “A very rough rule of thumb would be that for each year of their early life, native speakers add on average 1000 word families a year to their vocabulary” (Nation, 2001, page 9). Other research suggests that learners at primary school learn at least three to four thousand new words each year. This means that English language learners have a significant amount of English vocabulary to learn if they are to approach the expected proficiency for their age group. The older they are when they begin learning the new language, the greater the vocabulary gap will be between them and their native-speaker peers.

There's more to knowing a word than simply being able to say it. If a learner really knows a word, they will:

- know how the word sounds;
- pronounce the word intelligibly (using correct stress patterns);
- spell the word accurately;
- recognise it in print;
- understand what it means in the context where it's first met;
- know its most common meaning;
- know whether it has any other meanings in different contexts;
- know what part of speech it is and how it fits into the structure of the language;
- know whether the word is technical or general vocabulary;
- know whether it's being used literally, metaphorically, or idiomatically in a particular instance;
- understand whether the word should be used in informal or formal contexts, including its degree of social acceptability.

There are many different facets to “knowing” a word.

Learners can extend their knowledge of a word by:

- learning how to form other words in the same family;
- learning what other words or phrases **collocate with** the word (are likely to occur in close association with it), which may be different in different contexts, for example, “bank” may collocate with “river”, “water”, and “swim” in one context, with “money”, “account”, and “save” in another context, or with “cloud” and “storm” in another;
- learning that some words are joined to make a **lexical item** that represents one idea or concept, for example, “a bank robbery”, “a retirement village”;
- building a bank of words with similar meanings;
- learning (where appropriate) where the word fits on a cline or continuum of gradations in meaning, for example, “furious” is stronger than “annoyed”;
- finding out about the origin of the word.

Effective teachers provide explicit, ongoing teaching of vocabulary, focused on the changing needs of the learner. They begin with the high-frequency words that English language learners need at early stages and go on to include vocabulary that learners need for learning in all areas of the curriculum. This vocabulary will need to include both general words and technical, topic-specific words. Learners will need to know that some general vocabulary will have different technical meanings in different curriculum areas, for example, “pitch” in sport is different from “pitch” in music. The additional vocabulary needed for learning in upper primary, intermediate, and secondary schools is sometimes called “**academic vocabulary**”. Learning this vocabulary is part of the development of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP).

Low-frequency and high-frequency vocabulary

High-frequency words are words that occur often in spoken and written text. Low-frequency words are those that occur less often. The younger the learner, the fewer low-frequency words they are likely to know. However, it's important to understand that the frequency with which words occur varies depending on the context and the language users.

At the Foundation Stage (and possibly also at later stages), learners need systematic teaching to develop their **phonemic awareness**. Phonemic awareness involves knowledge of the sounds in the English language. It's critical for both oral and written language development.

In the early stages of language learning, it's important to concentrate on the first five hundred to one thousand high-frequency words so that the learner becomes familiar enough with them to fluently comprehend and produce texts that include these words. As well as the vocabulary in general word lists, the learner will need to learn the specific lower-frequency words needed for the curriculum content that they're studying.

Paul Nation identifies four main types of low-frequency vocabulary (see Nation, 2001, pages 19–20). These are:

- words that occur moderately frequently but that fall outside most high-frequency lists (for example, “approximately”);
- proper names (such as “Canada” and “Romeo”);
- words that are low frequency in one context or for one learner but are higher for another group or individual (for example, a student nurse will encounter medical words, such as “artery”, far more often than someone in another academic area or a member of the general public);
- words that are infrequently used by anyone, for a number of different reasons (for example, “bifurcate”, “welter”).

Research into vocabulary learning in relation to a corpus⁴ of typical academic English texts (see Nation, 2001, page 13) has found that:

- approximately 71 percent of the vocabulary in academic texts comes from the first one thousand word list;
- approximately 5 percent of the vocabulary comes from the second one thousand word list;
- approximately 10 percent comes from the 570-word academic word list;
- approximately 13 percent is “other” vocabulary.

A variety of word lists (from one hundred to ten thousand words) can be accessed via the websites listed on page 43.

⁴ A corpus is a sample of words and phrases used for linguistic analysis to establish frequency or usage, and other information.

Choosing words for learners at different stages

There are many ways of viewing word frequency and constructing word lists. These progressions aim to encourage teachers to develop some principled ways of choosing vocabulary for teaching and learning. One way of aligning word-frequency lists with successive stages of language learning is as follows.

	Word knowledge	Vocabulary focus
Foundation Stage	First 500–1000 words and other vocabulary relevant to class topics	Words for basic concepts, such as personal details, health, body parts, family, time, colours, shapes, numbers, objects around the home, school, environment, actions, core concepts (e.g., “big”, “little”), and core content words for curriculum learning (e.g., “animal”, “plant”, “poem”, “write”, “count”) <p><i>The choice of which words to teach will depend on the age and needs of the learner and on what their peers are learning. Topic choices should also include culturally familiar texts and contexts to help provide a bridge to new concepts.</i></p>
Stage 1	First 1000 words and a developing knowledge of the 2000 word list and other vocabulary relevant to class topics	Words useful for social and curriculum contexts and subject-specific technical vocabulary <p>Consolidation and extension of the learner’s bank of words for basic concepts</p> <p><i>The choice of words should give priority to words that learners meet in mainstream classes. Words for English grammar should also be taught, including the words “noun”, “noun phrase”, “adjective”, “verb”, “verb phrase”, and so on.⁵</i></p>
Stage 2	First 2000 words and a developing knowledge of the 3000 word list and other vocabulary relevant to class topics	Words useful for social and curriculum contexts and subject-specific technical vocabulary <p><i>The choice of words should give priority to words that the learner meets in mainstream classes. Words for English grammar should also be taught, including the words “noun”, “noun phrase”, “adjective”, “verb”, “verb phrase”, and so on.</i></p>
Stage 3	First 3000 words plus an academic word list ⁶ and other vocabulary relevant to class topics	
Stage 4	First 3000 words, an academic word list, a range of lower-frequency vocabulary relevant to the learner, and other vocabulary relevant to class topics	

The Foundation Stage focuses first on the three hundred most common words. Many of these are **structural words** (“little” words that “stick language together”), with few content words. Some important words, especially the words for core concepts, also need to be taught. Stage 1 includes developing the learner’s knowledge of further word lists, but the foundation list should also be revised and consolidated at this stage.

Stage 2 adds the next one thousand words, so the target number to learn by the end of Stage 2 is two thousand words. “Usually the 2000-word level has been set as the most suitable limit for high frequency words ... About 165 word families in this list are function words [sometimes called structural words] such as *a, some, ... because* and *to ...* The rest are content words” (Nation, 2001, pages 14–15).

⁵ See Derewianka, 1998, or Knapp and Watkins, 1994 and 2005, for help with teaching grammar terms.

⁶ See Coxhead, 1998.

Stage 3 builds on knowledge of the third one thousand words, and these need to be learned alongside curriculum-specific vocabulary, both **general** and **technical**. A learner's goals for vocabulary learning need to relate to their year level so that the target language is developmentally appropriate. Obviously, the target vocabulary lists for older learners will include more lower-frequency words, especially once learners are beyond year 7. Learners in mid- to senior secondary school (both native speakers and learners of an additional language) also need to master a bank of academic vocabulary. The goals for Stage 3 and beyond, therefore, include learning vocabulary from an academic word list, such as Averil Coxhead's. This list is available online, with exercises for vocabulary development, at <http://language.massey.ac.nz/staff/awl/index.shtml>

Other word lists, such as the NCEA list (available at www.tki.org.nz/r/esol/esolonline/classroom/vocabulary/ncea/home_e.php) are also useful.

The rate at which English language learners need to learn vocabulary increases as they get older. Learners have to take responsibility for learning vocabulary independently outside the classroom. They don't have enough time in class to learn the amount of vocabulary they require for secondary school. They need, therefore, to be taught strategies for learning vocabulary independently. (See the *Refugee Handbook for Schools*, Ministry of Education, 2003e.)

Teaching and learning vocabulary

Vocabulary teaching and learning should be integrated into topic teaching and learning. Research shows that learners are able to remember vocabulary better when words are connected to each other. Sometimes older learners in particular may need to increase their rate of vocabulary acquisition by learning word lists. Ideally, however, the words they learn should be linked to the topics they are studying at the time.

Spelling

A spelling programme should be provided alongside the teaching of vocabulary, reading, and writing. Learners need systematic support to master standard spelling because spelling is an important requirement for effective written communication. An effective speller:

- can spell a large number of words, including words with irregular spelling patterns and words that the learner doesn't know the meaning of;
- can spell new words, using their knowledge of other words and word families;
- uses their visual memory, writing words and saying them aloud to help them learn spellings;
- may sound out words with exaggerated pronunciation (using syllabification) as a strategy for working out spelling (see Brown and Ellis, 1994).

Learners who have difficulty spelling often don't have a good grasp of the sounds of the new language. They may lack letter–sound knowledge, have difficulty paying attention to detail, and/or have poor visual sequencing memory. Learners who have trouble spelling are likely to stick to a core vocabulary, avoid using common but hard-to-spell words, and use more repetition, resulting in less effective writing.

English, with its many words originally borrowed from other languages, is a particularly difficult language to learn to spell. The spellings of many words must, therefore, be learned by rote. There are some spelling rules that are quite regular, however, and these should be taught to learners.

Poor spelling is often linked to low expectations for learners' achievement. "Inaccurate spelling triggers a heightened sensitivity to other weaknesses in composition ... poor spelling is often associated with poor concept of self as a writer ... there are undoubtedly emotional and social consequences of being 'hopeless at spelling'" (Brown and Ellis, 1994, page 463). Because they tend to have good phonemic awareness, strong spellers are also likely to be proficient readers.

At the most basic level, learners should be encouraged to learn words using the *look, say, spell, cover, write, check* method. This is one way to help learners to grasp the forms of words and improve their phonemic awareness and visual memory. For further information about helping learners to improve their knowledge, awareness, and abilities in spelling, see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, pages 161–166.

Dictionaries for learners

Dictionaries are important and useful tools. Learners who are literate in their first language should be encouraged to use dictionaries in that language to consolidate their understanding of concepts. Bilingual dictionaries and picture dictionaries (both English-only and bilingual) are very useful. There are also bilingual subject dictionaries for older learners, such as a Chinese–English dictionary of biology.

Dictionaries should be chosen carefully. A good dictionary does not just provide a definition. It also:

- shows how the word is pronounced;
- lists the uses of the word in order of frequency;
- explains the meaning of the word, using language that can be understood by the learner;
- shows the word's use in context, in a sentence or phrase.

More advanced dictionaries may also show other words related to the entry. Many modern dictionaries are sold with a CD-ROM of additional information and exercises on dictionary use.

A good dictionary in every classroom is essential for effective language learning. Some recommendations include:

Picture Dictionary for New Learners of English (Auckland, New Zealand: The Centre for Refugee Education and the School of Languages, Auckland University of Technology)

Collins Cobuild Dictionaries (there are a number of these, including online versions)

Longman Language Activator (a dictionary organised according to **collocations** or grouped meanings and associations)

The Longman Picture Dictionary

Macmillan Essential Dictionary (the website www.macmillandictionary.com has exercises and further information).

Websites for teachers

Websites useful for teachers of all year levels include:

www.duboislc.org/EducationWatch/First100Words.html

(a first one hundred word list)

www1.harenet.ne.jp/~waring/vocab/wordlists/vocfreq.html#Set%20A

(word lists from two thousand words onwards)

<http://aac.unl.edu/vbstudy.html>

(a range of different types of word lists, including lists for school settings)

www1.harenet.ne.jp/~waring/vocab/wordlists/vocfreques.html

(advice on using the word lists)

www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/staff/paul-nation/RANGE.zip

(the vocabulary analysis programme for assessing the vocabulary level of a text)

www.angelfire.com/wi3/englishcorner/vocabulary/vocabulary.html

(a very useful site of vocabulary lists and vocabulary learning games, including some for the academic word list)

www.er.uqam.ca/nobel/r21270/levels

(Paul Nation's vocabulary level tests)

www.tki.org.nz/r/esol/esolonline/classroom/vocabulary/bilingual/home_e.php

(a site with bilingual vocabulary tests)

www.isabelperez.com/tesllinks2.htm

(a site with vocabulary games, dictionary and thesaurus references, word frequency lists, and many other useful references)

http://ec.hku.hk/vocabulary/tools_cp.htm

(vocabulary and text analysis tools).

Websites useful for teachers of years 9–13 include:

<http://language.massey.ac.nz/staff/awl/index.shtml> or www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/research/awl

(Averil Coxhead's *An Academic Word List* and exercises)

www.edict.com.hk/textanalyser/wordlists.htm

(a site with different word lists).

How ESOL specialists can use these progressions

ESOL specialists can use these progressions in a number of ways for a number of purposes, but it's important to remember that the ELLP is designed to help teachers monitor and record learners' progress over the long term, not the short term. For ESOL-funded learners, the record of learning could be adjusted at the same time as the ESOL funding assessment, on the basis of what the learner has been doing in class. However, the ELLP assessment is based on using classroom texts and tasks that are matched to the English language proficiency level of the learner, *not* to cohort level as is done for the funding assessment.

The ELLP is designed to be used in conjunction with the *ESOL Progress Assessment Guidelines*. Assessments can be carried out using a range of formal and informal tools and processes, which are described in these guidelines. The results of the assessments can be mapped against these progressions and against progress records. The results can then be recorded in a portfolio or in an electronic file so that they can be monitored over a number of years.

ESOL teachers can use the ELLP to help them:

- describe a learner's starting points in oral and written language;
- choose reading texts at the appropriate levels for both independent and instructional reading;⁷
- judge the writing proficiency of the learner and decide on the priorities for teaching;
- set teaching and learning goals, making sure that the teaching of oral and written language is integrated and that topics are linked to the mainstream curriculum;
- guide the design of the language programme for each group;
- measure and report on learners' progress over time;
- provide professional development for mainstream teachers – informing them about learners of an additional language, explaining what learners at specific stages can manage independently and with support, and helping them to adapt their programmes accordingly.

It's very important to establish a learner's level of literacy in their first language because this will strongly affect their starting point for learning the additional language, their rate of progress, and the type of support they need.

Learning and assessment programmes should be linked to mainstream tasks and topics but should be adapted to the proficiency level of the learner.

Ways for the ESOL specialist to record progress

Oral language assessments can be recorded in an oral language portfolio. This portfolio can include the learner's audio- and videotaped performances as well as teacher and peer comments on observations of oral tasks in the classroom.

Teachers can conduct reading assessments in a variety of ways, using the informal and formal assessment tools and processes referred to in both the *ESOL Funding Assessment Guidelines* and the *ESOL Progress Assessment Guidelines*. They can record the results so that they show the date of assessment, the assessment tool or process used, the level of text that was used for the assessment, and the outcome.

Writing assessments are best recorded as part of a writing portfolio with a summary sheet that follows the learner through the years and is kept with their school records.

⁷ Suggestions for teaching reading and writing to learners in primary schools can be found in *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4* and *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*. Suggestions for developing reading and writing through the stages with learners in secondary schools can be found in the *English Language Intensive Programme Years 7–13 Resource* and in *Effective Literacy Strategies in Years 9 to 13*.

How mainstream teachers can use these progressions

Mainstream teachers can also use these progressions in a number of ways and for a number of purposes, which may be slightly different from the ways in which ESOL specialists use them.

Mainstream teachers can use the ELLP to help them:

- understand the key issues in additional language acquisition and the factors that might influence English language learners;
- provide appropriate input and recognise expected output at different stages of language learning;
- set teaching and learning goals that integrate language learning into the curriculum;
- identify a language focus and teaching priorities for a curriculum topic;
- analyse the reading demands of texts in their curriculum area in relation to the stage of the learner and use these texts, with scaffolding or elaboration if necessary, or choose reading texts that the learner will be able to comprehend (either independently or with support);
- identify tasks, activities, or skills that need additional scaffolding for learners;
- adapt assessment tasks in their curriculum areas so that they are within the English language proficiency level of the learner;
- use appropriate assessment tools and processes to measure and report on learners' progress over time, for short-term and long-term learning;
- be aware of, and alert their colleagues to, other documents that support effective literacy practice and the use of effective literacy strategies at all year levels;
- identify issues that relate to teaching English language learners that they would like to address through professional development.

The professional development facilitator's manual (forthcoming) will offer further suggestions for using these progressions in ESOL-specialist classes and in the mainstream.

Glossary

academic vocabulary	words that are used in academic contexts or with academic topics. These words include words for specific subjects or disciplines and general academic vocabulary that is used for many different subjects (see <i>Effective Literacy Strategies in Years 9 to 13</i> , page 28). Some words have meanings that are different when the word is used in a specific academic subject rather than in everyday contexts, for example, in the subject of mathematics “mean” refers to the average of a set of scores, whereas its everyday meanings include “stingy”, “cruel”, and “unkind”.
adverb	An adverb is any word (or sometimes a group of words) that modifies or adds to the meaning of verbs, adjectives (including numbers), clauses, sentences, and other adverbs. Adverbs typically answer questions such as how?, when?, or where? For example, “In the wintertime they <i>usually</i> treated her <i>well</i> ”, “An <i>extremely</i> small child entered the room <i>quietly</i> .”
adverbial phrase	a group of words functioning as an adverb in a sentence, for example, “I’m going to the shop <i>to buy a drink</i> .”
article	“A” is called an indefinite article; “the” is called a definite article. (For more information about articles, see <i>Exploring Language: A Handbook for Teachers</i> , page 47.)
clause	a group of words containing a subject and verb, for example, “I’m going.” A clause may be a subordinate [dependent] clause or a main [independent] clause .
cognitive academic language proficiency	The ability to use academic language is sometimes called cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). The ability to use social language is sometimes called basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). CALP usually takes more time to acquire than BICS.
cohesion	the way a text is formed into a united whole through the use of linking words, nouns and pronouns, synonyms, and other cohesive devices
collocate with	(of two or more words) to be commonly used together. For example, “go” collocates with “swimming”, as in “go swimming”, but it does not collocate with “tennis”. A verb that collocates with “tennis” is “play”, as in “play tennis”.
collocation	two (or more) words that are commonly used together
complex sentence	a sentence that has a main clause and at least one subordinate clause , for example, “The bike was smaller [main clause] than I had expected [subordinate clause].”
compound sentence	a sentence containing at least two main clauses , linked by a conjunction (“and”, “but”, “or”, and so on)
conjunction	a joining word, for example, “and”, “but”, “or”

content words	words that have some meaning on their own and refer to an action, state, object, idea, and so on. (In contrast, functional words or structural words indicate relationships between other words and don't tend to have a clear meaning on their own.)
decode	read individual words, that is, translate them from the shapes of written language into the sounds of oral language (often silently) by making links between letters or letter clusters and their associated sounds, using visual and grapho-phonetic sources of information in a text in conjunction with semantic and syntactic sources of information in the text and prior knowledge of literacy learning
dependent clause	see subordinate clause
determiner	a word that quantifies or identifies nouns, including articles , numbers, and possessive adjectives
discourse	Discourse is the level of language beyond the sentence. Spoken discourse can refer to oral texts such as dialogues or monologues, while written discourse can refer to parts of written texts or entire written texts.
elaborate on	to enhance understanding of texts (oral, audio, visual, or written) by using supplementary information, explanations, or other material (which may include visuals). It is preferable to elaborate on language structures or vocabulary rather than to simplify them for learners after the Foundation Stage or Stage 1.
ellipsis	leaving out one or more implied words from a sentence, for example, “[I’ve] Got it.”
finite verb	A finite verb changes according to person, number, tense, and so on. It is a verb that has a subject–verb relationship within a sentence or a clause , for example, “the dog <i>ran</i> away”, “I <i>like</i> people who <i>are</i> polite.” A non-finite verb does not have this relationship, for example, “I want <i>to run</i> away”, “It’s easy <i>to like</i> children”, “ <i>Being</i> polite is very important.”
formulaic chunk	a phrase or sentence that learners remember and use without necessarily understanding the individual words, such as “How are you?”
general vocabulary	words that are used in many different everyday contexts
high-frequency word	a word that occurs often in speech or writing
homonym	words that have the same sound but different spellings and/or meanings, for example, “their” and “there”
idiom	a saying that has a different meaning from the individual meanings of the words that it consists of and is often used in informal contexts, for example, “She’s <i>over the moon</i> about the baby.”
idiomatic	containing idioms
imperative verb	a verb expressing a command or request, for example, “come” in “Come here!” and “remember” in “Please remember me.”
independent clause	see main clause

intensifier	a word used to make the meaning of another word or phrase stronger, for example, “very” in “very hot”, “so” in “so fast”, and “really” in “really angry”
interlanguage	the language used in transitional phases of learning an additional language. This language is not a standard form of either the learner’s first language or the target language but has elements of each, and may also include elements that come from aspects of language learning, such as “ overgeneralising ” grammar rules.
lexical	referring to the lexis or lexicon (all of the content words) of a language
lexical item	a word or group of words that has a specific meaning. For example, “drink milk” contains two lexical items, but “traffic light” contains only one.
main clause	(independent clause) a clause that can function as a sentence by itself, for example, “If we all go outside [subordinate/dependent clause], we can play in the sunshine [main clause].”
metacognitive	referring to a learner’s awareness of how they think and learn
minimal pair	two words that have only one different sound, for example, “ship” and “sheep” – these can be hard for English language learners to differentiate
modal verb	a verb that expresses obligation, permission, possibility, ability, or degrees of probability or obligation, for example, “can”, “could”, “may”, “might”, “must”, “should”, “will”, “would” (refer to <i>Exploring Language</i> , pages 66–68)
modes	Speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting are sometimes referred to as the modes of language use. There are two oral language modes, two written language modes, and two visual language modes. There are three modes for the production of language (speaking, writing, and presenting) and three modes for its comprehension (listening, reading, and viewing).
modifier	a word, phrase, or clause that occurs before and/or after a noun and modifies the meaning of that noun, for example, “ <i>the shining eyes of my daughter</i> ”
morphology	the study of the meaning-related structure of words. Morphemes are units of meaning that make up words; some words consist of one morpheme (such as “cat”), and some are combinations of morphemes (for example, “un+interest+ed”).
native speaker	a person who speaks a language (in this booklet, usually English) as their first language
non-finite verb	a verb that does not have a direct subject–verb relationship and does not change according to person, number, tense, and so on, for example, “I want <i>to run away</i> ”, “It’s easy <i>to like children</i> ”, “ <i>Being polite is very important.</i> ”
non-verbal language	all types of body language, such as gestures, movements, and facial expressions. This is considered part of oral language.

noun phrase	in linguistics, “phrase” refers to a group of words that has a meaning but does not have both a subject and a finite verb (so it is not a clause). A phrase is categorised by its most important part, for example, “the big dog” is a noun phrase. A noun phrase may be a single word, for example, “I”.
overgeneralising	In linguistics, “overgeneralising” means applying a grammar rule in a language context in which it is incorrect, for example, using the plural suffix -s with the noun “sheep” and saying “sheeps”. This is a sign that a language learner is beginning to know and understand the rules of the target language .
passive construction	a sentence construction in which the subject undergoes the action of the verb, for example, “He was remembered” (as opposed to an active construction, in which the subject performs or experiences the action, for example, “He remembered”)
phonemic awareness	awareness of the separate sounds within words
phonological knowledge	knowledge of the sound system of a language
phrasal verb	a verb consisting of a verb and a preposition or adverb, or both. A phrasal verb as a whole has a meaning that differs from the meanings of each of the parts, for example, “He <i>caught on</i> very quickly.” (Refer to <i>Exploring Language</i> , pages 68–69.)
phrase	a group of words that forms part of a sentence but does not express a complete thought. (In linguistics, it means a group of words that does not have both a subject and a finite verb .)
possessive adjective	a word that occurs before a noun and indicates the possession of this noun – “his”, “her”, “their”, “your”, “our”
prepositional phrase	a phrase that begins with a preposition, for example, “ <i>in</i> the car”, “ <i>outside</i> the house”
pronoun	a word that stands in place of a noun, for example, “I”, “he”, “you”
proper noun	a name of a person or place, beginning with a capital letter, for example, “Li Ling”, “Sāmoa”
prosodic features	the prosodic features of a language include pitch, volume, speed, intonation, and stress, all of which affect the way the sounds of the language are articulated. The way prosodic features are used can alter the meaning of what is said, for example, “John’s bought a new <i>car</i> ” (not a new bike) or “John’s bought a <i>new</i> car” (not a second-hand one). Prosodic features are considered part of oral language.
referent	a person or thing that a word (often a pronoun) refers to
relative clause	a subordinate clause introduced by a relative pronoun (such as “who”, “which”, “that”), for example, “That is a good idea, <i>which</i> we should remember.”
relative pronoun	the word used to introduce a relative clause – for example, “who”, “which”, “that”
sensory verbs	verbs that refer to feelings or senses, for example, “love” and “smell”

simple sentence	a sentence containing only one main clause
structural words	sometimes called functional or grammatical words; words such as “a”, “the”, “to”, and so on, which don’t have a specific meaning in themselves but which are crucial for making sense of texts, for example, “Mary was having <i>a</i> party.”
subject pronoun	a pronoun functioning as the subject of the sentence
subordinate clause	(dependent clause) a clause that is introduced by words like “when”, “if”, “after”, “because”, “unless”, “as”, “that”, or “whether” and that is incomplete as a sentence without a main clause , for example, “If we all go outside [subordinate clause], we can play in the sunshine [main clause].”
syntax	the ways in which words in a language can be combined to make sentences
target language	the language being learned
technical vocabulary	words that are subject-specific or have a subject-specific meaning, for example, “knock on” is a technical term used in the sport of rugby and “standard deviation” is a technical term used in the subject of statistics.
verbal language	language in the form of words. This is considered part of oral language.
verb phrase	in linguistics, “phrase” refers to a group of words that has a meaning but does not have both a subject and a finite verb (so it is not a clause). A phrase is categorised by its most important part. For example, in the sentence “I am going”, “am going” is a verb phrase. A verb phrase may be a single word.

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Note: Some of the Ministry of Education resources have a restricted distribution list.

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