English as a Second Language

Introduction
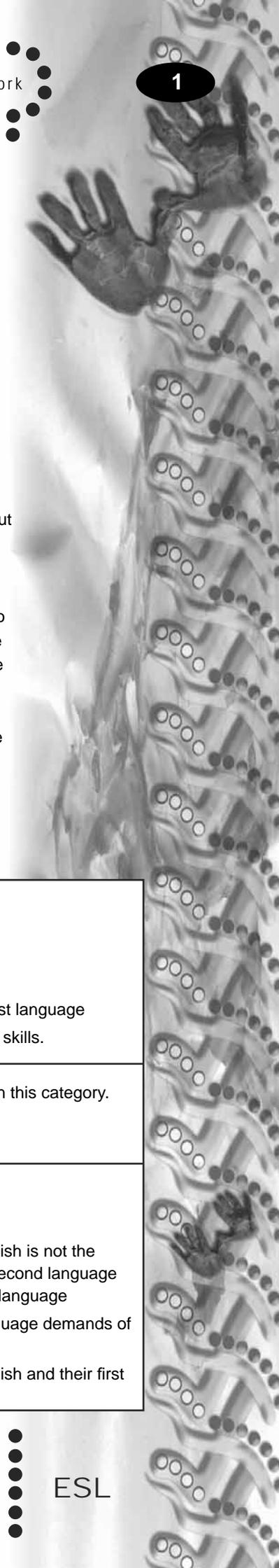
The term, **'English as a Second language' (ESL)**, is used in relation to Northern Territory learners who speak languages other than Standard Australian English (SAE) at home. About 40% of NT school students speak languages other than Standard Australian English at home.

Standard Australian English is Australia's national language. All students have the right to be taught to communicate effectively in Standard Australian English, to understand how the English language works, to think in and learn through English and to be given access to the cultural understandings that it carries.

ESL learners are not only learning Standard Australian English but are expected to learn in and through English across the curriculum. This means that all educators in NT schools are responsible for meeting the language learning needs of the ESL students in their classes.

The ESL learners in NT schools include:

Students newly arrived in Australia who have a language background other than English.	These learners may have • spent time in refugee camps • had periods of interrupted schooling • no previous schooling • developed good oracy and literacy skills in their first language • some experience with written English but lack oral skills.
Students born in Australia of migrant parents who enter school with little or no English.	Many children who enter Transition may be included in this category.
Students who have had all or some of their schooling in Australia, and whose home background includes at least one language other than English.	These learners may have • been born in Australia or elsewhere • come from homes where English is not used, English is not the only language used, and/or English is used as a second language between parents who do not speak the same first language • fluent 'playground language' but difficulty with language demands of the curriculum • entered school with a good command of both English and their first language.

Indigenous students who come to school speaking one or more local Indigenous languages.	These learners may • live in a local community where English is generally not used for everyday social and business interaction outside of the school • have developed good oracy skills in their first language • have had little 'school-orientation' to the printed word • know that English is used in the 'wider Australian world' through television, adults' interactions with non-Aboriginal people in their community • experience periods of disrupted schooling due to family and ceremonial obligations.
Indigenous students who come to school speaking Kriol.	These learners may • live in a local community where English is generally not used for everyday social and business interaction outside of the school • have developed good oracy skills in their first language, which, being Kriol, will have many vocabulary items identifiable as English derivatives • have had little 'school-orientation' to the printed word • know that English is used in the 'wider Australian world' through TV and adults' interactions with non-Aboriginal people in their community • believe they speak English due to the similarities of many Kriol words with English • have older relatives or can identify older people in the community who still speak 'language' that is the traditional language of the area • experience periods of disrupted schooling due to family and ceremonial obligations.
Indigenous students who come to school speaking Aboriginal English.	These learners may • live in a local community where English is generally used in everyday social and business interaction outside the school • have developed good oracy skills in Aboriginal English • have had varying degrees of 'school-orientation' to the printed word – some will have had a lot while others will have not had as much • believe that they speak the same English as everybody else • experience periods of disrupted schooling due to family and ceremonial obligations.

ESL learners come to school with existing language skills, cultural knowledge, social knowledge and cognitive abilities. This linguistic and cultural diversity is valued in itself. As well, research indicates that a student's level of language competence in his or her first language influences the rate of second language learning. Developing first language competence is important not only for reasons of identity and community but also for developing the cognitive, linguistic and cultural understandings learners need to be able to learn another language.

The ESL Pathways in the *NT Curriculum Framework* (NTCF)

Students learn a second language differently from their first. The ESL component of the NTCF describes the way ESL learners develop proficiency in English. Two ESL pathways are included, one for early childhood/primary students and the other for secondary students. Teachers need to use the ESL component of the NTCF to inform the teaching learning programs for ESL students and to make judgments about ESL learners' progress in Standard Australian English.

Strands

The four strands identified in ESL are interdependent and interrelated and describe the ways in which learners communicate in Standard Australian English.

Listening

refers to ESL learners' development in understanding spoken Standard Australian English. It focuses on the ability to actively listen for a purpose and involves learners being able to select and apply strategies to make meaning in a wide range of contexts.

Speaking

refers to ESL learners' development in using spoken Standard Australian English for communication for social and school-based learning. It involves developing learners' control over Standard Australian English phonology, word and sentence stress, rhythm and intonation and the information conveyed by these systems.

Reading

refers to ESL learners' development in reading, understanding and responding to a wide range of spoken, written and visual English texts. It involves learners' developing understandings of how texts are organised and how language varies according to situation, social and cultural contexts, purpose and audience.

Writing

refers to ESL learners' development in writing a range of texts for interpersonal, informational and aesthetic purposes. It involves developing writing skills including spelling, punctuation and grammatical structures.

The ESL Outcomes and Strands are organised into four **elements:**
1. Communication
2. Socio-cultural understandings
3. Language structures and features
4. Learning how-to-learn

The language and concepts that students learn about at school may not necessarily match those of their first language and culture. These elements help teachers to program and make explicit the language and cultural understandings needed to effectively communicate in Standard Australian English.

Communication

refers to how learners interact with the English-speaking environment and communicate in Standard Australian English. It also focuses on the development of learners' ability to produce and respond to spoken and written text.

Socio-cultural understandings

refers to the development of learners' understanding of and ability to use Standard Australian English appropriately in various contexts. It focuses on the need for ESL learners to be aware of the relationships between text, context, purpose and audience.

Language structures and features

focuses on the Standard Australian English language forms typically used in spoken and written communication. It explores Standard Australian English language in terms of patterns of text structure and organisation (genres), textual and grammatical aspects of language, print elements, pronunciation and non-verbal elements of communication.

Learning how-to-learn

refers to the explicit teaching of learning strategies that enable learners to develop and use Standard Australian English in a range of contexts.

The ESL Levels

The word 'Level' is used in the ESL section of the NTCF, rather than 'Band', to emphasis the difference between learning English as a second language and a learner's stage of schooling, age or cognitive ability. Students can demonstrate, for example, evidence of achieving at Band 3 in other Learning Areas while demonstrating outcomes at Level 1 in writing in English.

While the outcomes are similar in the Early Childhood/Primary and Secondary ESL Pathways, the **indicators** provide teachers with more age specific information to meet the needs of the ESL learners within their class.

Students who have concepts about literacy in their first language begin their ESL progression at Level 1 in reading and writing. Concepts of literacy include

- understanding that print and writing carry a message
- understanding that illustrations and pictures can convey information and add meaning to the text
- ability to identify parts of the book and handle books appropriately
- knowledge of print conventions, eg left to right, word spacing, knowledge of sound symbol relationship.

Students who are not literate in their first language and who have no initial understanding of literacy should progress through Beginning Levels 1, 2 and 3 in reading and writing before progressing to Level 2.

Progression through the levels

ESL learners of average learning ability, social and physical health and with uninterrupted schooling will develop the same level of academic English language proficiency as their English language speaking peers. Research results suggest that ESL learners will take between five to 10 years to acquire the same level of academic English language proficiency as their English language peers.

Generally, ESL learners, after initial progression through the Beginning Levels, progress through each level of the ESL outcomes within about 18 months. This progression depends on a range of inter-related factors including

- language background
- cultural knowledge
- age
- cognitive ability
- social, emotional and physical health
- school attendance
- previous schooling experience
- experience with English
- experience with the culture of school
- language of peers in classroom and school
- level of English use in the community
- socio-economic status of family and community
- support from family and community
- expertise of teachers, schools and NTDET to meet the needs of ESL learners.

NAPLAN identifies proficiency levels, called NAPLAN Achievement Bands, for reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation. This assessment program does not measure all the knowledge, understandings and skills in these areas. The skills within the NAPLAN Achievement Bands can be identified within the NTCF English learning area and on the ESL learning progress maps. The NAPLAN national minimum standard and 2008 Australian Mean has been used to identify minimum and proficiency performance standards for Reading and Writing within the NTCF.

The Phases

Year	Standard	Year	Standard
Year 3	• Minimum standard is within ESL Level 2 • Proficiency standard for Writing is within ESL Level 3 • Proficiency standard for Reading is within ESL Level 4	**Year 5**	• Minimum standard is within ESL Level 4 • Proficiency standard for Writing is within ESL Level 5 • Proficiency standard for Reading is within ESL Level 6
Year 7	• Minimum standard is within ESL Level 5 • Proficiency standard for Writing is within ESL Level 6 • Proficiency standard for Reading is within ESL Level 7	**Year 9**	• Minimum standard is within ESL Level 6 • Proficiency standard for Writing is within ESL Level 7 • Proficiency standard for Reading is within ESL Level 7

ESL Levels and Phases
Early Childhood and Primary Pathways

Listening Strand
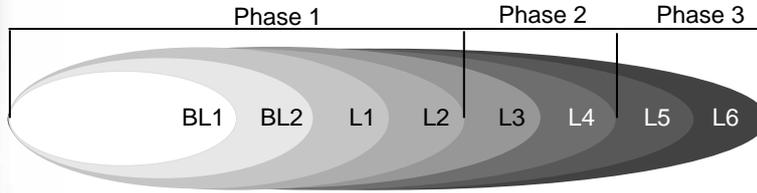
Speaking Strand

Phase 1   Phase 2   Phase 3
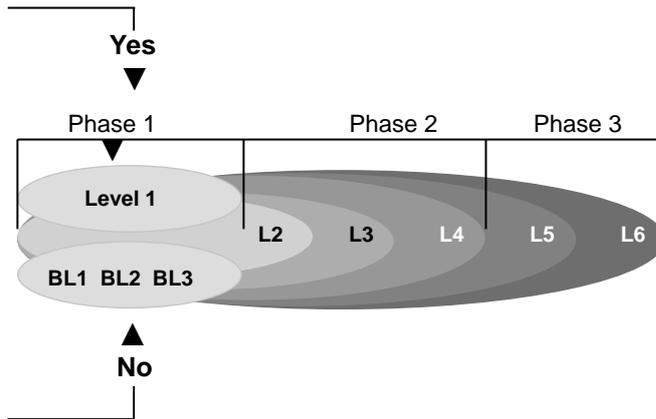
BL1   BL2   L1   L2   L3   L4   L5   L6

Reading Strand

Writing Strand

Has the student learnt in their first language, at pre-school, school or home some initial literacy concepts? eg

- that print and writing carry a message
- that illustrations and pictures can convey information

Yes ▼

Phase 1   Phase 2   Phase 3

Level 1

BL1 BL2 BL3

L2   L3   L4   L5   L6

▲ **No**

Middle Years and Secondary Pathways

Listening Strand

Speaking Strand

Phase 1   Phase 2   Phase 3

BL1   BL2   L1   L2   L3   L4   L5   L6   L7   L8

Reading Strand

Writing Strand

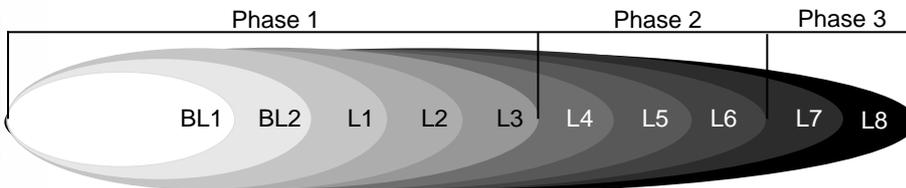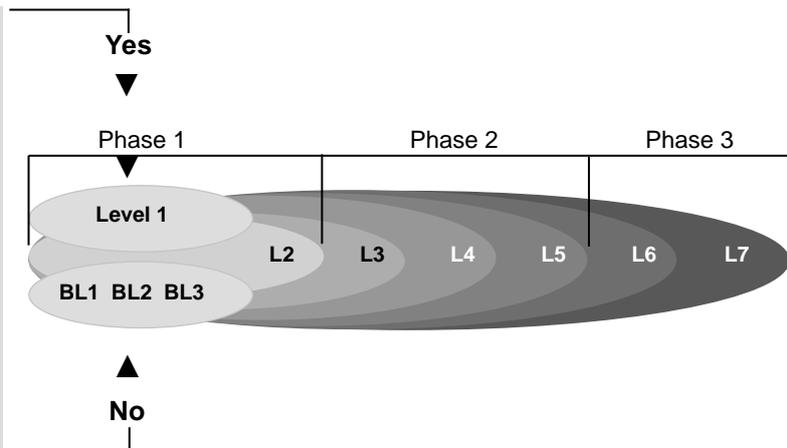Has the student learnt in their first language, at pre-school, school or home some initial literacy concepts? eg

- that print and writing carry a message
- that illustrations and pictures can convey information

Yes ▼

Phase 1   Phase 2   Phase 3

Level 1

BL1 BL2 BL3

L2   L3   L4   L5   L6   L7

▲ **No**

The ESL Outcomes within NTCF have been matched with three **Phases** that broadly describe the nature of ESL learners in NT schools.

Phase 1 Learners are acquiring the basic Standard Australian English language skills needed to communicate in the classroom, school and community. At this stage in their English language development they are unable to cope with the language demands of a mainstream classroom. These learners range from complete beginners who

- may use a first language extensively or go through a silent period in the classroom

- cannot negotiate meaning in English

- express themselves using single words and body language,

to learners who are

- beginning to contribute comments in English in familiar school and social situations

- beginning to read and write in English

- familiar with the culture of the school.

The teaching focus for **Phase 1** learners is on developing

- confidence

- initial skills in English language use within the culture of the school and the community - this takes precedence over mainstream content learning

- initial skills in learning-how-to-learn skills, eg managing the classroom environment, social skills and early literacy skills.

Phase 2a and 2b Learners are confident in socially communicating in English and respond to reading and writing tasks of some classroom activities, but have difficulties using English language for learning.

Phase 2a learners

- are stronger in interpersonal use of English than informational use

- depend heavily on explicit explanations and explicit language teaching

- need teacher support and scaffolding to carry out classroom activities successfully

- need extra time to complete English language-based tasks.

The teaching focus for **Phase 2a** learners is on

- developing skills in those stronger in interpersonal than in informational use of English

- continuing development and the explicit teaching of language skills

- developing information use of language in and through the learning areas.

Phase 2b learners

- may have well-developed skills in everyday interpersonal language use but have language learning needs relating to accessing mainstream learning area content

- can engage with familiar texts and tasks but will need support and ESL-informed teaching and programs to be able to access mainstream learning contexts

- need texts and tasks that are both appropriate for their cognitive level and linguistically accessible.

The teaching focus for **Phase 2b** learners is on

- greater use of information language

- preparing for more specialised use of language across all learning areas

- actively identifying language demands of the mainstream content and incorporating ESL strategies and methodologies into mainstream programs to facilitate language learning demands at the learners' appropriate cognitive level

- greater emphasis for independent learning

- allowing extra time to complete English language-based tasks.

ESL learners of average learning ability, social adjustment and uninterrupted schooling may move beyond the 2nd phase after four to five years of schooling with ESL support. Some students, however, may experience difficulty progressing beyond this phase as the language demands of schooling become more abstract and complex.

Phase 3 Learners are confident in using English in social situations but at times will display some difficulty using English in the more demanding academic contexts. These students may

- understand written texts at a literal level but have difficulty identifying implied meaning, author's viewpoint and bias, and relationships and connections between information

- have well developed understanding and use of English language for the purpose of social discussion, but may still experience difficulty with using and following academic and classroom discussion used for developing new or deeper understandings and concepts

- be unable to demonstrate their abilities because of some difficulty coping with the language demands of long or complex written assignments.

Learners who have reached the end of Phase 3 can communicate flexibly and competently in English in social and academic situations commensurate with their age.

The teaching focus for **Phase 3** learners is on

- increasingly complex informational and aesthetic use of language related to specific areas of study

- developing research skills and independent learning.

ESL learners of average academic ability, social adjustment and uninterrupted schooling may move beyond the 3rd phase after seven to 10 years of schooling with ESL support.

References:

English Learning Area Statement and NT Outcomes Profile. NTDE 1999

English as a Second Language Policy: Transition – Year 12. NTDE 1999

Guidelines for the Implementation of ESL Program in Urban Schools. NTDE 1999

ESL Framework of Stages K-12. Curriculum Corporation 1991

ESL Scales. Curriculum Corporation 1994

Pocket ALL: a user's guide to the teaching of languages and ESL. Curriculum Corporation 1991

ESL Companion to the English CSF. Victorian Board of Studies 2000

ESL Development: language and literacy in schools. National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia 1994

Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999

Element		What is this element about?	Exit Outcomes	Links to the ELs

COMMUNICATION		Refers to how learners interact with the English speaking environment and communicate in **Standard Australian English (SAE)**. It also focuses on the development of learners' ability to produce and respond to spoken and written text.	*Learners develop communication skills in Standard Australian English.*
			Learners will
			• establish and maintain relationships and discuss topics of interest
			• participate socially in
			  - interacting with others to solve problems
			  - making decisions with others
			  - transacting to obtain goods, services and public information
			• access and obtain information by searching for specific details in a spoken or written text, then process and use the information
			• obtain information by listening to or reading from a spoken or written text as a whole, then process and use the information
			• give information in spoken or written form to an audience
			• listen to, read or view and respond personally to a stimulus.
				The **Communication** strand links to all EsseNTial Learning domains – particularly the **Creative 1 and 2, Collaborative 1, 2,3, and 4** and **Constructive 1 and 2**.

ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE	**Socio-cultural understandings**	Refers to the development of learners' understanding of and ability to use SAE appropriately in various contexts. It focuses on the need for ESL learners to be aware of the relationships between text, context, purpose and audience.	*Learners demonstrate appropriate socio-cultural knowledge in Standard Australian English language contexts. They are aware of the validity of the diversity of other cultures and establish their own identity within this context.*
			Learners will
			• demonstrate how SAE changes according to different situations and to meet different communicative demands
			• demonstrate that they understand some of the everyday life patterns of their contemporary age group in the Australian community, eg
			  - how interpersonal relations are conducted
			  - cultural traditions achievements and social conventions
			  - historical roots, and the communities' relationship with other communities
			  - political and social institutions
			  - current events and regional and geographical concepts
			• demonstrate their awareness of the diversity and the validity of other cultures and establish a sense of self and the place of others within this diversity.
				The **Socio-cultural understandings** strand links to all EsseNTial Learning domains – particularly the **Inner 3 and 6, Collaborative 1,2,3 and 4** and **Constructive 3**.

	Language structures and features	Focuses on SAE language forms typically used in spoken and written communication. It incorporates aspects of SAE language such as patterns of text structure and organisation, textual and grammatical aspects of language, print elements, pronunciation, and non-verbal communication.	*Learners demonstrate knowledge of the structures and features of Standard Australian English as they make choices about how to use SAE in diverse contexts.* Learners will • demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of linguistic and aesthetic features of SAE as well as their own language and the language of others, eg perceive different patterns and rhythms in own language and SAE • compare the linguistic and aesthetic features of SAE to their own language and the languages of others • demonstrate understanding of the relationships between their home language and SAE.	The **Language structures and features** strand links to all EsseNTial Learning domains – particularly the **Inner 1, Collaborative 4** and **Constructive 1 and 2**.

	Learning how to learn	Refers to the explicit teaching of learning strategies that enable learners to develop and use SAE in a range of contexts.	*Learners develop oracy and literacy skills as well as cognitive skills and strategies for learning Standard Australian English and using English in other spheres of learning.*
			Learners will
			• take responsibility for their own learning, eg
			  - develop listening and speaking skills in SAE
			  - develop literacy skills in SAE
			  - take appropriate risks and learn from mistakes
			  - be able to work in groups/cooperate with others
			• use communication strategies to sustain communication in SAE, eg
			  - be able to question and generate questions
			  - be able to predict meaning from context
			  - interpret and use gestures, facial expressions (paralinguistic devices) to convey meaning
			• demonstrate cognitive processing skills through which to understand and express values, attitudes and feelings; to process information and to think and respond creatively, eg
			  - use strategies to process information
			  - use imagination to think and respond creatively.
				The **Learning how to learn** strand links to all EsseNTial Learning domains – particularly the **Inner 1 and 2, Creative 1and 2, Collaborative 1, 3 and 4** and **Constructive 1 and 2**.

Introduction

ESL