

 **Teachers - are you looking for some strategies to try in your classroom to help connect with your students' home languages? Try these!**

# 1. LANGUAGE REPERTOIRES



Get to know your students' language repertoires. A full picture of students' language abilities may not be reflected in the snapshot of data available in the school's enrolment database. One way to start the conversation in your class is through a survey. Or ask your students to draw a map of their language use and then talk about the map, that is, which language they use with what particular family and community members, and why.

- Have you ever asked your students about how home languages can help them to learn content in your class?
- How does your home language help you to learn new things?
- How does it feel when you are able to use your home language at school?
- How does it make you feel to hear your home language used by others when you are at school?



## 2. WHAT LANGUAGE RESOURCES DO STUDENTS BRING TO YOUR CLASSROOM?

If we take students' language resources as an asset in the classroom rather than a problem, then we should find ways to use these languages as often as possible. This means not only for translation purposes when students don't know a word in English.

Here's a simple way to enjoy the diverse languages of all your students. Each day ask one or two of your students to bring in a word from their home language, or a word in a language that they have some connection to. Ask the student to tell the class about the word. Why did they choose this word? What does it mean? Can they link parts of this word to words in other languages (including English)? Display the words, or have your students record the words. Encourage students to use the word during the day as relevant.

### 3. GREETINGS WORLD!



As a class learn greetings and farewells in the different home languages of your students. Use these words during usual class processes such as calling roll. Demonstrate that you value knowing these words by using them often and having them displayed in the classroom.

Be open to learn from your students – be excited to learn about their language and culture.



### 4. MAKING LANGUAGES VISIBLE

Consider displaying student work in home language as well as in English.

For example:

- if students are brainstorming ideas before writing a text, could it be useful to record these thoughts in their home language? If so, display the notes alongside other such texts in English.
- if students are translating English to their first language for other purposes (maybe to help parents to read a classroom note or student assignment requirements), display these translations in your room.
- When introducing an assessment task – are there key words and vocabulary that could be translated? If so, display these words in English and other relevant languages.

Consider allowing students to talk about a topic in their home language at the beginning and end of a lesson that has introduced a new content.

### 5. TEXT SELECTION



Where possible, choose texts that reflect the lived experiences of learners in the class. For example:

- stories that feature migration stories; or
- characters who speak more than one language.

Seeing people like yourself and your family in the texts used in schools helps to ensure all students feel like they belong.

## 6. TIME TO DUST OFF YOUR SCHOOL-BASED FRENCH? GERMAN?



Students are more interested and engaged with lesson content when they see it as relevant or connected to them in some way.

- Do you know phrases in a language other than English? Why not use these words and phrases in your class?
- Are you able to demonstrate your interest in the home languages of your students by learning some words and phrases in the language?



## 7. TALKING ABOUT SCHOOL AT HOME

Encourage students to share what they are learning at school with their families at home. Using the home language to do this will have multiple benefits:

1. increasing understanding of the topics;
2. improving proficiency in the home language;
3. building relationships with family members; and
4. helping migrant families to learn more about the Australian curriculum and their children's schooling.



## 8. TRANSLATION

Language matters. Use translation tools and parental knowledge to create multilingual word charts in the classroom and around the school.



## 9. THINKING ABOUT GROUPING

Be guided by students when grouping them together in class or for specific tasks. Think about grouping students who speak the same language so that they can talk together in

their home language about concepts and tasks. At other times, it might be beneficial to pair an EAL student with a non-EAL student. A key rule in pairwork is that both partners have equal talking time.

In the Home Languages in Schools project some students told us they benefitted from working with a peer who had the same first language, while other students told us that they preferred to work with an English-speaking peer as it allowed them to clarify classroom instructions.



## 10. LANGUAGE INVESTIGATORS

Thinking about language and languages broadens the knowledge available for all students – those who speak only English and those who speak multiple languages.

- Ask students to look for and ‘notice’ texts in other languages. These might be signs in the community, instruction booklets, or found in books, films, social media and the internet as examples.
- Encourage students to bring these texts and examples to the class. They could bring photos of texts from the community.
- Talk about what you and the students ‘notice’ about the text and the language used.
- You could ask students to look for texts about a particular topic of study too.

Teachers can work with EAL students to utilise their diverse experiences, languages, and cultural backgrounds in culturally-appropriate ways.

## 11. LANGUAGE IS VALUED HERE! CREATE A MULTILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT



- Trust that students who are speaking together in their home language are on task.
- Even if you don’t share your students’ languages, trusting that they are working is important.
- Ask students speaking in home language to let you know where they are up to with their work in English.
- Label things in the classroom in more than one language.


- Use texts and resources in different languages when introducing topics in your study area.
- Have routines for vocabulary development. Draw on home language knowledge to encourage English vocabulary development.
- Value significant cultural events and practices across diverse cultural groups.



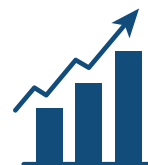
## 12. VOCAB! VOCAB! VOCAB

When introducing a new topic, consider home language vocab as a resource. Here's an example of just one way to do that.

Learning about weather – new words.

ENGLISH WORD	PORTUGUESE WORD	PICTURE
Precipitation	Precipitação	

## 13. USE RESOURCES



Be familiar with the Queensland Department of Education English as an Additional Language (EAL) Bandscales so that you have an understanding of the learning progression of an emerging bilingual learner. This will help you set explicit language objectives for your teaching.



## 14. ASSESSING WHAT?

Every subject area is assessed in English. However, not all assessment tasks recognise that some EAL students are new to Standard Australian English.

- Therefore, it is important to be explicit about what is being assessed by making the task requirements, instructions and questions clear to students.
- Where possible, allow students to use multiple modes of expression to demonstrate their knowledge and capabilities, for example, writing a text by hand or on a device, drawing diagrams with a verbal explanation, and/or presenting a speech.