



Building Blocks for planning language-sensitive teacher education

A LIST OF ELEMENTS FOR INCLUSION IN LANGUAGE-SENSITIVE TEACHER EDUCATION

One basic assumption of this project/website is that certain elements or topics related to language in general, and language-sensitive education in particular, should be covered in initial and in-service teacher education and professional development for all teachers. The list below is an attempt to provide an organised overview of 60 such elements. It is based on a syllabus proposed in the book [Language Sensitive Teaching and Learning](#) by Richard Rossner and Rod Bolitho. As it is derived from experience of working in pre-service and in-service teacher education, it is not suggested that either part of the list is comprehensive or authoritative. It is intended as resource for teacher educators working on courses which include a focus on issues related to language and communication.

The list is divided into two parts. Part A contains elements related to general language and cultural awareness. These can be considered relevant as a basis for part B, “Language and communication in education”. The elements in part A are not specifically applied to education, and depending on the teacher education context, they could be offered as part of a programme where future teachers share courses with students in other domains such as (applied) linguistics. Ideally, the elements of part A have already been covered, to some extent, during the previous education of the (future) teachers as well.

We recommend using this list in combination with the other Building Blocks, in specific [Building Blocks 3](#) (on teacher education curricula), [Building Block 4](#) (teacher education modules), and [Building Block 6](#) (teacher competences). The list does not contain any suggestions as to the quantity and weighting of the topics. Our assumption is that even with limited resources available for teacher education and professional development, there is much to be gained from considering the topics selected below.

A GENERAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS

1. How languages and communication work: how languages are organized and the factors that determine how they are spoken, written and signed
 - a. The elements and systems of language
 - b. Spoken language
 - c. Written language
 - d. Sign language
 - e. Language versus non-verbal communication

2. Language and communication as social phenomena: how language is used to communicate and interact in different social settings and contexts
 - a. The functions and uses of language
 - b. Roles and purposes of language users as social agents (e.g. everyday transactions, maintaining relationships, mediation and information sharing)

- c. Text types, genres, discourse
 - d. Miscommunication and misunderstandings
3. Language choice and language use 1: how languages and their use vary according to contextual factors
 - a. Adaptation and variation of language due to roles and relationships
 - b. Context as a factor in selecting languages, varieties and spoken or written language
 - c. National and regional varieties, dialects, accents
 - d. Registers and style (levels of formality)
 4. Language choice and language use 2: how language use may vary depending on language users'...
 - a. Language repertoires (languages and varieties learnt since early childhood)
 - b. Gender
 - c. Cultural, ethnic, social background and lifestyle
 - d. Language and identity
 5. Critical awareness of the reasons for language choice and language use: the importance of understanding how language choice and use vary according to contexts and users' purposes
 - a. Language and communication in persuasion and influencing opinion
 - b. Language use in positions of authority
 - c. Literary uses of language
 - d. Discriminatory uses of language (e.g. sexist or racist language) and language discrimination (e.g. linguicism)

B LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATION

6. Language, communication and learning: the way language is used in the learning and teaching of concepts, knowledge and skills
 - a. Language, thought, concepts and non-school learning situations
 - b. Ways in which teachers can support learning (providing exercises, mentoring, scaffolding)
 - c. Mediation in teaching and learning (explaining technical concepts, paraphrasing difficult definitions)
 - d. Informal language and academic language: Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)
 - e. Language and communication in classroom management
7. Teacher-student interactions in lessons: how students and teachers use language and communication in face-to-face and online learning
 - a. The impact of learning context and educational culture on language and communication

- b. The impact of lesson topics and intended learning outcomes on teachers' and learners' language and communication
 - c. Instructions – spoken, written and signed (e.g. in textbooks, tests, etc.)
 - d. Selecting and using questions: categories, purposes, level of challenge
 - e. Other forms of elicitation
 - f. Scaffolding: ways and means of helping students to learn new concepts and information
 - g. Collaborative learning and student-student interaction
 - h. Handling feedback on learners' work
 - i. Dealing with students' doubts, lack of comprehension and misunderstandings
8. Developing students' literacy and oracy: the importance of helping students to fully develop their ability to read and write different kinds of text, and to use and understand different kinds of spoken language
- a. The characteristics of students' individual linguistic and cultural repertoires
 - b. Literacy and how it develops
 - c. Written texts and genres in teaching and learning
 - d. How can literacy be assessed?
 - e. What is oracy? How does it develop?
 - f. Oral discourse and genres in teaching and learning
 - g. The role of dialogue and interaction in developing oracy
 - h. How can oracy be assessed?
 - i. The development of students' language repertoires
9. Subjects, language and communication: the ways in which language and language use vary across the curriculum from subject to subject
- a. Subject-specific language and defining terms
 - b. The impact of subjects on teaching and learning language and communication
 - c. The impact of subjects on written genres and language forms
 - d. Features of subject-specific language that may be challenging for learners.
10. The multilingual classroom: the importance of taking into account the different first and home or community languages and cultures represented in schools and classes
- a. Drawing on a diversity of language and cultural profiles in the classroom
 - b. Differing levels of competence in the language of schooling: supporting access and developing students' competence
 - c. Making space for other languages in learning
 - d. Using the linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom to build linguistic and cultural awareness.

Discussion and reflection questions:

- a) *Choose one or more topics from the list above and reflect on how they are connected to language-sensitive (teacher) education.*
- b) *Which of these topics are already catered for in the teacher education context that you are familiar with, and how?*
- c) *Can you think of other elements which may be considered for language-sensitive teaching and are missing on the list?*
- d) *On the basis of the categories in the list above (or a part of it), brainstorm a number of concrete examples of language-sensitive teaching for teachers of specific subjects and level of education (e.g. primary or secondary school) that could be used in a teacher education module. Alternatively, you could also think about examples for teaching that is **not** language sensitive. If you would like to study more aspects and concrete examples of language-sensitive education, please refer to [Building Blocks 3, 4, 5 and 6](#).*

Reference:

Rossner R and Bolitho R. (2022). *Language-Sensitive Teaching and Learning - A Resource Book for Teachers and Teacher Educators*. London: Palgrave Macmillan”
