

10 ways to support and challenge advanced EAL learners

Focus	Purpose	Questions
Give the language a context	Build a bridge between the learner's experience and the language of learning and the subject	Do we provide real examples for learners to talk and write about? Do we consider how they relate to <i>their</i> experience? Are we making abstract ideas accessible? How?
Spot technical and specialist vocabulary	Pinpoint words that have a specific use in context, but also a common use e.g. cell or tissue in biology (specialist vocabulary) Isolate words rarely encountered beyond the subject (technical vocabulary). Collect and structure knowledge of vocabulary.	How do we use the classroom environment and teaching to encourage learners to interact with their understanding of language? Do learners have the means to explore language independently? How do we enable them to develop their use of vocabulary in different contexts?
Use more formal talk as a bridge to writing	Ensure that learners have the opportunity to formally verbalise things that they are later going to write. Encourage more spoken-like writers to develop range and control.	Do we use cooperative learning to enable these learners to rehearse and secure understanding or prepare arguments? Do we challenge these learners by making explicit the conventions of genre and register?
Model phrases and sentences	Move from simple to complex. Give learners patterns for sequences that they can adapt with slight changes.	Do we provide these learners with a range of different constructions that they can readily adapt to fit specific contexts?
Use key visuals	Model and use visual planning tools to support language development.	Explanatory. How do we convert a series of ideas or a process into a visual narrative? Evaluative. How can we use visuals to identify how much the learner understands? Generative. Does the process enable the learner to expand their language capability?

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Make explicit the use and meaning of idiomatic expression	Help learners to become aware of idioms in particular contexts - e.g. 'struck gold', and to identify the difference between literal and figurative meaning	How do we alert learners to idioms? How do we help them to judge the value/power of words and phrases? How do we help them to consciously craft language that is fit for purpose?
Show the cultural context	Extend the cultural reach of advanced learners to references which might be outside their experience	How do we enable learners to access the cultural references within tasks, texts or bodies of knowledge?
Be explicit about grammar	Give advanced learners the technical skills to achieve high grades in specialist subjects	How do we give learners the opportunity to see how grammar works in our lessons and in the learning environment? Do we clearly connect effective expression with high achievement?
Experiment with the rules	Give advanced learners the opportunity to break the rules within a genre.	How do we show learners how to break the rules of grammar etc in useful ways? How can we enable them to see how this raises achievement?
Set high expectations	See language as a resource for learning	How do we enable advanced learners to see past their language issues? How well do we empower our learners to use language effectively?