

Developing a draft Learning Progression Framework for ESOL in New Zealand Schools

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ABSTRACT: Early in 2003 we were commissioned to produce a draft Learning Progression Framework (LPF) for ESOL in the New Zealand curriculum. The draft Framework was completed in June 2003 and entered the consultation round. In producing the draft Framework, we had to address a range of issues. Some these related to user expectations. Others concerned the relationship between the draft Framework and documents such as English in the New Zealand Curriculum, existing curriculum documents relating to other languages, and ESOL frameworks available in other countries. These issues proved to be critical. This paper explores some of these issues and introduces the draft Framework.

KEYWORDS: ESOL, language education, New Zealand curriculum, ESOL curriculum, mainstream ESOL.

Introduction

We were asked early in 2003 to produce a draft Learning Progression Framework (LPF) for ESOL in the New Zealand curriculum. That draft Framework, completed in June 2003, was intended to be relevant to both primary and secondary teachers (general and specialist), providing a basis for consultation that would lead to the production of a revised version and, later, to further related developments. Although the time available between the actual signing of the contract and the delivery of the draft document proved to be very short (approximately 10 weeks), it was felt that the project was worthwhile in that it had the potential to provide a focal point for debate and development. In addition, as each of us had been involved within the last two years in a range of language curriculum development projects both for the New Zealand Ministry of Education and overseas, we were already familiar with much of the background research that would be required.

The task requirements

In producing the draft LPF, we were asked to ensure that there was consistency with the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (1993), and the achievement aims outlined in *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* (1994). In addition, we were asked to take account of Frameworks that were available in other countries. Our attention was drawn, in particular, to *ESL Essentials* (1992), development guides relating to Junior Primary and AL and B Beginners stages produced by the Directorate of School Education, Victoria, Australia. There was, of course, also a requirement to take account of research on cognitive development and language acquisition and development.

Some factors that had to be taken into account A range of politically complex, and potentially fraught, issues were associated with the production of this draft LPF. First, there would be many stakeholders including:

- students, parents & caregivers;
- ESOL advisers;
- specialist ESOL teachers;
- primary teachers (range of subjects);

- secondary teachers (English);
- secondary teachers (other subjects);
- teacher educators;
- Ministry of Education itself and other government departments.

What the members of these groups expected, wanted and felt they needed might be very different in each case. Many language learners are able to understand, and make themselves understood, with little difficulty in predictable day-to-day contexts relatively quickly. This does not mean that their language is accurate or that it is sufficient to support their academic goals. Without intervention, errors may become fossilized and learners may become frustrated. This is something of which ESOL specialists are well aware. Their expectations of a draft LPF for ESOL in New Zealand schools might, therefore, be very different from the expectations of those teachers who had had little profession training in second language development. Inevitably, therefore, there would be a need for compromise.

It is common practice in many different countries to produce a simple, straightforward Framework along with a range of supporting documents. It was agreed with the Ministry early in the development process that because this document was intended primarily to act as a catalyst for consultation and development, it would focus almost exclusively on achievement objectives. Those who were seeking background information about the New Zealand school context or detailed guidance about teaching and learning at this initial stage might, therefore, be disappointed.

In addition to issues associated with the precise form that the draft document would take, there were other issues that would inevitably affect the approach adopted, issues that could not, in view of the agreed parameters, be discussed directly in the document itself:

- Students enter schooling at different ages and stages of cognitive development and with different backgrounds in English – or none at all (so sufficient flexibility needed to be built into the document to allow for different pathways);
- Some students have special classes in English; some do not;
- Some students are literate in their first language when they arrive in New Zealand schools; some are not;
- English may be spoken at home in some cases even though it is not the first language; in other cases, English may never be spoken at home;
- *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* is the curriculum document designed for schools generally. It has very little to say about ESOL and is now due for review. Even so, because, ultimately, it is the document that specifies general expectations in terms of outcomes for all students who are learning through the medium of English, it had to be taken fully into account;
- A LPF for ESOL in New Zealand schools must have something to offer all of those who are teaching or learning through the medium of English, whatever the particular context in which they are operating.

Further issues emerged from a consideration of some of the ESOL Frameworks that were available in other countries. For example:

- Vocabulary is very important for ESOL students. Yet many of the curriculum documents that are in existence around the world have very little to say about vocabulary;

- Language is often retrieved and processed in chunks (lexicalised chunks). Yet there seemed to be little acknowledgment of this in some existing ESOL curriculum documents;
- Discourse competence (including the ability to cope with different genres and text-types) is very important, particularly in the context of schooling. Yet this is something that seems to receive far less explicit attention in some ESOL curriculum documents than it does in curriculum documents designed primarily for native speakers.

In relation to all of these issues, we found the work of the Council of Europe (2001) relating to a common European framework of languages extremely useful in that it provides a clear outline of those competencies that need to be accommodated in language curriculum planning and is designed to provide a basis for establishing a common set of standards and levels.

Two different approaches: Level 1

For the first milestone, we produced an outline of two different possible approaches (*Approach A* and *Approach B*) along with two different drafts of the first of the eight levels designed in relation to the different approaches. *Approach A* was, we believed, more appropriate for those who were not specialists in teaching English as a second language. It was much simpler, having a single page for each curriculum level and being as closely aligned as possible to *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*, a document with which primary teachers and teachers of English in secondary schools would already be familiar. *Approach B* was, we believed, more appropriate for specialist teachers of English as a second language. It was considerably longer, including a language resource section, and was less closely aligned to *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. There was another important difference relating to the way in which the achievement objectives were specified. In *Approach A*, they were expressed in terms of a *combination of core cognitive concepts and vocabulary* (language learning objectives), and *skills* (developing language skills objectives). In *Approach B*, they were expressed in terms of *core cognitive concepts* only (including notions, functions and discourse constructs).

Adopting *Approach A* involved treating skills development and vocabulary in the same way as core cognitive concepts and, therefore, including them in the list of achievement objectives. Adopting *Approach B* involved treating skills development (listening, reading etc.) not as achievement objectives in themselves, but as *strands* that could be associated with the achievement objectives.

So far as national curricula are concerned, the two main effects of specifying achievement objectives in terms of Approach B would be that:

- the overall number of achievement objectives would considerably fewer than would otherwise be the case;
- teachers would be encouraged to focus on language systems (in context).

This is the approach that was adopted in the case of *French in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2002), *German in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2002) and the first draft of the *LPF for Māori in the New Zealand Curriculum* (produced in 2003). However, in the case of a draft LPF for ESOL students in New Zealand schools, adopting *Approach A* would, we believed, be more appropriate in that it gave greater weight to the development of those language skills which learners would need in order to operate effectively in mainstream schooling. Furthermore, it allowed for closer alignment with the objectives of *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* where, in common with other

curricula of a similar type, the emphasis is necessarily placed on the extension and use of language codes rather than on the primary acquisition of the language system. *Approach A* included *language learning objectives* (communication and vocabulary) and *language skills objectives* (listening & speaking, reading, writing, viewing & presenting). From level 3 onwards, it echoed, wherever possible, aspects of the achievement objectives in *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*. A sample of each of the two approaches is provided below in *Table 1* and *Table 2*.

Both versions were accompanied by notes intended to assist in the interpretation of the objectives¹.

TABLE 1. Sample of first draft of the LPF for ESOL in the New Zealand Curriculum:
Approach A

Level 1: Emergent Communication A					
By the end of Level 1, learners can recognise, understand and use familiar words, phrases and sentences in familiar contexts and situations.					
ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES					
Learning Language		Developing Language Skills			
Communication	Vocabulary	Listening & Speaking	Reading	Writing	Viewing & Presenting
<p>1.1 greet, farewell and thank people and respond to greetings</p> <p>1.2 introduce themselves and other people and respond to introductions</p> <p>1.3 ask and answer questions about some personal information (e.g. age)</p> <p>1.4 talk about some of the things they need and want</p> <p>1.5 communicate about where things are</p> <p>1.6 begin to respond to and use some simple classroom language</p>	<p><i>recognise and use some words relating to:</i></p> <p>.family and friends (e.g., sister); classroom objects (e.g., pencil); places in the school (e.g. gym); animals (e.g., cat); food, drink and meals (e.g. apple; tea; breakfast, etc.); days of the week, parts of the day, months and seasons; parts of the body; occupations; clothing; colours; numbers (<i>one – twenty</i>); location (e.g., <i>in; on</i>); personal details (e.g. name, phone number); agreeing and disagreeing (e.g., <i>yes; no</i>); politeness (e.g., <i>please</i>); instructions (e.g. <i>Listen! Look!</i>); questions(e.g. <i>What? Where?</i>)</p>	<p>identify the sounds of letters of the alphabet and letter combinations;</p> <p>recognise and understand simple, familiar words, phrases and sentences with the help of pictures and prompts</p>	<p>identify the sounds of letters of the alphabet and letter combination s;</p> <p>recognise and understand simple, familiar words, phrases and sentences with the help of pictures and prompts</p>	<p>write some simple, familiar words, using some of the conventions of written language</p>	<p>use pictures and words in combination to present some information</p>

Some suggested topics:

Myself, my family and my friends at home and at school

Some suggested text-types:

Simple conversational exchanges; songs; pictures, photographs and posters with captions; forms; picture books with non-complex, repetitive short accompanying text

TABLE 2. Sample of first draft of the LPF for ESOL in the New Zealand Curriculum: Approach 2

LEVEL 1: Emergent Communication A: Beginning to use English	
By the end of Level 1 , learners can recognise, understand and use familiar words, phrases and sentences appropriately, can give and follow simple instructions, can ask simple questions, and can respond appropriately (verbally and/or physically) to a range of simple questions.	
ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES	
1.1	Greet, farewell and thank people and respond to greetings and thanks.
1.2	Introduce themselves and others and respond to introductions.
1.3	Begin to communicate about notions of time using days of the week and months (and also, in the case of some learners, dates and times of the day).
1.4	Begin to communicate about personal information, such as name, age, nationality, and home
1.5	Begin to communicate about location.
1.6	Begin to use and respond to simple classroom language (including asking for the word to express something in English)
SUGGESTED SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS	My classroom and my school in New Zealand My school day in New Zealand My neighbourhood How to ask for the things I need Getting to and from school
SUGGESTED TOPICS	Myself, my family and my friends and acquaintances What's in my classroom/ school/ neighbourhood Things we do at school Things we do at home When and where things happen Where things are
SUGGESTED TEXT TYPES	Simple conversational exchanges Simple songs Pictures and photographs with captions Simple forms Simple picture books with simple, repetitive short accompanying text
SUGGESTED SOUND FOCUS	New sounds and sound combinations and intonation patterns for questions, statements and instructions
SUGGESTED DISCOURSE FEATURES	The order of conversational exchanges (eg greetings followed by questions relating to well being), conversation fillers (eg <i>um, er</i>)
SUGGESTED SKILLS FOCUS	As for Version 1: see <i>Table 1</i> above

Version 2 was accompanied by suggested language focus points along with examples and some simple suggested learning and assessment activities. In *Table 3*, an example of language focus points and examples (relating to the first achievement objective at level 1) is provided. *Table 4* provides some examples of simple learning and assessment activities associated with level 1.

TABLE 3. Sample suggested language focus points and examples from first draft of the LPF for ESOL in the New Zealand Curriculum: Approach 2

ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED LANGUAGE FOCUS	EXAMPLES
<p>Greet, farewell and thank people and respond to greetings and thanks.</p> <p>Note: At this stage, the language should generally be introduced and used in a formulaic way (as unanalyzed chunks of language)</p>	<p><i>Standard formulaic utterances</i></p> <p>Notes: Formulaic utterances are utterances that are made up of several words or phrases that are learned and used as if they were a single item. For example, <i>How are you?</i> will be understood as a way of asking after someone although the individual words may not be understood if they occur separately.</p> <p>Some of the expressions included in the examples are unlikely to be used by learners themselves. However, they are likely to hear them being used by adults.</p>	<p>Greetings Hello/ Hi/ Hi there. Good morning. / Good afternoon./ How are you?</p> <p>Farewells Bye./Goodby./ See you (later).</p> <p>Thanks Thanks (very much)./ Thank you (very much)./ Ta.</p> <p>Responses to greetings A: How are you? B: Fine./ Great/ Okay./ I'm well, thank you.</p> <p>Responses to thanks A: Thank you./ Thanks. B: [Smile]/ No problem./ It's okay./ You're welcome./It's a pleasure./</p>

TABLE 4. Sample suggested learning and assessment activities from first draft of the LPF for ESOL in the New Zealand Curriculum: Approach 2

ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES
<p>1.1 Greet, farewell and thank people and respond to greetings and thanks.</p> <p>1.2 Introduce themselves and others and respond to introductions.</p>	<p>Observe greetings, introductions and leave taking in different contexts, and take turns to role play; Tick/ hold up word cards for words heard (e.g., morning); Fill in labels on pictures to indicate time of day and seasons (e.g., evening) ; Tick pictures that identify appropriate gestures/ body language to accompany greetings, introductions etc. ; Fill in gaps in a familiar dialogue (orally or in writing) to complete the message etc.</p>

Accommodating English in the New Zealand Curriculum

As indicated earlier, adopting *Approach 1* allowed us to take account of the ways in which the achievement objectives in *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* were articulated. Of particular importance here was the fact that there were two strands of achievement objectives: Language Learning (including vocabulary) and Developing Language Skills (including Viewing and Presenting). It is only, however, at the higher levels (level 3 and above) that the ways in which this allowed for some alignment with *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* become evident. *Table 5* below outlines the achievement objectives relating to writing at level 6 in the draft LPF for ESOL in New Zealand Schools and those in *English in the New Zealand Curriculum*.

TABLE 5. Achievement objectives relating to written language in the draft LPF for ESOL in the New Zealand curriculum and in English in the New Zealand Curriculum

WRITTEN LANGUAGE: <i>English in the New Zealand Curriculum</i>			WRITING: Draft LPF for ESOL
Reading Functions	Personal Reading	select and read fluently and independently a wide range of contemporary and historical texts, beginning to adapt reading processes and strategies for different purposes	write regularly and coherently in response to experiences, ideas, observations, and texts; write on a variety of topics, shaping, editing, and reworking, and using appropriate language and discourse conventions; explore and analyse the beliefs and opinions encountered in texts; using appropriate terminology, explore aspects of the language and discourse conventions that are characteristic of different genres and text-types; applying some to their own writing; use information retrieved and selected from a range of sources to present coherent written arguments
	Close Reading	discuss and analyse language, meanings, ideas, and literary qualities in a range of contemporary and historical texts, taking account of purpose, audience, and other texts	
Writing Functions	Expressive Writing	write regularly, confidently, and fluently to reflect on a range of experiences, ideas, feelings, and texts, developing a personal voice	
	Poetic Writing	write on a variety of topics, shaping, editing, and reworking texts to express experiences and ideas imaginatively in an extended range of genres, choosing appropriate language features and using conventions of writing accurately and with discrimination	
	Transactional Writing	write clear, coherent instructions, explanations, and factual reports and express and justify a point of view persuasively, structuring material confidently, in appropriate styles for different audiences, in a range of authentic contexts	
Reading & Writing Processes	Exploring Language	using appropriate terminology, describe, discuss, analyse, and apply the distinctive conventions, structures, and language features of a range of texts and explain how they suit the topic and purpose	
	Thinking Critically	interpret, analyse, and produce written texts, identifying and discussing their literary qualities, and explore and identify attitudes and beliefs in terms of personal experience and knowledge of other texts	
	Processing Information	using appropriate technologies, retrieve, select, and interpret information from a variety of sources, and present accurate and coherent information for a range of purposes, analysing the processes used	

Table 6 outlines the achievement objectives relating to language learning (communication) at level 6 in the draft LPF. These objectives represent the language development core that is intended to underpin the language skills objectives (including those relating to writing).

TABLE 6. The achievement objectives at level 6 (Learning Language) in the draft LPF for ESOL in the New Zealand Curriculum

LEARNING LANGUAGE
COMMUNICATION
<i>By the end of Level 6, learners can:</i>
<p><i>Recognise and express in a range of contexts:</i></p> <p>agreement with concessions and reservations;</p> <p>grounds for conclusions;</p> <p>hypotheses with reasons/explanations;</p> <p>generalisations with exceptions;</p> <p>definitions of things and concepts</p> <p>Recognise, express and distinguish clearly between:</p> <p>facts and opinions/beliefs;</p> <p>real and hypothetical conditions (e.g., If I go . . . ; If I had gone . . .)</p>

Observations

As indicated earlier, one of the major problems associated with the production of a draft LPF for ESOL in the NEW Zealand Curriculum was the need to attempt to accommodate so many different types of stakeholder groups, each of which might have very different expectations. Another related to the need to find a way of accommodating the draft LPF to *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* without doing so in a way that tied it in to that curriculum document so closely that a major rethink would be likely to be necessary when that document was itself reviewed. Another issue, one to which we have not so far made reference, was that we were aware that the Ministry of Education was about to engage in the process of creating an Overarching Framework for Languages in the New Zealand Curriculum. That document would inevitably have some impact on the way in which curriculum documents for languages were constructed in the future. However, although one of us is directly involved in the process of producing an overarching framework document, it was not possible at the time the draft LPF was completed to anticipate the form that the overarching framework would take. With an Overarching Framework in place, decision-making in relation to the production of documents relating to languages might be more straightforward.

Consultation and additional resources

On completion of the draft LPF, we recommended to the Ministry of Education that consultation should be phased, the first phase involving a few representatives of different stakeholders: ESOL advisors, specialist ESOL teachers, primary teachers, and teachers of English and other subjects in secondary schools. Initial adjustments could then be made and decisions taken about what type of associated resources might be most useful. These additional resources might, for example, include:

- A resource for specialist ESOL teachers, providing guidance in relation to

the specific types of language focus that could usefully characterise each curriculum level, along with suggestions of unit and lesson plans and assessment activities;

- A resource for mainstream teachers, including suggestions for the planning and delivery of lessons in ways that accommodate the needs of both ESOL students and students for whom English is a first language.

The ground would then be prepared for wider consultation which might, for example, include making the draft LPF available on a website, along with explanatory notes, suggested future developments and a questionnaire.

Final comments

There has been a widespread feeling for some years that there was a need for a Learning Progression Framework for New Zealand schools. There has also been widespread agreement that there is a need for more support for classroom teachers in the form of suggested tasks and activities appropriate for different contexts. However, a number of problems, including the very different needs and interests of different stakeholder groups, had made it very difficult to find a way forward. We hope that the production of a short consultation document focusing on achievement objectives will provide the impetus needed to move the process towards completion.

Endnote

¹ A sample of the footnotes included in the draft LPF for ESOL at level 1 is provided below:

- At *Level 1*, language will generally be presented as ‘fixed formulae’ (unanalysed chunks) used in predictable contexts. Thus, for example, learners who can use ‘*How are you*’ and ‘*I’m fine thanks*’ appropriately at *Level 1* will not necessarily be able to use parts of the verb ‘to be’ correctly in other contexts. Similarly, learners who can say ‘*I watched TV last night*’ at *Level 2* will not be able to use past tense forms of regular verbs(or irregular ones) correctly in all other contexts.
- The Achievement Objectives are intended to provide a focus for achievement at each level. This should not prevent teachers from supporting linguistic exploration that extends into other areas.
- All of the Achievement Objectives under the heading of ‘Learning Language’ should be recycled at each higher level as more complex ways of achieving these objectives linguistically are introduced.

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