This study identifies the writing challenges faced by EAL pupils compared to English native speaking children (NS) and how their writing develops over a year.

48 EAL and 52 NS pupils were tested in Phase 1 (Autumn 2011) and Phase 2 (Spring/Summer 2012) using a range of standardised language and literacy tests.

**Tests:**
- CELF - expressive and receptive linguistic skills
- BPVS - receptive vocabulary for Standard English
- BASII - measured cognitive function in spelling and reading
- WASI - non-verbal IQ
- LBO - Language background questionnaire
- WIAT - measured reading, language and numerical attainment
- WAM - assessed text-level skills

### Phase 1

Tests were matched against pupils' chronological age (CA) and language age (LA). Pupils completed 1 narrative written task.

1. Fewer EAL pupils matched NS on language age, but those who did had higher non-verbal IQ scores that NS peers.
2. WAM test - EAL pupils only differed from NS on higher level features of writing: organisation and ideas.
3. EAL pupils scored lower on CELF, BPVS and WIAT than age-matched NS peers.

CA comparisons confirmed previous research, showing that EAL pupils have lower vocabulary and literacy scores than age-matched peers.

**Organisation:**
Paragraphing, based on themes and providing a cohesive text for the reader.

**Ideas:**
Using creative and interesting literary techniques to engage the reader through suspense, tension, observation etc.

### Phase 2

Tests were matched against pupils' chronological age (CA) and language age (LA). Pupils completed 1 narrative and 1 expository written task.

1. EAL and NS writing showed more similarities due to greater matches on LA.
2. EAL pupils out-performed NS on WAM expository spelling score.
3. EAL pupils scored lower on vocabulary in the narrative genre task than in the expository composition. NS showed no difference between the two genres.

EAL pupils showed more language-related differences on both written tasks compared to NS peers. After a year EAL pupils faced more challenges related to vocabulary. Receptive and expressive language scores are a significant predictor of EAL children's writing skills.

### Implications for Schools:
EAL pupils’ writing would be improved by teaching vocabulary- both breadth and depth, including academic, multi-word and figurative lexical items.

Schools need to ensure staff are sufficiently well-trained in EAL pedagogy to develop appropriate strategies to improve pupils’ overall linguistic knowledge and skills.