

Introduction

Welcome to Module 8 of Working with English Language Learners: A handbook for learning assistants (WELLS).

In this module you will learn about ways to support learners who are at different stages of learning to write in English. Some Emergent Bilinguals will have experience writing in their heritage language and other learners may have limited writing experience. Learning to write goes hand in hand with oral language (listening and speaking) and with reading. Emergent Bilinguals can be supported to develop writing skills alongside reading skills by drawing on the languages and literacies they know within a meaningful context.

The New Zealand Curriculum emphasises the importance of integrating Listening, Reading, and Viewing (input modes) with Speaking, Writing, and Presenting (output modes). Emergent Bilinguals will be more successful in the writing process when learning assistants provide opportunities for connections between the input and output modes named above.

The Writing Process

There are important differences between oral language (listening and speaking) and written language (reading and writing) that can be challenging for Emergent Bilinguals. When learners are engaged in writing, it is helpful for them to think about the writing context, the purpose or type of writing required, and the audience they are writing for.

It is important for learners to be able to speak and write in their heritage language/s if this is the most meaningful way to express their thinking. Heritage languages are a valuable

resource for developing Emergent Bilinguals' reading and writing in English. Some of the ways learning assistants can support the use of heritage languages in writing are:

- discussing ideas for writing in learners' heritage languages
- brainstorming writing ideas in learners' heritage languages
- making connections between English words and heritage language words
- reading models of writing that are written in heritage languages
- sharing writing or composing in heritage languages.

Learning assistants may not be speakers of the languages of the learners they are working with, however they can create opportunities for learners to use the strategies listed above. Learning assistants can also draw from members of heritage language communities to provide language knowledge, for example, family members, or bilingual colleagues etc.

The following section provides an outline of key ideas and examples of scaffolded tasks that incorporate this idea of moving from oral language (listening and speaking) to written language (reading and writing). 'Viewing' occurs throughout this scaffolding process. 'Presenting' occurs at the end of a scaffolded sequence of tasks as a final product of prior language and literacy learning. 'Writing' is a key output mode within the progression of tasks.

1. Building the field of knowledge

It is important to begin the writing process by connecting to learners' experiences and prior knowledge (see also Module 2 and Module 4). To do this you can:

- use pictures about the topic to spark conversations with Emergent Bilingual learners in their heritage languages and in English

- talk about the topic and get learners to write down/talk about/think/describe what they see in the pictures
- use graphic organisers about the topic, for example, Mind Map, KWHL Chart, Venn Diagram etc.
- take a record of oral or written vocabulary to find out what the Emergent Bilingual learner knows. To do this, you could try any of the following:
 - o Give the learner two minutes to say any word they know in their heritage language.
 - o Give the learner two minutes to say any word they know in English.
 - o Give the learner two minutes to say any word they know specific to a given topic, for example, celebrations, natural disasters, the life cycle of a plant etc. (this can be done pre and post topic to find out how much vocabulary learners acquire).
 - o Give the learner five minutes to write any word they know in their heritage language.
 - o Give the learner five minutes to write any word they know in English.
 - o Give the learner five minutes to write any word they know specific to a given topic, for example, celebrations, natural disasters, the life cycle of a plant etc. (this can be done pre and post topic to find out how much vocabulary learners acquire).
- Remember to explain to learners that they can do this by themselves when they start a new topic in any learning area, as a self-monitoring exercise.

Examples of tasks or activities at the 'building the field of knowledge' phase:

Language Experience

When learners are engaged in shared, hands-on experiences, inside or outside the classroom, they are learning language and content within meaningful contexts. Language Experience is a teaching approach that:

- integrates the input and output modes based upon children's experiences, interests, and stories
- supports learners to talk about experiences at school or outside of school
- provides opportunities for learning assistants to support learners in engaging in shared experiences through, for example, cooking lessons, science experiments, arts and crafts, and play-based learning, etc.
- can include learners sharing an object, a photo, or a drawing, or responding to a story or picture.

Connecting Language Experience to Writing

Language Experience provides a good springboard for supporting learners to write. The learning assistant can record in writing what a learner shares through speaking. In this sense, the learner is composing or creating their own oral and written text. It is important that learning assistants encourage learners to speak and write using any of their language registers (see Module 2) and family literacies to communicate and represent their thinking. When learners retell or write about shared language experiences, their written texts can then become enjoyable shared reading texts that are meaningful to learners.

Graphic organisers

A graphic organiser is a way of thinking through ideas and supporting learners to talk about content before writing about it, for example, mind map, Venn diagram, KWHL chart, flow chart etc. Graphic organisers are designed to make the writing process more enjoyable and meaningful, by giving learners the opportunity to generate ideas for their writing.

Graphic organisers can be used:

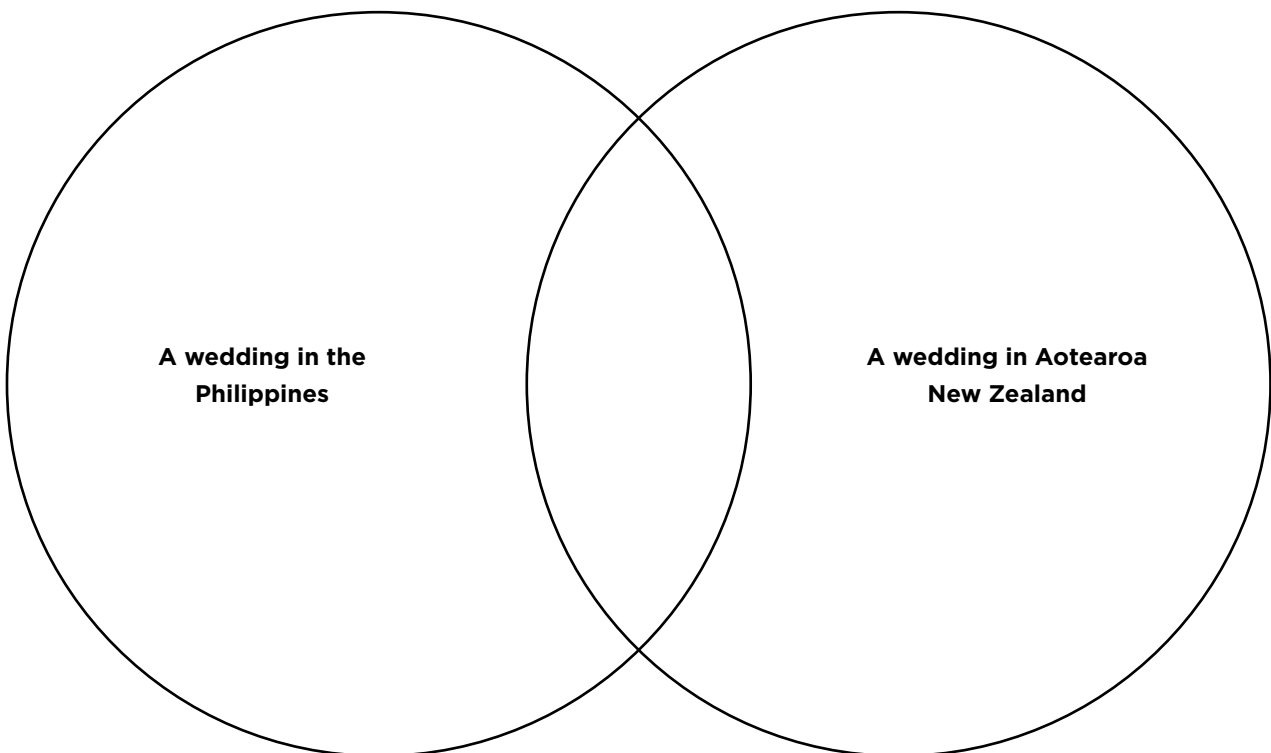
- to explore prior knowledge about a topic
- to think and talk through ideas
- to organise how to go from talking to writing
- to explore various writing frames which fit a particular writing purpose and level of writing complexity
- as a whole class, group, or individual.

As learners are gaining confidence as writers, it is important to give them lots of opportunities

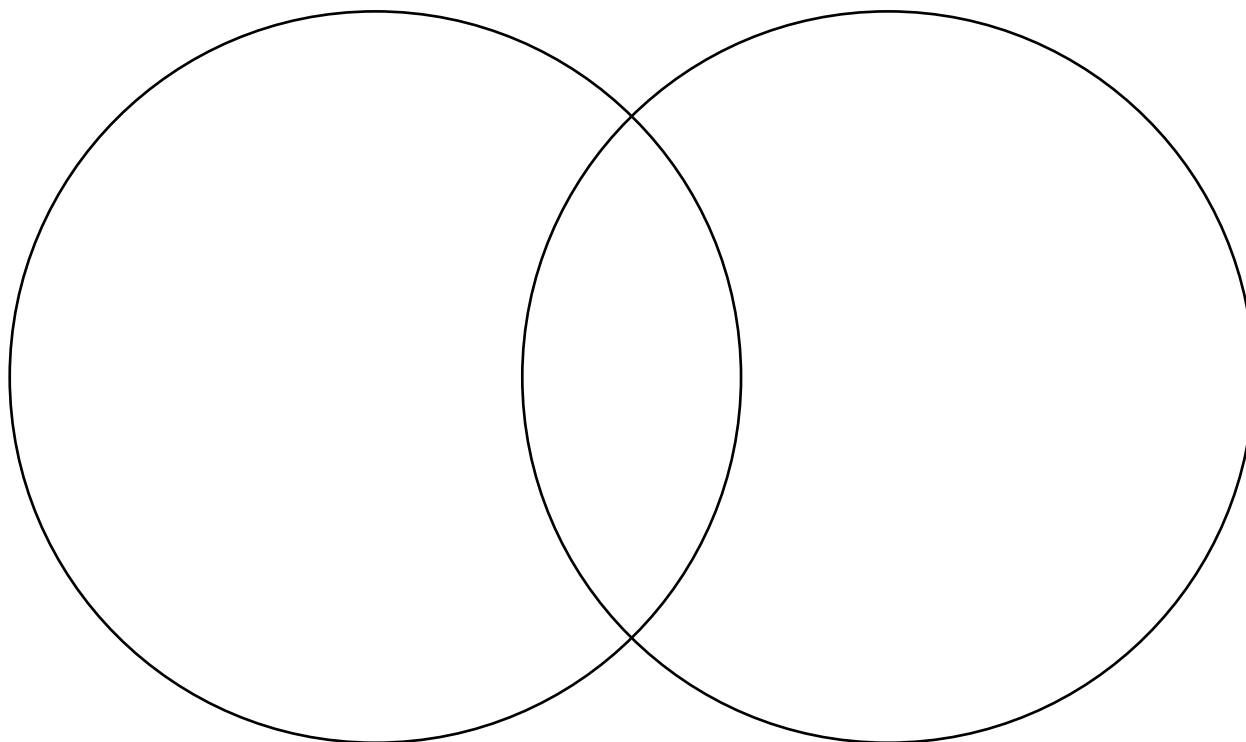
to talk. Therefore, it can be helpful to contribute collectively to a graphic organiser and have the learning assistant record the ideas that the learners share. Some learners will prefer to work independently while others will thrive when they work collaboratively. The following task provides an example of how you might use a graphic organiser with learners as a springboard for the writing process:

Module 8: Task 1: Venn Diagram Graphic Organiser

Task Instructions: Choose a celebration (wedding, funeral, birthday, new year, coming of age ceremony) that you would like to talk about with your colleagues. Choose two cultures to discuss the similarities and differences of your chosen celebration using the Venn diagram below e.g. What are the similarities and differences between a wedding in the Philippines and a wedding in Aotearoa New Zealand?



Venn Diagram Template



2. Breaking the task into small chunks or steps

Breaking the task into small steps is an example of scaffolding.

- Scaffolding can be done by composing from talk, and by providing small chunks of learning within writing. For example, if learners are focussed on narrative writing, you might focus initially on setting the scene and describing characters, before introducing the complication or problem (also see Module 4).
- Make sure that learners ask themselves, “Do I understand what I have to do in this task?” Explain how the task links to things they have done before or are going to do again.

3. Unpacking model texts by explaining text organisation and language features

Learning to write goes hand in hand with reading model texts and noticing what effective authors do in their writing.

- When reading a new text with Emergent Bilinguals, read the whole text through to them first.
- Make sure you explain to learners what type of text they are reading, for example, an information report, a narrative, an argument, etc. This is to help learners identify similar language features when they see the same sort of text again. For more information on writing for different purposes or text types, see the English Language Intensive Programme (ELIP), especially Foundation and Stage 1.
- If it is a writing task you are supporting, make sure learners know how to complete the task and have seen a model, or are using a writing frame (later in this module), for example, for an opinion or argument.

Module 8: Task 2: Cutting up a Model Text and Putting it Back Together Again

Purpose: To become familiar with the structure of a simple persuasive text or argument.

ELIP Stage 2 Writing: Can write a simple guided persuasive text (22c)

Task Instructions: Cut up the text below and work with a partner to put it back together again.

Should Students Wear Hats at School?
I believe that you should always wear a hat at school during the summer terms when you are outside, to stop you from getting sunburnt.
Firstly, if you don't wear a hat, you will get sunburnt and sunburn is painful.
Secondly, sunburn could lead to skin cancer when you get older and we don't want to get cancer.
In addition, hats can stop you getting headaches from the heat.
So, everyone in our school, including the teachers, should wear hats at lunchtimes during summer.

4. Putting the models together again

There are many ways of helping students to “see the big picture” of the whole text that you have broken down into small parts. You could:

- ask the learners to tell you about the main ideas in a text they have read by having a genuine conversation with them;
- use vocabulary games to help them learn key words;
- add to the graphic organiser used earlier;
- cut up sentences and reorder;
- sequence pictures from the text and retell the story or process;
- use a range of dictation tasks.

Examples of tasks or activities at the ‘Unpacking’ and ‘Putting Back Together’ phases:

Dictation

Dictation tasks integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing and provide good opportunities to become familiar with model texts or specific sections in texts, for example, an introduction or a conclusion.

Running Dictation

Purpose: To remember word chunks and phrases and dictate them to your partner or group.

Task Instructions:

1. Break learners up into groups of 3-4, or pairs for small classes.
2. Write a text on a piece of paper for each team and stick it on the wall on the other side of the room.
3. One member from each team runs to the text, reads the text, and tries to remember as much as they can.
4. The member runs back to their group and dictates what they can, while other team members write it down.
5. Team members take turns to be the 'runner' and 'dictator'.
6. The first team to finish writing the text correctly wins!

Variations

- Use pictures for children who can't spell and have them draw the picture instead of writing the words.
- Use pictures for learners who are just beginning to learn to read and spell English words and have them draw the picture instead of writing words.
- Place sentences around the room and have each group member do one each.
- Groups have to put the sentences into the right order before handing in the completed text.

Notes

Make each team's text different so learners only look to their own team for support. They are allowed to return to the board to look at their text as many times as they like. Ensure the text being used is meaningful to current classroom learning.



5. Creating new texts (oral, written, or visual)

Learners can create their own texts as they work towards independence in the writing process by:

- finding pictures associated with the topic and labelling them and explaining to you in their heritage language/s or in English their connection to the topic
- following a model sentence from one text and writing a similar sentence about another text
- writing new sentences about a diagram or picture
- completing a 'Skills Flow' (see Task 3)
- drawing and labelling a picture using the information from the text, for example, an animal from a written description
- supporting learners to create a new text using the model
- creating a '4x3 Grid' in preparation for writing (see Task 4)
- using a 'Writing Frame' to support or scaffold independent skills.

Writing frame examples for different text purposes (Wray, 2005):





<p>Argument</p> <p>I think that...because...</p> <p>The reasons for my thinking this are, firstly</p> <p>So...</p> <p>Another reason is...</p> <p>Moreover...</p> <p>Because...</p>	<p>Explanation</p> <p>There are differing explanations as to why... (how, what, when etc.)</p> <p>One explanation is that...</p> <p>The evidence for this is...</p> <p>An alternative explanation is...</p> <p>This explanation is based on...</p> <p>Of the alternative explanations I think the most likely is...</p>
<p>Recount</p> <p>Before I began this topic I thought that...</p> <p>But when I read about it I found out that...</p> <p>I also learnt that...</p> <p>Furthermore I learnt that...</p> <p>Finally I learnt that...</p>	<p>Report</p> <p>Spiders:</p> <p>Spiders have ... legs and...</p> <p>Spiders like to...</p> <p>Spiders eat...</p> <p>Spiders live...</p>

Module 8: Task 3: Skills Flow

Purpose: The 'Skills Flow' is a scaffolded task that incorporates the literacy skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading which flow from one to the other. It supports learners to write their own retell of a text or process by repeating and generating language and by integrating different language and literacy skills.

Task Instructions:

1. Work with a colleague to complete the skills flow for the text: '*Oku Ō ki Fē 'a e Fanga Kī' Fonu Pēpee*'? - Where Do Baby Turtles Go? By Kaliopeta Hu'akau. You will find the text of this story in Module 5.
2. Complete the Skills Flow together.
3. Listening: One person reads the story; the other listens and numbers the pictures.
4. Speaking: Retell the story in pairs using the ordered pictures to scaffold the process.
5. Writing: Write the story in your own words under the pictures to help you (individually or in pairs).
6. Reading: Read your stories to each other when you have finished.

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Note-taking and Summarising

Learners need to start note-taking and summarising in their later primary years, as the literacy demands of curriculum areas become more complex. Note-taking is a useful strategy to support learners to capture key

information from a text. Learners can be supported to know the difference between main ideas and details. Learners can be given responsibility over time to take their own notes. Early experiences with note-taking are best done collaboratively with teacher support.

Module 8: Task 4: 4 x 3 Grid

Purpose: To practise using a grid for note taking as a scaffold for writing.

Task Instructions:

1. Read the text in the box below.
2. Complete the following 4x3 Grid and discuss your responses.
3. Think about how you could use these notes as a scaffold for writing.
4. Think about how you might use a 4x3 Grid with the learners you work with.

A language can be seen as having two major aspects: social language and academic language

- Social language is for communicating in interpersonal contexts and can be either spoken or written. It may take place at school (in social exchanges in and out of the classroom) or outside school. It may include “functional language”, which is used for buying something at a shop, making an appointment, getting information, and so on.
- Academic language is for learning and communicating in educational contexts. It can be either spoken or written, and its main purpose at school is for learning within the curriculum.
- Social language is sometimes called Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), and academic language is sometimes called Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS usually take less time to acquire than CALP. In a school setting, learners will probably acquire social language more quickly and easily than academic language.

English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction Booklet (2008, p. 4)



4x3 Grid for Note-taking and Summarising:

Three main ideas	Three most difficult words	Three new things I have learnt	Three questions I have about this text

6. Reviewing learning

Learners benefit from opportunities to review and recognise their progress as writers.

- Learners go back to the graphic organiser and add to it.
- Learners do a peer record of vocabulary.
- Learners talk to a partner about what they have learned.
- Learners present a summary of their learning.

Examples of tasks or activities at the 'Reviewing learning' phase:

Checklists:

A writing checklist can be developed so that learners begin to self-monitor their writing for the technical aspects mentioned above. Other tools that may be useful to learners as they gain independence with writing are word banks (list of common and familiar vocabulary) and sentence starters or writing frames (i.e. common phrases that support writers to begin sentences). The complexity of the checklist should reflect the age of the learners so that they can be responsible for monitoring their own writing.

Here is an example of a checklist for an instructional writing purpose.

Structure

- The purpose of the activity is stated at the beginning.
- The materials/activities are listed in order.
- The layout of the text is easy to follow (steps may be numbered).
- The steps are in chronological order.

Language

- Verbs are active, simple present to indicate timelessness (you cut, you fold) or imperatives (cut, fold).
- Conjunctions that show time are used (first... then).
- Detailed information is given on: how (carefully, with the scissors); where (from the top); when (after it has set).
- Detailed factual description is given (shape, size, colour, amount).
- Modality may be used to show the degree of obligation (You should finish your homework within one and a half hours).

Here is an example of a simplified checklist for younger learners:

- I have read my writing aloud.
- My story makes sense to me.
- I have used capital letters at the beginning of my sentences.
- I have used full stops at the end of my sentences.
- I have used some interesting words.

7. Transferring learning – becoming an independent learner

Learners can use strategies from their writing in other contexts (see Module 9).

The writing process should be meaningful and engaging and focus on the ideas and topics that are important to learners. Learning assistants can support learners to recognise English letters and their sounds, and to understand how English words and sentences work using a shared-writing process. Learners can be supported to practise:

- forming letters
- using capital letters
- spelling words (recognising sounds and syllables in words and how these are represented in print)
- leaving space between words
- using punctuation
- writing from left to write.

Shared writing also supports the integration of the input and output modes of listening, reading, viewing (input) and speaking, writing, presenting (output).

Shared Writing

A shared writing process creates a safe space for Emergent Bilinguals to share ideas, and to practise the technical aspects of writing with support. Shared writing can be used to

develop the following skills: writing for meaning, talking about our ideas, practising spelling, modelling and practising writing, reading and reviewing, writing independently, and presenting completed writing products.

Meaning focused writing (Listening and Viewing):

Strong engagement is important for learners to be successful in the shared-writing process. It is important to invite learners to write for a purpose that is meaningful to them with an audience in mind. Shared-writing can be initiated as a response to a topic explored or story told through pictures, words, or video that connect with children's lived experiences and interests.

Talking about our ideas (Listening and Speaking):

Before writing, learners need time to talk about their ideas. Learning assistants can support talk before writing by asking open-ended questions about the story. While learners share their ideas, the learning assistant can record the main ideas and vocabulary that come up. Together, the learning assistant and the learners can decide on a sentence to write. The shared-writing experience may be one sentence or several, depending on the experiences learners have with writing in English. Writing should also build on prior oral language tasks that support learners to practise vocabulary and language structures that they can use in their writing.

Practising spelling (Speaking and Listening):

Learners can be supported to say words slowly and record the sounds they hear (individual letters and combinations of letters). They may use words from their heritage language and English in this process. This skill connects to phonological awareness in the reading process. Learners may initially write the sounds they hear in English words and these sounds may not represent the way the word is spelt. It is important to encourage these early attempts and not overcorrect learners as they attempt to write words. Instead, the learning assistant

can emphasise the sounds the learner was able to hear. The learning assistant can also show the learner how the word “looks in a book” to support them to understand that not all words look the way they sound.

Modelling and practising writing (Speaking and Writing): Learning assistants can demonstrate the writing process and co-author with learners during shared-writing. Learning assistants can share the pen with learners to write individual letters or words in the shared story. This encourages learners to “have a go” and take healthy risks. The effort learners make should be acknowledged positively rather than focusing on correcting their mistakes. Learners can also have individual whiteboards to try out letter formation independently during the shared-writing experience.

Reading and reviewing (Reading and Writing): During the shared-writing process, learners can be encouraged to read what they have written after each new sentence or section written by the group. This supports learners to read from left to right, to recognise words in print, and to decide what word comes next in a meaningful sentence. Reading during writing can also support self-monitoring strategies as learners reread to think about what comes next and to notice where edits and revisions can be made. Writing can also be done alongside reading texts that model the type of writing that is being introduced in the lesson. Learning assistants can draw attention to good models of writing, that can then be transferred to the group text.

Writing independently (Writing): Some learners will want to try writing independently. Shared-writing can be a final product that learners contribute to, or a springboard for independent writing. Learning assistants can make space for learners who want to write on their own and follow up with them after they have finished with the group. Sentence starters or writing frames can support independent writing.

Presenting completed writing products

(Writing, Reading, and Presenting): Both learners who write in the group and learners who write independently can share their work by reading aloud. The learning assistant can provide scaffolds for learners to present their writing successfully, for example, learning assistants may provide support with reading when learners share their stories.



Purposes for Writing

It is important for learners to be exposed to a range of purposes for writing, sometimes referred to as text types. A range of writing purposes gives learners opportunities to engage in important language processes: Describing, explaining, instructing, arguing, and narrating.

Language Process	Describing	Explaining	Instructing	Arguing	Narrating
Definition	Tells what something specific is like.	Discusses how something works or the reasons why something is the way it is.	Supplies details of how something is done.	Takes a stance on a significant issue.	Retells events or experiences.
Commonly used in these writing purposes or products	Personal descriptions Common-sense descriptions Technical descriptions Information reports Scientific reports Definitions	Explanations of how Explanations of why Elaborations Illustrations Accounts Explanation essays	Procedures Instructions Manuals Science experiments Recipes Directions	Essays Expositions Discussions Debates Reviews Interpretations Evaluations	Personal recounts Historical recounts Stories Fairy tales Myths Fables Narratives

Adapted from Knapp, & Watkins (2005)

Recapping Key Vocabulary: Module 8

Term	Definition
Writing purpose	The type of text you are writing for a particular purpose
Audience	The person/people you are writing for
Model texts	Examples of good writing for different text purposes

Coming up: Module 9

Module 9 is about supporting learners with 'thinking about thinking' and 'learning to learn'. Preparation: Think about what helps you to learn more effectively.

Resources

Knapp, P. & Watkins, M. (2005). *Genre, text, grammar: Technologies for teaching and assessing writing*. UNSW Press.

Ministry of Education. (2003). *English language intensive programme: Years 7 - 13*. Learning Media.

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Wray, D. (2005). *Teaching and learning literacy: Reading and writing texts for a purpose*. David Fulton Publishers.