

Appendix C

LATE Discussion
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Assessment and EAL Learners
An Australian Model

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John Polias (formerly EAL Consultant, South Australian Department of Education) devised *ESL Scope and Scales* as a model for the assessment of language development which spans both EAL students and those for whom English is a first language:-

'**ESL Scope and Scales** [*] is an innovative resource that links language development for second language learners to the language demands of the whole school curriculum.

'The **Scope** is the curriculum statement that describes and explains the model of language that underpins and organises the resource, and provides teaching suggestions that focus on language development.

'The **Scales** detail levels of achievement against which ESL/EAL learners can be assessed and reported on. The Scales describe English language development along a continuum described in 14 incremental steps: that is, 14 Scales. There are four versions of the Scope and Scales; each version corresponds to a different age group:

- ◆ Early Years (5-7 yr olds)
- ◆ Primary Years (8-10 yr olds)
- ◆ Middle Years (11-14 yr olds)
- ◆ Senior Years (15-16 yr olds)

'**ESL Scope and Scales** is a resource that teachers say:

- ◆ Links assessment of ESL/EAL to the reporting of their achievements and the planning and programming of lessons by teachers.
- ◆ Provides continuity through all the years of schooling to ensure that ESL/EAL learners are supported most effectively.
- ◆ Allows for efficient allocation of resources for supporting ESL/EAL learners by basing this on language achievement.
- ◆ indicates how far ESL/EAL learners have travelled in their English language development for successful participation in school and beyond.'

This is surprising stuff.

It rests on a number of assumptions:

- that the language development of ESL/EAL and English native speaker students can be mapped on the same scales
- that these can be described in terms of the language outcomes required in the curriculum areas ('subjects') at the 14 standards ('levels') for the Early-Senior stages
- that, broadly, the various curriculum areas make similar linguistic demands at these standards
- that there can be nuanced descriptions of the relevant linguistic features in the 14 scales
- that with adequate exemplification and appropriate support English teachers can recognise and programme the teaching of these features without undue alarm at apparent linguistic technicality
- that the traditional divide between ESL/EAL native speaker English language teaching can be avoided; learners are simply at different stages on a linguistic curriculum
- that modern language teaching might also be tied into these linguistic scales
- that teachers in the other curriculum areas can recognise the relevant linguistic demands of their programmes, modifying curriculum and programming accordingly

The choices and outcomes are described in terms of text and context according to features of field, mode and tenor of discourse in genre theory. 'Language across the curriculum' re-visited? But not the kinds of generalities and policies here long since gathering dust on the shelves, rather a matter of detailed specification and exemplification, making explicit what teachers intuitively 'know', in programmes which involve teachers and learners in assessing the linguistic choices needed to achieve learning outcomes across the curriculum. It is centred in teaching and learning.

As such, it appears to be quite different from the strictures of the English orders and literacy strategies here: prescriptions of what 'should' be known at given stages and levels, with little evident empirical base, scant reference to other learning outcomes and centred in self-referenced circular testing.

It is now compulsory in the South Australian Curriculum, with all teachers having to take account of the programme in their own curriculum areas. It deserves looking at here.

* **'ESL Scope and Scales** A resource for ALL teachers of students who are learning English as a second or additional language'

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