

Challenges and possibilities in using *The Victorian Curriculum F-10 EAL in a Year 7 science unit with a focus on word knowledge*

Anna Filipi, Minh Hue Nguyen, Amanda Berry (Monash University)
Angie Valcanis and Emily Smith (teacher partners)

1

Principal aims of the project

How do EAL and content teachers **collaborate** in working with the New EAL Curriculum 7-10 to **support EAL students**?

- aligning the curricula
- lesson planning
- teaching approaches
- vocabulary teaching

2

Background

- Past research has called for and has shown **the importance of collaboration** between EAL and content teachers to support EAL students (e.g. Creese, 2010; Edwards, 2014)
- **Linguistically responsive instruction** (e.g., de Jong et al. 2013; Lucas et al., 2008) provide sets of principles to guide teaching
- Science learning is **linguistically & cognitively challenging**: specialist terminology, everyday meanings and science specialist meanings (e.g. energy), complex & abstract ideas (e.g. 'invisible' atoms)

3

The project

- How an EAL teacher was working with a science teacher to **implement the EAL curriculum** to **report progress** of EAL students
- The data collected included **interviews** with the two teachers and **classroom filming** of 5 science lessons in Year 7

4

Word knowledge

- The **3 tiers of vocabulary** adopted across the curriculum
- Alignment with **word knowledge in the EAL curriculum** - a sub-strand of the communication strand



5

Linguistically responsive instruction

Teachers' perceptions and practices in five LRI principles within the area of developing EAL students' word knowledge:

1. understanding the **distinction** between **conversational** and **academic** language
2. applying principles of **language learning**, and attending to both **language forms and meaning** with specific reference to vocabulary knowledge
3. **responsive teacher talk**
4. establishing a **place for L1 use** (plurilingual awareness)
5. giving attention to **social interaction**.



6

Reflection on collaboration

1. The nature of the **collaboration**: Angie (EAL Coordinator/teacher) and Emily (Science teacher)
 1. Selection of Emily's **year 7 Science** class
 2. **Regular meetings** between members of the team
 3. Despite the demands and challenges the **outcomes** from the collaboration were **invaluable**.



7

Reflections on discussions in meetings

1. The schools' goal: explicit teaching **Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary** in all subject areas
 1. Background to *The Victorian Curriculum F-10: EAL*: need to **accommodate the learning** needs of EAL students
 2. **Isolating** the focus: **writing mode Sub strand Word knowledge C1 - Incorporate introduced subject-specific vocabulary into simple sentences**
 3. Discussion about **strategies and approaches** used to teach new concepts and vocabulary.



8

Year 7 Geography example: The water cycle

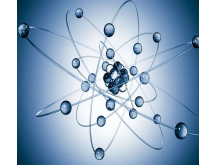
Meeting 1:

1. **Identifying** and teaching Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary from The Water Cycle including terms such as precipitation, evaporation etc.
2. Using whole and individual class activities by encouraging **questions**, **responding** and **reacting**, and **inviting** further thinking (dialogic approaches)
3. Drawing on **previous knowledge** and **experience**
4. Using elements of **visual pedagogy**, including video, diagrams and graphic organisers and encouraging pictorial representations
5. **Making links** to common or accepted usage
6. **Using colour** and **patterns** to convey different labels on a diagram
7. Providing space for **plurilingualism** in all stages of the tasks
8. Reciting the **pronunciation** of each term, as a class, with visual aids
10. Providing students with an opportunity to **write** about the different stages of The Water Cycle in simple sentences **with or without support**.



MONASH

Year 7 Science Introduction to Chemistry: States of matter



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY

Meeting 2

- 1. Transition to **remote teaching** and the effects on the year 7 EAL students
- 2. Original summative task: a TED talk style presentation on the topic of the States of Matter
- 3. The merits and challenges of this task for the EAL students
- 4. **Alternative summative task**: a comic strip with a narrative about the States of Matter using the key vocabulary.

10

Emily's Science class: Successes

1. **Learning intentions** and **success criteria** at the start of each lesson
2. The whole class **vocabulary building**
3. **Sounding out** new, technical terms
4. Looking for words within words **for connections** (e.g.,: evaporation/vapour)
5. Putting **key words** and images on the **wall**
6. **Bolding** key words on power points
7. **Repeating** key words during instruction and question times
8. **Using life experience/knowledge** of the everyday world to explain scientific concepts, their similarities and differences
9. **Providing glossaries** and including 'non-examples'



MONASH
University

Emily's Science class: Successes cont.

1. Checking in regularly with EAL students
2. Using **rephrasing** and **synonyms** regularly
3. **Repeating** key words
4. **Using gestures** (both hands and face) whilst relating new concepts
5. **Using shapes** and **coloured diagrams** to enhance understanding (EG: red/hot/ and cold/blue)
6. Providing **hypothetical** scenarios
7. Using **Predict/Observe/Explain** to encourage thinking skills
8. Playing word games such as 'hangman' as a **spelling strategy**
9. **Breaking down** long words
10. **Sharing** glossaries and language support on the Microsoft Teams One Note page dedicated to the year 7 EAL Science students.



MONASH
University

12

9

11

Emily's Science class: Challenges

1. The need to quickly adapt to **remote teaching**
2. **Making appropriate adjustments** to the summative assessment task
3. Teaching the **technical** language/concepts
4. The difficulty of trying to **make links** to everyday life
5. Teaching **concepts** that are **highly theoretical** and cannot be 'seen'
6. The heavy emphasis on **language** that all students find challenging.



13

Collaboration: Successes

Fruitful **discussions, sharing** about teaching vocabulary and **application** of approaches that led to:

- the **revised** assessment task - comic strip
- the **genre modelling** approach in science
- the use of **example/exemplar** of a sentence with key vocabulary/concepts in the comic strip
- **changes to instructions** from lengthy sentences to dot points for clarity
- the in class assistance of **an EAL specialist teacher** from an English language school



14

Collaboration: Challenges

1. The effects of **remote teaching** on the project and planning
2. The need for **support of leadership** would be ideal for ongoing and meaningful collaboration to take place.
 - adequate **time allowances** to be made available perhaps using Professional Learning Collaboration programs or **Observation Times** as platforms.



15

Role of EAL Coordinator

1. To **create formal opportunities** for **collaborations** between EAL teachers and content teachers and to maintain the practice as much as possible
2. To **organize ongoing whole school PD** each year or ideally each semester
3. To **advocate** for EAL focused practices in the school (e.g., PLCs and/or observations)
4. To **provide whole school support** to understand the role of the EAL teacher in working alongside content teachers to work on vocabulary and learning/assessment tasks specific to their subject area
5. To **work with school leadership team** to meet the requirement for content teachers to accommodate the learning needs of EAL students in their classes.



16

To conclude

- *The Victorian Curriculum F-10: EAL* needs to be relevant to **all** content areas and not just English.
- Need for **systemic recognition** that language is a matter for all teachers and is pivotal to every discipline's curriculum.



Interested in connecting with us?

We would love to hear from you...different curriculum areas, EAL teachers, teacher leaders....

anna.filipi@monash.edu

