



NOTES RE MEETING (4:30-5:30, 4/05/2020) WITH BSSS RE EAL/D AND THE ENGLISH FRAMEWORK

Background

Prior to the BSSS meeting, ATESOL ACT invited all those registered for that meeting to a preliminary discussion to clarify the issues relevant to this important discussion. The meeting was held on Zoom from 12:30-2pm prior to the main meeting. Six people attended.

Rough notes from that discussion were circulated prior to the 4:30pm meeting. Following the meeting with BSSS, a draft of the Notes below was circulated for comment to all participants registered for the BSSS meeting. The Notes below incorporate several suggested revisions and additions.

Participants in the BSSS meeting (and ATESOL ACT more generally) warmly acknowledged the goodwill shown by the BSSS representatives in agreeing to this meeting and the opportunity it offered for discussion at this late stage in the development of the English Framework.

Suggested Improvements to the English Framework

For students who speak and are learning English as an additional language or dialect, the following issues require further attention in developing the Senior Secondary English Framework.

1. Following Learning Principle 1 (that “Learning *builds on existing knowledge, understanding & skills*”), the English Framework should more explicitly *state and be developed on the basis of an understanding that EAL/D students are bi/multilingual*

In addition to referencing EAL/D students and other cultures, the Introductory Rationale and other sections should make much more explicit (and then build on) the fact that EAL/D students are learning English as an *additional language*. That is:

- these students come to the subject English with knowledges, understandings and skills **in one or more other languages** – for some/many, these knowledges, understandings and skills can be rich and complex; they will certainly be different from at least some of the knowledges, understandings and skills of those for whom English is their only or dominant language;
- their task is to develop **English** knowledge, understanding and skills – these student are learning *a language* and its associated knowledge, understanding & skills; that is, they are concurrently learning English, learning *through* (or *in*) English, and learning *about* English (see ACARA <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/student-diversity/students-for-whom-eald/>);

- this task is primarily a **language learning (i.e. linguistic)** task, not a moral or ethical task; it is also a **cross-cultural/intercultural** task, not an acculturation task – this point relates to standards that call for evaluation, how teachers interpret “*critical analysis*”, and the implied role of mainstream English literature and its appreciation in the curriculum;¹
- these students are doing ***a lot more than simply learning “in an English context”*** (and in any case, their “English context” will be *highly* variable). The current Framework phrasing (“The study of English facilitates the acquisition of skills for communication and learning in an English language context”) is unclear and could be taken to imply that EAL/D students come to subject English having “absorbed” the English language from their contexts. These students need to **learn** and be explicitly ***taught about*** English and how **to do** English.

We note that there is no reference to learning Standard Australian English as an additional dialect by **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander** or **Pacific students**. What data does the BSSS have on their presence in ACT schools? How does the English Framework acknowledge and respond to their English knowledges, understandings and skills?

SO:

- The Introductory section should include more explicit acknowledgement that this Framework is designed to enhance the learning of the ***diversity of English speakers*** in the ACT/Australia and explain how the Framework responds to this diversity.
- Acknowledging this diversity should include **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander speakers of languages other than English** and **speakers of non-standard varieties of English**.
- The Framework should be much clearer about when it refers to **English** and when it is referring to **generic language and linguistic skills**. (See, for example, the Goals and Skills sections). **English** and **language** are two different things for bi/multilingual students.
- The Framework should be more explicit regarding the use of texts etc. and student performance in different modes in **languages other than English**.
- The Standards should be much clearer about how **any given Standard of Responding** may or may not require proficiency in speaking/writing in English, **i.e. productive skills in English**.

As a corollary, the Standards should not attach double/multiple penalty/ies to problems with English performance.

For example:

TCourse Year 12 Responding Standard 2, C grade: “**explains** how literary conventions, **language [= English?]** and stylistic features are used in different modes”

EAL/D students may very well understand these features (and how they operate in an English text) but may not be able to explain it at a comparable level of Standard Australian English.

¹ We are not implying that literary texts should be excluded from the English curriculum. Rather, the issue is how they are approached and what is/is not appropriate in assessing students’ learning (and “appreciation”) in relation to these texts.

Question: *Should students be assessed on their understanding or the quality of their explanation in English? Does this Standard allow for an explanation in a language other than English? Does it allow for an explanation that uses a diagram or visual? How are teachers to provide an assessment when there are major (or even minor) differences between the two (e.g. excellent understanding but weak English)?*

This same question applies to many of the **Responding** Standards.

2. The Framework should clarify what is meant by “literary”. Does this mean based on/related to English literature texts? Or does it simply mean “stylistic”?

For example, dictionary definitions of the adjective *literary* include: “of, relating to, concerned with, or characteristic of literature or scholarly writing (a literary discussion, a literary style)”. Literary words and expressions are often unusual in some way and can be used to create a special effect in a piece of writing such as a poem, speech, or novel. *Literary* can also mean “versed in or knowledgeable about literature” (collinsdictionary.com).

Are all/some/none of these meanings intended in Achievement Standard 2 (12T EAL)?

3. Course development based on the Framework

The Framework is the basis for EAL/D-specific course development and elaborations. We assume that the BSSS will provide various forms of guidance and examples for course development. However, course development (and teaching) for EAL/D learners require EAL/D expertise.

SO:

In regard to course, exemplar and all other developments to support teachers in implementing the English Framework:

- i. Will the BSSS provide assurances that this ***grass roots work*** will include **cross-sectoral** representation and consultation? (We note that Catholic and Independent School sectors are included at higher levels in the Board but not necessarily at in grass roots work).
- ii. To meet the Board’s commitment to **Community Engagement** (2018 Annual Report p. 279), will the BSSS provide assurances that all developments related to implementing the English Framework will include representation from and consultation with **ATESOL ACT**?
- iii. To ensure the quality of developments based on the English Framework, will the BSSS provide assurances that these developments will, in future, include **comprehensive use of various sources of EAL/D expertise** (i.e. not place the burden on one or two people) and specifically include consultation with **ATESOL ACT** as one such source?

4. How will a single set of achievement standards be made to apply across all courses under the “English” umbrella?

The Framework would benefit from a clear statement that a single set of English achievement standards will be applied across all courses under the “English” umbrella. An indication/explanation of how it is envisaged that this will work would be reassuring.

5. Relationship to the ACARA Senior Secondary Standards

The BSSS EAL standards are much more complicated, multi-faceted, difficult to interpret and open to inconsistent, multiple and subjective applications than the ACARA EAL/D Standards.

Almost all of the BSSS EAL Standards would benefit from being less multifaceted and more clearly focussed.

We anticipate increased difficulties and legitimately based conflicts in interpreting and applying these Standards in moderation sessions.

Has application of the EAL Standards been trialled with EAL/D teachers?

What scope will there be for revising the EAL Standards in the light of the experience in applying them?

6. P.16: EAL M Course: is this intended as a separate EAL course? Or does this refer to an English M course?

We understand that there will be separate **EAL** M (Modified) and **English** M (Modified) Achievement Standards. Are the EAL M Standards in the current document (p. 16) actually the English M standards?

If they *are* the EAL M Standards, we believe they need further development based on discussion with a variety of EAL/D experts, including those with expertise in EAL/D students with special needs.

7. What Year 11 & 12 options and pathways exist for EAL/D students with basic/no English proficiency but with (approximately) ACT-equivalent Year 9 & 10 levels of education in a language other than English?

Essentially, we refer to recent arrivals with similar ages and educational backgrounds to local Year 11 & 12 local students. The EAL A Framework is not suitable for these students.

8. Data: what data does the BSSS collect/hold on EAL/D student achievement at Years 11 and 12?

We refer not just to those who *complete* (2018 Annual Report p. 277) but all EAL/D identified students at this level.

If this data are not held or are incomplete, will the BSSS undertake to collect data on EAL/D students' performance, at least against the EAL Achievement Standards?

Meeting the Board's commitment to a "high equity curriculum" (2018 Annual Report, p. 274) requires collecting, monitoring and publishing data on the diverse groups of students studying *all* Year 11 and 12 courses and assessed against course Achievement Standards.

Data collection should include:

- numbers of Year 11 and 12 students identified as learners of English as an additional language or dialect
- courses in which they are enrolled, including each English course
- their achievements in these courses.

In regard to the English Framework, these data would be essential for evaluating its impact, not least in regard to design effectiveness/appropriateness, promoting equity goals, supporting teachers through materials and professional learning, and content requirements for specialist EAL/D qualifications.

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