

Teaching English as an Additional Language: perspectives from North and South

Dr Barbara O'Toole: Marino Institute of Education, Ireland and Dr Barbara Skinner: Ulster University, Northern Ireland.

Outline of talk



- Setting the context: NI and ROI
- Mini-lesson
- Language Stories
- Starting school: stages of development
- The sociocultural perspective:
- The sociopolitical perspective: 'Funds of Knowledge'
- Approaches in the classroom: robust vocabulary instruction



Quick quiz!



- How many pupils for whom English is an Additional Language are there in Northern Ireland?
- What percentage of people in Republic of Ireland are from minority groups?
- How many languages spoken in Northern Ireland and Ireland?
- What is the main first language spoken by children for whom EAL in Northern Ireland and Ireland?

Put yourselves in their shoes!

Imagine you are a young learner from Ireland or Northern Ireland who has recently started school in Portugal.

Listen to the story and answer the following questions:

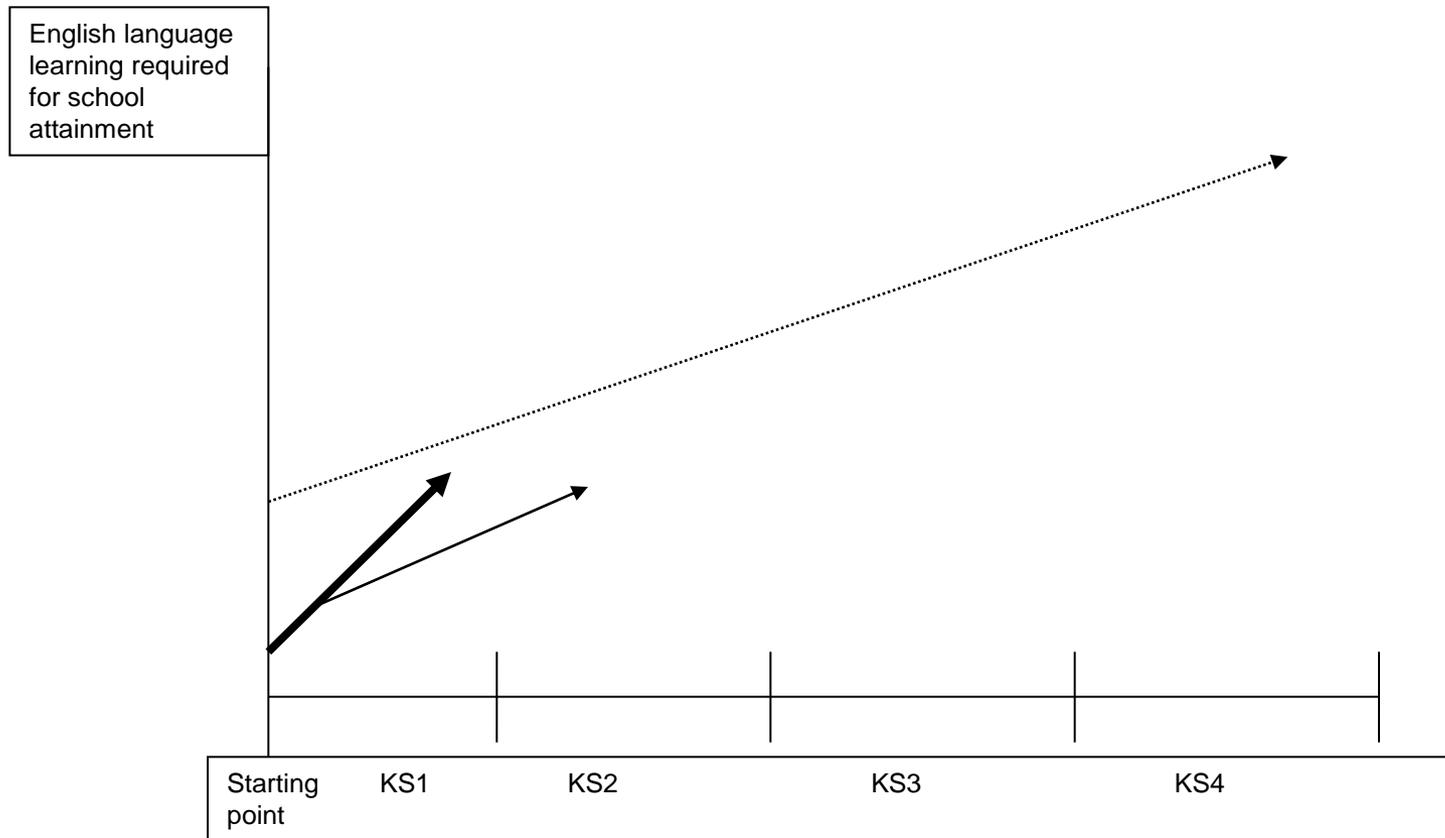
- What are the family doing?
- What difficulties do the family face?

what is linguistically involved in task we are setting?

Language Story

My name is Natalia. I am 12 and from Lithuania. I have been in NI for nearly two years. I enjoy Maths and I'm good at it but sometimes I can't explain what I do or ask and answer questions because I don't have enough English.

Starting school – the EAL learner's task



Beginner learners

- Silent period
- Using NVC
- Echoing single words
- Using chunks and phrases
- Using telegraphic sentences

- Focus – on effective ‘meaning making’, building fluency and confidence

Developing academic language

- Cummins (1996, 2000, 2011, 2014): his work has been critical in the field: importance of first language recognition; acknowledgement of societal power relations and impact on language learning
- Also distinguishes between two distinct stages of development: ‘social and conversational’ language and ‘academic language proficiency’



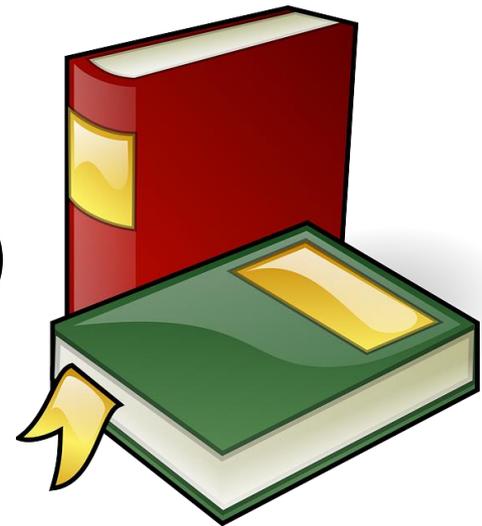
- Social & conversational language: also known as ‘playground language’ (Gibbons, 2002)
- Context rich: supported by visual cues, gestures, facial expressions etc.
- Student can develop social & conversational language fluency within **2 years** of being introduced to a new language



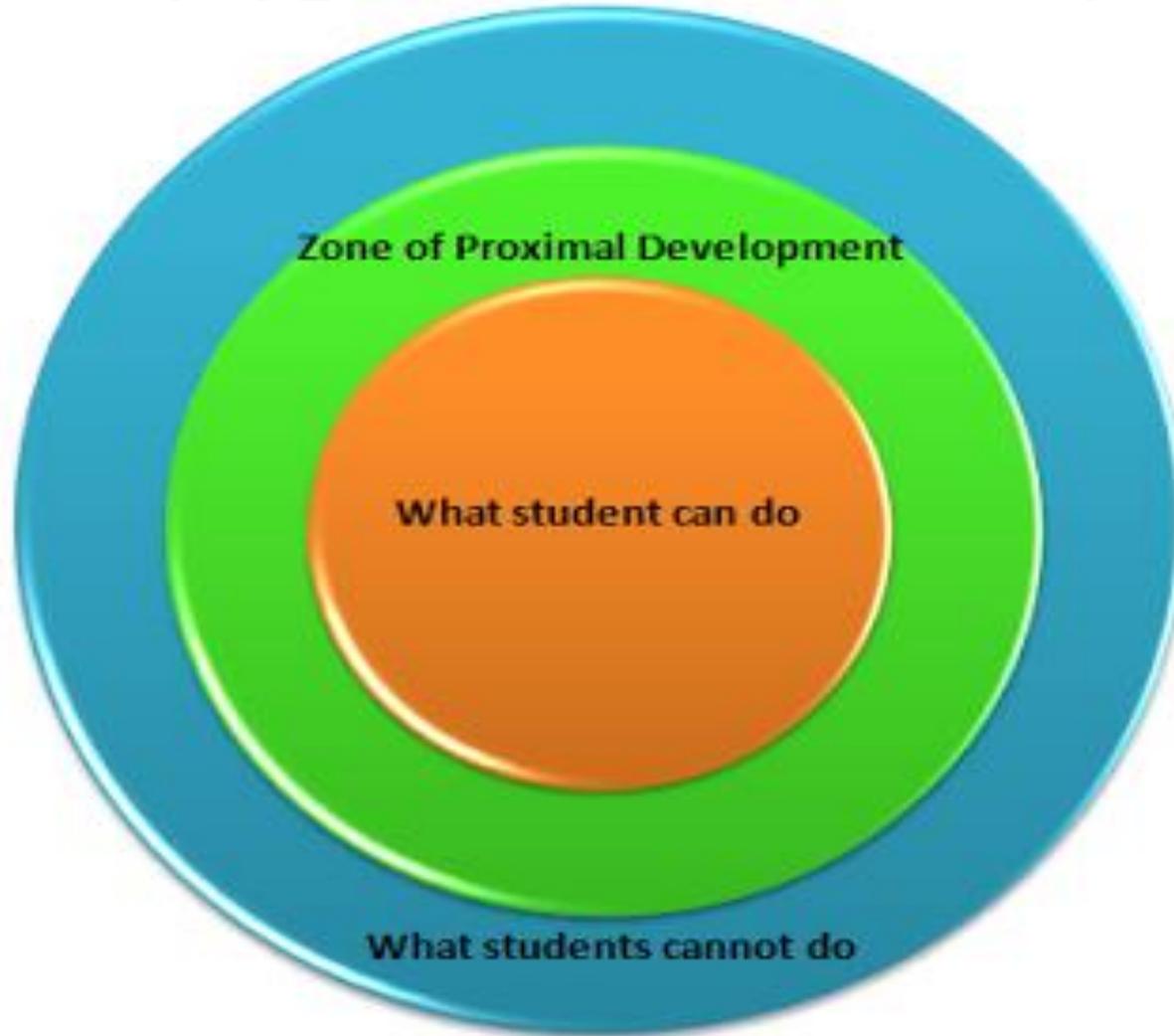
Academic language proficiency

- The language of school: more formal register, required for examinations, academic reading etc
- Takes up to 7 years for a student to develop academic language proficiency
- Fluency in social & conversational language can mask lack of proficiency with academic language

- “Range of language concepts and skills which pupils need to formulate and discuss the abstract, the theoretical and the complex...is also needed to express delicate nuances of thought...used for academic purposes such as **hypothesising, persuading, evaluating and deducing.**” Haslam et al, 2005
- *‘Bildungssprache’* (Grommes, 2014)



Socio-cultural perspective on learning (Vygotsky, 1896-1934)



'Significant other'

Scaffolding

Language inherent in the task

Analyses of texts for

- key vocabulary
- complex sentences
- structure
- subject specific terminology

Krashen's (1984)

- 'comprehensible input'
= $i + 1$

- To develop skills so that teacher and learners look *at* language rather than through it.
- To develop a 'linguistically responsive pedagogy'



Grammatical structures, phrases, key words that are used in your subject

- Maths: 20 biscuits in a packet, if Sandra buys three, then how many....
- History: Spanish priests had established missions by 1832
- Science: lung cancer death rate
- Geography
- Art
- Music
- PE

The dilemma for teachers

- Students must learn the dominant language
- How do teachers approach this work in a social justice framework, i.e. a) without working from a deficit perspective and b) without marginalising student's first languages and cultures, but recognising the linguistic capital of their students?



Socio-political perspective

- ‘Recognition’ and ‘affirmation’ of first languages and home cultures: critical to the subsequent development of English language proficiency.
- Cummins (2014, p. 15): interactions between educators and culturally diverse students are “never neutral with respect to societal power relations”, and that “in varying degrees they either reinforce or challenge coercive relations of power in the wider society”
- Cummins (1979, 1980, 1996, 2000, 2014): “the extent to which children’s language and cultural background are valued and promoted within the school” empowers or disables the learning and achievement of minority students (2000, p. 47).
- Phillipson (2003), Kenner (2004), Flynn (2007), Gregory (2008), Garcia (2009), Mc Daid (2011), Conteh (2012) and Conteh & Brock (2011).

'Funds of Knowledge'

- Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2005) define 'funds of knowledge' as the culturally developed knowledge, including language knowledge, which students bring to school.
- Moll (2005, p. 276) states that when first languages are not recognized by schools, this not only curtails the 'ability of teachers to build on the language and cultural experience of students' but it can also lead to a 'fracture' between families and school.

Funds of Knowledge

- Conteh & Brock (2011, p. 351) emphasise the importance of creating 'safe spaces' for bilingual learners, stating that such spaces 'need to be places where all their language experiences, in home, community and school, are recognised and valued'.
- Gregory (2008) refers to 'inside-out' approaches to literacy teaching, which begin with the internal worlds of students and work outwards to the external world.

Mohammed's story

- Mohammed's story:
- [Track 1](#): background
- [Track 2](#): the story



Using 'funds of knowledge' in teaching

'Passive' approaches

- Signage incorporating different languages,
- Displays incorporating different languages,
- Provision of books in different languages, including dual-language books, in classroom library,
- Context-reduced register



'Active' approaches

- Encouraging use of home languages in a targeted and structured manner,
- Language awareness activities for all students,
- Opportunities for constructing dual-language books / identity texts and encouraging their use,
- A 'language experience' approach in reading and writing,
- Using stories / poems / songs from a variety of cultures and languages,
- Using prior experience, in particular prior literacy experience,
- Explicitly teaching linguistic structures and practices that may differ from home languages
- Context-embedded register

Familiarity with language and academic background

Arabic speakers: script runs from right to left, no upper and lower case, use of present continuous 'ing' doesn't exist, verb comes at start of sentence

Hungarian speakers: a decimal comma is used instead of a decimal point, auxiliary verb 'do' does not exist, no possessive, pronunciation of consonants, j, q, s, w, x and y different

- See language features and fact sheet for range of nationalities <http://www.education-support.org.uk/teachers/ids/language-features-and-factsheets/>

Robust Vocabulary Instruction

- Involves engaging students with word meanings
- Providing opportunities for students to actively engage with meanings of new words after these words have been introduced
- Concerned with depth and breadth of vocabulary

Robust vocabulary instruction

- RVI with a ‘funds of knowledge’ dimension
- Linking vocabulary development to students’ own lives and interests: cooking, family life, cross-cultural stories, favourite places



- Work with the word several times: ‘one encounter with a word is unlikely to leave students with a rich and lasting understanding of its meaning’ Graves et al (2013)
- Provide the word in more than one context so that understanding is not limited to one situation
- Have students create uses for the word
- Encourage students to use the word outside class

- A learner needs to encounter a word many times before it becomes established in his / her memory (**x16 times**) – receptive skill. To actually *use* that word in conversation, a learner needs to hear it many more times – productive skill. ‘Even more encounters may be needed before a learner can retrieve the word in fluent speech.....’ (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 62).

Tiers of words

- Tier 1: everyday words that are frequently used and heard
- Tier 3: low-frequency words that are subject specific and specialised
- **Tier 2: words that are unlikely to occur in everyday conversations but feature regularly in academic texts**

Identify the Tier 2 words

- Photosynthesis
- Smooth
- Chair
- Cancelled
- Book
- Reluctant
- Philately
- Unfortunate
- Room
- Regularly
- Isotope
- Asphalt
- School
- Campanology

Robust Vocabulary Instruction

- Regularly
- Smooth
- Cancelled
- Unfortunate
- Reluctant

Sample strategies

- Four Square map
- Examples / Non-Examples
- Connect Two
- Situations
- Word Wizard

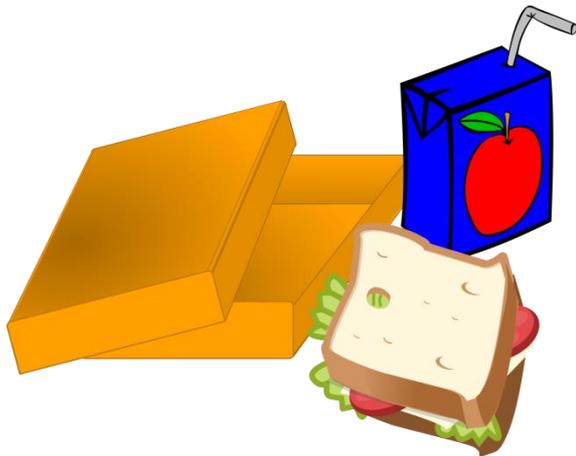
Four Square Map

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Four Square Vocabulary Word:
Reluctant | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Definition:
Hesitant
Not willing• My picture: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal Association:
We were reluctant to go out to the yard because it was starting to rain• Word in my language:• Sentence in my language: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opposite:
Eager• Sentence:• Sentence in my language: |

Examples / Non-examples

Regularly

- I regularly Skype my Nan to hear all her news
- She ate her lunch regularly because she was rushing to the shops



Reluctant

- I was reluctant to go to my Saturday school because my favourite TV programme was on at the same time
- I was reluctant to play for my football team as it was a very exciting opportunity



Connect Two

- Cancelled
- Regularly
- Magazine
- Smooth
- Unfortunate
- Reluctant
- Newspaper
- Upset
- Hesitant
- Seldom
- Rough
- Accident

Situations

Regularly, Smooth, Cancelled, Unfortunate, Reluctant

- When would your teacher use these words and why?
- Your auntie or uncle?
- Your dentist?
- A shopkeeper?

Word Wizard

- “If you hear a word from our word list – on TV, on the radio, in conversation, on the street, keep a record of this and report back to class the next day. You gain a point for each word.”



Summary of key points

- Importance of mainstream classroom along with EAL support: all teachers are language teachers
- Stages of development
- Sociocultural perspective
- Developing academic language
- Sociopolitical perspective
- Sample strategies: robust vocabulary instruction

Be linguistically responsive

Be culturally responsive