

10. Supporting refugee background students' literacy development

What will be covered

- 10.1 The development of listening and speaking in English
- 10.2 Strategies to assist listening and speaking
- 10.3 Reading and the low literacy refugee background learner
- 10.4 Strategies to assist reading
- 10.5 Writing and the low literacy refugee background learner
- 10.6 Strategies to support writing
- 10.7 Handwriting
- 10.8 Spelling

10.1 The development of listening and speaking in English

Key understandings

- Learning to speak and listen in English as a second or additional language is a complex process.
- Refugee background students may be learning English as their third or fourth language.
- Developmentally, listening and speaking come before reading and writing.
- It is important to distinguish between informal social, interpersonal communication and more formal, complex language that allows concepts and literacy to develop.
- ESL students need opportunities to practise and clarify through listening and speaking as well as through reading and writing.

Developmentally, oral language comes before written language. Listening and speaking precede reading and writing.

It is important to distinguish between informal social, interpersonal communication and more formal, complex language that allows concepts and literacy to develop. For example, when people talk among themselves they often use incomplete sentences and their talk assumes knowledge of the context. However, reporting on this talk would require a speaker to use more complete sentences and to supply the context to make it clear to a third person. It is this formal and complex oral language that students need to develop and use as a basis for learning.

* More information on activities can be found in Appendix 2, Glossary of Strategies.

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Many students from refugee backgrounds have lived in a number of transition countries, and may have lived in refugee camps prior to their arrival in Australia. Many of these students have had disrupted schooling:

They may have a strong oral basis in their first language, but may not have the concepts and language around subject areas such as science or maths. Their lack of formal schooling also means that when they join classes in an Australian school, their general knowledge and understanding in curriculum areas are likely to be lacking.⁶⁵

OSHLSPs provide opportunities for students to practise English outside school. This can be important, as in some instances there may be few environments outside school where students use English, especially the kind of English they will need to succeed at school. OSHLSPs can provide small group interactions in a safe and encouraging environment.

OSHLSPs can also provide opportunities to build on cultural traditions. For example, in cultures where story telling is important, story tellers often impart knowledge and tradition through ancient verses and proverbs. Getting students to take pride in this tradition can be a useful tool in providing them with the confidence needed for preparing class presentations, for example.

☞ Remember to keep in mind that it is the students who need to practise the language, not you. So think about tutor talk time vs student talk time.

Activity 10.1

Discuss and list what is involved when students are learning to speak and listen in English when it is their second language.

Then discuss ways of demonstrating these skills to students.

⁶⁵ DE&T (2006), Designing Effective ESL Programs – Professional Development for Teachers of Students with Disrupted Schooling (unpublished draft), module 2, p. 8.

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10.2 Strategies to assist listening and speaking

Key understanding

- It is important to explicitly focus on listening and speaking as this provides a tool for learning and a foundation for literacy development.

Listening

Effective listening involves:

- using appropriate body language so the speaker knows that you are paying attention;
- making sense of what has been heard;
- listening for different purposes (e.g. for information, interaction, critical listening); and
- listening to different types of language (e.g. conversations, jokes, stories, instructions, directions, reports, instructions, interviews).

Listening strategies

Speak so that students will understand you by:

- speaking clearly but naturally, pausing often;
- using simple vocabulary to introduce new concepts;
- avoiding or explaining idioms (e.g. 'lend a hand' and 'knock off');
- using gestures, visuals or objects to support listening;
- writing key words and instructions out so the student can look at them as well as hear them;⁶⁶
- repeating when necessary;
- checking understanding by observing and interacting and asking questions such as, 'What?, When?, Where?, Who?';
- modelling and checking understanding of key words and phrases such as *listen, say, read, write, match, circle, copy, put in order, fill the gap*;⁶⁷
- modelling how sounds are made and how stress on words and parts of words is used;
- wherever possible, drawing on first language and other language skills as a resource for second language learning (e.g. drawing on memorisation and classifying skills);
- building on knowledge and experiences;
- encouraging students to ask for clarification if they don't understand;
- providing clear and explicit instructions, but remembering not to use too many instructions at once, especially for younger students; and
- encouraging students to recognise the language patterns associated with particular tasks.

⁶⁶ Ontario Education, *Many Roots, Many Voices*, p. 20, available at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/manyroots/manyroots.pdf>, accessed 14 November 2006.

⁶⁷ These examples are suitable for newly arrived students. Source: Earp K & Smith M (2006), *Volunteer Tutor Program*, Adult Multicultural Education Services, Melbourne, p. 4.7.

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Listening activities

The following activities provide productive listening practise for students in OSHLSPs:

- Listen and draw
- Listen and retell
- Aural cloze
- Spot the difference
- Minimal pairs
- Listen and repeat
- Listen and follow instructions
- True/false
- Listen and respond
- Listen and identify key words
- Sequence events in order
- Who/what am I?
- Simon says
- Red elbow.

These activities are described more fully in Appendix 2.

Activity 10.2

In pairs, choose one of the listening activities listed above. Check its description in Appendix 2 if necessary, and then present an example of it to the group.

Speaking

Effective speaking involves:

- speaking clearly;
- using language, including interpersonal language, appropriate to the context;
- using formal academic language to support and express learning;
- communicating a variety of functions.⁶⁸ These include:
 - apologising, greeting, telling stories, reporting, asking for clarification;
 - giving instructions, directions, explanations, descriptions;
 - stating cause and effect; and
 - expressing preferences and opinions.

Speaking strategies

- Find out where and when the students speak English. This will help you predict the sort of language that may be unfamiliar to them.
- Provide encouragement and practise so that students develop confidence.

⁶⁸ More information on the functions of English is available on a number of websites, including: <http://www.kfmaas.de/function.html>, accessed 3 April 2007.

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- Recycle vocabulary and structure to reinforce them for students (e.g. correct use of grammar, including word order).
- Introduce, model, discuss and provide opportunities to practise and revise:
 - how to change language to make it appropriate for different contexts;
 - how we take turns;
 - key concepts and subject-specific vocabulary; and
 - grammatical structures in context, not in isolation.
- When providing feedback, remember that the meaning is generally more important than the grammar. It is more useful to model the correct form back to the student than to highlight errors, as errors are a normal part of language learning.
- Allow the student time to be silent but encourage participation in non-threatening activities.
- Remember to give students sufficient 'wait time' to formulate a response.
- Wherever possible, try to make links with school-based learning.
- Model and provide opportunities for exploratory talk to stimulate thinking – to explore, clarify concepts, question, hypothesise, make deductions and respond to others' ideas.⁶⁹
- Tell students what you require of them (e.g. I am listening to the way you pronounce the final sounds in these words).

Speaking activities

Table 10.1 provides some broad suggestions of types of spoken language that tutors can use to develop their students' skills.

Table 10.1: Types of spoken language⁷⁰

Rehearsed	More structured	Spontaneous	More polished	Sculptural
Debates	Interviews	Conversation	Role-playing	Storytelling
Oral reports	Directions	Brainstorming	Improvising	Reader's theatre
Presentations	Instructions	Exploratory talk	Monologue	Prepared dramatic presentations

Activity 10.3

List the activities in table 10.1 in order from the simplest to the most complex.

Share your ordered list with the group.

⁶⁹ Gibbons P (2002), *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning*, Heinemann, USA, p. 12.

⁷⁰ Adapted from: Jones P (1996), *Talking to Learn*, PETA, NSW, p. 30

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The following activities provide productive speaking practise for students in OSHLSPs.

- Tell a story based on photos or a newspaper story
- Inquiry and elimination*
- What did you see? ⁷¹
- Yes or No game*
- The Alibi game* ⁷²
- Describe and arrange*
- Problem solving activities*
- Rank ordering activities* ⁷³
- Chants, rhymes, songs and poems.

The activities marked with an asterisk (*) are best used with small groups. Most of the listening games in the previous section also provide speaking practise.

Figure 10.1 shows three examples of text type games.⁷⁴ These provide practise in:

- giving instructions (e.g. how to read a book, make a cup of tea, ride a bicycle);
- narrative or storytelling, starting with retelling familiar stories and moving on to creating original stories; and
- recounting events (e.g. visiting friends, going to a wedding, going shopping).

They consist of prompts that need to be taught and available for the student's reference. The games provide a scaffold to build up the three text types, focusing on how to link and sequence the language.

Depending on your student's confidence and skill, it may be necessary to model an example first with the student and then do a shared example, before expecting the student to respond independently. You may need to add more steps as the student's language develops.

Activity 10.4

In pairs, choose one of the speaking activities listed earlier. Check its description in Appendix 2 if necessary, and then present an example of it to the group.

⁷¹ Gibbons P (2002), *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning*, Heinemann, USA, pp. 30–2 & p. 12.

⁷² Bortolotto C et al. (1994), *Easy ESL Strategies for Effective Teaching*, Yarra Publications, Kew, pp.16–19.

⁷³ Burke D et al. (2000), *ESL in the Mainstream Participant Manual*, Department of Education, Training and Employment, South Australia, pp. 289–90.

⁷⁴ Jones P (1996), *Talking to Learn*, PETA, NSW, pp. 92-3.

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Figure 10.1: Three text type games

GAME 1: INSTRUCTIONS

How To _____

Prompt **Instructions (individual student)**

1. First ...
2. Then ...
3. Next ...
4. Finally ...

GAME 2: NARRATIVE

Prompt **Narrative (individual student)**

1. When?
2. Where?
3. Who?
4. What?
5. Complication
6. Resolution/ End

GAME 3: RECOUNT

Prompt **Recount (individual student)**

1. When?
2. Where?
3. Who?
4. What?
5. Comment

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10.3 Reading and the low literacy refugee background learner

Key understandings

- Reading successfully in English involves understanding:
 - how texts are organised according to their purpose;
 - the structure, sound/symbol relationships and meaning of the text; and
 - how to make and check predictions about text.
- Reading poses many challenges for low literacy refugee background learners.

Reading in English

Competent readers bring and use knowledge and experience to make sense of what they read.

This involves cueing into and predicting:

- the meaning of the text based on our knowledge of the topic (**semantics**);
- the structure of the language used (**syntax**);
- the letter/sound relationships (**graphophonics**); and
- how different texts are organised (**textual knowledge**).

Low literacy refugee background learners may not yet:

- have the concepts, vocabulary or understanding of idiomatic language to bring meaning to the text;
- have sufficient knowledge of the structure and functions of English to know whether the text makes sense;
- know all letter/sound relationships of English;
- have had print-based literacy experiences in their first language; or
- be familiar with some of the purposes and practices of reading and writing in English.

Therefore, many low literacy background students will need to develop:

- vocabulary, concepts and understanding of idiomatic language;
- knowledge of the structure of sentences and how sentences are linked together to form cohesive texts. This needs to be explicit to ESL students to improve their reading comprehension;
- their knowledge of the letter/sound relationships of English (there are 42 different sounds in English that are represented in many different ways: e.g. pay, paid, made). This needs to be taught in context not in isolation;
- an understanding of the purpose of reading;
- confidence in their capacity to learn;
- a sight vocabulary; and
- reading strategies and skills (e.g. prediction and reading on).

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Tutors need to develop awareness of:

- students' current level of understanding and needs;
- how students' confidence and attitudes will affect their reading and writing development;
- how to build on students' previous learning;
- how an over-reliance on graphophonics can lead to students 'barking at print' and not gaining meaning from the text;
- the importance of text selection⁷⁵ and modifying texts; and
- the importance of activities to make the texts accessible.

Activity 10.5

Read the following text:

An insect flies into a web. It struggles. The spider comes running down. It binds the insect with silk. Then it bites it with its fangs and poisons it. If the spider is hungry it eats the insect. If not, it keeps it for later.⁷⁶

Is this a simple text for a student from an ESL background? Why or why not? Discuss your views with the group.

Understanding text cohesion⁷⁷

Text cohesion is one of the key areas that poses challenges for ESL students as it stops them from understanding what they read. By understanding how it works in English we can understand the difficulties for students and can better support them. Understanding text cohesion involves understanding the roles of reference words, conjunctions, substitution, ellipsis and lexical cohesion.

➤ Reference words

Reference words point to something in the text. They usually point back to something that has already been mentioned. They include words like her, she, it, him, her, they, their, the (when referring to something already mentioned), this, those, that, etc.

☞ Second language learners may not recognise the relationship between the reference word and what it refers to and may not make it clear in their own writing.

Activity 10.6

Read the following text and identify the reference words and the words to which they refer.

A tall black figure was outside Sophie's house. The figure turned around and faced her window and then he walked on. He came to Mr. Goochey's house and there he stopped.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ For more information refer to Section 8.3, Selecting appropriate texts.

⁷⁶ Gibbons P (1998), *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*, PETA, NSW, p. 86.

⁷⁷ Adapted from: Gibbons P (1998), *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*, PETA, NSW, p. 83-6.

⁷⁸ Adapted from: Dahl R (1982), *BFG*, Puffin, London.

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➤ Conjunctions

Conjunctions are key words in the linking and organising of ideas. They include words like *and*, *but*, *before*, *after*, *if*, *however*. They help the reader interpret what will come next. For example:

Although the light was red, the car ...

The light was red, but the car ...

Because the light was red, the car ...

Conjunctions help the reader to recognise and interpret the main ideas of the text.

☞ Many second language learners do not have a sufficient range of conjunctions and connectives. This means that they are less likely to read with understanding or recognise the main points of a text. Their writing may also be less fluent or unstructured because of this.

Activity 10.7

Read the following text and identify the conjunctions.

He walked all day although he was exhausted. Finally he stopped outside a small hotel. If he went in, someone might recognise him, but unless he stopped to rest he could go no further. So he opened the door and went in.

➤ Substitution

Consider the following example:

He was given an old bike for his birthday. His old one was too small for him.

In this example, the word *one* has been used instead of repeating the word *bike*.

☞ Second language learners may not recognise that the two different words refer to the same thing.

➤ Ellipsis (omissions or implied understandings)

Some cats like cheese but some don't [like cheese].
He sat down, [he] stood up and then sat down again.

In the first example, *like cheese* has been omitted from the end of the sentence and has to be supplied by the reader.

In the second example, *he* has been omitted.

Ellipsis is part of the structure of English.

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☞ Second language learners may not be able to supply what is not there, or recognise what has been omitted. In either case they may be unable to comprehend the text. They will be unable to use this structure in their writing, which may cause it to sound too 'wordy'.

➤ Lexical cohesion

Lexical cohesion comes from the vocabulary used.

Read the following passage.

They were now in the country of thick *forests and rushing rivers*. The giant had definitely **slowed** down and was **running** more normally although normal was a silly word to describe a **galloping** giant. He leapt over a dozen *rivers*. He went **rattling** through a great *forest* then down into a *valley* and up over a *range of hills*, and soon he was **galloping** over a desolate *wasteland* that was not quite of this *earth*.

Most content words in this passage fall into two groups: those to do with movement and those to do with the physical aspects of the landscape. These strings of related words help to hold the text together. Understanding them and seeing the relationships depends on a reader's world knowledge.

☞ Second language learners may not have this amount of semantic variety within their vocabulary.

☞ Low literacy background students may not have had print based literacy experiences in their first language and may not be familiar with some of the purposes and practices of reading and writing in English.

☞ Students' confidence and attitudes will also affect their reading and writing development.

☞ It is important to match students' current level of understanding and needs and to build on their previous learning.

10.4 Strategies to assist reading

Key understanding

- Low literacy background learners will benefit from before, during and after reading activities to develop their reading skills.

The strategies you choose to support refugee background students' reading development will depend on their age, their language and reading level, the texts that they are being expected to read and the reading tasks they have been given. For example, a student in the early years of primary school will require different support to students in secondary school.

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You may:

- read to and/or with the student, particularly younger students and those with limited English;
- listen to the student read; or
- ask the student to read silently and then check their understanding.

Before reading

Tutor activities

- Prepare students for what they are going to read.
- Access prior knowledge.
- Stimulate interest.

Strategies

- Show enthusiasm for the text.
- Discuss the purpose and intended audience of the text.
- Show the student the book or text and discuss it with them.
- Predict and discuss what the book will be about:
 - from title and the cover;
 - from key or other visuals;
 - based on the topic; and
 - from key words and other words that might be in the book.
- Discuss idioms or language structures that may be unfamiliar.
- Encourage students to share existing knowledge and build on this (e.g. by using visuals and ensuring that vocabulary and new language features are introduced).
- Develop topic charts of words in the book with the student.
- Put these words on flashcards and use them for games.
- Prepare students for any features present in texts (e.g. captions, headings, subheadings, diagrams, tables, chapter headings) by checking their understanding of them and explaining their purpose and function.

Student activities

- Concept maps* or sunshine wheels* of key topics, characters
- Reader questions*
- Brainstorming
- Vocabulary games with flash cards
- Developing topic word charts with the tutor

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During reading

Tutor activities

- Model and support students to develop reading skills including comprehension and fluency.

Strategies

- Encourage and praise students.
- Discuss what the student is reading and has read to consolidate their learning.
- Discuss what is happening in the story, how the characters are feeling, etc.
- Encourage the student to use the pictures to support their reading.
- Pause and ask students to predict what will happen next.
- Ask students to identify the main idea.
- Ignore miscues that don't affect the meaning.
- Develop the student's understanding and use vocabulary and language structures.
- Help the student to organise and express their responses to the text.
- Demonstrate strategies for reading for different purposes (e.g. skimming for the gist, scanning for specific information^{79, 80}).
- Model and provide practise in re-reading for detail.
- If the student doesn't recognise a word when reading aloud:
 - encourage them to pick up the clues from the illustration;
 - ask a question to remind them of the context;
 - ask them to re-read the sentence up to the unknown word to remind them of the context;
 - read to the end of the sentence and then come back to the unknown word;
 - give them enough time to work out the word for themselves;
 - say or point to the first letter of the word;
 - cover part of the word to make it easier to recognise; and/or
 - tell the student to avoid losing the meaning.⁸¹

Student activities

- Directed reading and thinking activity*
- Oral cloze*
- Minimal cues*
- Directed silent reading*

⁷⁹ BBC Skillwise, *Skimming Fact Sheet*, available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/reading/techniques/skimming/index.shtml>, accessed 16 April 2007.

⁸⁰ BBC Skillwise, *Scanning Fact Sheet*, available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/reading/techniques/scanning/index.shtml>, accessed 16 April 2007.

⁸¹ Adapted from: Edwards V (1995), *Reading in the Multilingual Classroom*, Reading and Language Information Centre, UK.

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After reading

Tutor activities

- Reinforce particular skills.
- Respond to the text by revisiting it.

Strategies

- Ask the student which part of the story or character they liked.
- Focus on sound patterns that students are having difficulty with and make lists of words with the same patterns.

Student activities

- Repeated readings
- Cloze*
- Innovating on text*
- Innovating on the ending*
- Retelling either orally or in writing
- Drawing what happened
- Sketch to stretch*
- Storymap*
- Book report
- Letter to a character
- Character descriptions
- Make a game based on the book
- Text reconstruction *
- Summarising⁸²
- Monster cloze*
- Vanishing cloze*
- Vanishing definitions*
- Timelines (e.g. characters' lives, events in the text)
- Structured overviews*
- Concept maps*
- Graphic outlines*
- Word lists (e.g. vocabulary lists, consonant or phonic groups*)
- Disappearing definitions*
- Sentence reconstruction
- Picture and sentence matching
- True/false questions
- Comic strips
- Wanted posters
- Questioning the text*
- Fact and opinion⁸³
- Three level guide*

⁸² BBC Skillswise, *Summarising Fact Sheet*, available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/reading/summarising/factsheet.shtml>, accessed 16 April 2007.

⁸³ BBC Skillswise, *Fact or Opinion*, available at:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/reading/fact_and_opinion/factsheet.shtml, accessed 16 April 2007.

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Other useful approaches

- Shared reading:
 - Introduce the text and read it to the student focusing on the meaning. Model reading with expression.
 - Re-read it, encouraging the student to join in. Read it together until the student can read independently.
 - Language experience, i.e. writing and reading about a shared event (e.g. making something, an excursion). This can be used to make books with the students incorporating photographs of the actual experience.
 - Activities to develop a 'sight vocabulary' of common words such as are, one, she, said.⁸⁴ A sight vocabulary helps reading fluency. It is important that students also understand the meaning of these words and their context.
 - Language games (e.g. bingo concentration, word find puzzles, miming words).
 - Practising well known books to help develop fluency.⁸⁵
- ☞ Remember that students need to read for information and to learn through reading.

Activity 10.8

View the section of the DVD where Amanda is working on developing reading skills with a group of low literacy secondary students at Noble Park English Language School.

Reflect on her teaching.

Discuss how Amanda taught the following reading skills for the students in her class:

- Silent reading skills
- Skimming and scanning, including finding where they are up to if they return to a text

Discuss whether you could use these strategies to support the students you are working with in OSHLSPs.

⁸⁴ A list of the 100 most commonly used words is available at: <http://www.duboislc.org/EducationWatch/First100Words.html>, accessed 13 April 2007.

⁸⁵ Further information on developing reading fluency can be found on the following websites:
http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1fluency.html
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/teachstrat/readingfluencystrategies.htm>, accessed 16 April 2007.

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List the key ideas you have gained from viewing and discussing this section of the DVD.

10.5 Writing and the low literacy refugee background learner

Key understandings

- Writing successfully in English involves understanding and using the purposes, structures and language features of English.
- Writing poses many challenges for low literacy refugee background learners.

Many low literacy background students will need to:

- learn the differences between speaking and writing;⁸⁶
- understand the writing process (see the box below);
- be familiar with a range of writing types (e.g. labels, letters, cards, lists, book reports, comic strips, poems);
- understand the intended audience;
- understand the purpose of writing (e.g. to describe, inform, persuade or instruct);
- learn the language features and structure of different types of writing (texts);⁸⁷
- have initial support to organise their writing;
- practise writing; and
- know what is expected of them in regards to writing.

⁸⁶ Spoken language is often more informal and interactive and language can be clarified whereas written language needs to be clear as it often stand-alone.

⁸⁷ BBC Skillswise, *Types of Texts Fact Sheet*, available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/reading/typesoftext/factsheet.shtml>, accessed 16 April 2007. See also: Appendix 7 - Common text types.

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The Writing Process

Prewriting

Thinking about the purpose and the audience

Planning

Brainstorming

Clarifying

Gathering information through talking, reading and note taking, looking at models

Writing

Drafting

Organising

Discussing and changing

Redrafting

Editing

Proof reading

Checking

Incorporating changes into the final copy

Publishing

When appropriate

Activity 10.9

Work either individually or with a partner.

Select one of the following:

- the writing process; or
- one of the text types from the table in Appendix 7.

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List how you would use this information to support low literacy background students build knowledge of text types.

10.6 Strategies to support writing

Key understanding

- Low literacy background learners will benefit from before, during and after writing activities to develop their skills.

Before writing

- Model and look at samples of the different text types.⁸⁸
- Have students reconstruct the samples or models of the text type.*
- Use the model for dictogloss, cloze or running dictation.*
- Read about the topic.
- Develop a word bank.
- Use pictures to teach or elicit vocabulary (e.g. matching words to labels of specialised vocabulary).⁸⁹
- Jointly construct a text with the student.
- Model how you go about choosing words, using punctuation, etc.
- Restrict the number of focuses to be demonstrated and discussed.
- Encourage students to verbalise and practise expression.
- During modelling, provide students with the opportunity to observe, discuss, question, respond, reflect and make connections.⁹⁰
- Refer to the suggestions in the Prewriting section of The Writing Process.
- Suggest and/or provide techniques to organise ideas (e.g. graphic outlines, concept maps, notes and writing frames*).⁹¹
- Brainstorm possible words, sentences and sentences starters.
- Build up a bank of words about the topic.
- Play picture and sentence matching games.⁹²
- Undertake bundling activities.*

⁸⁸ See Appendix 7.

⁸⁹ Gibbons P (1998), *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*, PETA , NSW, p. 62.

⁹⁰ Wing Jan L (1996), *Modelled Writing in the Early Years of Schooling*, Catholic Education Office, Melbourne.

⁹¹ Sample frames are available at: <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/staff/D.J.Wray/Ideas/frames.html>, accessed 19 April 2007.

⁹² Gibbons P (2002), *Learning to Learn in a Second Language*, Heinemann, USA, p. 62.

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During writing

- Encourage talk about writing.
- Refer to the suggestions in the Writing section of *The Writing Process*
- Focus on meaning and appropriateness.
- Discuss incorrect language structures in context.
- Ask leading questions, make suggestions and provide constructive support.

After writing

- Provide feedback including:
 - what the student has done well;
 - areas for improvement; and
 - how this improvement can be achieved (e.g. sentence expansion).
- Share the written product with others and celebrate achievements.
- Use the writing for reading activities (e.g. cloze and text and sentence reconstruction activities*).⁹³

Activity 10.10

View the section of the DVD where Amanda is working on developing writing skills with a group of low literacy secondary students at Noble Park English Language School.

Reflect on her teaching.

Discuss how Amanda taught writing skills to her students.

Discuss whether you could use these strategies to support the students that you are working with in OSHLSPs.

List the key ideas that you have gained from the DVD about developing writing skills.

⁹³ For example, changing 'The girl walked home' to 'The Afghani girl called Azira walked slowly home to her flat in Dandenong'. Adapted from: DE&T (2006), *Designing Effective ESL Programs – Professional Development for Teachers of students with Disrupted Schooling* (unpublished draft), module 2, p.102.

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10.7 Handwriting

Key understanding

- Many low literacy background students will need explicit modelling and practice in writing the English script.

The script that is taught in Victorian schools is **Victorian Cursive Script**.

More information on this script can be found on the handwriting page of SOFWEB.⁹⁴ This site contains downloadable fonts and models that provide guidance for tutors.

Many low literacy refugee background students have little background knowledge of setting out work, ruling margins and handwriting.

These students will benefit from guidance, modelling and practise in:

- letter formation, including where to start letters, anti-clockwise direction of letters and top-to-bottom strokes;
- the use of upper and lower case letters; and
- the use of spacing between words.

Students need lots of opportunities to practise handwriting, both when they are copying and when writing their own work.

Students may benefit from:

- a range of writing experiences using different writing tools and papers (e.g. using texta pens for charts and pencils or ballpoint pens for exercise book work);
- opportunities to write for different purposes (e.g. writing lists and notes; writing carefully on cards; making posters, labels and signs);
- activities to strengthen their fine motor coordination (e.g. tracing; cutting; modelling with plasticine, clay or playdoh; sewing; dot-to-dot drawings; mazes); and
- reinforcement of the concepts and vocabulary of writing (e.g. up, down, beginning, end, oval, line, on the line, above the line, below the line, capital letters).⁹⁵

Activity 10.11

Check the SOFWEB handwriting page for the correct letter formations.

Look at the above suggestions and highlight any which would be suitable for the students that you are tutoring.

⁹⁴BBC Skillwise, *Handwriting*, available at: <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/eyes/resources/handwriting.htm>, accessed 12 April 2007.

⁹⁵ DE&T (2006), *Designing Effective ESL Programs – Professional Development for Teachers of Students with Disrupted Schooling* (unpublished draft), module 2, p.102.

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10.8 Spelling

Key understanding

- It is important for low literacy background students to have an explicit focus on spelling which is linked to their writing and school work.

Spelling and the low literacy background learner

Low literacy background students need to:

- base spelling on their oral English, by hearing English and seeing English words represented in writing;
- develop an understanding of patterns of English, such as rhyme;
- know that English has many irregular words;
- have an explicit focus on spelling; and
- learn about words and their derivations and the ways in which words can be modified or changed.⁹⁶

It is best to focus on spelling within the context of:

- the student's own writing;
- topics of interest to the student; and
- topics that are being studied at school.

Spelling strategies

- Focus on pronunciation and how it links with spelling.
- Focus on sound patterns that students are having difficulty with and build up lists of words with the same patterns.
- Build up lists of word families to focus on the letter sound system (e.g. too, food, soon).
- Support the student to group words that sound the same but are spelt differently (e.g. heart/cart).
- Build on words that students can already spell.
- Explicitly focus on useful ways to learn to spell such as:
 - the Look, Say, Spell, Cover, Write, Check strategy;
 - the Trace, Copy, Recall strategy;
 - the Have a Go strategy;
 - looking at spelling patterns and links to other words that have the same patterns (e.g. cart, park);
 - looking at spelling patterns in texts (e.g. find all the 'er' words);
 - limiting the number of words and introducing more when they have been consolidated;

⁹⁶ Department of Education and Training, *ESL Teacher Support Materials*, p.73, available at: <https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/curriculumatwork/secure/esl/download/A2B2B3.pdf>, accessed 14 April 2007.

⁹⁷ DE&T (2006), *Designing Effective ESL Programs – Professional Development for Teachers of Students with Disrupted Schooling* (unpublished draft), module 2, p.106.

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- building on the student's preferred learning style (e.g. more visual strategies for some learners);
- helping students to discover spelling rules (e.g. the rules for adding 'ed' to a base verb);
- referring to available resources (e.g. dictionary, chart or list);⁹⁷ and
- providing analogies to support students' spelling attempts.

For example, if a student spells cat as cut

- write the word;
- put in the correct letters and blanks in place of the incorrect letters (e.g. c _ t); and
- if necessary, show the student other words with the correct model for that particular sound/letter representation (e.g. hat, bat).

Spelling activities

- Keep a personal dictionary and add new words
- Brainstorm words that sound the same
- Practise the 100 most used words, many of which have irregular spelling patterns⁹⁸
- Look, Say, Spell, Cover, Write, Check*
- Have a Go*
- Trace, Copy, Recall*
- Write words in shape boxes
- Cloze, focusing on particular sounds. For example: tr _ _ for tree
- Practise dictionary skills

More information on three of these activities – Look, Say, Spell, Cover, Write, Check; Have a Go; and Trace, Copy, Recall – are shown in the boxes below.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ A list of the 100 most commonly used words is available at: <http://www.duboislc.org/EducationWatch/First100Words.html>, accessed 13 April 2007.

⁹⁹ Adapted from: DE&T (2006), Designing Effective ESL Programs – Professional Development for Teachers of Students with Disrupted Schooling (unpublished draft), module 2, p.106.

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Look, Say, Spell, Cover, Write, Check
<p>Look at the word</p> <p>Say the word</p> <p>Practise spelling the word out loud</p> <p>Cover the word</p> <p>Write the word</p> <p>Check the word. Is it correct? Do it again to be sure.</p>

Have a Go card		
First try	Second Try	Correct Spelling

Trace, Copy, Recall		
Trace	Copy	Recall
could	_____	_____
should	_____	_____
would	_____	_____



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Activity 10.12

Work in pairs. One of you read the section on spelling strategies for the tutor; the other read through the section on spelling activities.

Report back to your partner and discuss or demonstrate how you might use three of the strategies or activities with your students.

Report back to the whole group on the strategies and activities you found would work best with your students.

Activity 10.13

View the section of the DVD where Wendy is working on developing oral, reading and spelling skills with a group of primary students at Western English Language School.

Reflect on Wendy's teaching.

Discuss how she focused on the following skills for the students in her class:

- pronouncing the words
- reading the words
- spelling the words.

Discuss whether you could use these strategies to support your students.

List the key ideas that you have gained from this section of the DVD.

