


KEY ISSUES IN
LANGUAGE TEACHING

JACK C. RICHARDS


Key Issues in Language Teaching provides a comprehensive overview of the field of English language teaching. Informed by theory, research and practice, it is an essential resource for student-teachers at graduate and post-graduate level as well as for classroom teachers and teacher educators. Written in a clear and accessible style, the book links theory to practice and includes reflections from classroom teachers in many parts of the world. *Key Issues in Language Teaching* surveys a broad range of core topics that are important in understanding approaches to teaching English as a second or international language, and which form the content of many professional development courses for language teachers.

Among the issues that are examined are second language learning, approaches and methods, classroom management, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, the four skills, technology, textbooks, course design and professional development.


Discussion questions, illustrative examples and follow-up activities throughout provide practical application to the teacher's context and help establish the relevance of theory and research to classroom issues.



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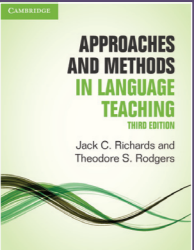
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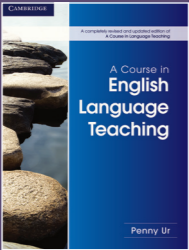
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Introduction

This book is a response to the need for a comprehensive text that explores key issues in English language teaching today. The current status of English as an international language has enormous implications for people worldwide. English is not only the language of international communication, commerce and trade, and of media and pop culture, but increasingly, in countries where it was taught in the past as a second or foreign language, a medium of instruction for some or all subjects in schools, colleges and universities. English is no longer viewed as the property of countries where it is the mother tongue of much of the population such as the United States, Australia or the United Kingdom, or of countries such as Nigeria, India, Singapore and the Philippines where it is used alongside other local languages; it is an international language that reflects many new contexts and purposes for its use, as well as the different identities of its users.

Parallel to the changes we have witnessed in the status of English in the last 30 or more years have been new developments in the language-teaching profession itself. The spread of English has brought with it the demand by national educational authorities for new language-teaching policies: for the development of standards for English teaching as well as teacher preparation, for new approaches to curriculum design, teaching and assessment and for greater central control over teaching and teacher education. The discipline of teaching English to speakers of other languages, variously referred to as TESOL, ESOL, ELT (English language teaching), ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) continually revises its theories, principles and practices, through the efforts of applied linguists and specialists in the field of second language acquisition, advancements in language-teaching methodology and enhancements in language-teacher education, as well as through the practices of creative and skilled classroom practitioners. This knowledge base has expanded enormously in both breadth and depth in recent years, as research and theory add to what we know or understand about the teaching and learning of English. It is important for teachers to understand these developments so that they can review their own understanding of language teaching and learning and consider innovations and developments in classroom practices that may be relevant to their own teaching contexts.

Factors such as these require a rethinking of many of our assumptions about the teaching of English. Because of the changing needs for English-language skills among today's learners and the many different motivations that learners bring to the learning of English, English teachers today need both a broad and flexible range of teaching skills, as well as an understanding of the complex and developing knowledge base that supports the language-teaching profession.

Key Issues in Language Teaching thus provides an account of the issues that are involved in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language and describes approaches to the teaching of English, in light of the issues mentioned above. The book covers a wide

range of territory, but aims to address the most important issues and topics that teachers in training generally encounter in their teacher-education courses or that practising teachers will find useful if they wish to review their own understanding and approaches. My goal has been to cover the issues in an accessible style, with key points in each chapter summarized after every section. The book does not assume a prior background in applied linguistics. It is accessible to those undertaking courses in TESOL and applied linguistics at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. It is designed to be used as a core text in TESOL teacher-education programmes, as well as a reference for the many practising teachers interested in accounts of contemporary issues involved in teaching English today. The issues covered are those that, in my experience, are of concern to all teachers and teacher educators, and include such diverse areas as language-learning theories and methodology, the language learner and lesson planning, the teaching of the four skills, testing and assessment, and the role of technology. Throughout the book, I have tried to keep the focus on practical classroom issues, although where relevant, I have linked these issues to theory and research that can inform them. The chapters may be read in any order, and cross-references direct the reader to other chapters offering more background on selected topics.

This book puts each classroom issue into context and considers the implications that current understanding has on the decisions made in the classroom. The book is equally appropriate for readers new to a given topic, as well as those who wish to refresh their understanding, and seeks to present a broad and in-depth overview of the issues. Reflective questions throughout each chapter, vignettes provided by practicing teachers in different parts of the world and discussion questions following the chapter are designed to help make connections to the reader's experience. Also offered are case studies, lesson plans and textbook lessons, with guided tasks that allow readers to apply the knowledge gained in a given chapter. Suggestions for further reading are also given at the end of each chapter.

The chapters are grouped into four parts, each addressing major themes of importance to teachers today and exploring the key issues within these areas. The first part, '*English language teaching today*', serves as an introduction to the book as a whole. Its chapters provide an overview of the role of English in the world, theories of second language learning, an account of the main teaching approaches that are in current or recent use, and an account of the knowledge and skills base experienced teachers make use of in teaching. This section, with its overview of both second language learning and methodology, is equally useful to those wishing to review or expand their knowledge of the research on these topics, and to those encountering these topics for the first time.

The second part, '*Facilitating student learning*', deals with the critical role learners play in language learning. It covers the attributes that influence their approach to learning, the structure of a language lesson and how to increase its effectiveness, the nature and function of classroom management strategies and the differences between teaching learners of different age groups. Each chapter seeks to provide the background knowledge as well as the conceptual tools that teachers can make use of in order to develop a learner-centred approach to teaching.

Part three, '*Language and the four skills*', covers the systems and skills of English, with chapters on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as the important role of discourse and pragmatics in both speech and writing. These chapters are equally relevant to those teaching single-skills courses, integrated-skills courses or any combination of skills that an institution may offer.

In the final part, '*The teacher's environment*', the focus is on the resources teachers use. The section begins with an overview of curriculum planning and course design and then examines the nature and use of textbooks, the integration of technology in language courses, testing and assessment, and the nature of professional development and how teachers can continue their teacher education.

Taken together, the four sections of this book aim to provide teachers and teachers in training with a foundation of essential knowledge and skills to support their teaching and ongoing career development.

This book is also available as an e-book. This is one of the first teacher's reference books from Cambridge University Press to be offered in an innovative electronic format. This format has a number of advantages. In addition to ease of access from computers, tablets and mobile phones, the e-book format allows readers to access short videos, where I summarize each of the chapters and the major sections of the book. Readers can also access a variety of links offering additional information, including brief biographies of the many teachers and teacher educators who have contributed their personal experiences.

Part

1

**English language
teaching today**

1

The scope of English and English language teaching

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What characterizes the global spread of English?
 - Factors promoting the use of English around the world.
- What do we mean by English as an international language?
 - Learners' views of English.
 - Varieties of English.
 - Using English as a lingua franca.
- What are the implications for English language teaching curriculums?
 - The status of English in the school curriculum.
 - English language teaching in English-speaking countries.
 - The role of the private sector in English instruction.
 - The impact of technology.

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, there has been a dramatic change in the scope of English language teaching worldwide and an increasing demand for competent English language teachers, as well as for language programmes that can deliver the English language skills and competencies needed by today's global citizens. The teaching of English consumes a considerable portion of available educational resources in many countries, and English is not necessarily a neutral commodity offering equal opportunities for all. English teachers, therefore, need to appreciate the special status English has in modern life, what its costs and benefits are to those who seek to learn it, the different motivations learners may have for learning English and the different circumstances in which they learn it. This chapter seeks to clarify some of these issues and to describe how English language teaching is realized in different parts of the world.

1.2 The global spread of English

The English language has a complex status in today's world. For some people, it is acquired as a first language. For some, it may be learned at school, and be essential for academic and professional success. For others, it may represent a subject that they are required to study in school, but for which they have no immediate need. And English means different things to people in different parts of the world. For some, it may arouse positive feelings – as the language of pop culture, the media and social networking. For others, it may have associations with colonialism, elitism or social and economic inequality.

English today has a unique status, as a consequence of the role it plays around the world and its function as an 'international' or 'world language'. It has been described as the world's *lingua franca*. Although some 380 million people are said to speak it as a first language in countries like Australia, Canada, the United States and Great Britain, a further 600 million people use it, alongside other languages, as a 'second language' – in countries like Nigeria, India and the Philippines. And another one billion people are said to be studying it, at any one time, as a 'foreign language', in countries like China, South Korea, France, Germany, Russia and Spain.

English is learned for many different reasons. It may be an essential tool for education and business for some learners; it may be the language of travel and related activities of sightseeing for others; and it may be needed for social survival and employment for new immigrants in English-speaking countries. For some, it may be a popular language for the media, entertainment, the internet and other forms of electronic communication. For many, however, it may merely be a language that they are obliged to study, but which they may never really have any obvious need for.

Despite the emphasis on learning English in many parts of the world, it is worth remembering that many people can survive perfectly well in their own countries without ever having to use English (Seargeant, 2009), and that fluency in English does not

necessarily offer learners any social or economic advantages. And as some have pointed out (e.g. Pennycook, 1994; Lin, 2001), the spread of English does not necessarily promote social equality. Lin (2001) argued that ability in English and access to adequate opportunities to learn it has a considerable impact on the lives of many learners worldwide, including both children and adult learners. She suggests that the classroom is a site in which learners experience a power asymmetry due to the social identities that all learners and teachers adopt. As a consequence, learners may develop a 'want-hate' relationship with English, one in which they struggle to acquire a language that may eventually put them at a disadvantage within the classroom context.



To what extent do you think mastery of English affects your learners' social mobility? What other benefits do you think your learners perceive in learning English?

Factors promoting the use of English around the world

The status of English in the world today has nothing to do with its intrinsic characteristics as a language. It did not become the world's second language because it has some special features that gave it that status or because it is superior in some way to other languages that might have assumed this role. Rather, the spread of English is the result of a number of historical and pragmatic factors (McCrum, 2010).

Historical factors

Primary among the factors that account for the spread of English is the fact that it was the language of the British Empire, and later, that of American expansion. One of the legacies of the British Empire was the use of English as the primary language needed for government, communication, commerce and education in those parts of the world under British colonial administration. And the countries in the Empire were located in many different parts of the world, from Africa to Asia and the Pacific. When colonial administrations were replaced by national ones, through independence, English remained as a major working language, facilitating communication among peoples speaking different languages (i.e. functioning as a link language or *lingua franca*) and providing a primary language for administration, education and the media. The English that became established in these vast territories took on local characteristics, giving rise to the 'new Englishes' that we recognize today, such as Indian English, Malaysian English or Nigerian English.

Globalization

The spread of English is often linked to globalization, since it provides for high levels of interconnectedness among nation states and local economies and cultures. The fact that English has become the primary language for communication within international

organizations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union is an example of such globalization. However, as Seargeant observes (2009: 63), globalization has contributed as much to the 'idea' of English as it has to its actual role in communication. In other words, in many parts of the world, English represents an image in popular imagination, established through the media, advertising and so on, rather than a practical necessity or reality for many people.

Scholars and educationists differ in their attitudes towards the global spread of English. Some (e.g. Graddol, 2006) think this spread is natural, inevitable, neutral and beneficial, and have been accused of 'English triumphalism'. Crystal (1997: 32) suggests that English 'fosters cultural opportunity and promotes a climate of international intelligibility'. Others see the spread of English as threatening local cultures, languages and identities. Phillipson (1992) used the phrase 'linguistic imperialism' to explain how English has come to play a leading role in maintaining the economic and political dominance of some societies over others. Because of the role of English as the dominant international language, the theory of linguistic imperialism asserts that other languages have been prevented from going through processes of development and expansion, and have been allocated a secondary status, along with the cultures they represent. Proponents of the theory of linguistic imperialism view the English language teaching industry as contributing to the propagation of the economic, cultural or religious values of dominant world powers.

Economic development

Many countries see English as important to their economic development. A recent report suggested that countries with poor English-language skills also have lower levels of trade, innovation and income. The report ranked 54 countries where English is not a first language and claimed that English is key to innovation and competitiveness. The top five were Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Norway. The lowest were Colombia, Panama, Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Libya. The report also suggested that Italy, Spain and Portugal were held back as a result of poor English-language skills (*New York Times*, 28 October 2012).

Communication

Since English is widely taught and used around the world, it is a convenient language for communication across national boundaries and in a wide range of professions. In many cases, the speakers (or writers) involved both may be using English as a foreign or second language (see section 1.3 below). Nerrier (2006), reporting as observer of communication in situations like these, noted that non-native English speakers are often better able to communicate with business clients in Korea and Japan than native speakers of English, due to the fact that their English is not likely to contain the kind of unfamiliar idioms and colloquial expressions used by native speakers of English.

Business and entrepreneurship

As the United States emerged as a global economic power after World War II, international trade and commerce became increasingly dependent on the use of English. Today, large business organizations are increasingly multinational in their operations, and English is increasingly the most frequent language used for both written and spoken communication within such organizations. Many of the world's English language learners require knowledge of English in order to enter the workforce in their countries and in order to advance professionally. Similarly, for many young IT graduates in countries like India, China, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, knowledge of English provides a chance to market their expertise outside of their countries. Their fluency in English, together with their creative and innovative thinking, is part of the driving force of thousands of successful businesses and companies worldwide.

Education

In many parts of the world where English has traditionally had the status of a school subject, it is now becoming the medium of instruction, particularly at university level. For example, since 2014 the Politecnico di Milano – a premium university in Italy – has been teaching its graduate courses in English (www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-17958520). The motivation for teaching subjects through English is partially to improve the English language skills of graduates (as with universities in Turkey, where many courses are taught in English). This trend also reflects the growing need for European universities to offer programmes in English to attract an international body of students and raise their international profiles – an aspect of the internationalization of higher education through English. There are now more than 2,000 such programmes in European universities. It is often assumed that these courses will be taught by younger lecturers who have themselves spent part of their education abroad. However, the kind of teaching observed in these situations is reported to be similar to what is observed at international academic conferences where few people are native speakers of English: discussion tends to settle around what is described as the 'lowest common denominator'. In subjects like mathematics, this may not be a major problem, but in disciplines where language is more central to intellectual debate, there is a risk that meaningful scholarly discourse could be compromised. (Aisha Labi, 2011: Europe's Push to Teach in English Creates Barriers in the Classroom (<http://chronicle.com/article/article-content/126326/>).

Another factor likely to further consolidate the spread of English is the growing popularity of content-based teaching, or CLIL, as it is referred to in Europe – that is, the use of English to teach some school subjects (see Chapter 3). (This is referred to as bilingual education in Central and South America.) The teaching of school subjects in English may start at secondary school and continue at university. And just as English-medium education was crucial in establishing local varieties of English in countries like India, Nigeria and Singapore (see section 1.3 below), we can assume that the teaching of content subjects through English is likely to produce students who speak English fluently, but with marked local features.

Travel

Today's citizens are often mobile, either moving to a new location for tourism or to seek employment. The development of tourism within a country is often dependent upon providing resources in English for visitors, and international travellers generally find that they need some knowledge of English in order to travel abroad. This provides a reason for many people to acquire some mastery of the language.

Popular culture

English today is an important language for the expression of western popular culture, as seen in movies, television and music. It is visible everywhere in sport, in advertising and in packaging and labelling of consumer items, particularly those aimed at younger buyers. In some parts of Europe (e.g. Finland), English-language movies and television programmes are broadcast in English (usually with subtitles), rather than in dubbed versions, providing young learners with increased opportunities to learn English.

The media

English is the language used in newspapers intended for an international readership, such as the *Bangkok Post* or *China Daily*, and in international magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek*. Similarly, it is used by international television networks, such as CNN and Al-Jazeera, and for television channels, such as RT, an English-language news channel which presents the Russian view on global news for an international audience, or CCTV, which presents the Chinese view of China and the world through English.

A global English language teaching industry

The spread of English is also supported by a global industry that involves publishers, private and public language-teaching institutions, and testing organizations, such as those offering international examinations. Two examples from the private language school industry are illustrative. The Swedish language-teaching company EF (Education First) is the world's largest private educator, with over 25,000 teachers and 15 million students worldwide, with headquarters in Lucerne, Switzerland. In China, supplementary English classes for preschool and primary school age learners is a multibillion-dollar industry that is expected to grow by 30% per year. The Walt Disney Company has schools in major cities there, and China's biggest private-education organization – New Oriental Education and Technology Group – has some 500 schools and earns over US\$60 million a year from children's English classes.

Symbolism

Although mastery of English is a practical goal for many learners, as noted earlier, in many parts of the world English has also accrued a value and status that transcends its role as a communicative resource. It is seen as a symbol of globalization, modernization,

technical innovation and progress. Therefore, educational planners believe that English should have a significant role in a national curriculum, because not to do so would be to opt out of contemporary views of progressivism. As one writer puts it, English is sometimes 'ensnared by an ideology that positions English as a language which everyone must know' (Cozy, 2010: 738), a language that everyone must study for the sake of the few. In an interesting study, Sayer (2010) examined the social meanings of English in the Mexican city of Oaxaca, as reflected in the use of English in street signs, shop names and product brands. He identified six themes or 'ideas' that English represents in that context:

- English is advanced and sophisticated.
- English is fashion.
- English is being cool.
- English is sex(y).
- English is for expressions of love.
- English is for expressing subversive identities.

Some describe the attraction of English as representing imagined communities of English speakers that the learner may wish to join (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). This was the focus of an interesting study by Lamb (2004), who explored the idea of what English represents in the minds of a group of Indonesian learners of English. For them, it was not linked to any particular geographical area (such as the United States, Australia or Great Britain) nor with any particular cultural community (e.g. such as Canadians, New Zealanders or Singaporeans) but rather was linked in their minds to international culture. This included international business, the spread of technology, consumerism and materialism, democracy, tourism and world travel as well as the worlds of fashion, sport and popular music.

The status of English also impacts negatively on people's views of their own language in some countries. An observer of the impact of English in Indonesia (Lindsay, 2011: xi) comments:

A quick glance at Indonesian newspapers, advertisements or television shows the extent to which English is infiltrating and even replacing Indonesian, but more significantly, the extent to which pride in speaking and writing Indonesian is declining. There was a time when speaking Indonesian was a sign of modernity, a symbol of the adoption of a broad identity beyond one's regional self expressed in one's regional language. Even twenty years ago, characters in Indonesian films and advertisements speaking regional languages or heavily regional language inflected-Indonesian were inevitably portrayed as 'traditional' (i.e. of the past), or as lower class, country hicks. By now, this same image is shifting to Indonesian. To be trendy is to speak English, or more commonly, heavily English-inflected Indonesian. There seems to be no longer any pride in speaking or writing Indonesian well.



Among the factors in this chapter that have promoted the spread of English, can you suggest the five which you think are most important in establishing the role of English in the country where you teach (or a country where English is a second or foreign language)?

1.3 English as an international language

Learners' views of English

Learners study English for many different reasons, and many have no choice in doing so. Their reasons for studying English relate to how English impacts on their present or future lives, and how they understand and perceive the nature and role of English. The 'idea' of English – what it means in the minds of teachers and students – is shaped by the efforts of applied linguists, educational planners and policy makers, as well as by the culture of a particular country. The English language teaching profession, as well as government policy makers, normally articulate the idea of English through reference to communicative needs, authentic language use and the functional or instrumental value of English for learners, as opposed to a language that the learner has an emotional and personal identification with. For many learners, whether they like it or not, English is a language they must learn. It can be regarded as a form of linguistic and economic capital. In the twenty-first century, for many people, competence in English adds greatly to an individual's capital, a fact that justifies the large amounts of money spent on teaching and learning it. Learners' motivations for learning English often reflect this instrumental perspective (Canagarajah, 2001). Critical educators have also drawn attention to learners' often ambivalent attitudes towards learning English (Lin, 1999; Canagarajah, 2001). Many learners need English, but they don't necessarily want it (Lin, 1999: 394). For some learners, it is an obstacle that they may resent. Teachers, therefore, need to be sensitive to their learners' perceptions of English and not simply assume that they share the teacher's views of the value of English.



What are the main reasons your students are studying English? Do your students *want* to learn English, or *need* to learn it?

The situation in Japan, as described by Seargeant (2009), is perhaps unique. Seargeant suggests that many people in Japan have an intense fascination with English, as is seen in acts of cultural display like advertising, and thousands of people devote huge amounts of time to studying it; yet, the English language has no official status in Japan, nor do most of the citizens have any real need for it in their everyday lives. Instrumental ambition for learning English in Japan is much less important than the 'idea' of English, that is, its symbolic meaning. Some observers have suggested that the continued use of grammar-translation in Japan, the use of 'decorative English' in advertisements and popular culture, and the notion that English is too difficult for Japanese students to master reflect a particular 'idea' of the nature of English in Japan. Seargeant (2009: 56) suggests that one consequence of relating the concept of Japanese ethnocentrism to foreign-language learning is that it prioritizes the role of culture in English language teaching, rather than mastery of spoken English:

The language becomes not so much a tool for international communication, but a living artifact belonging to a foreign culture. Likewise, native-speaker teachers become specimens of that

foreign culture, their role as instructors of specialized knowledge overshadowed by their status as foreign nationals, so it is the emblematic presence of a foreign culture in the classroom that is the defining factor of their appointment in schools, their status as language informants being overshadowed by their status as foreign nationals.

Varieties of English

But when we talk about teaching English, what exactly do we mean by ‘English’? Whose English are we talking about, and what kind of English? The concept of ‘English’ is really an abstraction since it refers to a whole range of speech varieties and speech styles, used differently by people in many parts of the world. In a sense, there is no such thing as ‘English’: there are only ‘Englishes’ – or different ways of using English. Different ways of using English reflect the different identities people express through their use of English. Identity may be shaped by many factors, including personal biography, nationality, culture, working conditions, age and gender.

Due to the complex and diverse functions of English around the world, as well as the changing status of English in today’s world, finding a convenient way to describe the different roles English plays is difficult. In some countries, English is the majority language and the mother tongue, or first language, of the majority of its population, such as in Australia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. The applied linguist Kachru refers to these countries as ‘the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English’ (1992: 356) or the ‘inner circle’. The terms *English as a native language (ENL)* or *English as a mother tongue* have been used to refer to the status of English in these countries. In countries where English is the dominant first language for most of the population, it is the main language used in government, education, the media, business, etc. The way English is spoken in these countries has traditionally been a reference point in teaching English to speakers of other languages, and these are the countries where the major approaches to teaching English have also been developed.

However, there are many other parts of the world where English has a different status. These are multilingual countries where widespread use of English – particularly in education, government, commerce and the media – is a legacy of colonialism. This refers to the status of English in many parts of Africa, in Pakistan and India, in Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Fiji and elsewhere, as noted earlier in this chapter. Kachru referred to these countries as the ‘outer circle’ and worldwide there are greater numbers of English speakers in outer circle than inner circle countries. A feature of outer circle countries is that local varieties of English have emerged there, reflecting the need for English to accommodate to the cultures of the contexts where it is used. People speak these newer varieties of English (just as people do when speaking other varieties of English, such as Australian or South African English) because they express their cultural and national identity. Older varieties of English, such as American or British English, are not considered targets for learning in countries where new Englishes have become established (Foley, 1988). The status of English in these countries has traditionally been referred to as a *second language*, and the countries where English has this status as *ESL countries*.

Many educators, including myself, object to the use of these terms since they suggest a secondary status for users of English in these contexts, but a satisfactory alternative term has not yet emerged. The varieties of English that have developed in these contexts (largely as a result of English-medium education) have been called *new Englishes* (Platt et al., 1984). And since many learners may encounter these new varieties of English, they need to be represented in materials for teaching listening comprehension. There is one group of new Englishes in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, sometimes referred to as South Asian Englishes. There is another group in the former British colonies in East and West Africa. Another group is found in the Caribbean, and there is the group found in South-East Asia – Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. Then there is a Pacific group, such as Fiji.



To what extent do you think learners should be exposed to many different varieties of pronunciation – including examples of the new Englishes referred to above?

In contexts where English is used alongside local languages, but for high domains – such as education – there is a tendency for speakers of the local language to incorporate English lexical items into their use of the local language as a sign of social status or to mark their identity in other ways. For example, in Chennai, in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and where Tamil is the local language, anglicized Tamil – sometimes referred to as Tanglish – is fashionable among young people, particularly the English educated. Some advocates of Tamil complain that the language is being threatened by the influx of English words. Young people in Hong Kong, similarly, find it natural to mix English words into their everyday Cantonese. The mixed code, it has been suggested, plays an important role in marking out the Hong Kong identity, serving as a distinctive linguistic and cultural marker of ‘Hong Kongness’. In post-apartheid South Africa, many black South Africans have adopted a local variety of English, laced with words from local languages, as a sign of freedom – in contrast to Afrikaans, which they may view as the language of oppression (<http://medienportal.univie.ac.at/uniview/detail/artikel/the-image-of-afrikaans-in-south-africa-part-2/>).



Language is an important way in which our identity is expressed. What are some ways in which personal identity can be expressed through language?

In many other parts of the world, English is taught as a subject in school, and that may be necessary for certain practical purposes, but it is not widely used within the country. Kachru referred to these countries as the ‘expanding circle’. English in expanding circle countries like China, Japan, Spain and Russia has usually been described as a *foreign language*, another term which it is difficult to find a convenient replacement for. In contexts


where English is a foreign language, local varieties of English are less likely to emerge, and the target for learning has traditionally been an external variety of English, such as British or North American English. However, there is evidence that, for many learners in these contexts in recent years, speaking English with an accent that reflects features of the learner's mother tongue (e.g. a French accent, a Dutch accent, a Korean accent) is no longer considered a sign of inadequate language mastery, but is instead a valid expression of cultural identity (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Nevertheless, a teacher educator notes that learners often have an unsophisticated understanding of accents:

Learners' views of accents

New teachers are often confused when interrogated by their students about accents. My first teaching job was in France where my classes divided themselves into two groups. Group A decided that they only wanted to learn an 'American accent'; Group B only wanted to acquire a 'British accent'. Both were actually more anti- the other than pro- their own choice. I come from New Zealand so it was easy for me to placate Group A by telling them that the New Zealand accent is nearly the same as the 'American' accent and Group B by telling them that the New Zealand accent was nearly the same as the 'British' accent. The nonsense of the whole thing was which American or which British accent did they mean, and could or should they even be bothering? It seems that, for all but a very few people, the accent you end up with, no matter how high your proficiency level, will be that of your L1, and why should it be any different? Learners do have a strange perception of the importance of accents. One low-intermediate Korean learner once told me that I couldn't understand him because he had an American accent. Actually, it was because he had a very strong Korean accent, and his knowledge of vocabulary and grammar was only that of a low-intermediate learner.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

 **Do your students have a preference for a particular accent in English, such as British or North American? What do you think are the reasons for their preference?**

Using English as a lingua franca

One of the major functions English fulfils in today's world is as a 'link language' or 'lingua franca', that is, as a means of communication between people who have no other shared language. This, of course, is the case for Germans using English to communicate with Russians or Japanese speakers, or for Italians learning English to communicate mainly

with people who speak another European language, such as Polish or Dutch. Increasingly, around the world, English is used for communicating in circumstances like these, where it functions as a 'common language' between people who do not share a language. The terms *English as an international language (EIL)* and *English as a lingua franca (ELF)* have been used to describe the use of English in these situations. ELF has been defined as follows (Firth, 1996: 240):

[ELF] is a contact language between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen *foreign language* of communication.

Another definition offers the following (House, 1999: 74):

ELF interactions are defined as interactions between members of two or more different linguacultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue.

The concept of English as an international language (or lingua franca) has a number of important implications for English teaching.

Learning English as an international language

As mentioned previously, in the past, English was often regarded as the property of 'native speakers of English' and of countries where it has the status of a mother tongue, or first language, for the majority of the population. It was these varieties of English (and particularly the standard accents within these varieties) that were considered legitimate models to teach to second or foreign language learners. And it was also assumed that English had to be taught in relation to the culture(s) of English-speaking countries. This picture has changed somewhat today. Now that English is the language of globalization, international communication, commerce, the media and pop culture, different motivations for learning it come into play. English is no longer viewed as the property of the English-speaking world, but is an international commodity. New goals for the learning of English have emerged, which include 'interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to study or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners...and a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures' (Yashima, 2002: 57), as well as other goals, such as friendship, travel and knowledge orientations (Clement and Kruidenier, 1983). The cultural values of the United Kingdom and the United States are often seen as irrelevant to language teaching, except in situations where the learner has a pragmatic need for such information. The language teacher no longer needs to be an expert on British and American culture, or a literature specialist either.

Therefore, new varieties of English reflect the pragmatic needs of using English as a lingua franca. For example, Bisong (1995) says that in Nigeria, English is simply one of a number of languages that form the speech repertoire of Nigerians, a language which they learn 'for pragmatic reasons to do with maximizing their chances of success in a multilingual and multicultural society'. English is still promoted as a tool that will assist with educational and economic advancement, but is viewed in many parts of the world as one that can be

acquired without any of the cultural trappings that go with it. Proficiency in English is needed for employees to advance in international companies and improve their technical knowledge and skills. It provides a foundation for what has been called ‘process skills’ – those problem-solving and critical-thinking skills that are needed to cope with the rapidly changing environment of the workplace, one where English plays an increasingly important role.

When it was taken for granted that the variety of English which learners needed to master was a native-speaker one, the choice was often determined by proximity. In Europe, due to its proximity to the United Kingdom, British English was usually the model presented in teaching materials. In many other parts of the world, North American English was normally the target. In some places (e.g. Indonesia), learners are more likely to encounter Australian English, and this may be the variety of English they feel most comfortable learning. However, in recent years, there has been a growing demand for North American English in places where British English was the traditional model, particularly among young people for whom American English is ‘cool’. It seems, perhaps, that it more closely resembles their ‘idea’ of English.

The two schools of thought concerning how closely learners should try to approximate native-speaker usage can be summarized as follows: The traditional view is that mastery of English means mastering a native-speaker variety of English. The presence of a foreign accent, influenced by the learner’s mother tongue, was considered a sign of incomplete learning. Teaching materials presented exclusively native-speaker models – usually spoken with a standard or prestige accent – as learning targets. The second school of thought is that when English is regarded as an international language, speakers may wish to preserve markers of their cultural identity through the way they speak English. In such cases, learners may regard a French, Italian, Russian or Spanish accent in their English as something valid – something they do not want to lose. This is a question of personal choice for learners, and teachers, therefore, should not assume that learners always want to master a native-speaker accent when they learn English. As one learner puts it, ‘I am Korean, so why should I try to sound like an American?’ This issue has important implications for the design of textbooks and is discussed in Chapter 18.



To what extent do your learners want to master a native-like pronunciation? How do you think they would respond if it was suggested to them that this wasn’t necessary?

Cosmopolitan English

Another concept that can be used to account for the way English is used in some newly-established contexts is *cosmopolitan English*, which can also be regarded as a European manifestation of English as an international language (Seidlhofer, 2004). Increasingly, in many European cities English serves as a lingua franca in the workplace, in particular within multicultural organizations. Many younger people in large cosmopolitan cities these

days are comfortable and confident using English and speak it with reasonable fluency. The English these young people learn to speak, however, often is not clearly British, nor American, though it frequently has more characteristics of American English, perhaps due to the influence of American pop culture, than the type of English they learned in school. Their accent may reflect their mother tongue, and they may not make a strong effort to lose it. The people with whom they interact could have five or six different mother tongues. There may be native speakers of English among them, but not always. Their vocabulary may have its limitations, and their sentence grammar, likewise, may not always conform to standard English. They speak *cosmopolitan English* – a variety of English that has not yet stabilized and whose characteristics have not yet been fully described. A teacher comments on cosmopolitan English in practice:

Cosmopolitan English

The concept of cosmopolitan English is a good characterization of the way many young Europeans use English. Take the case of the children of a family I know who moved to Finland from Brazil. They were raised by a Finnish mother and a Brazilian father, speaking Portuguese as their principal language, but also developed reasonable fluency in spoken English, prior to moving back to Finland. The two young-adult sons speak minimal Finnish and are more comfortable speaking English. Their peer group are mainly Finnish, but they use English almost exclusively among themselves. Their Finnish friends have no objection to using English – they regard it as ‘cool’ and see it as giving them an edge. Their English is cosmopolitan English.

I think cosmopolitan English is a phenomenon more common in certain parts of Europe than in other parts of the world. It explains why young people in the northern European countries, such as Sweden and Finland, speak English so well when they leave school, and why students in countries like Spain, Italy, Korea and Japan, of the same age, have such difficulties with English. It isn’t because the teaching is much better in some parts of Europe. Talk to young people from Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Holland, and they typically tell you that they learned most of their English from the media, from watching TV programmes and movies in English. Some 80% of the films shown in Western Europe are imported either from Britain or the US. But the important fact about the media in these countries is that foreign movies are not usually dubbed: subtitles in the mother tongue are provided, giving students a bilingual mode of developing their comprehension and, to some extent, their oral skills, something which doesn’t happen in those countries like Spain, Italy and Japan, where English learning is much less successful. Movies and other English-language based visual media there are almost always dubbed, and students go through the educational system rarely encountering a word of English outside of their English lessons.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, United Kingdom

Some European linguists, such as Seidlhofer (2004), believe that the increased use of English in Europe as a lingua franca will lead to a variety of cosmopolitan Englishes, or 'Euro Englishes', and that there are already clear signs of the emergence of European English. Other new Englishes, such as Japanese English, are also the focus of description (e.g. Hino, 2012). Seidlhofer believes it will be possible to provide descriptions of these varieties of English as they stabilize, and that eventually these descriptions will be codified in grammars and dictionaries. Others, such as Jenkins (2007), believe a core of Euro English will emerge, but there will be different varieties of Euro English, each with its own distinctive features, depending on the learner's mother tongue (Kirkpatrick, 2007). So as English becomes one of the primary languages of the European Union, British English may eventually become merely one sub-variety of it, along with French English, Dutch English, Danish English and so on. Widdowson (in Howatt and Widdowson, 2004: 361) commented on this situation and suggested that by acknowledging the different types of lingua-francas used, there was no intention to propose a reduced form of English. Rather it was simply to recognize that the modified varieties of English which are being used should be accepted as legitimate varieties that develop through the use of English as an international language. He argued that the functional capacity of the language is not in fact being restricted, but it is actually being enhanced, giving its users the opportunity to express their own identities through English rather than the socio-cultural identity of others.



Is the notion of cosmopolitan English relevant to your teaching context? Why, or why not?

Impact on native speakers of English

In the past, native speakers of English tended to assume that when they spoke English to non-native speakers, it was the responsibility of the other person to do their best to understand native-speaker English. Today, this might be regarded as a sign of what has been termed 'cultural imperialism' and that it is in fact the responsibility of native speakers to make themselves understood when they use English with non-native speakers. Native speakers of English who use English daily as an international language, and particularly English language teachers and teacher educators, need to develop the ability to use a type of English that makes use of high-frequency vocabulary and that avoids colloquialisms, vague language, obscure syntax or a marked regional accent or dialect – particularly when teaching students with limited proficiency in English. Some have termed this variety of English *Globish* (Nerrier, 2006). In Europe, meetings of the European Union are increasingly carried out in English, since it is argued that English is the language that excludes the fewest people present. However, this comes at a cost, since many native speakers of English are notoriously hard for colleagues in Brussels to understand, and it is often observed that they talk too quickly and use obscure idioms.

When dealing with global business, native speakers are often at a disadvantage when it comes to brokering deals in their mother tongue. In 2005, Korean Airlines chose a

French supplier for its flight simulators, rather than a simulator made by a British manufacturer, because the 'offshore' international English of the French manufacturer was more comprehensible and clearer than the English spoken by the manufacturer from the United Kingdom.

Consequently, some language schools are now offering courses in *offshore English* to help CEOs develop a more comprehensible way of using English when working abroad. Offshore English is said to consist of 1,500 or so of the most common English words and a syntax that is stripped of unnecessary complexity and vagueness. In classes in offshore English, native speakers are taught to speak *core English*, to avoid idioms (e.g. to say *make every effort* instead of *pull out all the stops*), to use Latin-based words like *obtain* instead of those with Germanic roots such as *get*, to avoid colloquial usage and strong regional accents, and to use a slower rate of speaking.



Can you suggest ways in which teachers who are native speakers of English often modify their English when teaching to make it more comprehensible to learners?

1.4 Implications for English language teaching

The growing demand for English worldwide and the changing nature of English itself as it assumes the role of the world's second language have had an important impact on policies and practices in English language teaching.

The status of English in the school curriculum

In view of the role of English worldwide, it is not surprising that, in most countries, English language teaching is a major educational priority and financial commitment.

Due to the importance governments attribute to the learning of English, in most countries today, learners in state as well as private schools are required to take English courses at some stage in their school careers. The form in which English instruction is provided, however, may differ considerably. For example, it may be a required or optional subject at grade school / elementary school and a required subject at middle school / junior high or high school / senior high. If English is taught at grade school, a gradual introduction to English is normally provided, the nature of the course sometimes depending on whether the children's mother tongue uses a Roman alphabet or a different writing system, such as Chinese or Arabic. English may be taught as a subject in its own right, or it may be used as a medium of instruction for some or most school subjects. The intensity with which English instruction is provided may range from a few hours per week, at grade school, to one or more hours per day, at middle school and high school. In many parts of Asia and

Latin America, English is generally a required subject in state schools. However, the time devoted to it is very limited, large class sizes make teaching difficult and the curriculum often fosters an exam-oriented or grammar-based approach to teaching. In China, more than 100 million people are currently studying English. In France, 96% of school children are studying English as an elective subject at school.



What is the official status of English in the country where you teach (or a country you are familiar with), and what is its status in the national curriculum?

Countries regularly evaluate their curriculums, as shown by this information provided by a teacher in Japan:

In Japan, English language policy is determined by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, [known as] MEXT (2008), and disseminated to local school administrators and teachers. The focus of the policy for foreign-language education is on 'communicative English', but content coverage and entrance-exam preparation are in reality the main focus of practising teachers. However, the 2013 curriculum aims to improve the content and delivery of English education, with an emphasis on language across the curriculum. Central to the 2013 curriculum guidelines is the concept of *gengo ryoku* (language ability), implying a coordinated focus on expression in Japanese across the curriculum. It is assumed that skills learned in the first language will transfer more easily to foreign-language instruction. For example, for senior-high-school English, more emphasis will be placed on speaking and listening, in an integrated-skills approach, and less of a focus on the grammar-translation approach of previous years.

In many countries, courses at secondary level typically focus on grammar, vocabulary and the four skills, but also reflect teaching trends in local contexts, where in some places, approaches such as content and language integrated learning (CLIL) may be used (see Chapter 3). Doubtless, the styles of teaching that occur around the world vary considerably; however, for many students, the following approach, observed in English classes in Indonesia (Lamb, 2009: 240), would be familiar:

My observation notes report teacher-dominated lessons based on a standard textbook with a grammatico-lexical syllabus and offering a set of traditional activities, including teacher explanations of language, reading-comprehension tasks, reading texts aloud, grammar and vocabulary exercises, and feedback sessions involving pupils writing their answers up on the blackboard. Oral work consisted mainly of teacher questions, plus some choral chanting.

Many students may have to take a local or national examination in English, as part of their school studies. The students' English teacher may be someone from their own country, or the teacher may be someone from another country. In the former case, the teacher's English proficiency may vary from minimal to advanced. In some countries (e.g. Japan,

South Korea, China), young graduates from English-speaking countries ('native speakers') are often employed to work, sometimes alongside local teachers, as conversation teachers. In many countries, English is a required subject for entry into university and is also a required subject for freshman/first-year university students. In some contexts (e.g. China), a pass in an English examination may be a requirement for university graduation. The kinds of English courses offered at university level may vary considerably. They may be general-English courses, based on the assumption that the students did not master enough basic communication skills during their school English programme, or, in some cases, they may be courses that prepare students for English-medium instruction (if some of their university courses will be taught in English). The use of English to teach graduate, and even undergraduate, courses is now a growing trend in many parts of the world. When this occurs, students entering university may be required to take an intensive English course to prepare them to follow courses taught in English, particularly if they are majoring in science or technology. These are called Foundation or Pre-sessional courses in the United Kingdom, and are sometimes referred to as Preparatory courses or simply Prep courses in other countries (e.g. Turkey).

English language teaching in English-speaking countries

While English language teaching is a major educational enterprise in countries where English has the status of a foreign language, it also plays an important role in 'English-speaking' countries such as Australia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. In 2010, there were 40 million foreign-born residents in the United States, some 17% of whom arrived between 2005 and 2010, and many of whom would be described as having *limited English proficiency (LEP)*. The growth in numbers of LEP students in recent years has major implications for state/public schools in the United States.

English-teaching programmes in countries like these serve a variety of different kinds of learners, including refugees and immigrants as well as students from different parts of the world seeking to improve their English. Such programmes involve both the public and private sector. For example, in Australia, the Adult Migrant Education Programme (AMEP) is a nationally administered language programme and one of the largest programmes of its kind in the world (www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/amep/facts-figures/amep-overview.htm).

The programme reflects the government's commitment to long-term sustainable settlement outcomes for newly arrived migrants, through integrated, targeted and well-designed programmes that support clients in their transition to life in Australia. Gaining English language proficiency is key to successfully settling in Australia... The number of hours of free English courses offered depends on the individual client's circumstances. All AMEP clients have access to up to 510 hours of English courses for five years from their visa commencement date or the number of hours it takes to reach functional English (whichever comes first).

Similarly, in Canada, the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programme provides English (and French) language courses for adult permanent residents. Immigrants who wish to take a course contact the nearest LINC assessment centre, or

immigrant-services organization, for an assessment of their language needs and are referred to LINC course providers in their community. The content of these courses follows the standardized descriptions of an individual's language proficiency at 12 benchmark levels (www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/linc.shtml).

In the United States, ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) curriculums are developed by education departments in individual states, based on the specific needs of each state, and are often framed around descriptions of competencies linked to state standards for English as a second language instruction.

The kinds of English courses offered in these contexts depend on the learners' individual needs. For example, 'mainstreaming' courses seek to prepare school-age learners to study in primary and secondary schools and to participate in the mainstream curriculum, and are often content-based (see Chapter 3). Some schools have procedures in place to recruit international students at high school or college level, since they can be an important source of revenue for the school. If students have limited English-language skills on arrival, they are often given intensive English-language support prior to entering regular classes (or sometimes parallel with them), to assist them with the language skills needed to master content and tasks in English, i.e. to enter the mainstream. Outside of school-related courses, social-survival courses prepare learners to participate in the communities in which they live. These courses aim to meet students' basic daily communicative needs and are generally competency based (see Chapter 3). Occupational or work-related courses seek to develop the English language skills or competencies needed in different fields of employment.

Tertiary institutions provide English language support for students in a variety of ways. Students may be tested on entry to determine if they need support for academic courses (such as support offered through courses in academic reading, writing, listening or speaking), and courses will typically be provided through a language centre or ESL department. Drop-in centres may also be available, where students can get individual assistance in essay writing, etc. Approaches used in such courses are often skill-based (i.e. based on a set of common skills that can be applied across many different disciplines) or text-based (see Chapters 3 and 16). General English may be delivered as a short, intensive course and, in some countries, may be linked to Cambridge English Language Assessment exams (described below).



What is your teaching context? What kinds of students do you teach or plan to teach? What are their goals in learning English?

The role of the private sector in English instruction

In many countries where the state school system provides limited English instruction (e.g. Central and South America, Japan, Korea and China), parents may send their children to private institutes for extra English instruction after school – sometimes for up to ten hours a week. Many teachers from English-speaking countries find employment in private

institutes when they work overseas. Whereas in the state school system local textbooks are generally used, sometimes prepared by the ministry of education, private institutes generally use commercial materials published by the major international publishers.

Private language schools often represent a response to a recurring problem in many countries – the ‘false-beginner syndrome’. Children may commence studying English at state primary schools, but receive only one or two hours of instruction a week. By the time they enter secondary school they have retained very little of the language they had learned, so instruction starts again at beginner level. But due to the limited exposure to English they often receive at secondary school, and the grammar and exam-based focus of teaching, when they leave secondary school their English is still rudimentary. If they enter college or university, they then recommence learning English, often again at beginner level. Learning English can be a source of frustration for such learners who find that despite several years of attempting to learn English, they have to keep starting again. As a response to the limited opportunities for learning English in state/public schools in many countries, a parallel system of private language schools exists to cater for those students who can afford to take additional English-language courses. The provision of English courses to fee-paying private students is a major industry worldwide. Students in such courses may simply want to improve their general English communication skills, since these may not have been emphasized in their school English programme. Some may have specific needs, such as English for business or travel, and some may want to enter local or overseas colleges and universities for tertiary studies.



How significant is the private language school industry in your country? What kinds of students do the schools cater for?

In addition to offering general English, private language schools often prepare students for international examinations, such as TOEFL, IELTS or TOEIC¹. In some countries, schools may offer courses linked to the ‘Cambridge Exams’ – a set of examinations developed by Cambridge English Language Assessment which place students according to five levels of proficiency, from basic (1) to advanced (5):

- 1** Cambridge English: Key (KET)
- 2** Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)
- 3** Cambridge English: First (FCE)
- 4** Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)
- 5** Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)

Private institutes may use their own school-based teaching materials, commercial textbooks or a mixture of both. Teachers may be native speakers or trained local teachers.

¹ TOEFL and TOEIC are registered trademarks of Educational Testing Service (ETS). This product is not endorsed or approved by ETS.

In recent years, too, there has been a rapid expansion in private-language institute courses directed at young learners and teens.

A teacher educator comments on teachers who teach at both state and private institutions:

Teachers' roles

Pre-service teacher training is usually geared towards employment in a particular sector: primary schools, middle schools, secondary schools or universities. The curriculum and teaching methods presented point to this goal. Overseas 'experts' running in-service courses in Southeast Asia are usually asked to work with teachers from the state system, although, in my experience, many teachers actually have two roles. By day, they teach at the state institution from which they have been sent on the course, but in the evenings, they teach at private language schools.

One can only admire people who move between the state textbook, with its culturally appropriate content, to one of the commercial textbooks with scenarios about flying overseas and booking into international hotels. (The popular preparation classes for international examinations are another story.) Teachers are remarkably adaptable. They will take ideas that they think are realistic and apply them, as well as they can, to both their classrooms. But international trainers need to keep in mind that spare time is one thing missing. An activity taking hours of preparation is unlikely to be acted on. After all, like teachers everywhere, they do have responsibilities beyond the classroom.

Marilyn Lewis, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

The impact of technology

In recent years, there has been a substantial change in where and how learning takes place. 40 or 50 years ago, teaching mainly took place in the classroom and in the language laboratory. The teacher used 'chalk and talk' and the textbook. Technology amounted to the tape recorder and overhead projector. However, with the emergence of communicative language teaching in the 1970s and, more recently, with the emergence of the internet, learning began to move away from the teacher's direct control and into the hands of learners, through the use of individualized learning, group work and project work, as well as online learning. The physical contexts for learning have also seen many changes. Learning is not confined to the classroom: it can take place at home, or in other places, as well as at school, using the computer and other forms of technology. Today's teachers and learners live in a technology-enhanced learning environment. Videos, computers, interactive whiteboards and the internet are accessible to almost all teachers and learners, and the language laboratory has been turned into a multimedia centre that supports online learning. Technology has facilitated the shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred learning, advocated by proponents of communicative language teaching. The role of technology is discussed in Chapter 19.

1.5 Conclusion

The status of English in today's world raises many issues for teachers and learners of English. The themes we have covered in this chapter, including the contexts where English is spoken, perceptions of English as a lingua franca and implications for English language teaching curriculums, can perhaps best be summarized through a set of principles, or considerations, that teachers need to keep in mind.

1. English means different things to different people

Learners associate English with a variety of values and roles, and these may influence their attitudes towards learning English and the kinds of learning experiences they prefer. Some may associate English with things they enjoy, such as pop culture, entertainment or the internet. For some, English may be viewed as something that will have economic value for them in the future, but this may not be the case for others. And not all learners may be seeking to acquire an overall general communicative ability in English, nor be aiming to acquire a native-like mastery of a particular variety of English. Teachers will need to realize that many learners may be satisfied with making themselves intelligible in English and speaking English in a way that reflects their cultural identity. All learners are different, as a Taiwanese learner cited by Holliday (2009b: 22) comments:

Although I did feel comfortable to be told that I did not have to be native-speaker like, I would definitely feel upset if I could not reach my own expectation in pronunciation...I just wanted to draw attention to the psychological part, the feeling, how people feel about themselves in terms of speaking...If we take Jenkins' view and tell them to stay where they are – you don't need to twist your tongue this way and that, and it's perfectly all right to keep your accent – at some point, we would terribly upset the learners because they might want to...I prefer to speak for myself.

The complex roles that English plays in different situations suggests that a 'balanced approach' to teaching English is appropriate (Farrell & Martin, 2009). This requires teachers 'to be culturally sensitive to the diversity of contexts in which English is taught and used' (McKay, 2002: 128). Thus, the variety of English emphasized should be based on the teaching context, the teacher's abilities and style, as well as their learners' needs and goals, both educationally and culturally. In such an approach, there is no single correct choice for all contexts (Christenson, 1992). Thus, choosing to teach standard British English in Doha can be just as appropriate as choosing to teach 'Chinese English' in Beijing.

2. Language teaching is a localized activity

Despite the global nature of English language teaching, each language-teaching situation is unique, and global solutions to local conditions are seldom effective. Language-teaching programmes need to reflect the individual contexts in which they operate. As Clark (1987: 11) comments:

A language curriculum is a function of the interrelationships that hold between subject-specific concerns and other broader factors embracing socio-political and philosophical matters,

educational value systems, theory and practice in curriculum design, teacher experiential wisdom and learner motivation. In order to understand the foreign language curriculum in any particular context, it is, therefore, necessary to attempt to understand how all the various influences interrelate to give a particular shape to the planning and execution of the teacher/learning process.

Seidlhofer (2004: 227–8) reflects a similar perspective, when she comments on the implications of English as a lingua franca (ELF):

Rather than just being trained in a restricted set of pre-formulated techniques for specific teaching contexts, teachers will need a more comprehensive education which enables them to judge the implications of the ELF phenomenon for their own teaching contexts, and to adapt their teaching to the particular requirements of their learners. Such teacher education would foster an understanding of the processes of language variation and change, the relationship between language and identity, the importance of social-psychological factors in intercultural communication and the suspect nature of any supposedly universal solutions to pedagogical problems.

3. Learners need to appreciate the diversity of English and the varieties of English that exist in the world

Learners should have the opportunity to hear different varieties of English, including 'new Englishes', as well as more familiar varieties of English (and perhaps to appreciate that English is not 'owned' by users of English in English-dominant countries, such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom). The internet provides a rich resource for illustrating how English is used around the world. A teacher comments on the use of Singapore English, or Singlish:

Learners' views of varieties of English

Outside the ESL classroom, our foreign students are exposed to a colloquial form of English, broadly known as Singlish. What might be a more constructive way of helping our students think through issues concerning Singlish in our linguistic environment so that they do not simply see themselves in an adverse situation, where they must swim against the tide of 'deviant' language? I was pleasantly surprised by a group of Vietnamese students I was interviewing. As they were aware of the different regional varieties of Vietnamese spoken in their own country, they told me it was acceptable that Singaporeans spoke English the way they did, even though it was not the variety they would want to acquire themselves. These students were also able to identify salient features of Singlish. As teachers who are ourselves users of non-native forms of English, we need to be proficient, informed and confident enough to discuss these issues with our students, be aware of how they view our local variety and also encourage them to build a realistic set of expectations as regards their own accents.

How do we set the stage for learning so that they can ultimately understand that in the reality of English language learning today, what truly exist [as stated by Kachru] are 'nativized webs of language structure and functional appropriateness'?

Chee Soo Lian, teacher and teacher educator, Singapore

4. Interlocutors may not be native speakers of English

Traditional views of English teaching often seek to prepare students to be able to manage interactions with native speakers of English. This may still be a relevant aim for learners who are studying English in an English-speaking environment. However, for many learners, their uses of English may mainly be with other speakers of English as an 'international language'. With globalization, English language learners need to be prepared for future encounters with speakers of varieties of English that differ from their own. One way to prepare learners is to expose them to different varieties of English (Matsuda, 2003). There are many examples of English varieties available on the internet, radio and television, and in different newspapers from around the world (Cook, 1999). For example, on the internet, teachers and learners can access the International Corpus of English (ICE) (www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage/ice), which provides samples of many national and regional varieties of English, and they can also access World Newspapers and Magazines (www.world-newspapers.com), which provides links to English newspapers from around the world. On the internet, it is also possible to view English television channels from around the world, such as New Delhi television (www.ndtv.com) from India, in which the broadcasters use Indian English.

5. Learners' English should be valued

Regardless of the English variety that teachers may choose to teach, learners should be reminded that the chosen model is an example of just one type of English, and that the learners' own English is valuable, even though it may differ significantly from the model presented in class. Some educators argue that teachers can encourage learners to 'refer to idiomatic expressions of their own language and enrich the communicative dialect of English with exotic and poetic elements' (El-Sayed, 1991: 166). For example, Dutch speakers of English might say, 'If you need help, just pull on the bell', which is a word-for-word translation of a Dutch expression. Although this expression is not one that a native speaker of English would use, the message is clear, so there is perhaps no need to 'correct' the speakers or to provide an alternative English expression. Thus, rather than being thought of as unsuccessful speakers of standard English, learners will be considered successful English-language users who make contributions to their speech community. This change in perspective, it is suggested, can increase learners' confidence and willingness to communicate in English (Cook, 1999). Hence, Kramsch (1993: 28) argues that learners can start using the foreign language 'not merely as imperfect native speakers, but as speakers in their own right'.

6. *Native speakers need to use English in ways that facilitate communication*

Native-speaker teachers of English need to recognize that the way they use English with other native speakers, and with people from their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds, is not necessarily helpful in contexts where English is an international language. They should learn how to monitor their speech to avoid the use of obscure idioms and expressions and endeavour to use English in a way that facilitates cross-cultural communication.

7. *Learners need to develop intercultural communicative competence*

From the viewpoint of English as an international language, the goal of English teaching is not merely to develop communicative skills in English. Byram (1988: 15) argues that language learning provides ‘the opportunity for emancipation from the confines of learners’ native habits and culture, with the development of new perceptions into foreign and native cultures alike’. Learning English thus becomes an opportunity to compare cultures, and for learners to validate their own cultural and linguistic heritages.

In sum, no monolithic standard of English exists as a target for English learning worldwide. Learners in different parts of the world have very different motivations for learning English, for the kind of English they seek to acquire and for the level of proficiency they need – and language-teaching policies and practices in different parts of the world reflect these differences. The expanding role of English in many countries prompts regular review of curriculum policies and associated teaching practices. The need for citizens with better English skills feeds the demand by national educational authorities for new language-teaching policies, for greater central control over teaching and teacher education, for new and more effective approaches to teaching English, and for standards and other forms of accountability. Yet despite the resources expended on English language teaching worldwide, in almost every country results normally do not match expectations – hence, the constant pressure to adopt ever-changing curriculums, teaching methods, materials and forms of assessment. As a consequence, the language-teaching profession is obliged to continually review its knowledge base and instructional practices through the efforts of applied linguists, researchers, teachers and teacher educators. Throughout this book, we will focus on the process of reflection and review of issues, approaches and practices in English language teaching.

Discussion questions

- 1 Technology (particularly the internet) has had a major impact on the role of English in the world. How has the ubiquity of the internet impacted English language education in your country?

- 2 Listen to an English language news broadcast available in your country. To what extent would the voices heard in this material expose students to different varieties of English? Consider both the programme announcers and those interviewed.
- 3 What examples of English being used as a lingua franca have you encountered – that is, as a means of communication between people who have no other shared language?
- 4 Consider this quote (Bruthiaux, 2010: 367): ‘In developing, resource-poor EFL settings especially, the top priority for students must be to acquire some English (for whatever purpose), with little time available and minimal resources from teachers who often lack proficiency and may have little awareness of the outside world. As a general principle, given the difficulties inherent in learning any L2 beyond early adolescence, models should be kept constant, with variation minimized or even artificially excluded.’ Do you agree? Why, or why not?
- 5 Do you think the ‘core English’ which is currently featured in ‘offshore-English’ courses should provide the model for all users of English as an international language – native speakers/writers and non-native speakers/writers of English alike?
- 6 Employing young native-speaker graduates to work as English conversation teachers, in public schools in places such as Japan, China and South Korea and in private institutes worldwide, suggests that the ideal teacher of a foreign language is a native speaker of that language. What advantages do a) native speakers, and b) non-native speakers, bring to language teaching?
- 7 Look at principles/considerations 1–7 presented in the Conclusion part of this chapter. Can you think of ways you could implement these principles/considerations in your teaching?

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2

Second language learning

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issue:

- What are the key theories of language learning?
 - Early history: behaviourism.
 - Language learning as a cognitive process.
 - Skill-based and performance-based learning.
 - Language learning as an interactive process.
 - Language learning as a social process.
 - Language learning as a strategic process.

2.1 Introduction

Any approach to language teaching needs to be firmly grounded in what we know about the nature of second language learning. Every classroom activity we make use of reflects knowledge and assumptions about how pupils learn and how we can best make use of this knowledge in teaching. Second language learning is a very complex phenomenon and is studied from many different perspectives, which means that there are a number of complementary – and sometimes competing – theories of second language learning. Language learning theories draw on learning theory from other fields, such as psychology and cognitive science, as well as from the findings of second language research. (This field of research is generally referred to as *second language acquisition*, or SLA. SLA includes a broader range of issues than those covered in this chapter, not all of them with practical applications – hence, the title of this chapter.) It is important to recognize that there are *theories* of second language learning, rather than a single theory of how second language learning takes place. No single theory of learning can account for the learning of something as complex as language, since learning a second language involves many different dimensions of knowledge and behaviour. Atkinson (2011b) has emphasized that second language acquisition is a very complex phenomenon with many different dimensions, and for this reason no single theory of second language acquisition can be expected to provide a complete understanding of it.

Van Patten (2010: 29–30) points out: although research ‘cannot speak to the day-to-day issues that confront teachers’, it can help them ‘understand acquisition and thus inform instruction’ by offering ‘insight into what the learning problems are’. Here, a teacher educator reflects on the importance of making SLA research accessible and relevant to teachers:

Teachers' views of research

As a teacher trainer, I am always interested in how experienced language teachers respond differently to SLA research. On the Cambridge DELTA course [Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults], for example, we have a couple of sessions on SLA and the implications for teaching, concentrating on issues such as L1 interference, interlanguage, the role of input and interaction, and individual differences. I notice that some teachers are very interested in the formal research perspective of SLA – how researchers go about collecting data on a particular problem, how the data is analyzed, what conclusions are drawn – and generally feel that, despite inconclusive findings in many cases, teachers need to pay attention to this research, seeing SLA as an important part of the knowledge base of a professional teacher. Other teachers, on the other hand, can react quite negatively, claiming that SLA research has little to offer practising teachers. I think it is largely a matter of how the research is often

presented in the literature – in highly theoretical terms, using quantitative methods, and often without considering the complex classroom variables that teachers, quite rightly, feel matter.

Neil England, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Sydney, Australia

In this chapter we will examine a number of theories of second language learning which have been applied in different ways in language teaching. These are behaviourism, learning as a cognitive process, skill and performance-based learning, learning through interaction, and learning strategies.

2.2 Theories of language learning

Behaviourism

A learning theory that had an important impact on many fields of teaching including language teaching is known as behaviourism – a theory which states that human and animal behaviour can and should be studied only in terms of physical processes, without reference to the mind. Behaviourism was based on the view that learning is a process in which specific responses are acquired in response to specific stimuli. Correct responses are reinforced and increase the chance of the behaviour becoming learned. Behaviourist learning principles have been successfully used for many years in training animals to perform the complex routines audiences enjoy watching in circuses and other public entertainments. According to the American psychologist Skinner (1957), an advocate of behaviourist views of learning that had been developed earlier by Watson (1913) and others, the learning of language was no different from the learning of any other kind of behaviour. Learning was said to involve habit formation, through repetition and reinforcement. This may sound familiar to many teachers, since it provided part of the theoretical support for the audiolingual method – a popular method in the 1950s and 1960s – which is discussed in Chapter 3. Language was taught through extensive drilling and repetition exercises, and through making use of activities that minimized the chances of producing mistakes.



Do you think there is any value in drills and similar repetition-based exercises in language teaching?

Behaviourism and teaching methods

Clark (1987) sees a behaviourist learning approach in many language-teaching methods, which first identify a set of target behaviours to be acquired (skills, functional ability, etc.) that are broken down into smaller units – that is, small elements of knowledge

and part-skills. These units are then sequenced from simple to more complex and build towards the desired outcomes. Thus, Clark (1987: 23) states:

[Behaviourism] has had a powerful influence in recent years on the design of foreign-language curriculums. It has given rise to the audiolingual, audiovisual / situational, topic-based and functional-notional approach to foreign language learning ... All of these approaches have sought to bring about an effective communicative ability in learners as their ultimate goal, but have conceptualized this ability and the way to bring it about in different ways, adopting different organizing principles in the design of the foreign-language curriculum. The audiolingual approach conceptualized a communicative ability in terms of good grammatical habits. The audiovisual / situational approach focused on the ability to understand and produce appropriate phrases related to particular situations. Topic-based approaches emphasized the ability to cope with certain topics. The functional-notional approach has focused on mastery of formal means to interpret and express certain predetermined meanings.

While the specifics of these approaches are the topic of Chapter 3, it is worth noting that the concept of breaking the whole down into small units and sequencing them for mastery based on practice is still at the core of most current approaches to syllabus development (see Chapter 17).

Contrastive analysis and language transfer

Lightbown and Spada (2006: 33) point out that behaviourism is reflected in the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CA), which states that where the first language and the target language are similar, learners will generally acquire structures with ease, and where they are different, learners will have difficulty. CA was based on the related theory of language transfer: difficulty in second language learning results from *transfer* of features of the first language to the second language. Transfer (also known as *interference*) was considered the main explanation for learners' errors. Teachers were encouraged to spend time on features of English that were most likely to be affected by first-language transfer. Today, transfer is considered only one of many possible causes of learners' errors. Since grammar is one of the main areas of language that is influenced by transfer, transfer is discussed more fully in relation to the learning of grammar (see Chapter 9).

However, in the 1960s the contrastive analysis hypothesis was criticized, as research began to reveal that second language learners use simple structures 'that are very similar across learners from a variety of backgrounds, even if their respective first languages are different from each other and different from the target languages' (Lightbown and Spada, *ibid.*). My early work on error analysis supported this view (Richards, 1974). Behaviourism as an explanation for language learning was subsequently rejected by advocates of more cognitive theories of language and of language learning that appeared in the 1960s and 1970s. One of the first people to develop a cognitive perspective on language was the prominent American linguist Noam Chomsky. His critique of Skinner's views (Chomsky, 1959) was extremely influential and introduced the view that language learning should be seen not simply as something that comes from outside but is determined by internal processes of the mind, i.e. by cognitive processes.



Can you give examples from your own language learning, or that of your learners, of errors that reflect transfer from the first language?

Language learning as a cognitive process

To view language learning as a cognitive process, learning is understood as a mental activity, one in which the learner is a lone scientist or explorer, building up his or her understanding of language from exposure to and experience of it. Cognitive approaches to learning are an established approach in psychology and are based on the view that learning reflects properties of the mind: 'Cognition is an overall term that includes all of the mental activities that facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of knowledge' (Pritchard, 2007: 8).

Here is a good description of this model of learning (Bialystock and Hakuta, 1994: 119–21):

Mind is an indispensable part of the system involved in learning a second language. It is the source of the cognitive operations that process the stream of language, make sense of it, and extract from it knowledge of a linguistic system. Mind is also the repository of the knowledge that the learner brings to the task: knowledge of the world, knowledge of social relations, knowledge of context and meanings, and knowledge of other languages... Second-language learners do not begin from scratch. The fact that the mind has already taken part in the process of discovery for one language prepares it to learn a second.

The goal of research from this perspective is to understand how changes in linguistic knowledge occur, what kinds of mental representations are constructed and the nature of the information-processing systems learners make use of. Atkinson (2011a: 4–5) identifies a number of core features and assumptions of a cognitive view of language learning, or cognitivism:

- 1 *Mind as a computer*: A set of operations that take in input, process it and produce output, as with a computer.
- 2 *Representationalism*: Processes that the mind engages in to store internal representations of external events (in this case, language input).
- 3 *Learning as abstract knowledge acquisition*: Abstracting the rules of the competence that underlies linguistic performance, as Chomsky put it.

A cognitive view of language learning is seen in the theories of universal grammar, schema theory, restructuring, explicit and implicit learning and noticing.

Universal grammar

This theory was proposed by Chomsky (1968) and suggested that learners come to language learning with an innate faculty for language learning that is activated by exposure to

language and that accounts for the rapid development of language in children. Universal grammar consists of innate ‘principles’ for the organization of language – particularly its grammar – that children apply to the input they receive. Some second language researchers, since the 1970s, have sought to apply this theory to explain features of grammatical development in second language learning, and to account for some of the features of learners’ developing language systems (Ellis, 1994). The theory of universal grammar suggests that learners apply innate and universal cognitive processes when they seek to learn a language, and these may account for similarities often observed in the language learners produce. This view was reflected in the *creative-construction hypothesis*, a view that emerged in the 1970s, which held that language learners develop an interlanguage system – one not directly reflecting the input they have received – through abstracting rules and principles and through making use of an internal mechanism – the *language acquisition device* – to create a developing learner’s grammar. This hypothesis accounted for the similarity observed among learners in the order of acquisition of grammatical items in a second language and offered a contrasting view of learning to the (then current) notion of language transfer, which attributed learners’ errors to interference from the first language. Now, errors were not viewed as signs of faulty learning, but were an indication of a creative-construction process at work as learners tested out hypotheses and abstracted the underlying rules and principles that accounted for language knowledge. Provided learners were exposed to the right kinds of input, learning would automatically occur. Teachers were encouraged to spend less time on correcting errors and trying to elicit error-free production, and more time on providing rich, meaningful input for learning (Dulay et al., 1982; Lightbown and Spada, 2006). Although more general psychological and social theories have emerged to add to our understanding of language acquisition, the original focus of the creative-construction hypothesis, as a creative process drawing on different cognitive processes, is still part of contemporary SLA theory.



The following learner sentences can be regarded as evidence of the creative-construction hypothesis. What language learning process do you think they illustrate?

- ‘I don’t know how do I pronounce this word.’
- ‘We are usually walk to school.’

Schema theory

The notion of schemas is another way of capturing cognitive aspects of learning. Schemas are mental models, or frameworks, which organize information in the mind and represent generalized knowledge about events, situations, objects, actions and feelings. They are part of prior knowledge that learners bring to new experience. For example, the schema of ‘the evening meal’, for some people, will consist of information about the time of the meal, where it takes place, the sequence of activities involved, the food items eaten and utensils used, and the participants and their roles and actions. Such a schema may differ

considerably from one culture to another and may need to be revised as new experience is encountered, described by Pritchard (2007: 4) as follows:

An existing schema represents the sum of an individual's current state of knowledge and understanding of the topic in question. New learning concerned with the topic will involve the process of assimilation (adding new information) and accommodation (adding new information and altering existing structures) and the expansion of and an increase in complexity, of the schema in question.

Schema theory has had a significant influence on our understanding of the nature of listening comprehension and reading in a second language, and on approaches to teaching both of these skills (see Chapters 12 and 14). It has emphasized the role of prior knowledge in comprehension, and the importance of pre-listening and pre-reading activities in preparing students to understand spoken and written texts. Teaching schemas involves helping students develop the interconnected meanings and relationships that make up schemas, and an understanding of the hierarchies of meanings and connections that underlie many concepts. The role of prior knowledge in learning is a core feature of constructivist theories of learning – one kind of cognitive approach to learning. Constructivist theory emphasizes that new learning is built upon existing knowledge and understanding. As Pritchard (ibid) describes it:

Prior knowledge has a crucial part to play in constructivist learning. An existing schema represents the sum of an individual's current state of knowledge and understanding of the topic in question. New learning concerned with the topic will involve the process of assimilation (adding new information) and accommodation (adding new information and altering existing structures) and the expansion of and increase in complexity of the schema in question.



What prior knowledge do you think you would draw on when reading a text called 'A visit to the dentist'?

In second language learning, the process that results when new learning builds on existing knowledge is known as *restructuring*.

Restructuring

Restructuring refers to adjusting what has been learned in order to accommodate new information. For example, if a learner has acquired the present simple tense and the past tense, when he or she encounters the present perfect – a form that involves a perspective on both the past and the present – the learner will have to restructure what has been learned in order to accommodate the new meanings communicated by the perfect tense. Language learning is believed to involve an ongoing process of restructuring previous knowledge in this way, whether a schema, words or grammatical knowledge. Swain (1999: 60) gives the following example of a restructuring task:

Students, working together in pairs, are each given a different set of numbered pictures that tell a story. Together, the pair of students must jointly construct the storyline. After they have worked

out what the story is, they write it down. In so doing, students encounter linguistic problems they need to solve to continue with the task. These problems include how best to say what they want to say; problems of lexical choice; which morphological endings to use; the best syntactic structures to use; and problems about the language needed to sequence the story correctly. These problems arise as the students try to 'make meaning', that is, as they construct and write out the story, as they understand it. And as they encounter these linguistic problems, they focus on linguistic form – the form that is needed to express the meaning in the way they want to convey it.

Restructuring is a central process in the learning of grammar and is discussed more fully in Chapter 9.

Explicit and implicit learning

An important distinction that originated in the field of cognitive psychology is the distinction between two kinds of learning. *Explicit learning* is conscious learning and results in knowledge that can be described and explained. *Implicit learning* is learning that takes place without conscious awareness and results in knowledge that the learner may not be able to verbalize or explain. For example, in teaching English, we often present students with information about different aspects of language and language use. They may study grammar rules and learn the features of a good cause–effect composition, and they may be able to describe and explain some of the rules underlying correct language use – such as the difference between the past simple tense and the present perfect. However, often learners (and also teachers) may be asked to explain things that we 'know', but which are difficult to explain, such as when we use a definite article in English and when we do not need to use one, or when we use *will* and when we use *shall*. People are also often consciously aware that something may be wrong about the way someone says something, but may not be able to explain exactly what it is.

The ability to use either explicit or implicit language knowledge in communication is sometimes called *procedural knowledge*. So when a learner can use the past tense appropriately in conversation, when referring to past events, and structure an account of a past event in the form of a narrative, he or she makes use of procedural knowledge. A learner demonstrates procedural knowledge when he or she participates naturally and fluently in a conversation, using appropriate expressions for opening a conversation; introducing and elaborating topics and information; and using strategies for turn taking, for responding to listener feedback and for bringing the conversation to a close. Researchers suggest that second language performance makes use of both explicit and implicit knowledge, and that explicit knowledge may be used to monitor or evaluate language production in situations where learners have time available for online planning (e.g. when composing an essay). In other situations involving spontaneous language use (e.g. conversation), speakers may not be able to access explicit knowledge (Ellis, 1994).

The distinction between explicit, implicit and procedural knowledge clarifies a number of questions that often arise in language teaching. For example: Does knowing 'about' language improve the learner's ability to use such knowledge? Not necessarily. This

knowledge has to become procedural knowledge, through practice. Over time, this knowledge becomes implicit knowledge and the basis for fluent language use. And can one master a language without necessarily knowing anything about its rules? Some would say, yes. Many first and second language users do so, making use of implicit knowledge. However, many would say that a focus on form was necessary to take learners beyond a plateau they would reach through purely implicit knowledge.

The implications of the distinction between explicit and implicit learning can be summarized as:

- Presentation of explicit knowledge facilitates understanding and awareness of the nature of language and how language is used.
- Some aspects of language may also be acquired implicitly.
- Explicit knowledge can become implicit knowledge, through practice.
- Procedural knowledge is based on practice in using both explicit and implicit knowledge.



Can you think of examples of language knowledge that people generally acquire as implicit knowledge?

The role of explicit and implicit knowledge is illustrated in this description of an adult learner's experience:



Explicit and implicit knowledge

Teachers wanting to explore the differences between implicit and explicit language knowledge sometimes call on their own experiences of language learning at school or university, where the emphasis was often on the explicit. By contrast, teachers who have been bilingual since childhood have an implicit knowledge of two or more languages. My own experience fell somewhere between these two. As an adult, my goal was to learn (partly relearn) the childhood language of my family, which, in my early years, had been banned in favour of an English-only policy. Therefore, my attempt to learn Welsh was more of a start than a review. My two sources of learning were commercial books and tapes, as well as an elderly bilingual tutor to whom time was unimportant and who loved talking, singing and baking. She made no attempts to explain the language which she had acquired implicitly; to her, that was simply the way the language was. However, she was an excellent speaker and listener. I would recommend this dual explicit/implicit approach of formal materials with their explanations about language, plus a native-speaking informant who is willing to use the language socially.

Marilyn Lewis, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

The teaching of many aspects of language use reflects a difference between implicit and explicit knowledge, particularly in relation to the ways speaking and writing are sometimes taught. An example is in the way that different text types such as recounts, descriptions and reports are taught (see Chapters 15 and 16). Initially, learners study examples of texts and study how they are organized. This information is typically provided as 'rules' and presented explicitly. Students then 'practise' applying the rules in creating texts of their own that reflect the rules. It is assumed that, over time, these will become part of implicit knowledge. However, the 'rules' can also be accessed if necessary during the process of constructing or revising texts.



Teachers provide models for learners, but so do other learners. If the language that learners hear from other learners is not accurate, do you think such modelling can have a negative effect, and if so, how do you minimize it?

Noticing

The distinction between explicit and implicit learning introduces the role of conscious awareness of features of language in learning. It has been proposed that some aspects of language are learned more easily if the learner is consciously aware of them in the language he or she hears – i.e. the learner 'notices' them (Schmidt, 1990; Cross, 2002). This is known as the *noticing hypothesis*. Schmidt (1990, with Frota, 1986) proposed that for learners to acquire new forms from *input* (language they hear) it is necessary for them to notice such forms in the input. Consciousness of features of the input can serve as a trigger that activates the first stage in the process of incorporating new linguistic features into one's language competence. As Slobin (1985: 1164) remarked of first language learning:

The only linguistic materials that can figure in language-making are stretches of speech that attract the child's attention to a sufficient degree to be noticed and held in memory.

Schmidt (1990: 139) further clarifies this point in distinguishing between *input* (what the learner hears) and *intake* (that part of the input that the learner notices). Only intake can serve as the basis for language development. In his own study of his acquisition of Portuguese (Schmidt and Frota, 1986), Schmidt found that there was a close connection between noticing features of the input, and their later emergence in his own speech. The extent to which a learner notices new features of language in the input (for example, the use of the past perfect tense in a narrative) may depend upon how frequently the item is encountered, how salient or 'noticeable' it is, whether the teacher has drawn attention to it or the nature of the activity the learner is taking part in. Schmidt found from a detailed longitudinal study of his own acquisition of Portuguese that new forms appeared in his Portuguese only *after* he had become aware of them in the Portuguese he was exposed to. On the other hand, forms that were frequent in the input he was exposed to, but that he was not consciously aware of (i.e. that he had not noticed) did not appear in his use of Portuguese (Schmidt and Frota, 1986). The noticing hypothesis emphasizes the role of

awareness in language learning and has implications both for the teaching of grammar as well as the teaching of listening. It is more fully discussed in the chapters on those topics (see Chapters 9 and 12).



Some aspects of language use may be easier to notice than others. Can you give examples of features of English which are a) easy and b) difficult to notice?

A teacher educator comments on how he came to incorporate noticing in his teaching:



Noticing in teacher training

I did my pre-service language-teacher education course in the early 80s and clearly remember a session titled, 'Highlighting new language on the whiteboard'. In this session, we were taught to highlight the form and pronunciation features of a grammatical structure, such as the third person *s* and the use of *do* vs. *does* in the question form of the present simple. We were told to use underlining, enlarged letters, a red board marker – anything to draw the students' attention to tricky form features, 'to hit them in the eye', so to speak. Long before the noticing hypothesis came along in the 1990s to provide theoretical support for this practice, it seemed to make very good sense to me when I tried to see things from a learner's perspective. This almost certainly explains why I was quick to adopt this practice in my own teaching.

Neil England, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Sydney, Australia

Language learning as skill-based and performance-based learning

Some aspects of language learning can also be regarded as examples of skill-based and performance-based learning. Skill-acquisition theory emerged in the 1980s as an alternative to cognitive views of learning (Ortega, 2009).

Skill-based learning

Skills can be understood as integrated sets of behaviours that are learned through practice. They are made up of individual components or sub-skills that may be learned separately and that come together, as a whole, to constitute skilled performance. One thinks of learning to ride a bicycle or to play the piano as consisting of skill-based learning of this kind. DeKeyser (2007b: 97) describes this process as follows:

The basic claim of skill-acquisition theory is that the learning of a wide variety of skills shows a remarkable similarity in development, from initial representation of knowledge through initial changes in behaviour to eventual fluent [and] largely spontaneous, and highly skilled behaviour, and that this set of phenomenon [sic] can be accounted for by a set of basic principles common to the acquisition of all skills.

Skill-based learning theory suggests that complex behaviours are made up of a hierarchy of skills. Complex skills, such as how to take part in conversation or how to read a newspaper, can be broken down into individual component skills. These exist in a hierarchy from lower-level skills (e.g. in reading a text, recognizing key words in a text) to higher-level skills (e.g. recognizing the writer's attitude to the topic of a text), and the lower-level skills need to be acquired before the higher-level skills can be used. Initially, skills are often consciously managed and directed by the learner. This is called *controlled processing* (Ellis, 1994). Over time, skills can become automatic and do not require conscious attention. This is called *automatic processing*. Learning involves development from controlled to automatic processing, i.e. the cumulative learning of lower-level skills. For example, when pianists learn to play a new piece of music, they often initially study the score to make decisions about fingering, phrasing and so on. They then learn the piece, usually in sections, often starting with a very slow performance of the piece, as they master difficult sections using controlled processing, and gradually moving towards faster performance. Eventually, they learn to play it from memory, without using the printed score as a guide. Many of the decisions they had to make while learning the piece are now made automatically, as the piece is performed using automatic processing. Sometimes, however, as part of their regular practice sessions, they may return to the use of controlled processing and practise the piece again very slowly, and in shorter sections, until they pick up fluent performance of the piece again.



Can you think of other examples of things you have learned and where you have moved from controlled to automatic processing in building a complex skill?

Many aspects of second language learning can similarly be understood from a skill-based perspective, such as the ability to compose complex written texts, the ability to understand spoken and written texts, and the ability to speak fluently and coherently. And central to the notion of skill-based learning is the notion of practice. Practice refers to repeated opportunities to use language over time. Practice is normally accompanied by feedback, allowing the learner to gradually improve his or her performance (DeKeyser, 2007a). Cook (2008) discusses this view of language learning in terms of 'processing models', whereby language learning is viewed as the gradual development of familiar classroom practices, an idea that has been central to many language teaching methods. Methods such as audiolingualism as well as techniques from communicative language teaching, such as information-gap tasks, depend on the idea that practice makes perfect. Cook's processing models (2008) therefore remind us that language development involves knowledge, behaviour and skills developed through practice.

This view is supported by Boers and Lindstromberg (2009: 28), who observe:

It is now believed by many, especially in the paradigm of Cognitive Linguistics (CL), that children acquire their mother tongue ‘bottom-up’ or, more precisely, ‘from chunks up’. In this view of the matter, a large portion of the acquisition process is simply a matter of imitation and generalization of what is encountered time and again in the input... Again, it follows that it is the highest-frequency elements that stand the best chance of being noticed, understood, learned, remembered, and employed as exemplars.

Performance-based learning

The notion of language learning as skill-based learning can be extended to describe how we use skills as the basis for communicative performance: we develop our ability to use language through participation in social activities that can be understood as acts of performance, such as using the telephone, taking part in a discussion or ordering food in a restaurant. Skill-based learning is thus complemented by viewing language learning as performance-based learning. From this perspective – sometimes referred to as a *sociocognitive approach* (Atkinson, 2011a) – learning involves acquiring repertoires of performance for use in specific contexts. As mentioned, as we practise, our performance becomes more skilful over time. We become more effective users of language, and more skilled at using it for the variety of communicative purposes it serves.

The performance-based view of learning focuses on language as a means of achieving social goals and actions. We use spoken language to buy things, order food, make telephone calls, invite someone for dinner and so on; we use written language to write letters, essays, reports, and to send email or text messages and so on. In other words, we use language to perform, or carry out, different functions. We learn language for real-world use and not as an abstract system in the mind, as implied by a cognitive approach to learning. And when these activities are performed, we call upon knowledge of specific conventions for the use of spoken and written language – conventionalized forms of discourse that are embedded in specific social activities (see Chapter 16). Learning is successful to the extent that we achieve our goals and that we employ recognized conventions of discourse organization for doing so. We learn how to use language, in this way, through repeated opportunities to practise doing so, and presumably, our performance becomes more skilful over time. The focus in performance-based learning is hence on the social aspects of learning, rather than the ‘systems’ dimensions. By performing the activities repeatedly over time, the learner becomes more proficient in them.

Many aspects of language as performance can be acquired through observing examples or ‘models’ of how language is used for particular purposes, and the ‘rules’ that account for how they are used. Teachers incorporate these principles into activities they plan in order to present language and then to facilitate student practice, such as activities that use dialogues and role plays to simulate authentic situations. For example, learning how to answer telephone calls, to order food in a restaurant, to ask for the bill in a café or to give instructions to a taxi driver can be learned through watching people perform

these activities, understanding the means they used and then using the same procedures repeatedly, on other occasions, until they can be performed automatically (Nguyen, 2011). My own experience bears this out (author's data):

I recently observed four young Swedish teenagers in a café in Prague, giving their orders to a waiter (who was Egyptian). The first student to give his order expressed it using *will*: 'I will have the hamburger and coke'. Each of the other students used exactly the same strategy for ordering their meals ('I will have... And I will also have...'), modelling their requests on the expression used by the first speaker.

Similarly, in a recent stay at a hotel in Ecuador, during a daily visit to the coffee shop to purchase a cappuccino, an exchange that I observed took place each time between the clerk and customers after ordering a coffee, and consisted of *Para aquí o para llevar?* ('For here or to take away?'), the meaning of which was clear from the context and from the customer's response. The routine was added to my Spanish speech repertoire. In the same way, through sharing meals in restaurants with Spanish-speaking friends and colleagues over several weeks, I was able to quickly master the language and routines needed to order in Spanish from a menu.



Can you think of other examples of where language routines are learned through participation in social or real-world activities?

Below a teacher describes how she has used performance-based learning in an activity where students ask for directions and information about their neighbourhood:



Neighbourhood scavenger hunt

One of the best things about teaching in New York City is the ability to use the city in my instruction. I often require my students to go out and use the language from our class lessons in 'real life'. One activity that I've used many times is the neighbourhood scavenger hunt. When I was working with beginners at a language institute in the city, we had a unit on neighbourhoods and giving and getting directions. (Unit 8 of *Interchange 1*, plus supplementary vocabulary.) Towards the end of the unit, I divided the class into pairs and gave each pair one copy of a handout, with eight questions highlighting the vocabulary and structures we had studied. (See the worksheet below, 'What's around here?') We did this as a race, and I usually offered a small prize to the first pair to correctly complete the handout (including correct grammar).

When all pairs had returned, we went over the answers. This was a practice run for the task that would occur the next day. The next day, we did a similar activity in Union Square, a popular neighbourhood in the city. We met at school, where I gave each

pair a map of the neighbourhood with my cell-phone number on it, in case someone got lost, and a copy of the worksheet, 'Union Square: What's around here?' We took the subway to Union Square, where I oriented them to the map, showing them which way was north, etc. Students had one hour to walk around and complete the handout. They were encouraged to ask people on the street where things were. At the end of the hour, we met at a local restaurant, where students would share what they had found out and have something to eat.

What's around here?

- 1** What classroom is next to room 1617?
- 2** What is across from our school?
- 3** What's between the bathrooms and the classrooms?
- 4** Is room 1601 near our classroom?
- 5** What's on the corner of 45th Street and 3rd Avenue?
- 6** What's in front of the windows in the computer lab?
- 7** Is there a drugstore near our school? If yes, where?
- 8** Are there any grocery stores around here? If yes, where?

The first pair to answer all questions correctly wins!

Union Square: What's around here?

- 1** What are the names of three restaurants on 14th Street?
- 2** Is there a movie theater around here? If yes, where?
- 3** There's a bookstore on 17th Street across from the park. What's the name of it?
- 4** What's next to the bookstore?
- 5** Are there any drugstores near here? If yes, where?
- 6** How many grocery stores are there on 14th Street between University Place and 3rd Avenue?
- 7** Is there a post office near here? If yes, where?
- 8** What's on the corner of 12th Street and Broadway?
- 9** Are there any laundromats around here? If yes, where?
- 10** Look for Max Brenner chocolate restaurant on Broadway. It is between 13th Street and 14th Street. What's across from Max Brenner?
- 11** Go inside Max Brenner, find Marcella, check your answers and eat something delicious!

Marcella Caprario, teacher, New York, NY, US

Language learning as an interactive process

A learning theory that has had considerable influence on language teaching is interactional theory – a social view of language acquisition that focuses on the nature of the interaction that occurs between a language learner and others he or she interacts with, and how such communication facilitates second language acquisition. Communicative language teaching and task-based teaching both reflect this view of learning.

Modification of input

At the core of the theory of language learning as an interactive process is the view that communication can be achieved between a second language learner and a more proficient language user (e.g. a native speaker) only if the more proficient user modifies the difficulty of the language he or she uses. Lightbown and Spada (2006: 43) mention that in the original (1983) formulation of the interaction hypothesis, Long postulates that ‘there are no cases of beginner-level learners acquiring a second language from native-speaker talk that has not been modified in some way’. If the input is too difficult or complex, of course, it may lead to communication breakdown. Therefore, when communicating with learners with limited English proficiency, speakers will typically modify their input by using known vocabulary, speaking more slowly, saying things in different ways, adjusting the topic, avoiding idioms, using a slower rate of speech, using stress on key words, repeating key elements, using simpler grammatical structures, paraphrasing and elaborating. In this way, the input better facilitates both understanding as well as learning. The applied linguist Steven Krashen drew on these theories in developing *the natural approach* (Krashen, 1981; 1982), which emphasized the role of comprehensible input in facilitating second language learning (see Chapter 3).

The following are strategies that can be used to facilitate comprehension:

Negotiation of meaning

This refers to meaning that is arrived at through the collaboration of both people involved. This negotiation may take several forms:

- The meaning may be realized through several exchanges, or turns, rather than in a single exchange.
- One speaker may expand on what the other has said.
- One speaker may provide words or expressions the other needs.
- One person may ask questions to clarify what the other has said.

Interactions of this kind are believed to facilitate language acquisition, evidence for which may be seen both in short term as well as longer-term improvements in grammatical accuracy (Ortega, 2009).

Repairing misunderstanding

If the learner is to succeed in communicating with others, despite limitations in his or her language proficiency, he or she needs to be able to manage the process of communication in a way that deals with communication difficulties. This can be achieved through the use of communication strategies such as the following:

- Indicating that he or she has misunderstood something.
- Repeating something the other person has said, to confirm understanding.
- Restating something, to clarify meaning.
- Asking the other person to repeat.
- Asking the other person for clarification.
- Repeating a word or phrase that was misunderstood.

In interactional theory, the learner's ability to pay attention and request feedback is considered an essential feature of successful second language learning.

Clarifying input

A feature of interactions between native speakers (or advanced language users) and second language learners is modification of the native speaker's language to facilitate comprehension. Clarification of 'input' is often seen in interactions like these:

- *Clerk to customer:* You need to fill in the form. The form. You need to fill it in. Write here, please.
- *Adult to visitor:* Which part of Japan are you from? Are you from Tokyo?
- *Supervisor to factory worker:* You start this one first. Finish. Then you see me.
- *Advanced-level learner to lower-level learner:* You need to review your essay before you hand it in – you know, go through and check the spelling and the organization carefully.

When people communicate with learners who have a very limited level of proficiency in a second language, they often use strategies of this kind, using a form of communication sometimes referred to as 'foreigner talk'. Other examples of this kind of modified talk are known as 'teacher talk', and 'caretaker talk' (e.g. the interaction between a parent and a very young child). Similarly, when a learner interacts with a person who is a more advanced language user, the input the advanced user provides often helps the learner expand his or her language resources. For example, the reformulation of the learner's utterance may draw attention to, or help the learner notice, features of the language, as we see in these exchanges between a student and a teacher (author data):

- S: I'm going away for weekend.
T: You're going away for the weekend?
S: Yes, away for the weekend.

- T: What did you buy at the sale?
 S: I bought it. This bag.
 T: Oh, you bought this bag? It's nice.
 S: Yes, I bought this bag.
 S: Last week, I go away.
 T: Oh, you went away last week?
 S: Yes, I went away.



Do you think reformulations of learners' utterances as in the example above are likely to lead to learning? What other forms of feedback do you think would be useful?

Negotiation of meaning often occurs spontaneously as well. For example, the following negotiation of meaning was observed between a learner and a native speaker: the learner wished to express that she lived in a shared apartment near the campus with two other students.

- S1: So, where are you staying now?
 S2: Staying an apartment. Together some friends.
 S1: That's nice. How many of you?
 S2: Staying with three friend. Sharing with Nada and Anna. Very near.
 S1: It's near here? Near the campus?
 S2: Yes, it's near the campus. On Forbes Street.

Repeated opportunities to communicate in this way are said to provide opportunities for learners to expand their language resources and are often used with communicative approaches to teaching.

Language learning as a social process

Beginning in the 1990s, another influential view of learning was developed that draws on an approach known as *sociocultural theory* – a theory developed by the Russian psychologist Vygotsky in the 1930s, and whose work became known in the West from translations that appeared in the 1960s. In the 1980s and 1990s the notions of *scaffolding* and the *zone of proximal development* were introduced to language teachers by researchers seeking to apply Vygotsky's theories to second language teaching and can be regarded as an expansion of interactional views of learning (Lightbown and Spada, 2006).

Scaffolding

Sociocultural theory views language learning as a social process in which meaning and understanding is constructed through dialogue between a learner and a more

knowledgeable other person. The term *sociocultural* means that learning takes place in a particular social setting (e.g. a classroom), in which there is interaction between people (teachers and students), objects (texts, books and images) and culturally organized activities and events (instructional acts and sequences). In order for the experienced knower to communicate with the learner, a process of mediation occurs. Learning is a process of guided participation, mediated through the guidance of a more knowledgeable other. Through repeated participation in a variety of joint activities, the novice gradually develops new knowledge and skills (Rogoff, 1990). The term *mediation* emphasizes the external social process that is taking place and extends the theory of language learning as interaction, as well as the concept of modified input.

Scaffolding refers to this process of mediation. Initially, learners depend on others with more experience than themselves and gradually take on more responsibility, over time, for their own learning, in joint activity (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In the classroom, scaffolding is the process of interaction between two or more people as they carry out a classroom activity, and where one person (e.g. the teacher or another learner) has more advanced knowledge than the other (the learner) (Swain et al., 2010). During the process, discourse is jointly created through the process of assisted or mediated performance, and interaction proceeds as a kind of joint problem-solving between teacher and student. For example, in a classroom setting, the teacher assists the learners in completing learning activities by observing what they are capable of and providing a series of guided stages through the task. Collaborative dialogue ‘scaffolds’ the learning process by initially providing support (the ‘scaffold’) and gradually removing support as learning develops. Learning is initially mediated and directed by the teacher, or other more advanced learners, and is gradually appropriated by the individual learner. Throughout, the teacher provides opportunities for noticing how language is used, experimenting with language use, practising new modes of discourse and restructuring existing language knowledge – all essential aspects of teaching, and an account of teaching that many find conforms to a common-sense understanding of the process of teaching. Wells (1999: 221), drawing on Mercer and Fisher (1993: 343), identifies three qualities for a learning event to qualify as an example of scaffolding:

- Learners should be enabled to do something they could not do before the event.
- Learners should be brought to a state of competence which enables them to complete the task on their own.
- The learning event should be followed by evidence of learners having achieved a greater level of independent competence, as a result of the scaffolding experience.



Scaffolding can take place between teacher and learner, and between two or more learners. Do you think scaffolding also occurs between learners of roughly the same level when they carry out an activity?

Zone of proximal development (ZPD)

Central to the notion of mediated learning is a concept referred to as the *zone of proximal development*, which focuses on the gap between what the learner can currently do and

what needs to be achieved to reach the next stage in learning – the *level of potential development*. Vygotsky defined it as ‘the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving and adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’ (1978: 86). Teaching is optimally effective, the theory goes, when it ‘awakens and rouses into life those functions which are in the stage of maturing, which lie in the zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1934, quoted in Wertsch, 1985: 71). During the interaction between learner and teacher, the learner is guided through the process of scaffolding until he or she is gradually able to function independently. To participate in mediated learning, the learner must develop *interactional competence*, the ability to manage exchanges despite limited language development. Personality, motivation and cognitive style may all play a role in influencing the learner’s willingness to take risks, his or her openness to social interaction, and attitudes towards the target language and users of the target language.

The sociocultural theory of learning and the notions of mediated learning, scaffolding and the ZPD provide an explanation for things that teachers normally do when they teach, but also provide a different way of conceptualizing and understanding these processes.

The following example of how this process takes place shows the interactions between an ESL/ELT tutor in a US college programme and a student during feedback sessions on the student’s essay writing, and is described by Lantolf and Thorne (2006: 278–80). The strategies the tutor uses in responding to grammatical errors in the student’s composition are summarized as follows, and arranged according to whether they reflect independent functioning on the part of the learner (0) or different degrees of collaborative interaction between the tutor and the learner (stages 1–12):

- 0 Tutor asks the learner to read, find the errors and correct them independently, prior to the tutorial.
- 1 Construction of a ‘collaborative frame’, prompted by the presence of the tutor as a potential dialogic partner.
- 2 Prompted or focused reading of the sentence that contains the error by the learner or the tutor.
- 3 Tutor indicates that something may be wrong in the segment (for example, sentence, clause, line): ‘Is there anything wrong in this sentence?’
- 4 Tutor rejects unsuccessful attempts at recognizing the error.
- 5 Tutor narrows down the location of the error (for example, tutor repeats or points to the specific segment which contains the error).
- 6 Tutor indicates the nature of the error, but does not identify the error (for example, ‘There is something wrong with the tense here’).
- 7 Tutor identifies error (for example, ‘You can’t use an auxiliary here’).
- 8 Tutor rejects learner’s unsuccessful attempts at correcting error.

- 9** Tutor provides clues to help the learner arrive at the correct form (for example, 'It is not really past, but something that is still going on').
- 10** Tutor provides the correct form.
- 11** Tutor provides some explanation for the use of the correct form.
- 12** Tutor provides examples of the correct pattern when other forms of help fail to produce an appropriate responsive action.

In the following example a teacher describes the importance of scaffolding:



Providing appropriate scaffolding for classroom tasks

Student failure to produce as expected is often the result of lack of, or ineffective, scaffolding. Take writing, for example. With effective scaffolding, students can produce texts that they would never be able to produce by themselves. In the ELT institute I work for, writing assignments typically follow this structure:

- a** Students are presented with a model that they read, discuss and subsequently analyze so as to identify relevant rhetorical features, such as what genre or type of text it is, the types of discourse markers used, how the text is organized into introduction, development and conclusion, etc.
- b** Students are given a topic to develop in the same genre as the model text.
- c** Students engage in activities to generate ideas, such as free writing, debating, etc.
- d** Students organize the ideas generated in an outline or diagram.
- e** Students write their first draft.
- f** Teacher and/or peers give feedback on the content and form of the first draft.
- g** Students rewrite their text. The end product is the result of the scaffolding provided and the social construction that took place among students and between students and teacher.

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Language learning as a strategic process

Another approach to understanding second language learning is through the study of learner strategies. A focus on learner strategies was part of a movement known as 'learner-centredness' that originated in the 1970s and 1980s, in both general education and language teaching, and has led to a great deal of research since then. Benson (2012: 31) comments:

The learner-centred approach involved a shift away from a subject-centred view of language education, which views language learning as the mastery of a fixed body of words and grammatical structures, toward a view that emphasized the acquisition of language skills, participation in communicative processes and the construction of language knowledge.

The notion of learner strategies reflects the philosophy of learner-centredness because it addresses how learners can be actively involved in managing their own learning, through awareness of strategy use and through reflecting on their own learning processes. *Learning strategies* are defined as specific actions and behaviours that learners use to improve their skill in learning or using a second language, and that they believe will improve the effectiveness of their learning or language use (Chamot, 2001). A useful definition of strategies is ‘activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own learning’ (Griffiths, 2008: 94).

Strategies are normally identified through interviews with learners and through the use of self-report questionnaires, as well as through giving learners tasks to carry out (e.g. to read a difficult text) and reflect on, or report, how they go about it. The notion of strategies raises important questions about language learning. For example:

- Are some learners more successful than others because they are more aware of strategies and use them more often than other learners?
- What strategies do successful learners use?
- Can strategies be taught?

Rubin (1975: 45–8) was one of the first to try to identify the strategies of successful language learners and identified seven characteristics of ‘good language learners’:

- They are willing and accurate guessers who are comfortable with uncertainty.
- They have a strong drive to communicate, or to learn from communication, and are willing to do many things to get their message across.
- They are often not inhibited and are willing to appear foolish if reasonable communication results.
- They are prepared to attend to form, constantly looking for patterns in the language.
- They practise, and also seek out opportunities to practise.
- They monitor their own speech and the speech of others, constantly attending to how well their speech is being received and whether their performance meets the standards they have learned. They attend to meaning, knowing that in order to understand a message, it is not sufficient to attend only to the grammar or surface form of a language.

Hall (2011: 147) suggests that lists such as these reflect the principles of communicative language teaching – the dominant methodology of the time (see Chapter 3) – and need to be viewed with some degree of scepticism. There has been a great deal of research and theorizing related to the nature of learning strategies since that time. A useful classification (adapted by Dörnyei, 2005, from O’Malley and Chamot, 1990) identifies the following types of strategies used by second language learners: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, social strategies, and affective strategies.

Cognitive strategies are ways in which we try to better understand or remember learning materials or input, such as by making mental associations, underlining key phrases in a text, making word lists to review following a lesson and so on. The following is an example (author's data):

When I was learning Indonesian, I had a great deal of difficulty trying to distinguish *kanan* (right) and *kiri* (left) and always got the two confused, until I used the strategy of mentally reminding myself that *kanan* does NOT contain the letter 'r' for 'right'.

Metacognitive strategies are ways in which learners analyze, prepare for, monitor and organize their own learning. They can involve the planning a learner does before a classroom activity, monitoring performance during an activity and evaluating how he or she carries out an activity. For example, a student might focus on the following kinds of questions in relation to a reading text he or she has been asked to read during a reading lesson:

- How should I approach this reading task? (planning)
- What parts of the text should I pay more attention to? (planning)
- Am I focusing on the appropriate parts of the text? (monitoring)
- Did I understand correctly the words the writer used? (monitoring)
- Did I perform the task well? (evaluating)
- What caused me to misunderstand part of the text? (evaluating)

Social strategies are actions the learner initiates in order to increase the amount of interaction and practice he or she can have with speakers of a language. For example, a learner may deliberately avoid spending time with people who share his or her mother tongue so that he or she has more opportunities to use English.

Affective strategies are actions the learner takes to control the emotional conditions involved in language learning, i.e. to reduce anxiety or stress when trying to use the language. For example, a learner may find it helps to listen to music while he or she is doing homework.



Learners use different cognitive strategies in order to help them understand and learn from materials they read. What strategies do you use for this purpose?

The motivation for much of the research on strategies has been to determine what the most effective strategies are for particular kinds of learning tasks and to teach students to use effective strategies (Oxford, 2011). This was prompted by O'Malley and Chamot's (1990: 140) finding that:

In general, more effective students used a greater variety of strategies and used them in ways that helped the students complete the language task successfully. Less effective students not only had few strategy types in their repertoire but also frequently used strategies that were inappropriate to the task.



What are some ways in which the strategies used by successful language learners can be identified?

Teaching learners to use effective strategies is known as *learner training* or *strategy training*. Strategy training raises a number of issues:

- Are strategies the same across different cultures?
- Are strategies consciously employed or implicit?
- Does successful strategy use depend on which strategies are used, how often they are used or how well they are used?
- How can strategies be taught?

Oxford (1990) suggests an approach that can be used:

- Learners do a task without any strategy training.
- They discuss how they did it, and the teacher asks them to reflect on how their strategies may have facilitated their learning.
- The teacher demonstrates other helpful strategies, stressing their potential benefits.
- Learners are provided with opportunities to practise the new strategies.
- Learners are shown how the strategies can be applied to other tasks.
- Learners are provided with further tasks and asked to make choices about which strategies they will use.
- The teacher helps learners to understand the success of their strategy use and assess their progress toward more self-directed learning.

Approaches to strategy training generally have these characteristics. Dörnyei (2005) argues that, to develop learners' awareness of what strategies are and what their role is in language learning, strategy training must provide activities that link these strategies to classroom tasks, to offer examples of many different types of strategies, to provide practice in the use of strategies, and to provide opportunities for learners to reflect on their use of strategies.

In teaching strategies, Cohen (2011: 683) suggests that four issues are involved:

- 1 Raising awareness of the strategies learners are already using.
- 2 Presenting and modelling strategies so that learners become increasingly aware of their own thinking and learning processes.
- 3 Providing multiple practice opportunities to help learners move toward autonomous use of the strategies, through gradual withdrawal of teacher scaffolding.
- 4 Getting learners to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies used and any efforts that they have made to transfer these strategies to new tasks.

Both explicit teaching of strategies (known as direct instruction) and indirect strategy instruction (by providing opportunities to practise strategies without explicit instruction) can be used to help develop awareness and use of strategies; however, many people recommend a direct approach in which strategy training is incorporated into a regular language lesson. Chamot (2005) described five stages: preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation and expansion. Gu (2012) illustrates these in similar terms of a series of stages a teacher can use in teaching strategies. Firstly, the teacher begins by introducing and modeling a strategy, following which the students practice using it. This stage is followed by a period of reflection in which the students review their experience of using the strategy. Lastly, the students try out the strategy with different learning tasks. Gu (2012) suggests then that the overall goal of these stages is for learners to become independent strategy users and to take responsibility for their own choice and use of strategies.

Much of what teachers do focuses on strategy development, since teachers typically guide students towards effective ways of learning and of completing learning activities. However, perhaps the most important outcome of strategy research is the emphasis it gives to learner autonomy and learner responsibility. It reminds us that learners can take a great deal of responsibility for their own learning, and that learning is not simply the mirror image of teaching. It also reminds us that language teaching is not simply concerned with teaching language; it includes teaching *how* to learn a language. Through an awareness of strategies, learners can influence and manage their own learning, and conversations with learners about what strategies they use, how they use them and when can be a focus of journal writing and other activities in which learners discuss and share their experiences with effective, and also less effective, strategies. Awareness of the strategies that can be used with different kinds of classroom tasks and in dealing with real-life uses of English outside the classroom can be a regular component of teaching.

Learners also use strategies outside of the classroom. I experienced a good example of a learner using communication strategies recently, when a student in Guatemala was asked to drive me to my hotel after an event. He was anxious to make use of the opportunity to talk to me and entered readily into conversation. However, once I started speaking at my normal rapid speech rate, he interjected several times, saying, ‘Sorry, I didn’t get what you said?’ ‘Sorry, do you mean...?’ ‘Could you say that again, please?’ He was using me like a tape recorder, rewinding me to listen again and thus making use of the opportunity to practise communicating, rather than simply abandoning the attempt to do so.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has explored major learning theories that have contributed to language teaching as we understand it today. The theories complement each other since they each focus on different dimensions of second language learning. The main implications of these theories for language teaching can be summarized here:

- Language learning involves extensive practice in order to develop fluent language use.
- Second language learning makes use of both implicit and explicit learning, and conscious awareness of language through 'noticing' can facilitate language development.
- Learners expand their language skills through taking part in collaborative learning activities in which the teacher or other learners guide them through the completion of tasks. Gradually, the learners learn to complete complex tasks with less guidance.
- Learning depends on the kinds of input learners receive, both in the classroom and beyond it. In order to provide input that is accessible to learners and, therefore, can support language learning, input needs to be made comprehensible, by reducing the complexity of the language that students work with and by using communication strategies to help clarify meanings.
- Activities that involve interaction and negotiation of meaning provide opportunities for learners to expand and refine their language resources and to learn through the feedback such opportunities provide.
- Effective language learning involves developing awareness of strategies that can be used to plan, monitor and evaluate language use, as well as to repair trouble spots in communication.

Discussion questions

- 1 Learning through repetition is a key feature of behaviourism. Examine a recent coursebook. Does it make use of activities that involve repetition of items that have been presented? What kinds of repetition activities does it make use of?
- 2 Do you think it is sometimes useful to compare grammatical items or patterns in English with features of the learner's first language? Why? What learning theory would this activity reflect?
- 3 If possible, collect a sample of errors in the use of the past tense from students with different first languages. Are the errors similar or do some appear to reflect first language interference? If not, what could account for the similarities of the errors?
- 4 Schemas sometimes differ across languages. Compare the activity of 'the evening meal', which is cited as reflecting a schema, and how it might differ in two cultures.
- 5 Can you think of examples of other tasks that can facilitate restructuring? Compare with Swain's example.
- 6 Can you suggest a classroom listening activity that would involve noticing differences between use of the present and past tense?
- 7 Examine a coursebook that teaches spoken communication skills. What acts of performance does it include?
- 8 Choose an activity that could be carried out in groups of three and that involves some form of information gap (see Chapter 3). As the activity is carried out, assign the first

person to observe the interactions that take place and to note examples of the following if they occur: negotiation of meaning, repairing misunderstanding, modifying input.

- 9 Observe a lesson or a video of a lesson. Can you find examples of how the teacher provides scaffolding to enable learners to complete a task?
- 10 Choose any of the strategies that are discussed in the section *Language learning as a strategic process*. Can you suggest a way in which this strategy could be taught to learners?

Further reading

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3

Approaches and methods

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What are the global teaching approaches and methods?
 - The difference between an approach and a method.
 - The grammar-translation method.
 - The direct method.
 - Audiolingualism.
 - Situational language teaching.
 - Communicative language teaching (CLT).
- What special-purpose approaches and methods are there?
 - English for specific purposes (ESP).
 - Competency-based language teaching (CBLT).
 - Content-based instruction (CBI and CLIL).
 - Text-based instruction (TBI).
 - Task-based language teaching (TBLT).

3.1 Introduction

The teaching and learning of foreign or second languages has been the subject of debate for centuries, and, throughout history, many different ideas about how best to teach languages have been proposed. In the nineteenth century, the grammar-translation method was widely used up until the end of the century. In the first half of the twentieth century, the major teaching methods that will be described in this chapter were the direct method, the structural-situational method, audiolingualism and communicative language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). These methods were widely implemented at different times in different parts of the world. However, by the latter half of the twentieth century, the nature of language teaching had changed. There was a great diversity of contexts and needs for the teaching of English, and global methods gave way to a variety of different approaches more suited to different kinds of learners and for use in different kinds of teaching situations. Rather than a focus on 'general English' that would be suitable for all types of learner, specially developed courses were needed for immigrants, for refugees, for learners needing English for occupational or educational purposes and for international business or travel, and for learners needing English for professional or academic reading or writing. In this chapter, we will review global language-teaching approaches and methods, as well those that have been developed for more restricted or specific purposes. But first it will be necessary to clarify the distinction that is often made between an approach and a method.

3.2 Global teaching approaches and methods

The difference between an approach and a method

All instructional designs for the teaching of a second or foreign language draw on a number of sources for the principles and practices they advocate. For example, they generally make explicit or implicit use of:

- *A theory of language*: An account of what the essential components of language are and what proficiency or competence in a language entails.
- *A theory of learning*: An account of the psycholinguistic, cognitive and social processes involved in learning a language and the conditions that need to be present for these processes to be activated.

Theories of learning were discussed in Chapter 2, where we saw that some theories of learning view language learning mainly as a cognitive process, others as an interactive process and others as a social process. The theory of language and language learning underlying an instructional design results in the development of principles that can serve

to guide the process of teaching and learning. Different instructional designs in language teaching often reflect very different understandings of the nature of language and of language learning, as we will see below. The particular theory of language and language learning underlying an instructional design in turn leads to further levels of specification. For example:

- *Learning objectives*: What the goals of teaching and learning will be.
- *The syllabus*: What the primary units of organization for a language course will consist of.
- *Teacher and learner roles*: What roles teachers and learners are expected to play in the classroom.
- *Activities*: The kinds of classroom activities and techniques that are recommended.



What languages have you studied? What methods were employed in the classes you took?

When an instructional design is quite explicit at the level of theory of language and learning, but can be applied in many different ways at the level of syllabus design and classroom procedures, it is usually referred to as an *approach*. Communicative language teaching and the natural approach, which are discussed below, are described as approaches, because the principles underlying them can be applied in many different ways. Teachers adopting an approach have considerable flexibility in how they apply the principles to their own contexts. When an instructional design includes a specific level of application in terms of objectives, teacher and learner roles and classroom activities, it is referred to as a *method*. With a method, there are prescribed objectives, roles for teacher and learners and guidelines for activities, and, consequently, little flexibility for teachers in how the method is used. The teacher's role is to implement the method. Audiolingualism and situational language teaching (described below) are examples of methods in this sense. The 'methods era', in this sense, is often said to have lasted until the 1990s, by which time researchers and applied linguists had shifted the focus to teachers and the process of teaching, rather than methods. The researchers suggested that while teachers may draw on principles and practices from approaches and methods they have studied or been trained in, once they enter the classrooms and develop experience in teaching, their practice is much more likely to reflect an interaction between training-based knowledge, knowledge and beliefs derived from the practical experience of teaching, and their own teaching philosophy and principles. This theorization of practice will be described in Chapter 4.

The following methods discussed below – grammar-translation, the direct method, audiolingualism and situational language teaching – can all be considered early global-teaching methods.

Grammar-translation

Grammar-translation was a teaching method that was used for centuries and is probably still used in some parts of the world today. It was based on a detailed analysis of the grammar of the language, followed by exercises involving translating sentences and texts from the mother tongue into the target language. (Although in many parts of the world today, teachers often make use of the students' mother tongue when they teach, in order to present or explain new language, this practice may be called 'mother-tongue facilitated teaching', and has nothing to do with what we refer to as the grammar-translation method.) The emphasis in the grammar-translation method was primarily on reading and writing skills and sentence-level practice, and little use was made of spoken language in the classroom, since in times before globalization there was little practical need for oral fluency. Jin and Cortazzi (2011: 558) describe grammar-translation as referring to 'a cluster of practices, including explicit grammatical explanations, detailed examples illustrating grammatical rules, bilingual vocabulary lists and translation exercises, and perhaps a focus on reading literary texts'. Consequently, students who studied with this method often developed a good understanding of the grammar of the language, but little fluency in speaking. Translation texts typically bore little relation to the way language is used in the real world, and for many students, language classes meant a tedious experience of memorizing lists of obscure grammar rules and vocabulary and trying to produce translations of stilted or literary prose. However, for a more recent view of the value of translation, see Cook (2010).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as cross-border travel became more common, there was growing recognition in Europe of the need for people to have a spoken command of other languages. There was, consequently, a need for teaching methods that gave more attention to speaking, and this led to a movement away from grammar-translation and the introduction of oral-based methods (although we noted above that grammar-translation continues to be used in some parts of the world). These oral-based methods did not make use of translation. The primacy of the spoken language and the need to teach a language through its spoken, rather than written form was also emphasized by linguists of the time, and it was during this period that the discipline of phonetics was developed. A teacher educator points out, however, the possible value of grammar-translation in some contexts:

A case for grammar-translation

For Chinese EFL learners, the main purpose for learning English is to pass exams in order to further their education or for social mobility, rather than for daily communication. Therefore, grammar-translation may, to some extent, be helpful for students to achieve their purpose, though most Chinese scholars are advocating CLT. In my personal experience as a middle-school student, both grammar and translation were the major focuses of English textbooks. In order to pass the exams, middle-school students had to work hard on the grammar items required in the syllabus. As for translation, students

were required to translate Chinese sentences into English (and less frequently from English into Chinese) using phrases, expressions and sentence patterns learnt in the text. I experienced, in university, a similar format for the grammar-translation method, though the level of difficulty was much higher. Besides sentence translation, there was also passage translation in the university textbook.

Viewed from my own English language-learning experience, I think grammar-translation should not be regarded as a method to be avoided by EFL teachers. There is no reason why deep understanding of grammar, and good ability to translate, cannot help students improve their writing or lay a solid foundation for their speaking and communicative competence, for that matter. On the contrary, a good command of grammar will give an EFL learner more confidence, among other advantages, to hone his/her communicative competence. Through translation, EFL learners can also better understand language items, such as grammar or vocabulary (words and phrases), and better comprehend the original text. It may, therefore, be said that grammar-translation certainly has a role to play in the Chinese EFL context, where most students do not have exposure to an English-speaking environment.

Ao Ran, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China; research associate, Singapore



Have you ever studied a language using the grammar-translation method? How useful was it? Why do you think some teachers still feel comfortable using the grammar-translation method?

Perhaps the reason for the continued use of grammar-translation in countries such as China, reflects a) the limited command of spoken English of many language teachers, b) the fact that this was the method their teachers used, c) the sense of control and authority in the classroom that it gives teachers and d) the fact that it works well in large classes. Jin and Cortazzi (2011: 558–9) offer the following explanation for the continued use of grammar-translation, and other traditional teaching approaches, in some parts of the world:

TAs (traditional approaches) have persisted for longer in most developing parts of the world than in more economically developed ones, due to the slower development of educational systems and language teacher training, cultural perceptions and different ways of change, limited learning resources and finance.

The direct method

One of the first oral-based methods to be developed was known as the direct method, since it was based on the idea that the meaning of new language items could be communicated directly through careful presentation techniques and without recourse to translation. The following procedures were typically used:

- 1 Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
- 2 Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
- 3 Oral-communication skills were built up in a carefully graded progression around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
- 4 Grammar was taught inductively (i.e. without direct explanation or presentation of grammar).
- 5 New teaching points were introduced orally.
- 6 Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects and pictures; abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.
- 7 Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.
- 8 Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.

A teacher describes her early teaching experiences with the direct method:

The direct method – my experience

When I began teaching English in Spain over 25 years ago, I worked at a school which was part of an international chain of language schools, and where we had to follow the 'direct method'. As a language learner myself, I had been taught Spanish mainly through the audiolingual method, which, in my case, involved spending three hours a day in a language laboratory, using a book specially written by my tutor and aptly named *Sangre, Sudor y Lágrimas* or 'Blood, Sweat and Tears'.

When I discovered the direct method, I remember how excited I felt. First of all, I attended a special training course, where I was given very specific instructions on how to apply the principles of the method. What particularly appealed to me, at that time, was the fact that we would be teaching English only through English – no translation or lengthy grammar explanations or coursebook, not even any writing as such, at least during the first year with my elementary group. I had to be quite inventive and constantly think of how I could build up my students' communication skills little by little, through a question and answer routine. It certainly wasn't always easy to adhere to the principles of the method.

My students were highly motivated, enjoyed this experience, and, in fact, they did learn a lot. In hindsight, with more experience and knowledge, I can see that this method was by no means perfect and does have its drawbacks. However, the point I would like to make is that before dismissing it out of hand, we can still adapt and use those techniques which work for us in our own teaching context.

Diana Croucher, teacher, Barcelona, Spain

The direct method is sometimes still used in teaching English to young children and there are good examples of teachers using the direct method on the internet. And we probably owe to the direct method the fact that the use of the mother tongue and translation have been ignored, or downplayed, in language teaching ever since – something that many language learners find counter-intuitive. The direct method was used in many private language institutes, such as those of the Berlitz chain (where it is still used today), where teaching was often one-to-one and the teachers were native speakers of the language. However, it was difficult to implement on a large scale (e.g. in schools), since it demanded a high level of both teaching skill and language fluency on the part of the teacher, and there were few published resources to support it. By the 1920s, it had significantly declined, and in the United States, a reading-based approach that was predicated on the gradual introduction of words and structures in simple reading texts was used for foreign-language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).



Why do you think the direct method is sometimes used to teach children?

Audiolingualism

Prior to the Second World War, foreign languages were often taught using a reading-based approach, in which vocabulary study and reading comprehension were the primary focus (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). During the Second World War, the need for a different approach to language teaching was recognized in the United States, and the US army worked with linguists on ways of teaching languages that seldom had been studied seriously up to that time – languages such as Japanese and Chinese, for example. An intensive oral-based method was developed (referred to as the ‘army method’) that was grammatically based, but that required extended oral practice, and that often produced learners with good oral skills in a relatively short time. As a result, after the Second World War, the need for more effective language-teaching methods than the reading approach was recognized, and applied linguists drew on what had been learned from the army method, and developments in linguistics and psychology, to the development of audiolingualism. Audiolingualism takes its name from the belief that language learning should be based on the spoken language, through the medium of audio input (hearing) and spoken output. Language teaching focused on teaching the basic structures of the language through a process of drilling and repetition. For example, the following exercise occurs in a widely used text, published in the United States in the 1950s (Lado and Fries, 1957):

Listen to the statements with *here* or *there*. Use *this* or *these* to indicate objects *here*. Use *that* or *those* to indicate objects *there*. For example:

The water here is fresh. *This water is fresh.*

The water there is clear. *That water is clear.*

The houses there are old. *Those houses are old.*
The houses here are new. *These houses are new.*

- 1 The trees there are pine trees.
- 2 The problem here is difficult.
- 3 The apples here are ripe.
- 4 The man there is my cousin.
- 5 The student here is from Nicaragua.
- 6 The lady there is a teacher.
- 7 The light here is bright.
- 8 The men there are engineers.
- 9 The books here belong to Mary.
- 10 The house there is fifty years old.
- 11 The boys there are my nephews.
- 12 The flower here is a violet.

It was assumed that language learning meant building up a large repertoire of sentences and grammatical patterns, and learning to produce these accurately and quickly in the appropriate situation. Once a basic command of the language was established through oral drilling and controlled practice, other uses of language were introduced, usually in the sequence of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Techniques that were often employed included memorization of dialogues, question and answer practice, substitution drills and various forms of guided speaking and writing practice. Great attention to accurate pronunciation and accurate mastery of grammar was stressed from the very beginning stages of language learning, since it was assumed that if students made errors, these would quickly become a permanent part of the learner's speech. And much of this practice could be carried out in a language laboratory, where little input from the teacher was required, rather than in a classroom. A teacher comments on his experiences studying Indonesian in the late 1970s:

Memories of audiolingualism

I studied Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) at university in the late 1970s. Many of the classes were in the language laboratory, using classic audiolingual techniques, such as repetition and substitution drills and question and answer practice. I was on my own in

a booth, with enormous headphones and a clunky tape recorder. Sometimes the teacher would listen in, comment on and correct my production of single sentences practising certain grammatical patterns. It is fashionable today to dismiss these techniques as uncommunicative, mechanical, mind-numbing. Although today I certainly would not choose to learn a foreign language using these techniques exclusively, at the time I found them very useful and not at all mind-numbing. I value accuracy and loved being able to take my time to achieve a sense of near perfection in the production of an utterance.

Neil England, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Sydney, Australia

As Neil England observes above, not all aspects of audiolingualism need to be rejected since it can help develop automaticity in language use, and it still accounts for the way many teachers conduct some or part of their lessons. Williams and Burden offer the following explanation for the dominance audiolingualism achieved (1997: 12):

There are a number of possible practical reasons for this. In many countries, teachers are not provided with professional training; in some contexts the prerequisite for teaching is a primary education. It can be quicker and easier to teach teachers to use the steps involved in an audiolingual approach: presentation, practice, repetition and drills. Teachers can also follow the steps provided in their coursebook in a fairly mechanical way. Teachers who lack confidence tend to be less frightened of these techniques, whereas allowing language to develop through meaningful interaction in the classroom can be considerably daunting, and requires teachers with some professional knowledge. An audiolingual methodology can also be used by teachers whose own knowledge of the target language is limited.

The same explanation, offered above, also accounts for the success of two widely used textbook series based on the audiolingual methodology – *English 900* (originally published 1964), and *Side by Side* (originally published 1980–3).



What sort of skills do you think teachers need to master when using the audiolingual method?

Situational Language Teaching

Although audiolingualism was developed in the United States, a similar methodology based on similar principles was developed in the United Kingdom and was known as the structural-situational method, the oral method, or situational language teaching. This approach grew out of the work of British TESOL specialists in the first half of the twentieth century, who took the direct method as their starting point, but developed a vocabulary and grammatical syllabus to provide the basis for a general English course. By the 1950s, it was the standard British method and was used in textbooks and teacher-training courses

in areas of British ELT influence worldwide. The main characteristics of the method were (Richards and Rodgers, 2014: 47):

- 1 Language teaching begins with the spoken language. Material is taught orally before it is presented in written form.
- 2 The target language is the language of the classroom.
- 3 New language points are introduced in situations, rather than as isolated items of grammar.
- 4 Vocabulary-selection procedures are followed to ensure that an essential general-English vocabulary is covered.
- 5 Items of grammar are graded, following the principle that simple forms should be taught before complex ones.
- 6 Reading and writing are introduced once a sufficient lexical and grammatical basis is established.

In a typical lesson, according to the situational method, a three-phase sequence was often employed, known as the P – P – P cycle – Presentation, Practice, Production – a procedure that will be familiar to many teachers who have completed certificate-level training courses:

- *Presentation:* The new grammar structure is presented, often by means of a conversation or short text. The teacher explains the new structure and checks students' comprehension of it. Alternatively, the students may be asked to infer a grammar rule from its use in a text or conversation.
- *Practice:* Students practise using the new structure in a controlled context, through drills or substitution exercises.
- *Production:* Students practise using the new structure in different contexts, often using their own content or information, in order to develop fluency with the new pattern.

The P – P – P lesson structure has been widely used in language-teaching materials and continues, in modified form, to be used today. Many speaking or grammar-based lessons in contemporary materials, for example, begin with an introductory phase in which new teaching points are presented and illustrated in some way, and where the focus is on comprehension and recognition. Examples of the new teaching point are given in a context that clarifies the meaning of a new form. This is often followed by a second phase where the students practise using the new teaching point in a controlled context, using content often provided by the teacher. The third phase is a free-practice period, during which students try out the teaching point in a free context, and in which real or simulated communication is the focus. Lessons thus move from a focus on accuracy (or skill-getting) to fluency (or skill-using), a format which many teachers and materials developers continue to find useful. A textbook series based on the situational approach and which was widely used in the 1980s and 1990s was the *Streamline* series. However,

growing dissatisfaction with P-P-P began to develop as early as the 1960s. A common observation was (Shehadeh, 2005: 14):

Apart from highly gifted and motivated students, most learners working within a structure-based approach fail to attain a usable level of fluency and proficiency in the second language, even after years of instruction. In India, [the applied linguist] Prahbu notes that the structure-based courses required 'a good deal of remedial teaching, which, in turn, led to similarly unsatisfactory results', with school leavers unable to deploy the English they had been taught, even though many could form grammatically correct sentences in the classroom.

Others criticized the view of language implicit in P – P – P: it suggests that grammar is learned incrementally – one structure at a time, through mechanical practice rather than communicative language use – an issue that is addressed by advocates of communicative language teaching and task-based teaching, which are discussed below. However, since there is little published research on how teachers actually implemented P – P – P, it is difficult to know if the unsatisfactory results, frequently cited for the method, were attributable to the method itself, poor levels of application of it, poor teaching, or were due to unfavourable classroom-learning conditions that would make learning difficult, no matter what method was used.



Do you think a P – P – P lesson format (or a modification of it) still has its place in language teaching?

Both audiolingualism and situational language teaching began to fall out of favour in the 1970s, as the theories on which they were based became discredited, due to the emergence of new paradigms in both language theory and language-learning theory. The behaviourist model of learning, based on imitation and repetition, was being challenged by cognitive and interactive views of language and language learning (see Chapter 2). Language was no longer viewed as a set of fixed patterns and rules to be learned by exposure and imitation, but was seen to draw on cognitive processing that enabled learners to build up their linguistic competence through exposure and interaction. Both cognitive and interactive theories of learning offered alternative accounts of learning (Chapter 2). Suddenly, drills, pattern practice, substitution tables, memorization of dialogues and other practices associated with audiolingualism and situational language teaching were no longer popular, as a new 'communicative' paradigm in language teaching emerged. This came to be known as communicative language teaching – the next global method – and was a dominant paradigm in language teaching for the next 20 years.



Do you think some of the techniques associated with the audiolingual and situational methods, such as the memorization of short dialogues, choral and substitution drills and teacher-led question and answer practice, have a place in language teaching? If so, why?

Communicative language teaching

Just as the direct method was a response to the need for a greater emphasis on fluency in spoken second-language communication towards the end of the nineteenth century, a similar change in needs together with changes in language learning theories prompted a rethink of approaches to language teaching in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. This was the period when the process we now refer to as globalization was beginning to have an impact on travel, communications, education, commerce and industry. The world was becoming smaller, and proficiency in English was becoming a more urgent priority for countries in many parts of the world. The language-teaching profession was challenged to provide a response. In reviewing the status of language teaching at that time, educators concluded that the assumptions underlying audiolingualism and similar methods needed to be reviewed, resulting in what eventually became a paradigm shift in approaches to language teaching.

In reviewing teaching practices and the assumptions they were based on at the time, applied linguists argued that grammar-based methods such as audiolingualism and situational language teaching only focused on grammatical competence as the underlying basis for second language proficiency. Researchers felt that what was needed in order to use language communicatively was *communicative competence*, a construct proposed by Hymes (1973) to describe a person's knowledge of how to use language appropriately as a communicative resource. Communicative competence was said to include the ability to use language for different communicative purposes (e.g. description, narration, exposition, complaints, apologies, suggestions) and the ability to use language that is appropriate to the context of its use, i.e. the setting, the participants and the activity being accomplished. This view seemed to provide a new approach to language teaching. It could also draw on interactive and learner-centred philosophies of learning to support its teaching practices.

The result was communicative language teaching or CLT. CLT created a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement when it first appeared, and language teachers and teaching institutions all around the world soon began to rethink their teaching, syllabuses and classroom materials (Hymes, 1973; Canale and Swain, 1980; Widdowson, 1979; Paulston, 1974). The support CLT received from prominent academics at the time as well as from organizations like the British Council, in addition to the fact that it provided a basis for a new generation of textbooks, meant that it soon became widely known and accepted. In planning language courses within a communicative approach, grammar was no longer the starting point. New approaches to language teaching syllabuses were needed, and different syllabus options were proposed, as well as a different focus for classroom activities. The concept of functional syllabuses (organized around communicative functions, or speech acts, such as making requests, giving advice, making suggestions, describing wishes and needs and so on) appeared during this period, and the European regional organization, The Council of Europe, developed a series of new syllabus frameworks organized around topics, functions and situations, as well as vocabulary and grammar covering the basic, intermediate and advanced proficiency levels (van Ek and Alexander, 1980).

Since the language classroom is intended as preparation for survival in the real world, and since real communication is a defining characteristic of CLT, an issue which soon emerged was the relationship between classroom activities and real life. Some argued that classroom activities should, as far as possible, mirror the real world and use real-world, or 'authentic', sources as the basis for classroom learning. Clarke and Silberstein (1977: 151) thus argued:

Classroom activities should parallel the 'real world' as closely as possible. Since language is a tool of communication, methods and materials should concentrate on the message and not the medium. The purposes of reading should be the same in class as they are in real life.

Others (e.g. Widdowson, 1987) argued that it is not important if classroom materials themselves are derived from specially created texts and other forms of input, as long as the learning processes they facilitate are authentic. Negotiation of meaning, noticing and the movement from controlled to automatic processing (see Chapter 2) are examples of authentic learning processes, and these can be facilitated by classroom materials and activities that are specially designed with these processes in mind. However, since the advent of CLT, textbooks and other teaching materials have taken on a much more 'authentic' look, reading passages are designed to look like magazine articles (if they are not, in fact, adapted from magazine articles), and textbooks are designed to similar standards of production as real-world sources, such as popular magazines. Chapter 18 covers, in depth, the question of authenticity in textbooks.



Widdowson discusses the importance of authentic learning processes. What would be an example of an authentic and an inauthentic process?

The communicative syllabus

Traditional language syllabuses usually specified the vocabulary students needed to learn and the grammatical items they should master, normally graded across levels from beginner to advanced. (Syllabus design is discussed in Chapter 17.) Several new syllabus types were proposed by advocates of CLT. The first widely adopted communicative syllabus, developed within the framework of classic CLT, was termed the *threshold level* (van Ek and Alexander, 1980). It described the level of proficiency learners needed to attain to 'cross the threshold' and begin real communication. The threshold syllabus hence specifies topics, functions, notions and situations, as well as grammar and vocabulary.

As well as rethinking the nature of the syllabus, the new communicative approach to teaching prompted a rethinking of the nature of classroom-based language teaching. It was argued that learners learn a language through the process of communicating in it, and that communication that is meaningful to the learner provides a better opportunity for learning than a grammar-based approach. Under the influence of CLT theory, it was argued that grammar-based methodologies should be replaced by functional and interaction-based teaching: accuracy activities, such as drill and grammar practice, were

replaced by fluency activities, based on interactive small-group work. Some proposed a 'fluency-first' pedagogy (Brumfit, 1984), in which students' grammar needs would be determined on the basis of performance on fluency tasks, rather than predetermined by a grammatical syllabus. However, in practice, grammar syllabuses were rarely abandoned, and language courses have continued to reflect a communicative approach, such as my *Interchange* series (4th edition, Richards et al., 2012) and my *Four Corners* series (Richards and Bohlke, 2011). The difference between more traditional approaches and CLT courses is that grammar is integrated with communicative practice and linked to communicative outcomes. Jin and Cortazzi comment (2011: 569):

Grammar after being in a bypass in audiolingual and early communicative periods is widely reinstated to a more central position in TESOL theories. This is evident in streams of corpus-based reference and pedagogic grammars. It is clear from the steady flow of research-based rationales and considerations for applying grammar in L2 classrooms. Questions remain about attention to grammar (when and how, at which language levels); about whether to integrate grammar with other skills or have some separate treatment, about deductive or inductive treatment or both, and about the use of descriptive terms in grammar teaching. In mainstream textbooks, grammar is usually a focus in specific sections of explanations followed by limited practice after considerable work with language in texts and classroom interaction, so that grammatical patterns under consideration will have already been exemplified in meaningful contexts.

Nevertheless, the communicative syllabus may have limitations in some environments, as one teacher points out:

The limitations of communicative language teaching

From the theoretical perspective, CLT seems to be a better teaching method for the Chinese context, because the learning outcomes it defines are mostly what Chinese learners of English lack and need. In reality, however, there are practicalities which may render the implementation of CLT quite daunting, or may even hinder the reception of this method in China. For example, from the teacher's standpoint, adhering to the principles of CLT may mean sticking to a set of ideals that are hardly achievable in real-life situations. If the focus of English language teaching in China is real communication, then students may not be able to have good exam results, in exams such as the National College Entrance Examination. Nationwide, adoption of CLT may require a radical overhaul of the whole national testing system. Predictably, more human and financial resources would have to be committed to the overhaul. While it is true that English language teachers in China should provide opportunities for learners to experiment and try out what they have learnt, the opportunities they can provide for their students to put what they have learned into practice, through communicative activities, are, in fact, very limited. There used to be an 'English Corner', where students could go and practise their English at least once a week. But not any more. 'English Corner', as it were, has given way to virtual chat rooms, such as QQ. Teachers should simulate as many communicative activities in class as

class time permits, but, then again, this is not quite practicable because of the large size of Chinese classes ([smaller classes] of English majors in some universities, of course, [are] an exception). Teachers who are tolerant of students' errors may, in some cases, either be considered by their students to be too incompetent to identify their errors (especially in universities), or be blamed by students for mistakes they make in the exams, because it is generally deemed to be a teacher's responsibility to correct students' mistakes, or errors, in the English language-learning process. If Chinese EFL students are left to induce and discover grammar rules, they would have to receive substantial exposure to English in order for the induction and discovery to take place. However, students' heavy study load (especially for middle-school students and non-major university students) does not always allow them to spend much time on English. To put it in a nutshell, the feasibility of CLT in China may be questionable if students lack an English-speaking environment.

Ao Ran, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China; Singapore

Ao Ran's comments remind us that methods developed from one context cannot always be transported to a very different context and expected to work in the same way. In China, the examination system, class size and an overcrowded curriculum often do not provide conditions favourable for learning through communicative interaction.

Communicative practice

The essence of CLT is the assumption that learners learn a language through using it for authentic communication. Drawing on both interactive and constructivist views of language learning (see Chapter 2), it was assumed that learning would be an *outcome* of engaging in meaningful communication. This called for the use of classroom techniques and activities that required learners to use their communicative resources and engage in negotiation of meaning (Breen and Candlin, 1980). Activities of this kind made use of collaborative learning in pairs or small groups, and included:

- *Information-gap activities*: Activities that require learners to communicate in order to get information they do not possess.
- *Jigsaw activities*: Activities in which the class is divided into groups, and each group has part of the information needed to complete the activity.
- *Task-completion activities*: Puzzles, games, map-reading and other kinds of classroom tasks in which the focus is on using one's language resources to complete a task.
- *Information-gathering activities*: Student-conducted surveys, interviews and searches in which students are required to use their linguistic resources to collect information.
- *Opinion-sharing activities*: Activities where students compare values, opinions and beliefs, such as a ranking task in which students list six qualities, in order of importance, which they might consider when choosing a date or spouse.

- *Information-transfer activities:* These require learners to take information that is presented in one form and represent it in a different form. For example, they may read instructions on how to get from A to B and then draw a map showing the sequence, or they may read information about a subject and then represent it as a graph.
- *Reasoning-gap activities:* These involve deriving some new information from given information, through the process of inference, practical reasoning, etc. – for example, working out a teacher's timetable on the basis of given class timetables.
- *Role plays:* Activities in which students are assigned roles and improvise a scene or exchange, based on given information or clues.

A lesson plan for a communicative lesson is given in Appendix 1.



What kinds of interaction and language use do you think the activities listed above are likely to facilitate?

An issue that arises with activities of this kind, however, is whether fluency work develops fluency at the expense of accuracy. In doing communicative tasks, the focus is on getting meanings across, using any available communicative resources. This often involves a heavy dependence on vocabulary and communication strategies, and there is little motivation to use accurate grammar or pronunciation. It was soon found that communicative practice thus requires extra attention on the part of the teacher, in terms of preparing students for a task or follow-up activities that provide feedback on language use. The promise that communicative classroom activities would help learners develop both communicative competence as well as linguistic competence did not always happen. Programmes where there was an extensive use of 'authentic communication', particularly in the early stages of learning, reported that students often developed fluency but not accuracy, resulting in learners with good communication skills, but a poor command of grammar and a high level of fossilization (Higgs and Clifford, 1982). In this case, many teachers find the need to build more accuracy-focused activities into their lessons, ensuring that learners have opportunities to notice errors in their own production, as well as activities that involve students' monitoring their own language development over time (Lightbown and Spada, 1990). Technology offers a useful means of doing this, if learners keep a video record of their performance at different stages during a course (see Chapter 19). However, like all approaches, communicative-practice activities may work more effectively in some contexts than in others, as this teacher notes:



Second thoughts on CLT

Several years ago, in Singapore, I taught on a course for a group of Cambodian primary and secondary school teachers of English. The objectives of the course were to develop the teachers' proficiency in English and their confidence in using communicative activities. In one lesson, I was showing the teachers examples of information-gap

activities taken from different published materials. I got them to take on student roles and do one of the activities. It was one of those ‘Spot the ten differences between the two pictures’ tasks. The teacher ignored my ‘Don’t show your picture to your partner’ instructions, immediately placed both pictures on the desk and circled the differences. We talked about why, from my perspective, the activity was a failure. The teachers told me they found it a bit strange to deliberately create artificial communication barriers, when the task of identifying the differences between the pictures could be much more efficiently achieved by working in a no-nonsense cooperative way. It was a bit of a critical incident for me, reminding me that some of the principles underlying communicative approaches may not make cultural sense in some contexts.

Neil England, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Sydney, Australia

Krashen and the ‘natural approach’

An alternative interpretation of communicative language teaching was developed by two American language teaching specialists in the 1980s – Tracy Terrell and Steven Krashen – which they termed the *natural approach* – and which had a considerable impact on language teaching particularly in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. It was described as an attempt to incorporate the ‘naturalistic’ principles observed in studies of second language acquisition. Krashen and Terrell’s account of their theories appeared in their book *The Natural Approach* (Krashen and Terrell, 1983). Central to the natural approach is Krashen’s *language acquisition theory*, the central features of which are as follows:

The acquisition/learning hypothesis: This contrasts two distinctive ways of second language development. *Acquisition* refers to an unconscious process that involves the naturalistic development of language proficiency through understanding language and through using language for meaningful communication. *Learning*, by contrast, refers to a process in which conscious rules about a language are developed. It results in explicit knowledge about the forms of a language and the ability to verbalize this knowledge. Formal teaching is necessary for ‘learning’ to occur, and correction of errors helps with the development of learned rules.

The monitor hypothesis: This states that conscious learning can function only as a monitor or editor that checks and repairs the output of the acquired system. Three conditions limit the successful use of the monitor:

- 1 *Time.* There must be sufficient time for a learner to choose and apply a learned rule.
- 2 *Focus on form.* The language user must be focused on correctness or on the form of the output.
- 3 *Knowledge of rules.* The performer must know the rules. The monitor does best with rules that are simple in two ways. They must be simple to describe and they must not require complex movements and rearrangements.

The natural order hypothesis: This states that grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable order. Errors are often signs of naturalistic developmental processes, and during acquisition (but not during learning), similar developmental errors occur in learners no matter what their native language is.

The input hypothesis: This seeks to explain the relationship between what the learner is exposed to of a language (the input) and language acquisition. It involves four main issues:

- 1 The hypothesis relates to acquisition, and not to learning.
- 2 People acquire language best by understanding input that is slightly beyond their current level of competence. This is referred to as $I + 1$ (i.e. input plus one).
- 3 The ability to speak fluently cannot be taught directly; rather, it 'emerges' independently in time, after the acquirer has built up linguistic competence by understanding input.
- 4 If there is a sufficient quantity of comprehensible input, $I + 1$ will usually be provided automatically. Comprehensible input refers to utterances that the learner understands based on the context in which they are used as well as the language in which they are phrased. When a speaker uses language so that the acquirer understands the message, the speaker 'casts a net' of structure around the acquirer's current level of competence, and this will include many instances of $I + 1$.

The affective filter hypothesis: This describes the learner's emotional state or attitudes as an adjustable filter that freely passes, impedes, or blocks input necessary to acquisition. A low affective filter is desirable, since it impedes or blocks less of this necessary input.

These five hypotheses have obvious implications for language teaching. In sum, these are:

- 1 As much comprehensible input as possible must be presented.
- 2 A pre-determined language syllabus is not needed. Language knowledge and awareness should arise out of meaningful and communicative language use.
- 3 Whatever helps comprehension is important. Visual aids are useful, as is exposure to a wide range of vocabulary rather than the study of syntactic structure.
- 4 The focus in the classroom should initially be on listening and reading; speaking should be allowed to 'emerge'.
- 5 In order to lower the affective filter, student work should centre on meaningful communication rather than on form; input should be interesting and so contribute to a relaxed classroom atmosphere.



What kinds of classroom activities do you think can help lower a learner's 'affective filter'?

The natural approach was very much a product of the 1980s and attracted a great deal of interest at that time. It reflects an approach or philosophy that could be applied in different ways according to the teaching context. It was particularly influential in

Krashen's home state of California, where it helped frame an approach to the teaching of language minority students (Krashen, 1981). In practice, it rejected the need to develop language courses around a pre-planned grammatical syllabus and advocated instead an experiential approach to learning based on providing learners with content-rich activities and materials. In view of the interest Krashen and Terrell's somewhat radical proposal attracted, numerous articles as well as full-length books were devoted to debating it, some rejecting both the theory and research Krashen used in support of the principles of the natural approach (e.g. Gregg, 1984; McGlaughlin, 1978), as well as its practical applications. However, in California at least, policy changes in recent years have made the natural approach unsuited to the needs of teachers in public schools. As with public education in many other countries, teachers are now required to teach to standards that specify the language skills learners need to develop at different stages in the school curriculum.



What do you think are some ways in which the right kind of comprehensible input can be provided in teaching?

CLT and the local teaching environment

One of the most positive outcomes of CLT was the generation of a new wave of enthusiasm in language teaching and a transformation of the resources available to teach English. The constraints imposed on teachers and materials designers by the somewhat rigid methodologies of audiolingualism and situational language teaching were removed, as the focus shifted to learner-focused materials and activities which drew on authentic or semi-authentic texts, role play and other communicative classroom activities. At the same time, some critics posed a note of caution, as alluded to in the discussion above on the communicative syllabus and practice activities.

In an important book, Holliday (1994a) argued that the communicative orthodoxy taught to teachers who are native-speakers of English reflects a view of teaching and learning that closely reflects culturally bound assumptions, derived from the cultures of origin – the United Kingdom, Australasia and North America – which Holliday refers to as BANA entities. The teaching methods developed in BANA centres reflect the kinds of learners who study in institutes and universities serving students who generally have instrumental reasons for learning English, namely for academic or professional purposes or as new settlers. Their needs, however, may be very different from students learning English in state-based educational programmes (e.g. public schools) in other parts of the world – studying in tertiary, secondary or primary settings – and hence referred to by Holliday as TESEP contexts. Holliday describes these two learning environments as creating very different contexts for learning and containing very different parameters. Methods developed in one context (e.g. BANA settings) will not necessarily transfer to others (TESEP settings), and, as Holliday points out, most of the literature on English language teaching reflects a primarily BANA understanding of teaching, learning, teachers, learners and classrooms. In these contexts, 'English language teaching tends to be instrumentally oriented, in

that it has grown up within a private language school ethos where there has been a considerable freedom to develop classroom methodology as a sophisticated instrument to suit the precise needs of language learners' (Holliday, 1994a: 4). In TESEP settings, by comparison, 'English in these institutions is taught as part of a wider curriculum and is, therefore, influenced and constrained by wider educational, institutional and community forces, quite different from those in the BANA sector' (ibid.).

A more radical critique of the influence of communicative language teaching and similar Western or 'centre-based' methods is given by Kumaravadivelu (2012). He argues that 'centre-based' methods are by their nature developed for very general situations, reflecting idealized contexts for teachers and learners. However, the contexts in which teachers work are very varied and situation specific. No general teaching method can hope to match the everyday realities teachers have to deal with in their practice. General methods, Kumaravadivelu (2012) suggests, reflect a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to teaching, one that assumes that teachers and learners are all very similar.

Textbook authors, however, generally respond with the claim that they do not intend their books to be used as coursebooks, but rather as 'sourcebooks' – as a springboard for teachers to adapt and supplement to meet the needs of their local contexts, i.e. as support for improvisational teaching (see Chapter 4).

Despite these criticisms, communicative language teaching had become the global solution to language teaching by the 1970s and 1980s. It was adopted worldwide as the basis for global ESL/ELT textbooks (see Chapter 18) – courses that typically covered all four skills, as well as grammar, but which were organized around a communicative syllabus and a communicative methodology. Through expanded teacher training, most programmes found a way to make the new methodology work for them, and to customize it as needed to their local teaching situations. An example of a communicative lesson plan can be found in Appendix 1.

So had the language-teaching problem been solved once and for all? Not really. Not everyone who wanted to learn English aimed to learn 'general English'. The need to develop approaches suitable for learners with particular learning needs led to the development of a number of other approaches to teaching. We will refer to these as *special-purpose approaches and methods*, since they were generally a response to particular learning needs and circumstances.

3.3 Special-purpose approaches and methods

Among the factors prompting the need for approaches that went beyond CLT were the following:

- *The internationalization of education:* Growing numbers of international students in English-speaking countries, such as Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, were studying in colleges, universities and other tertiary institutions. They needed to acquire the language skills to pursue their studies in English.
- *Resettlement:* Following the Vietnam War and conflicts in other parts of the world, large numbers of refugees were admitted to the United States, Australia and other countries. Many had no knowledge of English and needed intensive instruction to prepare them for life in their new countries.
- *Immigration:* Large numbers of immigrants also settled in English-speaking countries, and schools had to provide support that would enable school-age learners to follow mainstream education.
- *Globalization:* As English took on a greater role in international trade, business, commerce and travel, millions of learners needed language skills for these purposes.
- *Science and technology:* English was now the main language used for publications in the fields of science and technology, requiring advanced reading skills for many learners.
- *The privatization of English language teaching:* The growing demand for English language skills has led to the private sector taking a greater responsibility for the provision of language teaching, through private institutes of different kinds that offer learners of all ages an opportunity to develop communicative skills in English – something they may not be able to acquire in a school exam-based curriculum. In such schools, although many learners may simply want to improve their ‘general English’, others may be studying English for work or study-related purposes and hence need a different kind of course.

The issues above prompted the need for language courses designed to address issues that were often specific to particular teaching/learning situations. We will consider these next.

English for specific purposes

The language teaching profession from the 1950s and 60s recognized that many learners needed English in order to use it in specific occupational or educational settings. For these learners, it would be more efficient to teach them the specific kinds of language and communicative skills needed for particular roles (e.g. that of an engineering student, nurse, engineer, flight attendant, pilot or biologist), rather than just to concentrate on more and more general English. This led to the approach known as *English for specific purposes*, or ESP. ESP is not a method, but rather an approach to designing a curriculum that is built around learners’ communicative needs. (Curriculum design is the focus of Chapter 17.) In ESP courses, the communicative approach is generally used but the materials themselves are tailored to specific needs. It makes use of *needs analysis* – the use of observation, surveys, interviews, situation analysis and analysis of language samples collected in different settings – in order to determine the kinds of communication learners would

need to master and the language features of particular settings, if they were in specific occupational or educational roles. The focus of needs analysis was to determine the characteristics of a language when it is used for specific, rather than general, purposes. Such differences might include:

- Differences in vocabulary choice.
- Differences in grammar.
- Differences in the kinds of texts commonly occurring.
- Differences in functions.
- Differences in the need for particular skills.

ESP courses soon began to appear addressing the language needs of university students, nurses, engineers, restaurant staff, doctors, hotel staff, airline pilots and so on. The methodology used to teach these courses was not prescribed, although often it was generally based on CLT and also reflected the skill-based and performance-based approaches which were described in Chapter 2. Clark (1987: 197) suggests that the influence of these approaches was reflected in the design of courses like these, since they first identify a set of target behaviours to be acquired (skills, functional ability, etc.), which are broken down into smaller units – that is, small elements of knowledge and part-skills. A teacher educator describes ESP in practice at a university:

Developing an ESP course

In my most recent place of work, most of our language teaching is done in what we call an ‘embedded’ form. All decisions relating to the role of English in the curriculum are made jointly by a subject [lecturer] and an English lecturer. Different levels and types of embedding are offered. In some cases, the English lecturer teaches classes as part of the course, using materials and examples from that subject. In others, we teach classes together, alternating between content and language. The key for us is to increase the relevance of our instruction for the students; rather than offering classes or support independent from students’ study (which many of them have no time for, anyway), we always try to predict what type of help students will need and when. By planning ahead with the subject lecturers, we can, for example, give a class to law students on drafting a letter, a few weeks before they have to hand in a letter to a client, as part of their course assessment. This ensures that the students see English as an integral part of their degree, not simply as a time-consuming add-on.

Hayo Reinders, teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand



Do you think teachers who teach ESP courses need different kinds of knowledge and skills from teachers who teach general English courses?

Competency-based language teaching (CBLT)

Competency-based instruction is an approach to the planning and delivery of courses that has been in widespread use since the 1970s. What characterizes a competency-based approach is the focus on the outcomes of learning, as the driving force of teaching and the curriculum. The application of its principles to language teaching is called *competency-based language teaching*. See Appendix 2 for an example of a competency-based lesson. Because this approach seeks to teach the skills needed to perform real-world tasks, it became widely used, from the 1980s, as the basis for many English language programmes for immigrants and refugees, as well as for work-related courses of many different kinds. It is an approach that has been the foundation for the design of work-related and survival-oriented language teaching programmes for adults. It seeks to teach students the basic skills they need in order to prepare them for situations they commonly encounter in everyday life. Recently, competency-based frameworks have become adopted in many countries, particularly for vocational and technical education. They are also increasingly being adopted in national language curriculums. Auerbach (1986) identified eight features involved in the implementation of CBLT programmes in language teaching, in its early days, and which are true of many such programmes today:

- 1 *A focus on successful functioning in society:* The goal is to enable students to become autonomous individuals capable of coping with the demands of the world.
- 2 *A focus on life skills:* Rather than teaching language in isolation, CBLT teaches language as a function of communication about concrete tasks. Students are only taught those language forms/skills required by the situations in which they will function. These forms are normally determined by needs analysis.
- 3 *Task, or performance-oriented, instruction:* What counts is what students can do as a result of instruction. The emphasis is on overt behaviours, rather than on knowledge or the ability to talk about language and skills.
- 4 *Modularized instruction:* Language learning is broken down into meaningful chunks. Objectives are broken down into narrowly focused sub-objectives so that both teachers and students can get a clear sense of progress.
- 5 *Outcomes are made explicit:* Outcomes are public knowledge, known and agreed upon by both learner and teacher. They are specified in terms of behavioural objectives so that students know what behaviours are expected of them.
- 6 *Continuous and ongoing assessment:* Students are pre-tested to determine what skills they lack, and post-tested after instruction on that skill. If they do not achieve the desired level of mastery, they continue to work on the objective and are retested.
- 7 *Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives:* Rather than in the traditional paper-and-pencil tests, assessment is based on the ability to demonstrate pre-specified behaviours.

- 8 *Individualized, student-centred instruction:* In content, level and pace, objectives are defined in terms of individual needs; prior learning and achievement are taken into account in developing curriculums. Instruction is not time-based; students progress at their own rates and concentrate on just those areas in which they lack competence.

Therefore, CBLT is often used in programmes that focus on learners with very specific language needs. In such cases, rather than seeking to teach general English, the specific language skills needed to function in a specific context is the focus. This is similar, then, to an ESP approach. There, too, the starting point in course planning is an identification of the tasks the learner will need to carry out within a specific setting and the language demands of those tasks. (The Common European Framework of Reference also describes learning outcomes in terms of competencies – see Chapter 17.) The competencies needed for successful task performance are then identified and used as the basis for course planning. The teaching methods used may vary, but typically are skill-based, since the focus is on developing the ability to use language to carry out real-world activities. An example of a lesson from a competency-based textbook is given in Appendix 2.



Identify some of the competencies you think students would need to master in English in order to function in the following situations:

- As a tour guide.
- As a nurse.
- As an English teacher.

Content-based instruction (CBI) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

Another need that emerged from the 1950s was a growing demand for courses that prepared students to study in English-speaking countries. In many English-speaking countries, such as the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia, large numbers of students whose mother tongue is not English (international students, immigrants) need English in order to enter schools, colleges and universities, and to follow content courses in English. This provided the motivation for an approach to language teaching known initially as *content-based instruction (CBI)* and, more recently, referred to in Europe as *content and language integrated learning*, or CLIL. Richards and Rodgers (2014) compare CBI and CLIL as follows:

Both CBI and CLIL are part of a growing trend in many parts of the world to use English as a medium of instruction (Graddol, 2006). They have features in common, however they are not identical. CBI often involves a language teacher teaching through English, working with a content teacher to co-teach a course, or a content teacher designing and teaching a course for ESL learners. CLIL often involves a content teacher teaching content through a second or foreign language, as does CBI, but also may involve content from subjects being used in language classes. That is, the CLIL curriculum may originate in the language class, whereas

CBI tends to have as its starting point the goals of a content class. CBI emerged somewhat organically advocated by a number of academics and educators, supported by an extensive literature extending over a considerable period of time but without official sanction. CLIL, on the other hand, was officially proposed in a European Commission policy paper in which member states were encouraged to develop teaching in schools through the medium of more than one language. The acronym 'CLIL' has been widely circulated within members of the European community since 1994 and has become, by decree 'the core instrument for achieving policy aims directed at creating a multilingual population in Europe' (Dalton-Puffer and Smith, 2007). And unlike CBI, CLIL aims at not only stimulating multilingualism of all citizens in the European community but strives as well to 'preserve the independence and health of local languages' (www.eurydice.org/index.shtml). This is because CLIL does not represent an immersion program in an ESL setting, but rather the development of English-language skills in those who will use it as a lingua franca.

With both CBI and CLIL, content, or information, provides the main organizing principle for a course, and language is taught through its integration with content, rather than being taught separately. Of course, any language lesson involves content, whether a grammar lesson, a reading lesson or any other kind of lesson. Content of some sort has to be the vehicle that holds the lesson or the exercise together, but in traditional teaching methods, content is selected *after* other planning decisions have been made. In other words, grammar, vocabulary, texts, skills, functions, etc. are the starting point in planning the lesson or the coursebook. Once these decisions have been made, content is selected. *Content* refers to the information or subject matter that learners learn or communicate through language, rather than the language used to convey it. A teacher describes how she used content effectively as the organizing principle of a unit of study:

Create your own religion: a content-based project

Teaching a third-year oral and written English language class for English majors at Bukhara State University in Uzbekistan, I was tasked with covering an odd list of topics that the National Ministry of Education had deemed necessary for all students to know. One such theme, which corresponded to a chapter in a book written by the country's president, was called 'High spirituality is the foundation of our future'. The only requirement for the unit was to have students read the chapter and discuss it; beyond that, I had complete freedom to select additional readings and activities to encourage language development, while supporting students' learning about spirituality and world religions.

Rather than ask students to research a particular world religion, which would have been difficult, given the limited resources available in Central Asia at the time (1999), I, instead, assigned my class a few readings on spirituality and religion, in general, and then gave them a small-group project to create their own imaginary religions. During class time, we discussed various factors that made a religion different from a cultural practice – such as core beliefs, deities, rites and holy texts – as well as factors that

are similar to cultural practices, but may cross cultures that share a religion – such as ethical behaviours, holidays and food practices. Using the religions with which my Uzbek students were most familiar, Islam and Christianity, we identified which practices were tied to the different religions, and which were shared by the students' common Uzbek culture.

The final project for the unit challenged students to use their new knowledge of cultural and spiritual practices to make up a new religion. I reminded them that I was not asking them to believe in this religion, but, rather, to use their imaginations to make up a fictional religion that demonstrated their understanding of the core concepts we had discussed in class, and that would show their ability to use English in a variety of modes. They identified the core tenets of their religion and determined central values that shaped the religion. They named and described the qualities of the deities their religion's followers believed in, identified ethical practices such as dress and behaviour and selected meaningful imagery. They wrote poetic prayers and hymns and scripted rituals for worship.

On the last day of the unit, each group took about 15 minutes to present their imaginary religion. These presentations challenged students to draw on multiple forms of English, as they acted out the rituals and sang the songs they had written. Most of the groups chose to don costumes and share foods that were important to their religion's followers. The most memorable included a religion focused on nature, where followers wore green and conducted their rites outdoors, and a religion based on courtly love, where followers ate heart-shaped chocolates and sang romantic songs as part of their worship ritual. The students reported that while they were initially suspicious of the assignment, in the end, they appreciated the way it challenged them to be creative while demonstrating their understanding of the concepts of religions and spirituality, as well as to make use of both oral and written language in the final presentation and documents.

Betsy Gilliland, teacher and teacher educator, Honolulu, HI, US



What type of content is most likely to be of interest or relevance to your learners or to a group of learners you are familiar with? How could relevant content be chosen for these learners?

CBI was also promoted on the basis that it better supported language learning than traditional approaches. The assumption was that people learn a language more successfully when they use the language as a means of acquiring information, rather than as an end in itself, and because CBI better reflects learners' needs for learning a second language. In addition, content provides a coherent framework that can be used to link and develop all of the language skills. CBI can be used as the framework for a unit of work, as the guiding principle for an entire course, as a course that prepares students for mainstreaming or as the rationale for the use of English as a medium to teach some

school subjects in an ESL/ELT setting – as well as provide the framework for commercial ESL/ELT materials (Adamson, 1993; Ballman, 1997; Benesch, 1988; Cantoni-Harvey, 1987). CBI/CLIL today is an important and widely used approach to teaching English and other foreign languages, from primary to tertiary levels, and in many different programme formats, which will be discussed below.



The assumption mentioned above is that ‘CBI better reflects learners’ needs for learning a second language’. If you have learned a second or foreign language, think back to your own reasons for learning it. What were they, and were your needs and expectations met in the courses you took? If not, how did the outcome differ from what you expected?

In North America, a number of different versions of content-based instruction have been developed: Theme-based language instruction, sheltered subject-matter instruction and adjunct instruction (Brinton et al., 1989).

Theme-based language instruction

Theme-based language instruction involves organizing a course around a theme or topic, such as sport or pop art, rather than around a language syllabus. The topics and themes are selected based on the students’ interests, and can cover either a range of different topics or deal with one or two topics in depth. The teacher uses the topic or theme as a means of developing language and language skills. Although the course is content-based, language development is still the main goal of teaching and assessment, rather than the content itself. This approach is more common in contexts where English is a foreign language and is not widely used in the surrounding community. The course could be taught by a language teacher or, in a team-teaching situation, with a content specialist.

Sheltered subject-matter instruction

Sheltered subject-matter instruction refers to situations where students study content through a second language, but the class is taught by a content instructor, rather than a language instructor. Instruction is ‘sheltered’ because students are given special assistance to help them understand the content of the course. The content instructor adjusts his or her teaching to take account of the students’ language-proficiency levels so that the lessons are pitched to the students’ proficiency capabilities. The content itself, however, is not changed or made easier, on the assumption that language learning will be facilitated by the focus on content learning. Sheltered CBI is more usual at university level in English-medium universities. The goal is to help ESL/ELT students study the same content material as regular English L1 students. Two teachers often work together to give instruction in a specific subject. The content specialist might give a short lecture, and then the English teacher later checks students understanding and deals with any language-learning issues.

Adjunct instruction

Adjunct instruction describes situations where students are enrolled in 'linked' or concurrently-offered content and language classes that are taught by content and language instructors, respectively. In the content course, the purpose is mastery of the course content, and in the language course, the purpose is second language learning. However, the syllabuses of the two classes are developed in collaboration by the two instructors. Typically, the content course provides a point of departure for the language classes, so cooperation and coordination between content and ESL/ELT teachers is essential, with the adjunct classes usually taught by the ESL/ELT teacher. The aim of these classes, sometimes English for specific purposes or English for academic purposes classes, is to prepare students for 'mainstream' classes, where they will join English L1 learners.

However, CBI need not necessarily be the framework for an entire curriculum, but can be used in conjunction with any type of curriculum. For example, in a business communications course, a teacher may prepare a unit of work on the theme of sales and marketing. The teacher, in conjunction with a sales-and-marketing specialist, first identifies key topics and issues in the area of sales and marketing, to provide the framework for the course. A variety of lessons are then developed, focusing on reading, oral presentation skills, group discussion, grammar and report writing, all of which are developed out of the themes and topics which form the basis of the course.

Many courses for immigrant children in English-speaking countries are organized around an adjunct-based CBI framework. For example, non-English-background children in schools in Australia and New Zealand are usually offered an intensive language course to prepare them to follow the regular school curriculum with other children. Such a course might be organized around a CBI approach.



Have you ever had a teaching or learning experience involving theme-based language instruction, sheltered subject-matter instruction or adjunct instruction? If so, what were some of the pros and cons of this experience?

A logical extension of the CBI philosophy is to teach some school subjects entirely in English. When the entire school curriculum is taught through a foreign language, this is sometimes known as *immersion education*, a practice that has been used for many years in parts of English-speaking Canada. Parents from English-speaking families in some parts of Canada can thus opt to send their children to schools where French is the medium of instruction. The goal is to produce children who are bilingual in French and English, since they acquire English both at home and in the community.

Content and language integrated learning

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is used increasingly in Europe, particularly when only some subjects in the curriculum are taught through a second or

foreign language (Coyle et al., 2010). In Europe, the substantial increase in CLIL-based programmes of different kinds is part of a policy to promote bilingualism, as reflected in the European Commission's (1995) white paper *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society*, 'in which a stated objective was the "1 + 2 policy" – that is, for EU citizens to have competence in their mother tongue, plus two Community foreign languages' (Llinares et al., 2012: 1).

CLIL in Europe has been described as a response to globalization and the need for knowledge-driven economies and societies. According to Coyle et al. (2010: 5–6):

Much CLIL classroom practice involves the learners being active participants in developing their potential for acquiring knowledge and skills (education) through a process of inquiry (research) and by using complex processes and means for problem solving (innovation).

Coyle et al. (2010: 8) cite four reasons for the spread of CLIL in Europe:

Families wanting their children to have some competence in at least one foreign language; governments wanting to improve languages education for socio-economic advantage; at the supranational level, the European Commission wanting to lay the foundation for greater inclusion and economic strength; and finally, at the educational level, language experts seeing the potential for further integrating languages education with other subjects.

As a consequence of the factors above, different kinds of content-based, or CLIL, courses are now common in many parts of the world and differ significantly from traditional approaches to second and foreign-language instruction. Content-based, or CLIL courses, are generally subjects in the humanities and social sciences, such as history, geography and social studies. But sometimes subjects in the areas of natural sciences and the arts may also be taught in the foreign language. Examples of CLIL programmes in Europe include:

- A vocational school in Germany teaching a catering course in Italian.
- A module on the theme of 'Where we live' comparing houses and homes in Africa and Europe.
- A unit on 'water' taught both through the mother tongue and a foreign language, in a primary school.
- Students in different countries carry out a science-based project in a foreign language and then compare results.
- Geography teachers choose a human-geography unit on Senegal and teach it in French, rather than the mother tongue.

CLIL is believed to help achieve both individual as well as educational, social and intercultural goals for language learning. Coyle et al. (2010: 42) describe these goals as follows:

- 1 Content matter is not only about acquiring knowledge and skills; it is about the learner *creating* their own knowledge and understanding, and *developing* skills (personalized learning).

- 2** Content is related to learning and thinking (cognition). To enable the learner to create their own interpretation of content, it must be analyzed for its linguistic demands.
- 3** Thinking processes (cognition) need to be analyzed for their linguistic demands.
- 4** Language needs to be learned, which is related to the learning context, to learning *through* that language, to reconstructing the content and to related cognitive processes. This language needs to be transparent and accessible.
- 5** Interaction in the learning context is fundamental to learning. This has implications when the learning context operates through the medium of a foreign language.
- 6** The relationship between languages and cultures is complex. Intercultural awareness is fundamental to CLIL.
- 7** CLIL is embedded in the wider educational context in which it is developed and, therefore, must take account of contextual variables in order to be effectively realized.

CLIL is often accompanied by regular (and sometimes expanded) foreign-language instruction. CLIL programmes are now widely used at all levels in many European schools, from primary to tertiary. Its use in Europe is prompted both by the diversity of languages spoken in Europe and, as noted above, by the European Commission's efforts to develop a multilingual Europe, where people can communicate in two or three different languages. As with CBI, successful implementation of CLIL often depends upon cooperation between content and language teachers. However it raises a number of issues, such as how to balance language and content, who should be teaching CBI, are CLIL teachers language or content teachers, what the focus of assessment should be, the role of the first language in CBI/CLIL classrooms, and the level of English subjects teachers need to teach CBI/CLIL classes.

Text-based instruction (TBI)

Text-based instruction (also known as genre-based teaching) involves explicit teaching of the structure of different text types, and an instructional strategy in which the teacher introduces the text, its purpose and features, and guides students through the production of texts, through the process of scaffolding. This involves assisting the learners in the creation of texts and gradually withdrawing teacher support until the learners can create their own texts (see Chapter 16). Teaching is organized around a sequence of text-types related to the learners' needs, and learners are given practice in performing different kinds of texts until they can produce them without the teacher's support and guidance. TBI is an approach that draws on the field of discourse analysis and genre theory (see Chapter 16). Like most methods and approaches, it aims to prepare learners for real-world uses of English by focusing on how language is used to achieve different purposes, such as reporting a scientific experiment, telling a story or explaining how something works. 'Genre' refers to an area of activity where there are norms of language usage in such fields

as science, business, medicine or literature. Texts are the units of discourse that occur in different genres. Burns (2012: 142) comments:

For example, a doctor's consultation genre will have a typical beginning, middle, and end in which various grammar features and patterns of language will be used at different stages of the interaction. The genre of a consultation may vary among different cultures and over time, but members of that culture will generally have a shared knowledge of how things typically proceed. What actually gets said during any one consultation is the specific text that emerges on that occasion.

And Paltridge (2006: 180) adds:

Genre-based teaching focuses on the abilities, knowledge, and skills that learners need in order to perform particular spoken and written genres. A genre-based syllabus is made up of a list of genres learners need to acquire, such as academic essays, case-study reports, or business presentations, including relevant discourse-level features and contextual information in relation to them.

In language teaching, the text-based approach owes much to the work of the Australian school of applied linguistics, drawing on the work of Halliday, Christie, Feez and others, and has had a considerable impact on both first and second language teaching in Australia and New Zealand. The model of language a text-based approach draws on is known as systemic functional linguistics, and the main concepts of this functional model of language are that a) language can be understood as a resource we use to create meaning; b) language makes use of a series of interrelated systems that users draw on each time they use language; c) texts are the basic units of communication; d) texts reflect the contexts in which they are used, their purposes, and the participants involved (Feez and Joyce, 1998: 5).

The text-based approach has had an impact on both the teaching of English for specific purposes as well as English for academic purposes (Paltridge, 2006), and has been used as an approach in national curriculums, for teaching at primary and secondary education, in countries such as Singapore and Sweden. It also forms part of the pedagogy of CLIL programmes, where students may be studying science, geography or other disciplines through English and will need familiarity with the text-types used in those disciplines or subjects (Llinares et al., 2012: 109):

Students need to understand and participate in the activities which build and extend the store of knowledge that make up the disciplines they study, activities which, to a large extent, are carried out through language. While the most obvious difference between disciplines is that of vocabulary – and this is the one usually mentioned in a CLIL syllabus – research in educational linguistics has also shown a major difference to reside in the functional structuring of discourse.

'Text' in this approach is hence used in a special sense to refer to structured sequences of language that are used in specific contexts in specific ways (see Chapter 16). For example,

in the course of a day, a speaker of English may use spoken English in many different ways, including the following:

- Casual conversational exchange with a friend.
- Conversational exchange with a stranger in a lift.
- A telephone call to arrange an appointment at a hair salon.
- An account to friends of an unusual experience.
- Discussion of a personal problem with a friend, to seek advice.

In the case of writing, common texts may include:

- Sending email messages.
- Updating a blog.
- Writing a note to a teacher.

Each of these can be regarded as a text. According to a text-based approach, learners in different contexts have to master the use of the text types occurring most frequently in specific study or work contexts. According to proponents of TBI, it is an approach that is based upon explicit modelling of texts and analysis of their features, a focus on the relationship between texts and the contexts of their use, designing units of work that lead students through the understanding and use of whole texts – both spoken and written. Feez and Joyce (1998, 28–31) describe how this can be applied in terms of a five-stage process for working with texts. Students first examine a text and consider the context in which such a text is used. Then with the teacher's help they analyze it in terms of its organization, language and discourse features. Following this they work with the teacher to create a similar kind of text. This prepares them to write a text on their own. Finally they may consider the text in relation to texts used in other contexts.

As its name implies, the core units of planning in TBI are spoken and written text types. These are identified through needs analysis and through the analysis of language as it is used in different settings. However, the syllabus also usually specifies other components of texts, such as grammar, vocabulary, topics and functions; hence, it is a type of mixed syllabus, one which integrates reading, writing and oral communication, and which teaches grammar through the mastery of texts, rather than in isolation. A text-based approach also reflects the notion of scaffolded learning in which the teacher has the role of an expert who provides the scaffolding, or support, that is necessary for learners to master the use of different types of texts (see Chapter 2). As Burns (2012: 145) comments:

Based on the concepts of scaffolding and support built up over time, it follows that the texts and tasks presented to learners need to be logically sequenced with both short-term and long-term learning goals in mind.



Think of learners studying English for a specific purpose. What text types do you think they will encounter?

The Singapore English language syllabus (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2010) specified the following text types:

- Conversations.
- Short functional texts.
- Explanations.
- Expositions.
- Information reports.
- Narratives.
- Procedures.
- Recounts (personal, factual, historical).

Today's learners may also encounter new types of texts, such as blogposts and scam messages (Viswamohan et al., 2010).

As can be seen from the above summary, text-based teaching focuses primarily on the products of learning, rather than the processes involved. Critics have pointed out that an emphasis on individual creativity and personal expression is missing from the TBI model, which is heavily wedded to a methodology based on the study of model texts and the creation of texts based on models. Likewise, critics point out that there is a danger that teaching within this framework can become repetitive and boring over time, since the five-phase cycle described above is applied to the teaching of all four skills.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT)

Task-based language teaching (also known as task-based instruction) builds teaching and learning around tasks, particularly real-life tasks (Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1996a, 1996b; Van den Branden, 2012). Rather than employ a conventional syllabus, particularly a grammar-based one, advocates of TBLT argue that grammar and other dimensions of communicative language use can be developed by engaging learners in tasks that require them to focus both on language form as well as language use. TBLT is usually characterized as an approach, rather than a method, and exists in both 'strong' and 'weak' forms, the former advocating a task-driven syllabus, and the latter a task-supported syllabus incorporating a focus on form. According to Leaver and Willis (2004: 3): '[TBLT] is not monolithic; it does not constitute one single methodology. It is a multifaceted approach, which can be used creatively with different syllabus types and for different purposes.' Thus, it can be linked with other approaches and methods, such as content-based and text-based teaching (Leaver and Willis, 2004). Proponents of TBLT contrast it with earlier grammar-focused approaches to teaching, such as audiolingualism, that they characterize as 'teacher-dominated, form-oriented classroom practice' (Van den Branden, 2006).

Of course, most teachers make use of different kinds of tasks as part of their regular teaching. TBLT, however, makes strong claims for the use of tasks and sees them as the primary unit to be used, both in planning teaching (i.e. in developing a syllabus) and also in classroom teaching. Task work is seen as the primary focus on classroom learning, and language development is an outcome of task-performance and not a condition for it. The key assumptions of task-based language teaching are:

- language is learned through engagement in interactive processes that involve purposeful and meaningful communication
- tasks are a vehicle that can be used to create their processes in the classroom
- tasks can be specially designed pedagogic tasks or tasks drawn from the real world outside of the classroom
- tasks can be sequenced according to difficulty and in terms of their language demands and characteristics
- a conventional grammar syllabus is not needed since grammar can be addressed as it arises in relation to task performance.

Because of its links to communicative language teaching methodology and support from some prominent SLA theorists, TBLT has gained considerable attention within applied linguistics. In recent years, it has moved beyond a small scale research setting and seen a number of applications in mainstream education, particularly in the Benelux countries (Van den Branden, 2006). Its success is cited in many different contexts. For example, Shehadeh (2005: 14) reports:

American government language institutions found that with task-based instruction and authentic materials, learners made far more rapid progress and were able to use their new foreign language in real-world circumstances with a reasonable level of efficiency after quite short courses. They were able to operate an effective meaning system, i.e. to express what they wanted to say, even though their grammar and lexis were often far from perfect.

Leaver and Kaplan (2004: 61) reported that when US State Department programmes shifted to a task-based approach, a number of benefits were reported:

- Greater motivation.
- Opportunity for repetition without boredom.
- Greater curricular flexibility.
- Promotion of 'learning how to learn'.
- An opportunity for natural error correction.
- Promotion of risk-taking.
- Higher proficiency results.
- Increased student satisfaction and better programme-evaluation results.

However the notion of task is a somewhat fuzzy one, though various attempts have been made to define it, such as the following (Council of Europe, 2001: 57):

Tasks are a feature of everyday life in the personal, public, educational domains. Task accomplishment by an individual involves the strategic activation of specific competencies in order to carry out a set of purposeful actions in a particular domain with a clearly defined goal and specific outcome.

Examples of tasks of this nature are:

- Interacting with a public-service official.
- Taking part in a job interview.
- Purchasing something in a store.
- Describing a medical problem to a doctor.
- Completing a form to apply for a driver's licence.
- Following written instructions to assemble something.
- Reading a report and discussing its recommendations.
- Replying to an email message.

Some of the key characteristics of a task are:

- It is something that learners do, or carry out, using their existing language resources or those that have been provided in pre-task work.
- It has an outcome which is not simply linked to learning language, though language acquisition may occur as the learner carries out the task.
- It is relevant to learners' needs.
- It involves a focus on meaning.
- In the case of tasks involving two or more learners, it calls upon the learners' use of communication strategies and interactional skills.
- It provides opportunities for reflection on language use.



According to the definitions above, can you give examples of classroom activities in your teaching situations that can be regarded as tasks? What are some activities that cannot be regarded as tasks? What role do the latter kinds of activities have?

In proposing the use of tasks as core units in syllabus planning and instruction, advocates of TBLT draw both on SLA and sociocultural theory. From SLA theory, they refer to the concepts of negotiation of meaning, noticing and restructuring (Chapter 2). When

learners are engaged in tasks, they have to make efforts to ensure that their messages are communicated and engage in negotiation of meaning, often with a more advanced learner. This enables them to notice the gap between their productions and those of proficient speakers, thus fostering second-language development. This is the 'notice-the-gap' hypothesis. Carefully structured and managed 'output', created in this way, is essential if learners are to acquire new language. Managed output here refers to tasks and activities that require the use of certain target-language forms, i.e. ones which 'stretch' the learner's language knowledge and that consequently require a 'restructuring' of that knowledge. Van Gorp and Bogaert (2006: 89) comment:

In task-based language education...learners learn by confronting the gaps in their linguistic repertoire while performing tasks and being interactionally supported. ... In fact, for each individual pupil who is performing a task, the actual 'gap' will probably be different. This implies that each learner will run into different difficulties when dealing with the same task and consequently may learn different things.

Van Gorp and Bogaert (2006: 101–2) describe how TBLT also draws on sociocultural theory:

The cognitive and interactional activity that the students develop at this stage is crucial in terms of intended learning outcomes. After all, task-based language learning is highly dependent on the basic premises of social-constructivism, stating that learners acquire complex skills by actively tackling holistic tasks, calling for an integrated use of the target skills, and by collaborating with peers and more knowledgeable partners while doing so.

Several different versions of TBLT have been proposed (Long and Crookes, 1992). In some, tasks are pedagogical units, designed by the instructor to facilitate interaction and negotiation of meaning. Many of the activities proposed in the early days of CLT (as described above) can be described as tasks of this kind, i.e. information-gap and information-sharing activities that we find in many coursebooks and ESL/ELT materials. For others, tasks are based on real-world tasks the learners encounter. Once identified through needs analysis, they are used as the basis for the design of classroom tasks.



Can you give examples of real-world tasks that your learners, or learners you are familiar with, need to use English to accomplish? What are some of the linguistic demands of the tasks you identify?

Task-based language teaching makes heavy demands on teachers, since it tends not to rely on the use of published courses and materials but requires teachers to develop tasks based on their students' language level and needs. There are no general task-syllabuses for teachers to refer to and for this reason, TBLT has not been used as the basis for commercial materials. Likewise, TBLT does not readily relate to the needs of students studying English in order to take standardized tests. However, it has attracted some level of interest in Europe, and has also been strongly promoted by some second

language acquisition researchers, due to the fact that it seeks to apply particular theories of language learning (see Chapter 2) to classroom teaching. In practice, implementation of TBLT shows a great deal of variation from context to context, leading some advocates to distinguish between strong and weak forms of TBLT (e.g. Skehan, 1998) or between ‘task-supported language teaching’ versus ‘task-referenced language teaching’ (e.g. Ellis, 2003). Hence, in some TBLT classrooms, the role of tasks is mainly to practise communicative language use (as with conventional CLT), while in others, task performance is followed by activities that draw attention to language form, which is the principal classroom activity.

Although methods and approaches such as those described above often appear to reflect different theories and principles, in practice, many teachers draw on principles and techniques from different approaches and methods, as this teacher describes:

An eclectic approach to methods

I teach at a private language school, where learners from all over the world come to study five days a week, for anything from two weeks to two years. In order to keep learners engaged for that many hours, one methodology simply doesn’t cut the mustard. I’ve lived through quite a few briefly fashionable movements and gleefully looted whatever I could from each. With more experience, one blends them all and develops a best practice which utilizes anything that works with one’s own particular learners.

For example:

Audiolingualism: I drill new vocabulary and grammar so that learners get the opportunity to try out the new sounds. I believe that pronunciation is a very physical act, and the muscles of the lips, jaw and tongue need practice to develop the strength necessary to produce sounds that don’t exist in L1. Developing a sense memory is important.

Text-based learning: What we teach is not what they learn. Often learners will pick up totally different information/skills than what we intend when we are planning our lessons. Therefore, it is very helpful to have plenty of real language surrounding the target language. That way, you improve the odds of learners finding the language items that they have been processing, of which you are unaware. One very useful source for this language is unabridged, authentic listening and reading texts.

Communicative language teaching: It is really useful to encourage learners to express what they are interested in and what they know about. These days, that’s what most of them are learning the language for. Rather than getting them to parrot meaningless sentences that I give them, I make sure there is plenty of time, in each lesson, for learners to communicate genuinely with each other and exchange their own thoughts and opinions. What I can provide and help them with is a slightly more sophisticated way of expressing those opinions.

The one constant in any lesson is that learners need language input (in its broadest definition). A very formative experience for me was during a 'speaking' lesson. The classroom dynamics were excellent. Everyone was engaged and talking freely for an hour and a half. At the end of the lesson, a learner came up to me and said, 'That was nice, but I can do that at the hostel I'm staying at. Tomorrow, can we learn some more words?' It's not enough to keep them amused; we need to teach them stuff.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has considered many different approaches and methods that have been adopted at different times in language teaching. Perhaps the quest for more effective methods in language teaching reflects the fact that large-scale language programmes seldom meet the expectations of learners, employers and educational planners. Hence new language teaching proposals typically claim to be more effective than the ones they replace. However the adoption of new curriculum innovations in teaching is dependent upon a number of factors. These include:

- The extent to which an approach or method is officially adopted by educational authorities and educational organizations.
- The support it receives by authority figures or experts, such as academics and educational specialists.
- The extent to which it can provide the basis for educational resources, such as textbooks and educational software.
- The ease with which it can be understood and used by teachers.
- The extent to which it aligns with national curriculum and assessment guidelines.

During their initial teacher training, teachers are often introduced to different teaching methods and approaches, such as the ones described above. It is sometimes suggested that they should pick and choose, or blend different methods, when they start teaching. In fact, method decisions are often made for them. If they teach in a private institute and are teaching courses in general English, it is likely that they will teach from a commercial textbook series based on the communicative approach. If they are teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) or English for academic purposes (EAP), they may find that the course is organized around skills, text types or project work – in which case, they will need to learn how to teach within the chosen framework. If they are preparing students for content classes taught in English, a content-based approach is likely to be recommended. And if they teach a course in a particular skill area, such as a reading course or a conversation course, they will need to familiarize themselves with the approaches and methods that are typically used in these types of courses (see Chapters 12–15).

Despite the differences in how course designers, materials writers and teachers approach the planning and organization of their teaching, once lessons begin, plans are transformed through the interactions between teachers and students during the lesson (see Chapter 6). Through these processes, teachers create lessons that are right for the moment, but which might not be right for the next lesson they teach. Allwright (1988) previously argued this point of view, pointing out that classroom interaction and communication is complex and dynamic and is not simply a result of the teacher's methods. He explains that in order to understand classroom learning, it is insufficient simply to consider the method the teacher is using in isolation; the focus should be on the kinds of interactions that actually occur between teacher and students and among students themselves. Allwright's argument (1988), one which was supported by subsequent research in classroom interactional processes, was that the method didn't really matter very much considered within the broader context of classroom interaction.

As we noted in Chapter 1, teaching is 'situated'; that is, it reflects the contexts in which it occurs, and, for this reason, there can be no 'best method' of teaching. Dogancay-Aktuna and Hardman (2012: 113) thus conclude:

One cannot identify a 'best practice', even for a given context. The situatedness of language teaching involves not just the matching of particular pedagogies with particular settings, but seeing good pedagogy as emergent *from* those settings.

The next chapter will examine the knowledge and skills teachers need to develop, in order to both match appropriate approaches to their settings and to reflect on and refine their pedagogy as they teach.

Discussion questions

- 1 What is the difference between an approach and a method? Why do you think communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching are often referred to as approaches, whereas audiolingualism and situational language teaching are considered methods?
- 2 Despite the ascendancy of CLT, the grammar-translation method remains in use in some parts of the world. Why might some teachers feel comfortable using the method?
- 3 What role do you think translation can play in teaching English? Suggest some different kinds of translation activities and what their goals would be.
- 4 What are the features of the direct method? What lasting impact has it had in language teaching?
- 5 Do you think some of the techniques associated with the audiolingual method, such as the memorization of short dialogues, choral and substitution drills and teacher-led question and answer practice, have a place in more communicative approaches? If so, why?

- 6** CLT has questioned the centrality of grammar in language learning and teaching. How should teachers using communicative approaches respond to learners who feel most comfortable with grammar-based approaches?
- 7** Choose one of the student's books from an internationally used coursebook series. See if you can find an example of the following:
 - An information-gap activity.
 - A jigsaw activity.
 - A task-completion activity.
 - An information-gathering activity.
 - An opinion-sharing activity.
 - A role play.
- 8** Look at the same coursebook again. Do you see evidence of a grammatical syllabus, along with a communicative approach? How are the two combined?
- 9** In Krashen's terms, what are examples of activities that promote a) acquisition b) learning?
- 10** What do English for specific purposes (ESP) and competency-based language teaching (CBLT) have in common? In what kinds of teaching situations would each be appropriate?
- 11** Theme-based language instruction, adjunct instruction, sheltered subject-matter instruction and content and language integrated learning are all types of content-based instruction. In what types of teaching situations might each be used?
- 12** Why has CLIL become popular in Europe and how is it generally implemented?
- 13** What are some examples of task-based language activities? How can a focus on form be addressed with task-work?
- 14** Peter Nicoll describes his own teaching style as 'eclectic'. If you are teaching, how would you describe your own teaching style? What principles is it based on? If you are not yet teaching, which of the approaches and methods presented are ones you would be most likely to try? In what sort of teaching environments do you imagine they would work best?

Appendix 1:

Communicative language teaching lesson plan

Look at the lesson plan developed by Diana Croucher, a teacher in Barcelona, Spain, who makes use of a communicative approach. To what degree does she also focus on accuracy in the lesson? Which of the beliefs about the communicative approach, presented in this chapter, do you think this teacher adheres to?

LESSON PLAN

Level: Elementary / pre-intermediate (CEFR A2/B1)

Length of lesson: 55 minutes

AIMS

Communicative aims

Students tell each other about an important event in their lives and see if they can agree on whose story is the most exciting/interesting.

Linguistic aims

To use and practise the language they already know and to learn new language in the context of storytelling.

Timetable fit

In previous lessons, students have already done substantial work on listening and oral fluency. They have also studied the present simple, the present continuous, the past simple, comparatives and superlatives and question formation, among other things.

LESSON PROCEDURE

Stage	Time	Focus	Procedure	Aim
Pre-task speaking	10 minutes	Open class	Teacher projects relevant picture onto board (e.g. two girls at graduation ceremony). Asks students what they can see. Asks if this is a normal day or special occasion. Introduces theme, 'An important event in my life'.	To generate interest, activate top-down knowledge, activate vocabulary and establish the context.

Stage	Time	Focus	Procedure	Aim
		Pairs	Teacher hands out pictures of other important events. In pairs, students talk about different pictures/events. Teacher monitors activity. Feeds in vocabulary.	Introduce new vocabulary. Interactive personal response to the theme.
		Open class	Check task.	To clarify any problems.
Listening	10 minutes	Individually	Teacher explains she's going to tell students about an important event in her life. Puts questions on board. (See below.)	To focus students' attention, give them a purpose for listening. Provides useful exposure to target language.
		Open class	Teacher tells students about an important event in her life (trip to Costa Rica). Students listen and answer questions. Check answers to questions.	
Speaking	5 minutes	In pairs	Teacher writes prompts on board. (See below.) Students have to reconstruct her story. Teacher monitors activity.	To give students the opportunity to put meanings into words. Fluency practice.
		Open class	Check answers.	To clarify any problems.

Stage	Time	Focus	Procedure	Aim
Language focus	15 minutes	Individually	Teacher gives students worksheet with a copy of her text. (See below.) Teacher asks first question and models answer. Students complete the remaining questions.	To practise accuracy as well as fluency. To highlight and focus on form – promote noticing.
		Pairs	Students compare answers.	To clarify any problems, check understanding, give corrective feedback.
		Open class	Check answers. Teacher asks students if her trip to Costa Rica was a <i>good</i> or <i>bad</i> experience. (<i>good</i> = <i>exciting</i> , <i>a lovely time</i>) Teacher elicits the opposite of <i>exciting</i> and <i>lovely</i> . Teacher gives students more adjectives. (See below.) In pairs, students decide if the words are positive or negative. Teacher checks task in open class.	To recycle / introduce new vocabulary.
Personalized practice	5 minutes	In pairs	Students tell each other about an important event in their lives and ask follow-up questions. They decide whose story is the most exciting/interesting.	Students express and understand meanings. Try to achieve an outcome. Check students stay on task.

Stage	Time	Focus	Procedure	Aim
	5 minutes	In pairs	Teacher mediates. Students change partners and repeat the task.	Provide help if necessary. Gives them a chance to give a more polished performance.
	5 minutes	Open class	Teacher opens up the activity to the whole class – invites students to ask each other questions across the classroom. Teacher comments on task achievement and invites students to ask any questions they may have.	Develop a good class dynamic and an interactive, personal response to theme. Clarify problems. Give feedback.

TEACHING MATERIALS

Live listening – teacher writes these questions on board for students to answer while listening.

Where did I go?

Who did I go with?

Was it a good or a bad experience? How do you know?

Post-listening – teacher writes these prompts on board.

What can you remember? EXAMPLE: Five – I went to Costa Rica five years ago.

In pairs – what can you remember? Here are some words to help you.

Madrid / San José

11 hours

Beautiful

Big

Birds and animals

Exciting

WORKSHEET

An important event in my life

My husband and I went to Costa Rica on holiday five years ago. First, we flew to Madrid and then to the capital, San José. I remember that the flight was very long – eleven hours in total. Costa Rica is a very beautiful country. Everything is really big – the trees, the plants and the flowers. We saw lots of birds and animals – monkeys, crocodiles and parrots. It was really exciting, and we had a lovely time.

Complete the questions

1. When _____ to Costa Rica?
Five years ago.
2. Where _____ to ?
We flew to Madrid and then to San José.
3. What _____ ?
We saw lots of trees, plants and flowers.
4. How _____ ?
It was exciting. I had a lovely time.

exciting	interesting	difficult
boring	wonderful	terrible
	lovely	horrible

Appendix 2:

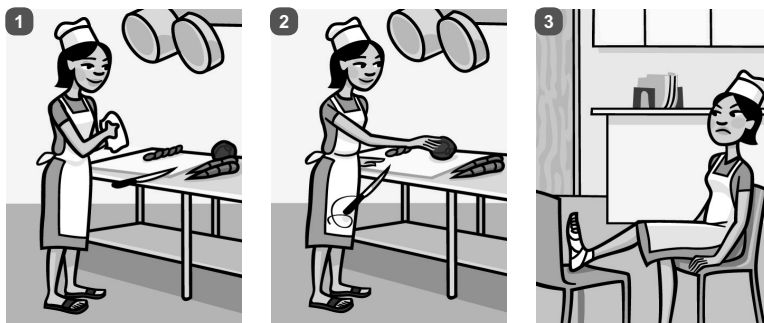
Accident report

Look at the lesson below from the textbook *Ventures* (Savage et al., 2007). How does the lesson reflect the principles of competency-based language teaching?

Lesson E Writing

1 Before you write

A Talk with a partner. What happened to this woman?



B Read the accident report.

ACCIDENT REPORT FORM	
Employee name:	<u>Komiko Yanaka</u>
Date of accident:	<u>January 13, 2008</u>
Time:	<u>9:00 p.m.</u>
Type of injury:	<u>cut foot</u>
How did the accident happen? <u>Every night, I cut vegetables in the kitchen. Last night, the knife slipped and cut my foot. I have to go to the doctor tomorrow.</u>	
Signature:	<u>Komiko Yanaka</u>
Date:	<u>1/14/08</u>

C Write. Answer the questions about the accident report.

- Who had an accident? Komiko Yanaka.
- When did the accident happen? _____
- What was the injury? _____
- How did the injury happen? _____
- When did she complete the form? _____

D Write. Work with a partner. Read the sentences. Number the sentences in the correct order.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Yesterday, I cut my foot.
____ It fell on my foot.
____ The knife slipped.
____ I was in the kitchen. | 3. Yesterday, I broke my leg.
____ I fell.
____ I went to the hospital.
____ I was at the top of a ladder. |
| 2. Yesterday, I sprained my ankle.
____ There was water on the floor.
____ I have to fill out an accident report.
____ I slipped. | 4. Yesterday, I hurt my back.
____ I felt a terrible pain in my back.
____ I picked up a heavy box.
____ I have to see a doctor tomorrow. |

2 Write

Complete the accident report form. Use your imagination or write about a real accident. Use Exercises 1B and 1D to help you.

ACCIDENT REPORT FORM	
Employee name: _____	
Date of accident: _____	Time: _____
Type of injury: _____	
How did the accident happen? _____	

Signature: _____ Date: _____	



Your signature on a form makes it official.
For a signature, use cursive writing.
Don't print.

Carl Staley
~~Carl Staley~~

3 After you write

A Read your form to a partner.

B Check your partner's form.

- What was the injury?
- What was the date of the accident?
- Is there a signature on the form?

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4

Developing knowledge, skills and awareness in teaching

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What are the skills that define the competence of a professional language teacher?
 - Acquiring practical classroom skills.
 - Improvisational performance.
 - English-language proficiency.
- What areas form part of the process of teacher development?
 - The knowledge base of language teaching.
 - The language teacher's identity.
 - Moving from teacher-centred to learner-centred teaching.

- Realizing the need for learner-centred teaching.
- The role of teachers' beliefs.
- Theorizing from practice.
- Teachers' changes in their approach to teaching.

4.1 Introduction

The expansion of English language teaching, as a consequence of the role of English as an international language, has created increasing demand worldwide for competent English teachers, and for more effective approaches to their preparation and professional development. Being an effective English language teacher involves mastering practical classroom skills, as well as acquiring the specialized knowledge that teachers make use of in their teaching. It also involves developing a deeper understanding of teaching, over time, through the experience of teaching. At the same time, teaching is, to some extent, an activity that draws on the teacher's personal beliefs, values and individual teaching style. The ESL/ELT profession has developed and continues to refine the professional knowledge base expected of language teachers, as reflected in the standards set for them, and the professional and academic qualifications available for them. However, teacher development is also dependent upon the teacher's individual initiatives and efforts, and in their willingness to participate in activities that involve reflection, monitoring and evaluation of one's own professional growth. In this chapter, we will examine the knowledge, skills and understanding that teachers make use of, and which provide the basis for their practice.

The nature of what we mean by competence, or skill, in teaching is not always easy to define because conceptions of good teaching differ from culture to culture (Tsui, 2009). In some cultures, a good teacher is one who controls and directs learners and who maintains a respectful distance between the teacher and the learners. Learners are more or less the passive recipients of the teacher's expertise. Teaching is viewed as a teacher-controlled and directed process. In other cultures, the teacher may be viewed more as a facilitator. The ability to form close interpersonal relations with students is highly valued, and there is a strong emphasis on individual learner creativity and independent learning. Students may even be encouraged to question and challenge what the teacher says. The way a person teaches, and his or her view of what good teaching is, will, therefore, reflect his or her cultural background and personal history, the context in which he or she is working, and the kind of students in his or her class. For this reason, teaching is sometimes said to be 'situated' and can only be understood within a particular context. This is reflected in a comment by an Australian student studying Chinese in China and reacting to the 'Chinese approach' to teaching (Brick, 1991: 153):

The trouble with Chinese teachers is that they've never done any real teacher-training courses, so they don't know how to teach. All they do is follow the book. They never give us any opportunity to talk. How in the world do they expect us to learn?

We may compare this with the comments of a Chinese student studying in Australia (Brick, 1991):

Australian teachers are very friendly, but they can't teach very well. I never know where they're going – there's no system, and I just get lost. Also, they're often very badly trained and don't have a thorough grasp of their subject.



What might some typical characteristics be of teachers in the context in which you completed your schooling?

A teacher educator reflects on the notion of a 'born teacher':



The idea of a 'born' teacher

When people speak of 'a born teacher', what do they mean? Does one mould fit all? I recall a group of teachers in training for polytechnic institutes who had been recruited, following successful careers in various fields. They were almost all of the same culture and yet differed hugely in the qualities they believed important for teachers. I had noticed that some who were lively, engaging and sociable during meal breaks became wooden during teaching practice. At first, I put this down to nervousness, but when I raised the topic, the truth came out. Many believed that there was a particular image they should show, now that they were going to be teachers. To depersonalize the discussion, we built up a list of qualities they had admired once in their own teachers. Soon the board was filled with antonyms: fun/serious, theatrical/quiet, predictable/unpredictable and so on. Maybe there is such a thing as a born musician or a born painter, but we had difficulty saying the same thing about teachers. It seems as if one key is being oneself. Skills can be learned, but not those good qualities that are already part of one's personality.

Marilyn Lewis, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

4.2 The skills and competence of a skilled language teacher

Acquiring practical classroom skills

Learning to teach English initially means mastering a core set of basic skills, or competencies, that teachers make regular use of in the classroom. These skills have to do with managing different aspects of lessons, and include:

- Planning and delivering lessons to address specific language skills and systems (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, reading, speaking and writing).
- Using effective learning arrangements (e.g. whole class, group work and pair work).
- Giving learners feedback on their learning.
- Checking learners' understanding.
- Guiding learners' practice.
- Monitoring learners' language use.
- Making transitions from one task to another.
- Using teaching resources effectively (e.g. textbooks, DVDs, whiteboards and computer software).

The initial challenge in becoming an English teacher is to acquire the basic classroom skills needed to present and navigate lessons, and to be able to access and implement such skills confidently and fluently. Teaching from the perspective of skills is an act of performance, and, for teachers to be able to carry themselves through the lesson, a repertoire of techniques and routines needs to be familiar and accessible. What we normally mean by the term 'teacher training' (see Chapter 21) generally refers to instruction in these basic classroom skills, often linked to a specific teaching context. During training, this repertoire of teaching skills is acquired through observing experienced teachers and often through practice-teaching in a controlled setting, using activities such as micro-teaching or peer-teaching (Richards and Farrell, 2011). Good teaching from a training perspective is viewed as the mastery of this set of skills or competencies. Experiencing teaching in a variety of different situations, with different kinds of learners and teaching different kinds of content, is how a repertoire of basic teaching skills is acquired. Barr and Dreeben (1983) argued that experience is the primary source of the practical knowledge teachers acquire. As they add to their teaching experience they acquire knowledge and skills related to the grouping of students, the different kinds of content they are required to teach, methods of teaching and the use of teaching materials, and how to manage a class effectively. Barr and Dreeben (1983) further identify how the first year or two of teaching is crucial in a teacher's development and the primary period in which teaching skills are developed, since this period marks the break between having no experience and the point at which the teacher assumes responsibility for teaching a class.



What are some aspects of teaching that can be learned from experience? What are some that you think are not easy to learn from experience alone?

In order to be able to improve on teaching, an ability to review and reflect on one's teaching is important as we see in the following example:

Teacher development and confidence-building

Perhaps it was because I was born and raised in a family of primary-school teachers that I had a teaching spirit inside me. I started teaching English when I was in my second year [of my BA in teaching English], just about three years after I first started learning, even though I had not had any formal training on teaching methodology at all. I learned to teach by observing the way I was taught and by concentrating on what I thought to be ‘effective ways of teaching’. I first started as a part-time teacher, teaching a one-hour class, every day, of 15 students at a beginners’ level. The instruction was almost all in Khmer – my mother tongue – except for an occasional English phrase. I was so scared of my class getting out of control, since my students were all young teenagers; no one was above 15. And I did not remember using any handouts or extra activities, since I had to bear my own cost of the photocopies if I wanted to use any materials. Therefore, I chose to stick totally to the coursebook. However, I started reflecting on my teaching, and how I could make my class more fun and more beneficial for my students. Eventually, even though it was not a great teaching situation, I did learn how to become a better teacher while working there.

However, it was not until I was in my final year of my BA in teaching English, in which teaching pedagogy and teaching practice were heavily focused on, that I realized how different my teaching was from what were considered best practices. I started to do less talking, instead, and pay more attention to my instructions. Rather than just being obsessive with absolute control of my class, I started working more as a facilitator and a guide for language learning. Most of the time, I also tried to emphasize study skills, as part of my teaching. I am now more confident in adding extra resources to my lessons, localizing some part of the coursebook and rearranging the order of the content of the coursebook.

Adapting new techniques or skills into my teaching was not easy at first. I normally gave up during the first try if it did not work out. I was basically so scared of applying new ideas into my teaching. However, I started going to English-teaching conferences in Cambodia, talking to my colleagues about techniques that have been successful in their classes, attending professional development workshops and observing other instructors teaching. All of these activities gave me more confidence and helped to shape a new teaching methodology. Now I understand that if I apply the new technique for the first time and it is not completely successful, I will adapt my strategy and try again.

Theara Chea, teacher and teacher educator, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Improvisational performance

When one observes experienced teachers in their classrooms, one is struck by their apparent effortless management of the different dimensions of lessons. They may not need to refer to a lesson plan, because they are able to create effective lessons through monitoring

their learners' response to teaching activities and can create learning opportunities around important teaching moments (see Chapter 6). Their teaching can be viewed as a kind of skilled improvisation. Over time, experience leads to the development of routines that enable classroom activities to be performed fluently, automatically and with little conscious thought and attention, enabling the teacher to focus on other dimensions of the lesson (Tsui, 2009; Borg, 2006). Experienced teachers engage in sophisticated processes of observation, reflection and assessment, and make 'online' decisions about which course of action to take from a range of alternatives that are available. These interactive decisions often prompt teachers to change course during a lesson, based on critical incidents and other unanticipated aspects of the lesson. For example, Bailey and Nunan (1996) and Richards (1996) both report studies of how teachers depart from their lesson plans. Bailey and Nunan described the principles which prompted their improvisations as follows:

- 1 *Serving the common good*: Change focus to a problem that many learners experienced in the class.
- 2 *Teach to the moment*: React to immediate opportunities that arise during lessons.
- 3 *Furthering the lesson*: Move the lesson on when possibilities are exhausted.
- 4 *Accommodating different individual learning styles*: Improvise with different teaching strategies.
- 5 *Promoting student involvement*: Allow space for students to participate.
- 6 *Distribute the wealth*: Stop particular students from dominating the class, and encourage other students to take turns.

As teachers accumulate experience and knowledge, there is, therefore, a move towards a degree of flexibility in teaching and the development of the ability to improvise. Research reviewed by Borg (2006), Tsui (2003) and others hence describes some of the following characteristics of expert teachers:

- They have a wide repertoire of routines and strategies that they can call upon.
- They are willing to depart from established procedures and use their own solutions and are more willing to improvise.
- They learn to automatize the routines associated with managing the class; this skill leaves them free to focus on content.
- They improvise more than novice teachers. They make greater use of interactive decision-making as a source of their improvisational performance.
- They have more carefully developed schemas of teaching on which to base their practical classroom decisions.
- They pay more attention to language issues than novice teachers (who worry more about classroom management).
- They are able to anticipate problems and have procedures available to deal with them.

- They carry out needed phases more efficiently, spending less time on them.
- They relate things that happen to the bigger picture, seeing them not in the context of a particular lesson.
- They distinguish between significant and unimportant issues that arise.



In what ways does experience help develop skill and expertise in teaching?

We see these differences between novice and expert teachers summarized in the following set of stages (Berliner, 1998, cited in Wright, 2005: 279):

Stages in development of expertise in teaching

Stage 1 (novice): Teacher labels and learns each element of the classroom task. Set of context-free rules of performance acquired. Performance is rational, inflexible and needs purposeful concentration.

Stage 2 (advanced beginner): Similarities across contexts are recognized and episodic knowledge acquired. Strategic knowledge gained; knows when to ignore or 'break' rules. Prior classroom experiences begin to guide behaviour.

Stage 3 (competent): Teacher able to make conscious choices about actions, to set priorities and plan. Teacher knows, from experience, what is important and not important. Teacher now knows how to deal with errors.

Stage 4 (proficient): Intuition and knowledge begin to guide performance. Recognition of similarities across contexts acquired. Teacher picks up information from classroom and can predict events with precision.

Stage 5 (expert): Has an intuitive grasp of situations, and non-analytic sense of appropriate behaviour. Teaching apparently effortless and fluid. Automatic, standardized routines for management and instruction now operate. Teachers are likely to have difficulty in describing their thinking.

So while learning to teach, from the perspective of skill development, can be thought of as the mastery of specific teaching competencies, at the same time, these skills reflect complex levels of thinking and decision-making, and it is these cognitive processes that also need to be the focus of teacher training. From the perspective of teacher cognition, teaching is not simply the application of knowledge and learned skills. It is viewed as a much more complex process, affected by the classroom context, the teacher's general and specific instructional goals, the teacher's beliefs and values, the learners' motivations and reactions to the lesson and the teacher's management of critical moments during a lesson (Borg, 2006; 2009). It is these cognitive processes that enable teachers to engage in

improvisational teaching, a skill that comes from knowledge and experience. The ability to make appropriate decisions while teaching depends upon the teacher's ability to assess the learners' responses to the lesson and make modifications if needed. It involves observing the lesson as it proceeds and asking questions like the following:

- Do the students understand this? Are my instructions clear?
- Do I need to increase student involvement in this activity?
- Is this too difficult or not sufficiently challenging for the students?
- Should I try teaching this in a different way?
- Is this taking too much time?
- Is the activity going as planned?
- How can I get the students' attention?
- Do I need to improve accuracy on the task?
- Is this relevant to the aims of the lesson?
- Do the students need more vocabulary or grammatical support for the activity?
- Am I providing too much support and guidance, rather than letting the students have more responsibility for their learning?



Borg (2006) talks about 'critical moments during a lesson'. What are some examples of these?

English-language proficiency

English-language teachers may be speakers of English as a first language or may have learned English as a second or foreign language. The majority of the world's English teachers are second-language speakers of English and many are outstanding teachers. Unfortunately, in many countries where English is taught, native-speaker teachers of English have a privileged position. They may be less well-trained than their local colleagues, yet receive a higher salary by virtue of the fact that they are native speakers of English. In addition, others tend to attribute to them skills and expertise that they do not have – a phenomenon sometimes referred to as 'nativespeakerism'. Vodopija-Krstanovic (2011: 207) comments:

In English language teaching, the native speaker has been held up as a benchmark for knowledge about language, and represents an ideal in ELT methodology. The native speaker / non-native speaker dichotomy is said to divide the TESOL world, in which native English-speaker teachers are often privileged over non-native English-speaker teachers, who are regarded as inferior in knowledge and performance, a notion that has influenced employment policy, teaching methods and language use.

However, language proficiency *does* affect how well a teacher can teach a second language. I speak French and Indonesian and could teach both these languages to beginner-level students; however, due to limitations in my language proficiency, I would be dependent upon coursebooks and other resources and would not be capable of moving much beyond the language of the textbook. So the issue is, how much of a language does a teacher need to know to be able to teach it effectively, and how does proficiency in a language interact with other aspects of teaching (Khamhi-Stein, 2009; Medgyes, 2001)? To answer these questions, we need to consider the language-specific competencies that a language teacher needs in order to teach effectively. These include the ability to do the following kinds of things:

- Provide good language models.
- Maintain use of English in the classroom.
- Give explanations and instructions in English.
- Be able to provide examples of words and grammatical structures.
- Give accurate explanations of meanings of English words and grammatical items.
- Be able to use and adapt authentic English-language resources in teaching (e.g. newspapers, magazines or the internet).
- Monitor one's own speech and writing for accuracy.
- Give correct feedback on learner language use.
- Provide input at an appropriate level of difficulty.
- Be able to engage in improvisational teaching.

Learning how to carry out these aspects of a lesson fluently, in English, is an important dimension of teaching skill, and teachers with limited English proficiency may tend to overuse the students' mother tongue in teaching, may be unable to provide suitable language input for learning and may become over-dependent upon the textbook and audio player. However, teachers who are second language speakers of English bring a number of skills to the classroom. They are familiar with the difficulties involved in learning English and are usually able to communicate well with learners of limited language proficiency. And, conversely, as noted above, the mere fact that a teacher speaks English well is no indication that he or she is an excellent English teacher. Language proficiency is one component of teaching English, but it is only one factor involved.

The type of English a non-native speaker teacher seeks to acquire may also be related to the teacher's sense of professional identity. Vodopija-Krstanovic (2011: 216) comments on the attitudes of student-teachers in Croatia towards their teachers' pronunciation, criticizing their non-native pronunciation and raising questions about their professional identity, expertise and qualifications. One student comments:

It's the pronunciation. It's the British accent that's some kind of prestige... Some of our teachers here have awful pronunciation. The idea that those professors have a doctoral degree in English... and they talk like that... I know they didn't have TV back then... We will be school language

teachers one day, so if you are going to teach others, then you have to know how to speak English, and pronunciation is part of that.

On the other hand, native-speaker teachers in the same institution found the native-speaker based pronunciation of some of the Croatian professors to sound quaint and stilted:

Some of the professors here speak a sort of very snobbish English, like X. I mean, terribly posh ... and a lot of other people I met. So, obviously, they'd internalized some sort of model of their stays in England, which carries a slightly old-fashioned sense of prestige.

4.3 The process of teacher development

The knowledge base of language teaching

English language teaching requires a specialized knowledge base, obtained through both academic study and practical experience. The professional knowledge base of teachers is known as *content knowledge*. Content knowledge refers to what teachers need to know about what they teach (including what they know about language teaching itself), and constitutes knowledge that would not be shared with teachers of other subject areas. Content knowledge can be thought of as constituting the 'theoretical foundations' of ESL/ELT, in comparison with the practical, teaching-skills aspects of teaching, which were discussed above. Content knowledge, however, is of many different kinds. One important distinction is between *disciplinary knowledge* and *pedagogical content knowledge* (Shulman, 1987; Crookes, 2009). Disciplinary knowledge refers to a circumscribed body of knowledge that is considered by the language-teaching profession to be essential to gaining membership in the profession. For example, it could include the history of language teaching methods, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, phonology and syntax, discourse analysis, theories of language, critical applied linguistics and so on. It is important to stress here that disciplinary knowledge is part of professional education and does not translate directly into practical teaching skills. As a result, teachers in training may not immediately grasp its relevance, as this teacher explains:

Finding relevance in disciplinary knowledge

My initial teacher-training course consisted of a four-year programme, comprising 33 different modules, many of which were directly relevant to a teacher's work – for example, methodology, the practicum, English language, etc. Other modules had a more theoretical basis, and for young novices itching to start teaching, like my fellow trainees and myself, it was difficult at the time to understand the relevance and usefulness of being required to acquire what we felt was unnecessary knowledge.

One morning, as we were faced with hours of case-grammar lectures, one of my classmates – the brave spokesperson of our collective frustration – asked the lecturer to explain to us the use of engaging with the study of grammar in such depth, when, in practice, we would be very unlikely to have to teach it at that level. I remember our lecturer's shock and dismay at being asked to justify the need for us to learn his subject, and I also recall thinking that his explanation was not convincing enough to motivate us to want to engage enthusiastically with semantics and pragmatics for the rest of the academic year.

As the years went by, however, I have learned not just to appreciate the sound and broad-ranging knowledge base that studying such subjects has given me, but I am also aware that such knowledge has contributed significantly to developing my confidence as a teacher – an unexpected and valuable outcome. As I became a teacher of teachers later on in my career, I have found myself drawing and building on that knowledge, and I am now thankful for the solid foundations that the disciplinary knowledge I was required to acquire during my initial teacher training have provided me with to build my professional identity.

Silvana Richardson, teacher and teacher educator, Cambridge, UK

Pedagogical content knowledge, on the other hand, refers to knowledge that provides a basis for language teaching. It is knowledge which is drawn from the study of language teaching and language learning itself, and which can be applied in different ways to the resolution of practical issues in language teaching. It could include coursework in areas such as curriculum planning, assessment, reflective teaching, classroom management, teaching children, teaching the four skills and so on (this book covers both kinds of knowledge, although it focuses mainly on pedagogical content knowledge). Professional courses for ESL/ELT typically include a mix of disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. A case study of a teacher in Iran who reflects on both kinds of knowledge can be found in the appendix of this chapter.

Introductory courses generally spend more time on pedagogical content knowledge. A sound grounding in both disciplinary and pedagogical content knowledge prepares teachers to be able to do things such as the following:

- Understand learners' needs.
- Diagnose learners' learning problems.
- Plan suitable instructional goals for lessons.
- Select and design learning tasks.
- Evaluate students' learning.
- Design and adapt tests.
- Evaluate and choose published materials.
- Read the professional literature.

- Adapt commercial materials.
- Make use of authentic materials.
- Make appropriate use of technology.
- Evaluate their own lessons.

Here, a teacher describes the important link between disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge:



Surviving as a beginning teacher

One of the ways I survived as a beginning teacher was to use my bilingual Spanish/English dictionary. As a native speaker [of English], I could not understand how to explain the grammar I was teaching, and the use of a dictionary was a strategy I used. I remember looking up the word *do* for the question: *What do you do?* I literally translated each word in the question and thought I had the answer for my students. What I did not realize is that the word *do* was a verb and also an auxiliary. Of course, I did not understand what the function of an auxiliary was. I finally looked up the word *do* in a grammar book, and, bit by bit, I began to understand the function of the auxiliary *do*. More importantly, I started to understand the complexities of my own native language.

Martha Lengeling, teacher and teacher educator, Guanajuato, Mexico

The role of pedagogical content knowledge is demonstrated in a study by Tang (cited in Richards, 1998a), in which she compared two groups of English teachers in Hong Kong – one with training in literature and the teaching of literature and one without such training – and how they would exploit literary texts in their teaching. Each group was given a set of literary texts (poems, short stories or extracts from novels) and asked to assess the potential of these texts for teaching English. Some of the differences between these two groups of teachers are seen in the following summary of the research findings:

Literature majors / undergraduates	Non-literature majors / undergraduates
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saw ways of dealing with any difficulties the texts posed.• Saw a wide variety of teaching possibilities with the texts.• Addressed literary aspects of the texts.• A variety of strategies were used to help students explore the meanings of the texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worried about how to deal with the difficulties the texts posed.• Planned to use the texts mainly for reading comprehension.• Did not address literary aspects of the texts.• Mainly used questions to check comprehension of the texts.

So, as we see in this study, possessing both relevant disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge made a substantial difference to how teachers planned their lessons. Consequently, teachers with this relevant knowledge should be able to make better and more appropriate decisions about teaching and learning, and arrive at more appropriate solutions to problems, than a teacher without such knowledge. However, the central issue of what constitutes appropriate disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge remains an unresolved issue, and studies that have sought to investigate the impact of both types of knowledge on teachers' practices have produced very mixed results (Bartels, 2005).



What areas of disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge would you like to learn more about?

A further important component of professional knowledge required of language teachers in today's classrooms has been termed *technological pedagogical content knowledge*, or TPACK (Mishra and Koehler, 2006) – that is, the ability to incorporate and integrate technology into teaching. Reinders (2009: 231) points out that, depending on the teacher's level of technological expertise, this could involve 'being able to, first, *use* a certain technology; second, being able to *create* materials and activities using that technology; and, third, being able to *teach* with technology'. Reinders (2009: 236) suggests that 'the challenge for teachers will be more one of helping learners develop the skills to deal successfully with the increased control and independence that technology demands'. Increasingly, teachers are expected to develop these skills – and standards have been developed to specify what these skills are and to what level teachers should have them (see *TESOL Technology Standards*, Healey et al., 2011). But as Kajder (2007) comments:

As integral as these emergent technologies are becoming to the field of literacy, it is still new to think about using new tools for new purposes. The purpose is not to do familiar things in the same familiar ways, like moving an essay to PowerPoint. Instead, it is about doing new things with new tools, alongside our students – and valuing the multimodal knowledge they already are bringing into our classroom.

The language teacher's identity

A language teacher has several different roles in the second-language classroom. These can include:

- *A model*: Providing examples of how language is used and giving feedback on students' language use.
- *A planner*: Selecting and organizing learning materials for lessons.
- *A resource*: Providing information about English.
- *A performer*: Creating lessons that reflect careful planning and execution.

- A *manager*: Controlling and managing learner behaviour to maximize learning opportunities and to minimize disruptions.
- A *motivator*: Providing experiences that motivate and engage learners.
- An *inquirer*: Learning more about the nature of second language learning through teaching different kinds of learners and reflecting on observations they make.
- A *mentor*: Guiding learners towards successful learning strategies and approaches.
- A *learner*: Learning more about teaching through the experience of teaching.
- A *theorizer*: Developing a deeper understanding of language teaching by developing explanations and theories to account for things the teacher observes in the classroom.



Most teachers play different roles in class at different times. Which role from the list above do you see yourself adopting most often?

Language teachers develop different roles as they gain experience in teaching, and constantly negotiate between these different roles. One of the things a person has to learn when he or she becomes a language teacher is what it *means* to be a language teacher; that is, what the identity of an English teacher is (Miller, 2009). *Identity* refers to the differing social and cultural roles teacher-learners enact through their interactions with their students, during the process of learning. These roles are not static, but emerge through the social processes of the classroom. Identity may be shaped by many factors, including personal biography, gender, culture, working conditions, age, and the school and classroom culture. The concept of identity thus reflects how individuals see themselves and how they enact their roles within different settings (Norton, 2001). Teacher identity includes how teachers recognize their roles within their world, and involves their beliefs, values and assumptions about teaching and being a teacher. For some ESL/ELT teachers working in English-speaking countries, their identity may partly reflect their wish to empower immigrants, refugees and others for whom English is a way out of their current circumstances (Cooke and Simpson, 2008). In other countries, the satisfaction of helping learners acquire something they need and want is a motivation for many other teachers. Teacher-learning thus involves not only discovering more about the skills and knowledge of language teaching but also what it means to be a language teacher. Vodopija-Krstanovic (2011: 220) describes how the identity of a native-speaker English teacher in Croatia changes from being that of a representative of a foreign culture (the US) to that of a language-teaching professional during the course of her initial contact with her students:

I would describe students' perception of me, as both an individual and a professor, as proceeding through three general phases... The first phase lasts for the first two or three classes, wherein I am perceived as an object of curiosity, in the sense that I am a real foreigner from the legendary Wild West of the US, and that there is much that is unknown and mysterious about me... Following about the second or third class, students get a sense that I am not all that much unlike them... By the fourth class... students seem resolved, above all else, to determine what

it is exactly that I expect of them in class and what elements are to be the most important in determining their grades. Finally... students make a final judgement surrounding my ethos and the overall impression that I have left upon them.

Moving from teacher-centred to learner-centred teaching

An important transition that occurs in teacher development is a shift from approaching a lesson in terms of its content and the demands the lesson places on the teacher to an approach in which the lesson is tailored to the learners' needs and understandings (Benson, 2001). A learner-centred approach to teaching has some of the principles of communicative language teaching (see Chapter 3), and is reflected in the following aspects of lessons:

- The degree of engagement learners have with the lesson.
- The extent to which learners' responses shape the lesson.
- The quantity of student participation and interaction that occurs.
- The learning outcomes the lesson produces.
- The ability to present subject matter from a learner's perspective.
- How the teacher is able to reshape the lesson based on learner feedback.
- How the lesson reflects learners' needs and preferences.
- How the lesson connects with the learners' life experiences.
- How the teacher responds to learners' difficulties.



Can you give examples of some of the features on the list above?

We see a learner-centred view of lessons in the response two teachers gave to the question, 'What constitutes an effective language lesson from your perspective?' (author data):

To me, the most important thing is that the students enjoyed themselves and had useful practice. And that the lesson was at the right level for them – not too easy or too difficult – so that they felt it was really worthwhile coming to class today.

I believe every child in my class has got the capacity to learn, even if he or she is not aware of it. Every learner is a winner. I try to encourage each student to discover what he or she is good at, and to help them be successful at it.

It is natural, when one first starts teaching, to be preoccupied with one's own performance as a teacher, to try to communicate a sense of confidence, competence

and skill, and to try to create lessons that reflect purpose, order and planning. It is a period when ideas are being tried out and tested, when the teacher's role and identity are being developed and when many new challenges have to be overcome. Hence, studies of teachers in their first year of teaching have revealed a transition from a survival and mastery stage, where the teacher's performance is a central concern, to a later stage where teachers become more focused on their students' learning and the impact of their teaching on learning (Farrell, 2009). The challenge is to make sure that such a transition occurs, and that one's initial teaching experiences do not lead to a style of teaching that sticks – one that provides a comfort zone for the teacher, but that fails to provide learners with the opportunity to achieve their full potential as learners (Benson, 2001).

Learner-centredness, as a characteristic of expert teachers, is seen in some of the research Borg reviews (2006), where the characteristics of expert teachers include:

- They are familiar with typical student behaviours.
- They use their knowledge of learners to make predictions about what might happen in the classroom.
- They build their lessons around students' difficulties.
- They maintain active student involvement.

Senior (2006: 200) suggests that a central aspect of learner-focused teaching is creating a classroom that functions as a community of learners.

It is sometimes forgotten that language classes operate as communities, each with its own collection of shared understandings that have been built up over time. The overall character of each language class is created, developed and maintained by everyone in the room.

Effective teachers use different strategies to develop a sense of community among their learners, including using group-based activities, addressing common student interests and concerns, regularly changing seating arrangements so that students experience working with different classmates, using humour and other ways of creating a warm and friendly classroom atmosphere and recognizing that students have social, as well as learning, needs in the classroom.

Realizing the need for learner-centred teaching

Below, a teacher recounts how she realized the need for learner-centred teaching:

Relating activities to students' lives

As a beginning teacher, I was given the lower levels of English, and they tended to be large, about 30 students. I enjoyed the dynamics of a large class and prepared my

classes thinking of how I could get across the grammar I was teaching. I looked at the textbook and planned how to get through each activity of the unit I was planning. I felt if I could go through every textbook and workbook activity, students would learn. Of course, this type of thinking was somewhat top down because I assumed that giving out the information of these activities would be the way for my students to learn the language. In essence, I controlled these activities, beginning with the first activity and continuing on with each one. These activities seemed to be rushed. In one of these classes, I was teaching questions in the present simple tense, such as *What do you do?* *Where do you live?* etc. I ran through the activities, and at the end of the class, two of my students asked me if they could use the grammar related to their lives. It was a wake-up call for me, and I learned two things. I realized my way of thinking was not tapping into my students' lives, and I also realized that completing all the book activities was not the way for learning.

Martha Lengeling, teacher and teacher educator, Guanajuato, Mexico

The ability to personalize one's teaching is also an important aspect of learner-focused teaching. Personalizing teaching means focusing one's teaching, wherever possible, on one's students and their lives, concerns, goals and interests. This can be achieved by linking the content of lessons to the students' lives and by involving students in developing or choosing the content of lessons (Dörnyei, 2001). For example, in teaching narratives, while the textbook might provide examples of what narratives are and describe their linguistic and textual features, having students share personal stories among themselves can be a powerful way of promoting genuine communication among them. In sharing accounts of their childhoods and discussing significant events or experiences in their lives, students will be prompted to practise and develop their communicative resources by asking questions, asking for clarification, responding with their experiences and so on.

Students can also be involved in generating lesson content. For example, they can work in groups to choose suitable topics for essay writing. Instead of using examples from the textbook to present a lesson on idioms, students might compile lists of idioms they have encountered out of class and bring these to class for discussion. Learner-centredness in teaching thus reflects the view that 'language teaching is an educational endeavour which should seek to empower learners by enabling them to assume an informed and self-directive role in the pursuance of their language-related life goals' (Tudor, 1996: xii). As we will see in Chapter 5, learner-focused teaching encourages autonomy and raises motivation in the language classroom.



Tudor talks about 'self-direction'. What techniques do you use to encourage learners in your class to take responsibility for their own learning and develop self-directed learning skills?

A teacher educator describes how experienced teachers conduct self-directed classes:



Differences between novice and experienced teachers

In my role as teacher educator, I have to observe a good number of teachers a year, some still in training, others novices and others more experienced. What definitely sets novice and experienced teachers apart is that while the former tend to focus primarily on teaching the lesson, the latter focus on teaching the learner. In directing their attention primarily to the lesson, less experienced teachers are concerned about whether they are able to follow their lesson plan, to put into practice a number of recently learned techniques, to manage the group effectively. If they planned to carry out an activity in a certain way, by way of a specific interaction pattern, they will stick to it even if students' reactions and behaviours, during preceding activities, indicate a change of direction. They may be more concerned about the questions they will ask their learners than the answers that their learners will provide. Because the basic lesson and classroom routines are not automatized yet, a lot of these teachers' focal attention is on them, with little working memory left to effectively sense the students.

More experienced teachers, on the other hand, are able to gauge the classroom atmosphere and change direction, when needed, in order to reach the students. They are also sensitive to affective situations that call for special attention. For example, I remember once when I was observing a novice teacher, and she began her class by reviewing what had been taught the previous class – talking about past activities – and personalizing the topic by asking students what they had done during the recent holiday. As students spoke, she wrote the verbs used on the board, as a review of past forms. She was also keen on providing corrective feedback when necessary. One by one, students started reporting that they had gone to the movies, studied, read a good book, etc., and the teacher reacted, saying, 'Good', 'Nice', 'OK'. Suddenly, the next student called upon said, 'Oh, I goed to Paris'. The other students looked at the peer with surprise, but the teacher just went on with her planned strategy, and said, 'You went to Paris; repeat: I went to Paris', which the student diligently repeated. The teacher turned to the next student and said, 'And you, what did you do?' Considering that it is very uncommon for a person to travel from Brazil to France during a four-day holiday, this learner's endeavour deserved more attention, and attention to meaning, not only form! In fact, the teacher could have used it to her advantage to review the simple past even further, by having the classmates ask the student why he had gone to Paris, what he had done there, eaten there, the places he had visited, etc. However, since she had not planned this, she didn't do it!

Isabela Villas Boas, teacher and teacher educator, Brasilia, Brazil

The role of teachers' beliefs

The study of teachers' beliefs is central to the process of understanding how teachers conceptualize their work, since teachers' beliefs play a central role in the process of teacher development, and changes in teachers' practices are the result of changes in their beliefs. In order to understand how teachers approach their work, it is necessary to understand the beliefs and principles they operate from. The construction of personal theories and an understanding of teaching are a central task for teachers (Golombek, 2009). Such theories are often resistant to change and serve as a core reference point for teachers as they process new information and theories. Clark and Peterson (1986) (summarized and discussed in Breen, undated: 47–8) proposed that:

- The most resilient, or 'core', teacher beliefs are formed on the basis of teachers' own schooling as young students, where they observed teachers who taught them. Subsequent teacher education appears not to disturb these early beliefs, at least, perhaps, because it rarely addresses them.
- If teachers actually try out a particular innovation which does not initially conform to their prior beliefs or principles, and the innovation proves helpful or successful, then accommodation of an alternative belief or principle is more possible than in other circumstances.
- For the novice teacher, classroom experience and day-to-day interaction with colleagues have the potential to influence particular relationships among beliefs and principles and, over time, consolidate the individual's permutation of them. Nevertheless, it seems that greater experience does not lead to greater adaptability in our beliefs and, thereby, the abandonment of strongly held pedagogic principles. Quite the contrary, in fact. The more experience we have, the more reliant on our 'core' principles we have become, and the less conscious we are of doing so.
- Professional development which engages teachers in direct exploration of their beliefs and principles may provide the opportunity for greater self-awareness through reflection and critical questioning, as starting points for later adaptation.
- The teacher's conceptualizations of, for example, language, learning, and teaching, are situated within that person's wider belief system concerning such issues as human nature, culture, society, education and so on.

A teacher describes how a professional-development course led her to reflect on her own beliefs and teaching practices:

The role of teachers' beliefs

One of the most important turning points in my career as a teacher was at the beginning of the Cambridge DELTA course, when we had to write about our 'personal theory of

practice', i.e. our beliefs as a teacher. I remember thinking, 'Oh, this is really easy. It'll only take half an hour, at the most'. However, it was when I started to put my thoughts down on paper that my doubts began. Little by little, I began to question all of my previously held beliefs and assumptions – Are my lessons really learner-centred? Are they genuinely communicative? Do I respond to my students' needs and preferences, or do I tend to follow my own pre-planned agenda? Initially, this experience was uncomfortable for me, and I started to feel very insecure. On the other hand, it was also extremely enlightening and gave me the opportunity to really explore my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. We are often resistant to change and prefer to stay in our own comfort zones – after all, change is never easy and involves time, effort and emotion. However, only by critically reflecting on our own teaching practices and implementing changes, when necessary, can we become better, more confident professionals.

Diana Croucher, teacher, Barcelona, Spain



What is an example of one of your core beliefs that affects the way you teach?

Other researchers (e.g. Bailey, 1992; Golombek, 1998; 2009) affirm the notion that changes in teachers' beliefs precede changes in their teaching practices. Similarly, Hampton (1994) notes that teachers' beliefs or 'personal constructs' determine how they approach their teaching. These beliefs may be quite general or very specific. For example, Harste et al. (1984) identified nineteen separate beliefs about teaching and learning that were built into a simple activity for Year 1 learners at primary school. Teachers' beliefs strongly affect the goals, materials and activities they choose for the classroom. Hampton suggests that some of these core beliefs are changeable, but others are 'impermeable and difficult, or impossible, to change' (Harste et al., 1984: 120). Breen (undated) describes the core beliefs of a group of 167 teachers who participated in a language-learning experience, and who reported on the practices they thought facilitated the learning of the language. These are summarized in terms of nine principles:

- 1 Selectively focus on the form of the language.
- 2 Selectively focus on vocabulary or meaning.
- 3 Enable learners to use the language / be appropriate.
- 4 Address learners' mental processing capabilities.
- 5 Take account of learners' affective involvement.
- 6 Directly address learners' needs or interests.
- 7 Monitor learner progress and provide feedback.
- 8 Facilitate learner responsibility or autonomy.
- 9 Manage the lesson and the group.



What do you think sometimes prompts teachers to change their core beliefs?

Theorizing from practice

Mastery of teaching skills and the specialized thinking skills expert teachers make use of are essential aspects of teacher development. But teacher-learning also involves developing a deeper understanding of what teaching is; it involves developing ideas, concepts, theories and principles based on our experience of teaching (Borg, 2006). The development of a personal system of knowledge, beliefs and understanding, drawn from our practical experience of teaching, is known as *theorizing from practice*. The belief system and understanding we build up, through practice, help us make sense of our experience and also serve as the source of the practical actions we take in the classroom. To better understand the concept of theorizing from practice, it will be useful to contrast two ways of thinking about the relationship between theory and practice. The first is the *application of theory*. This involves making connections between the concepts, information and theories from our teacher-education courses and our classroom practices; it involves putting theories into practice. So after studying the principles of task-based instruction or collaborative learning, for example, we might try to find ways of applying these principles in our teaching.

Theorizing from practice, on the other hand, involves reflecting on our practices in order to better understand the nature of language teaching and learning and to arrive at explanations or hypotheses about them. The information we make use of is the experience of teaching, observations of how our learners learn, or fail to learn, and our reflections on things that happen during our lessons. The theorizing that results from these reflections may take several different forms. It may lead to explanations as to why things happen in the way they do, to generalizations about the nature of things, to principles that can form the basis of subsequent actions and to the development of a personal teaching philosophy (Richards, 1998a). The following examples, taken from teachers' narratives and journals, illustrate teachers beginning to theorize from practice:

Learners learn more when they work in groups, because they can learn from each other, and they get more opportunities to talk than when the teacher is conducting the class. Error correction works best when you ask students to monitor their own language, rather than having them depend on the teacher all the time.

A further stage in theorizing from practice is when teachers formulate principles that they refer to when planning and evaluating their teaching, and when they develop the personal philosophy which guides their decision-making, as noted above (Bailey, 1996). Here is an example of a teacher describing some of the beliefs and principles she brings to her teaching (cited in Richards, 1998a):

I think it's important to be positive, as a personality. I think the teacher has to be a positive person. I think you have to show a tremendous amount of patience. And I think if you have a

good attitude, you can project this to the students and, hopefully, establish a relaxed atmosphere in your classroom, so that the students won't dread to come to class, but have a good class. I feel that it's important to have a lesson plan of some sort...because you need to know what you want to teach and how you are going to go from the beginning to the end. And also taking into consideration the students, what their ability is, what their background is and so on. I have been in situations where I did not understand what was being taught, or what was being said, and how frustrating it is, and so when I approach it, I say, 'How can I make it the easiest way for them to understand what they need to learn?'

This teacher's philosophy emphasizes the teacher's attitude and the need to create a supportive environment for learning in the classroom. She stresses the need for lesson planning, but her justification for lesson planning is based on helping the students, rather than helping the teacher. Other examples of principles which teachers have described in journals and conversations include:

- Follow the learners' interests to maintain their involvement.
- Always teach to the whole class – not just to the best students.
- Seek ways to encourage independent student learning.
- Make learning fun.
- Build take-away value in every lesson.
- Address learners' mental processing capacities.
- Facilitate learner responsibility, or autonomy.

Activities in which teachers articulate their theories, beliefs and principles are an important component of professional development, and journal writing, narratives, discussion and critical reflection can all be used for this purpose. The theorizing that results from these procedures often provides the basis for interpreting and evaluating one's own teaching, as well as the teaching of others. It also makes one's theories available for scrutiny by others.



What principles do you make use of in teaching a) grammar b) spoken English?

Teachers' changes in their approach to teaching

Change is regarded as a major dimension of teachers' professional lives. Both pre-service and in-service teacher education is normally predicated around the need to provide opportunities for thoughtful, positive change (Richards, 2008; Borg, 2006). Pennington describes positive change as central to the professional life of a language teacher. She comments that 'a distinguishing characteristic of the notion of teaching,

as a profession, is the centrality of career growth as an ongoing goal' (Pennington, 1990: 132). In addition, Freeman (1989: 29–30) highlights a number of aspects of the notion of change:

- Change does not necessarily mean doing something differently; it can mean a change in awareness. Change can be an affirmation of current practice.
- Change is not necessarily immediate or complete. Indeed, some changes occur over time, with the collaborator serving only to initiate the process.
- Some changes are directly accessible and quantifiable, while others are not.
- Some types of change can come to closure, and others are open ended.

Change may be a consequence of interactions with supervisors, colleagues, teachers and students. In addition, it may be a result of the following (Bailey, 1992):

- Dissatisfaction with the current situation.
- The connection of a new idea to the teacher's own situation.
- A change in teaching context.
- Life changes and personal growth, which led to professional development.
- A realization of something, based on the teacher's experiences as a learner.
- A conflict between the teacher's new belief and current practices.

In a study of 60 teachers' reported changes in their practices since they first entered the language-teaching profession (Richards et al., 2001), the teachers reported the following major changes:

- They now adopted a more learner-centred approach to teaching – more focused on students' interests and daily lives, more respect for students' ideas and opinions and more use of autonomous learning.
- They had changed their teaching philosophy – more flexible teaching methods, teaching of strategies and more use of tasks and activities.
- They relied less on textbooks – more use of authentic materials and teacher-created materials.
- They used more communicative activities in the classroom – more use of group work, pair work, role play and games.
- They had moved away from grammar-based teaching – more focus on fluency and communication.
- They were more confident and had greater enthusiasm for teaching – better rapport and interaction with colleagues.

Below, a teacher educator reflects on changes she has experienced in language teaching:

Ten years down the line

In 2003, I moved to the UK and put my teaching career on hold for ten years. Before that, I had been teaching English to adult students in Barcelona for a number of years. I am a highly motivated teacher with a passion for the English language and culture. Having had to learn the language myself has always provided me with that extra inside knowledge of how best to help and encourage my students to master the intricacies of the language. Or so I thought.

Two key elements I tried to put forward were passion and hard work. I used the image of the language student as a sponge, not missing any chance to learn and practise the target language. Another important message I tried to convey was that there is never an end to language learning. It is the labour of a lifetime, more so as language is a living thing which changes, evolves and grows with every passing day.

I used every opportunity to draw from my own experience as a learner, in order to make my students realize that if I had managed to reach a fairly acceptable level of proficiency in English, it was within their reach to do so, too.

When I resumed my teaching in 2011, I expected to find better, and more prepared, learners than ten years before, mainly because the ten years I spent away from the classroom coincided with the huge boom of the internet and of the new technologies applied to language teaching and learning. Let's face it: today English is a click away for everyone with access to the internet, from a PC or any hand-held electronic device. Long gone are the days of my youth when the opportunities to be exposed to spoken English were few and far between – music, next-day newspapers and the odd film in the original version with Spanish subtitles.

In 2011, I came back to a classroom equipped with a PC with internet access, an interactive whiteboard, interactive coursebooks, the works! All this made my teaching easier in some respects, mainly as it meant I could use very fresh materials in class, and I no longer needed to spend hours recording from satellite TV, and then viewing four-hour long tapes, in order to spot that news item or report which would be suitable for exploitation in class. The same applied to reading materials, as today we can have all the world's newspapers at our disposal instantly, and in all languages. So, from this point of view, class preparation and materials production and exploitation had become much easier. Hurray!

With regard to students today, the majority have internet access from their phones, with electronic dictionaries and translating apps that they use all the time. All this technology, but what for? Today's students are not better than the ones I left behind in 2003. If anything, they are worse in some areas. With so much exposure to spoken English – most of the younger generation watch American series online on a regular basis, to mention an example – I had expected their pronunciation and intonation to have improved. Much to my amazement, they were making the same mistakes as those belonging to the pre-internet generations. What are we doing wrong?

It made me wonder whether we should go back to basics. After all, I learned English with the help of books, the occasional cassette recording, lots of drills...nothing fancy, really. What I did have was a dedicated teacher who inspired me and a passion for the language, originally sparked by music. My love for the language drove me to learn more about the culture, the literature, the people...And that is how my love story with English evolved and made me embark on a fascinating journey of discovery and enjoyment which continues to this day, almost 40 years on.

The problem is that learning English today has become a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. The promise of better job prospects is what drives most people to learn English. There is nothing wrong with that, but this should not be the sole objective. We live in a society driven by figures and efficiency rates. Business, productivity levels and finance govern all spheres of our lives, whether we like it or not. We need to recover the pleasure of learning for the sake of it. We need more emphasis on the 'soft' advantages of learning a foreign language, and only then may we have more motivated students in our classrooms.

Maite San Juan, teacher and teacher educator, Barcelona, Spain

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that there are many different dimensions to being an effective language teacher. A specialized knowledge base is required, command of a range of teaching skills and classroom routines, the ability to engage in improvisational teaching, a high level of proficiency and fluency in English, the development of a sense of teacher identity and the ability to engage in learner-centred teaching. How a teacher's knowledge and skill base and belief system change over time is also fundamental to our understanding of effective teaching, and to approaches to language-teacher education. Learning to teach is not simply a process of translating knowledge and theories into practice, but involves constructing new knowledge, theory and practice, through engaging in the process of language teaching. An important professional goal for teachers is to develop an understanding and awareness of their own beliefs and practices, and to find ways to explore and review their own assumptions about language teaching and learning.

Discussion questions

- 1 In the section Acquiring practical classroom skills, a number of basic classroom skills are identified. In your experience, what skills have you found most difficult to develop? What skills do you still feel you need to develop?
- 2 If a teacher with a different cultural and educational background was coming to teach in your country for the first time, how would you orient him or her to the norms of classroom culture and behaviour he or she might be unfamiliar with?
- 3 What are some ways in which improvisational performance can lead to a better lesson? Are there also disadvantages to using improvisation as a regular teaching style?

- 4 What advice would you give to an English teacher who said: 'English is not my first language and I need to improve my English in order to become a better teacher'?
- 5 Have you developed your disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge through independent or self-directed learning? What did you learn and how?
- 6 Compare two books that aim to present teachers with basic knowledge and skills for teaching English. How similar is the content they include?
- 7 Choose a lesson from a textbook and suggest ways in which you could build personalized activities around the lesson to make it more learner-centred.
- 8 Theorizing from teaching was mentioned as an important part of professional development. Compare the understanding you and another teacher have developed in relation to one or more of these topics: What is its value? How can it be of help to teachers in their daily classroom experiences?
- 9 If you are teaching, what are some ways in which you have changed your approach to teaching since you started teaching? What do you think was the source of the changes?

Appendix:

Case study: teacher knowledge

Read the case study below, provided by Danial Sadeqi, a teacher in Tehran, Iran. He shows both disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Make a list of the topics he mentions that reflect each type of knowledge.

How would you characterize your philosophy of teaching?

I believe the teacher sets the bar for the students under his [or her] tutelage by his [or her] own example, as well as his [or her] expectation of them, both as individuals and as a class. The students will become what the teacher wants them to be, they will perform as well as the teacher expects them to and, essentially, it is this attitude towards the class that determines which lesson plan the teacher develops and which method he [or she] adopts. I have seen many students whose performance changed dramatically, either for better or for worse, as soon as their teacher changed. When asked why, most of them referred to the teacher's attitude towards students as the most contributing factor. The energy and enthusiasm that I show as a teacher, regarding the subject I teach, will go a long way in making the learners interested, motivated and inspired. This is really important because the key to teaching effectively lies in loving your job, as well as the subject matter, and thus making the students feel the same way about it. By doing so, their learning curve will surge remarkably, as they will enjoy what they are learning.

What did you find most difficult when you first started teaching?

Time management and keeping up with the lesson plan are inevitable challenges for any inexperienced teacher, and I was no exception. Moreover, dealing with people from

different educational and cultural backgrounds was another problem which was also a contributing factor to the first two challenges.

What sources did you draw upon in developing your understanding of teaching?

I believe the best place to deepen our understanding of teaching is the classroom. The students' reactions, feedback, facial expressions and their eagerness towards the subject, on the one hand, and the teacher's own impression towards the learners – how much they are learning, how successful the method and the approach he or she has adopted are – on the other, provide the teacher with the necessary tools to gain more insight into teaching and hence enhance his or her quality of teaching. Each time we teach a certain lesson, we learn something new and will know how to do it better next time. However, in the long run, this process will wear out the teacher and fossilize him or her. The other problem is that there are times when we are lulled into the false sense of getting better, when, in actuality, we are getting worse or staying where we were before, without any improvement, because we do not make the right decision! So the question is: how can we make sure that we are making informed decisions and sound judgments? Are we really getting better, or do we just *think* we are?

The only way we can accomplish this objective is to have a wide knowledge of theory. Admittedly, teaching will become a routine job, and it is the theoretical research that gives our mind some way to breathe, a way to refresh our spirit. Therefore, to avoid being fossilized, I mostly turned to books and journals, both online and otherwise, for the theoretical aspect of teaching. I also attended workshops and seminars and participated in teacher-training courses, which offered a great opportunity to get some hands-on experience of teaching. And there were always peer observation, team-teaching and consulting with other colleagues and supervisors to get feedback in order to improve my teaching method. By so doing, we will be able to manipulate the theory and whatever we know about teaching, in our classes, and the combination of the two will give us the opportunity to make better decisions and teach more effectively.

Did you have good teachers when you learned English? What did you learn from them?

Yes. I learned the importance of building a good rapport with the students, the necessity of engaging the learners and having them contribute as much as possible to the class and the significance of the role testing plays in teaching. I also learned that the teacher's most important responsibility is to guide the students, show them the right path and help them face the challenges themselves. I came to realize that good teachers are good leaders, managers, consultants and facilitators.

Have you changed your approach to teaching since you began teaching? What prompted any changes you may have made?

Yes, definitely. When I started teaching, I mostly relied on what I had learned at the university and in teacher-training courses. But, after a while, I realized the need to read more and more to gain further insight into teaching and also learn a lot more English to be able to cope with the challenges I faced in real classes. I had to adopt a special approach, tailored to the needs of each class, depending on their level, age range, cultural

background, etc. Teaching methods, I realized, were not a set of hard and fast rules to be followed religiously, without any consideration of the needs of the students.

How important is research and theory to you?

Without constant research and regular reading, one cannot keep abreast of the new developments in the field and would end up being *just another* teacher, ill-equipped to address the new challenges which arise in the class. Another advantage it gives us is that we would not have to learn everything through trial and error. That is, researching and drawing on other people's experience not only open new horizons before us but also save us much time and, therefore, are of utmost importance for any teacher who wants to make a difference.

How well do you think a person needs to speak English, in order to be an effective English teacher?

Since the teacher is the major source of input for the students and is considered a model for them, he or she needs to speak very good English, in order to do his part well as a teacher. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, the more the teacher knows about the language, the more the students will learn from him or her. He or she will be able to use authentic language in all contexts, even when he or she is not actually teaching. Secondly, the teacher who is not proficient in using the language will expose the students to language which is not authentic or to the incorrect usage of different grammatical structures, and so they will learn and pick up expressions, pronunciations and intonations which are incorrect. Sometimes it takes months to help them unlearn these. After all, if the teacher himself or herself has not yet learned the language well, how will he [or she] be able to help others do so?

Further reading

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Part

2

**Facilitating student
learning**

5

The second language learner

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What kind of diversity exists in language learners' beliefs and learning styles?
 - The role of learner beliefs.
 - Styles of classroom participation.
 - The influence of learning styles.
- What other areas of diversity are important?
 - Learner autonomy.
 - The age factor in language learning.
 - The role of language-learning aptitude.
 - The role of motivation.
 - The role of identity.
 - The role of affective factors.
 - Willingness to communicate.

5.1 Introduction

As we noted in Chapter 4, in traditional approaches to language teaching, learners were often viewed as being somewhat passively involved in the language-learning process. They were viewed as the recipients of the teacher's expertise, and their role was to follow the instructional process as it was guided and directed by the teacher. The assumption was that language learning was the more or less automatic result of good teaching (Breen, 2001b; Benson, 2005). The learner's role was often limited to listening to and repeating what the teacher (or audio programme) said, and learning through mechanical repetition. This was very much the case when I studied French, using what was called the audiovisual method. At the beginning of the course, we were instructed as to what we must and must not do (e.g. no translation; accurate imitation of the model phrases and dialogues), and the course was predicated on the assumption that all the students needed to do was to passively absorb the language through repetition. This is a very different view of learners from the current understanding of the learner's role in second language learning. As we saw in Chapter 4, effective teaching acknowledges that successful language learning depends upon active participation and involvement by learners, and that learners bring a variety of different motivations, levels of understanding, beliefs and approaches to language learning. A recent summary of research on the ability to achieve near-native competence in language learning suggests that it is 'a function of many, and varied, factors, such as aptitude, intelligence, motivation, personality characteristics, learning experience, learning strategies and social environment' (Biedron, 2011: 99). In this chapter, we will examine the kinds of learners we encounter in ESL/ELT classes and the nature of the learner's contribution to language learning.

Encouraging diversity

A recurring feature of many second language classrooms is the diversity of learners who may be studying in the same class. Diversity has many facets and is reflected in such areas as the degree of learner autonomy, learning styles, the student's age, language-learning aptitude, the role of motivation, identity and affective factors. Therefore, in any one class, there may be students who are not only of different ages but also have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds – as well as those with very different learning experiences and approaches to learning. In these circumstances, teaching approaches and activities that work well with one group of learners, or with some learners in a class, may not be as effective or successful with others. This was emphasized by Holliday, quoted in Chapter 3, in the distinction between learners in BANA and TESEP contexts.

Even in fairly homogeneous classes, students may have very different interests, needs, learning styles and reasons for learning English. Learners do not always share the same language-learning goals. Since their aptitude or talent for language learning also differs, some master new sounds without difficulty and remember things they have studied relatively easily. For others, these areas are a struggle. Language learning may create anxiety for some learners, while for others, it is something they enjoy. Like me, you have

probably observed, in classes in which you have been a student, that each student often appears to follow his or her own learning trajectory.

Effective language lessons are sensitive to individual needs and preferences; they draw on and integrate language learning with students' life experiences; they generate student participation and target language output; they support authentic communication; and they encourage students to take more personal responsibility for their learning. In other words, diversity is seen as a resource, rather than an obstacle to be overcome.



What kinds of diversity exist among the students in your class (or in a class you have observed)?

5.2 Diversity of language learners: beliefs and learning styles

The role of learner beliefs

Learner beliefs are defined as the preconceived ideas or notions about different aspects of language and language learning (Dörnyei, 2005). These include ideas concerning the relative importance or value of different languages; the roles of teachers and students in the classroom; the relative ease or difficulty of learning particular languages or aspects of language (such as grammar or pronunciation); the opinions learners have about the strategies that work best for them, and about the advantages and disadvantages of different teaching techniques and classroom activities (Bernat, 2006). The beliefs learners hold about language and language learning are assumed to influence how learners approach the task of language learning and to affect their styles of classroom participation, their strategic choices and their motivation (Altan, 2006). Victori and Lockhart (1995: 225) report that 'the way learners perceive language learning may have a significant impact on their learning outcomes'. Cortazzi and Jin (1996: 169) suggest that classroom behaviours are 'set within taken-for-granted frameworks of expectations, attitudes, values and beliefs about what constitutes good learning, about how to teach or learn, and whether and how to ask questions', all of which are linked to their specific culture. Yu (2001) points out that Chinese students may resist activities such as role play, because they believe that teachers are expected to transmit knowledge, and that 'playing games' would not be perceived as promoting learning. Hu (2002, cited in Peng and Woodrow, 2010: 841) observes that in the perceptions of Chinese students and teachers, education is 'a serious undertaking that is least likely to be associated with light-heartedness, but requires deep commitment and painstaking effort'.

Learners from different cultural backgrounds may thus have different beliefs about respect and submission to the teacher, and whether to take risks in interpersonal communication. Learners who believe grammar is the most important aspect of a language, for example,

are likely to give priority to this, while those who believe the goal in learning a language is to be understood might be expected to devote more time to developing fluency and less to achieving accuracy in grammar or pronunciation (Richards and Gravatt, 1998).



What are some ways in which diversity in the classroom can be a resource for teaching? What are some ways in which it may pose challenges for teachers?

Most people who have had some experience of language learning have developed beliefs about learning languages. They may have formed ideas about how best to learn vocabulary or grammar; what kinds of people do best at language learning; the importance of translation; the significance of a foreign accent; the importance of practice, repetition, error correction, the value of group work and so on. Learners may also have fixed ideas about the language they are studying and (in the case of English) believe, for example, that some varieties of English are superior to others, or that English has more grammar (or less) than other languages they have studied. Learners' beliefs are often studied by giving students statements about language or language learning and asking them to respond to them. For example:

- Some people have a special ability to learn a language.
- People in my country are very good at language learning.
- Learning a foreign language is not very difficult.
- Vocabulary is the most important thing to learn in language learning.
- It is important not to speak with a foreign accent.
- You shouldn't try to say something in English unless you are sure you won't make mistakes.



Can you suggest different ways of identifying learners' beliefs about language learning?

Learners' beliefs may be shaped by past learning experiences and the context in which learners have studied or learned a language, as well as personal factors. Teachers and learners, however, do not necessarily share the same beliefs about language learning, and some of the beliefs learners hold may affect their classroom behaviours. In general, it has been found that students with positive beliefs about language learning tend to have stronger motivation, use a wider range of learning strategies, are less anxious about learning and achieve better results. In order to understand learners' beliefs, classroom activities can be used in which students discuss and compare their beliefs on a range of language-learning issues. These activities can provide an opportunity for the teacher to clarify any misconceptions students may have, based on their limited experience and knowledge, particularly those that might hinder their participation in planned classroom activities.

Styles of classroom participation

Classroom second language learning involves many different kinds of changes, including changes in ideas, beliefs, skills and ways of handling classroom events, and can arouse different kinds of emotional responses, such as exhilaration and excitement, as well as anger and frustration. Wright (2005: 156) observes that within a single lesson an activity could prompt all of these emotions as the learners first struggle with a new concept and then experience pleasure when they succeed in mastering it.

Learners differ in a number of ways that may influence their styles of classroom participation at different times. For example:

- *Relaxed or anxious*: Some learners may find the language class an opportunity to relax and enjoy themselves. For others, it may arouse anxiety, and they may be reluctant to participate (see Wright's comment above).
- *Risk-taking or risk-avoiding*: Some students are not afraid to try new things, even if they may not be very successful. Others avoid activities that involve risks.
- *Playful or serious*: Some students enjoy activities that have a playful and fun element. Others think learning is a serious business and may dislike such activities.
- *Fuzzy focused or black and white*: Some learners don't need clear outcomes for activities. Others prefer an unambiguous 'black-and-white' outcome.
- *Confident or insecure*: Some students have confidence in their abilities, while some may be less sure of their abilities.

An early, but still relevant, account of the different participation styles found in many classrooms was given by Good and Power (1976) (cited in Richards and Lockhart, 1994), who identify six different types of students, each of which favour a different style of classroom interaction and participation:

- *Task-oriented students*: They are generally highly competent and successful in completing tasks. They enjoy learning, are active learners, aim for high levels of performance, are cooperative and create few discipline problems.
- *Social students*: They place a high value on personal interaction and, although competent in accomplishing tasks, tend to place a higher value on socializing. They enjoy working with others, may be talkative and outgoing and do not hesitate to ask for assistance from the teacher or others when needed.
- *Dependent students*: These students need constant support and guidance to complete tasks. They tend not to favour group work and often depend on the teacher or other students to tell them if their learning has been successful.
- *Phantom students*: These students do not draw attention to themselves, although they generally work steadily on tasks. They rarely initiate conversation or ask for help. Because they do not disrupt the class or other students, the teacher may not know them well.

- *Isolated students:* They set themselves apart from others and withdraw from classroom interactions. They may avoid learning by turning away from activities such as peer or group work. They are reluctant to share their work with others.
- *Alienated students:* They react against teaching and learning and may be hostile and aggressive. They create discipline problems and make it difficult for those around them to work. They require close supervision, and their learning problems may be related to personal problems.



What sort of student do you think you were most often like in your school classes? Did it differ from teacher to teacher or from subject to subject?

Categorizations such as those above represent broad generalizations, of course, and should not be applied uncritically. When teachers are confronted with students who seem isolated or alienated, information obtained from needs analysis may throw light on the causes (see Chapter 17). At times, adjustments in classroom management can also help, by having more social students, for example, work with more isolated students. At other times, it may be the teacher who, unaware of underlying cultural differences, needs to adjust his or her beliefs and understanding. As we saw earlier, what seems to be a lack of willingness to communicate may, in fact, simply be a matter of different expectations. Foreign teachers in Japan realize, for example, that students are far more willing to communicate when given tasks with a clear beginning, middle and end – that is, problems to solve – than when asked open-ended questions. Once students are focused together on a task, their desire to formulate the perfect response before speaking can be somewhat minimized.

Teachers sometimes recognize differences of this kind and may have names they use to describe the different kinds of students they encounter in their classes, although, as we see in these examples from teachers, the labels are only useful to teachers if they are then prompted to focus on solutions (author data):

The back-row distracter

In my last class, I had a student who always sat at the back and tried to distract other students. I decided to talk to him after class to discuss the problem. And I moved him closer to the front of the class for the rest of the course.

The non-participant

Recently, I had one or two students who did not want to participate in activities. I decided to ask the class to draw up some rules for classroom behaviour, and for responding to students who preferred to sleep during class, rather than participate.

The over-exuberant student

I have a student who always shouts out answers, without waiting for others to participate, and who generally tries to dominate the class. I tried to deal with her in a fun way, by making a gentle joke to remind her that others also needed to practise their English in class.

However, although teachers may recognize these traits in some of their learners, a learner's participation in the classroom will vary according to many factors – such as the task he or she is assigned, the learner's relationship with the teacher and with other students in the class and his or her level of language proficiency – and will also be influenced by motivational and cultural factors, as we've seen above. Hopefully, most language classes will contain a majority of students who have a positive attitude towards learning. Experienced teachers develop an awareness of the kinds of learners who make up their classes and develop strategies for interacting with students who may pose difficulties. Chapter 7 is devoted to effective classroom management and addresses issues of this kind.

Teachers vary in how they respond to the differences they find among the students in their classes. Some find that seating arrangements – who sits where in the classroom – can have an important influence on how the class functions as a community. Some teachers feel that allowing students to sit in the same place throughout the class does not help develop a sense of community, because students sometimes form 'cliques'. Other teachers feel that students are often more comfortable working with other students whose behaviour and styles they are familiar with. These are important considerations in pair work and group work, a topic explored in Chapter 7.



Do you think isolated students should be encouraged to work more with others, for example, by pairing them with social learners? Similarly, do you think it is useful to group alienated learners with task-oriented learners?

The influence of learning styles

The concept of learning styles has had a chequered history in language-learning research. Griffiths (2012: 151) observes that although the concept of learning styles is intuitively appealing and helps clarify how learner differences can influence learning, in the literature on learning styles there is a 'quagmire' of different definitions and explanations of what learning styles are.

To keep our discussion to a manageable level, we will follow Reid's (1995) definition of learning styles as 'an individual's natural, habitual and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills' (Reid, 1995: viii). Learning styles are stable attributes that may influence a learner's preference for particular ways of approaching learning. They are different from *strategies* (discussed in Chapter 2), which are activities that learners consciously choose to regulate and manage their own learning.

The following learning styles have often been referred to when discussing learning styles, and may also lead to different styles of classroom participation (Reid, 1995), as discussed earlier:

- **Visual learners:** Visual learners, as the name implies, respond to new information in a visual fashion and prefer visual, pictorial and graphic representations of experience. They benefit most from reading and learn well by seeing words in books, workbooks

and on the board. They can often learn on their own with a book, and they take notes of lectures to remember the new information.

- *Auditory learners:* Auditory learners learn best from oral explanation and from hearing words spoken. They benefit from listening to recordings, from teaching other students and by conversing with their classmates and teachers.
- *Kinaesthetic learners:* Learners of this type learn best when they are physically involved in the experience. They remember new information when they actively participate in activities, such as through field trips or role plays.
- *Tactile learners:* These learners learn best when engaged in 'hands on' activities. They like to manipulate materials and like to build, fix or make things, or put things together.
- *Group learners:* These learners prefer group interaction and classwork with other students and learn best when working with others. Group interaction helps them to learn and understand new material better.
- *Individual learners:* Learners of this type prefer to work on their own. They are capable of learning new information by themselves, and remember the material better if they learned it alone.



Do you think you have a favoured learning style?

You may like to take a learning-styles quiz in Appendix 2 at the end of this chapter to see what kind of learner you are.

These six styles, however, are not rigid categories, and several may combine in any one learner. As such, Dörnyei (2005) emphasizes that these different learning styles are not to be understood as fixed categories, since any one learner may reflect a combination of styles. He argues that the styles are tools which enable the creation of a profile of how a learner approaches learning in general, of how he or she understands, reacts to and manages a learning situation.

Dörnyei and others (e.g. Griffiths, 2008) have emphasized the uncertain state of knowledge and understanding about learning styles; however, they agree that some learning-style dimensions seem to correlate with preferred approaches to language learning. This may be reflected in different ways. For example:

- Preferences for particular kinds of classroom activities.
- Preferences for particular styles of teaching.
- Preferences for particular classroom arrangements.
- Preferences for studying particular aspects of language.
- Preferences for a particular mode of learning.

So, while some students enjoy games and role plays, others may prefer more structured activities that focus on the mastery of specific grammatical points. Some students may like the teacher to correct any mistakes in their pronunciation, while others may feel pronunciation is less important than fluency. Some students may feel more comfortable when the teacher is engaging in whole-class teaching, while others may prefer group-based learning. And some students may prefer learning from technology and media-based resources to learning from books and other print-based materials. So while teachers have their own assumptions about what and how to teach, so do students, and students' assumptions may reflect preferred teaching approaches from their own culture. One of the motivations for research on learning styles in language teaching has been prompted by the possibility of conflicts between students' learning styles and those of the teacher.

While students, of course, may not have the means to say they like role plays because they are 'kinaesthetic learners', or to say they like pair work and group work because they are 'group learners', they can express their reactions to different types of classroom activities. Activities in which students write about or discuss their successful and not so successful language-learning experiences can help the teacher learn about the students' preferred learning styles and their preferences for the kinds of teaching they expect or prefer. It's important to keep in mind, however, that some students may not have thought about these topics previously, so the teacher may need to experiment and first form some basic opinions by trial and error.

Reviewing research on learning styles, Nel (2008: 57) concludes:

It appears that every learner does have a learning style, consisting of a unique blend of instructional and environmental preferences, of information-processing preferences, and of preferences related to personality. Stylistic preferences seem to be relatively stable; however, successful learners seem to be able to adapt their learning styles to accommodate the requirements of a particular learning task or situation. And no one style which typifies good language learners has been identified.

One area of research on learning styles has explored how people perceive, remember, organize and represent information (this is sometimes referred to as *cognitive style*). Some people are said to have a predominantly verbal way of representing information in thought, where others utilize a more visual, or image-based, mode. This has led to a distinction between *field dependence* (FD) and *field independence* (FI), a characteristic that is generally measured by people's responses on questionnaires. Field dependence is a learning approach in which a learner tends to look at the whole of a learning task containing many items. The learner has difficulty in studying a particular item when it occurs within a 'field' of other items. A field-independent approach is one in which a learner is able to identify or focus on particular items and is not distracted by other items in the background or context.

The implications of this distinction for language learning are many and have received quite an amount of research attention, some of the results of which are summarized by Nel (2008: 51):

A review of the literature seems to indicate that field independence correlates positively, and significantly, with success in the language classroom...[It has been found that] language learners with FI styles were more successful in deductive lessons (that is, principles are given, consequences and applications are deduced), while those with FD styles performed better in inductive lessons (that is, facts and observations are given and underlying principles are inferred). [It has been found] in a study of English-speaking students learning French in Toronto that FI correlated positively and significantly with imitation and listening comprehension tasks. [Another study] found a positive and statistically significant relationship between FI and proficiency as measured by the TOEFL test.

5.3 Other areas of diversity

Learner autonomy

Closely related to learner beliefs and learning styles is the concept of learner autonomy, and an emphasis on learner autonomy has been an important trend in language teaching in recent years. Learner autonomy refers to the principle that learners should take an increasing amount of responsibility for what they learn and how they learn it (Benson, 2001). Autonomous learning is said to make learning more personal and focused and, consequently, is said to achieve better learning outcomes, since learning is based on learners' needs and preferences (Victori and Lockhart, 1995). It contrasts with the traditional teacher-led approach in which most decisions are made by the teacher.

Benson (2003) outlines five principles for achieving autonomous learning:

- 1** Active involvement in student learning.
- 2** Providing options and resources.
- 3** Offering choices and decision-making opportunities.
- 4** Supporting learners.
- 5** Encouraging reflection.

In classes that encourage autonomous learning:

- The teacher becomes less of an instructor and more of a facilitator.
- Students are discouraged from relying on the teacher as the main source of knowledge.
- Students' capacity to learn for themselves is encouraged.
- Students' awareness of their own learning styles is encouraged.
- Students are encouraged to develop their own learning strategies.

A teacher educator reflects on her own experiences, both as an autonomous learner and as a teacher encouraging autonomous learning:

Recollections of autonomous learning

Benson's principles for autonomous learning remind me of two experiences of 'penfriends'. My first was as a schoolgirl student of French in New Zealand, when we were encouraged to correspond with French-speaking contemporaries. My 'penpal' was a Belgian girl whose family had once met one of our teacher's relatives. Letters and photos went to and fro by sea. Our teacher seemed to be following Benson's advice to involve us actively in our learning by providing the means of communication in the target language.

Fast forward many decades, and I have recently been part of a similar exchange, organized by a university teacher in China. This time, the medium was email, and the teacher gave the class cultural topics, which they were to question us about as part of an assignment. One of the fascinating things to me was the students' difficulty in grasping that I couldn't always provide a definite answer to questions starting, 'Do all foreigners...?' 'Are people in your country...?' and similar openers. I'd recommend email correspondences as one way of encouraging the principles of Benson and others for learner autonomy.

Marilyn Lewis, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

Another example of the application of the principles of learner autonomy is the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio (Little, 2002), which is intended to help support autonomous learning on a wide scale. The ELP has three components: a language passport, which summarizes the owner's linguistic identity; a language biography, which provides for a reflective account of the learner's experience in learning and using the foreign language; and a dossier, in which the learner collects evidence of his or her developing proficiency in the language. The ELP involves regular goal setting and self-assessment.


Critics of learner autonomy, however, point out that not all learners may wish to learn in this way, or be capable of doing so, and that it reflects a western conception of learning that may be inappropriate in non-western cultures (Holliday, 2003). However, for many teachers, learner autonomy is an important facet of their teaching, which they seek to realize in a number of different ways – for example, through careful analysis of their learners' needs, through introducing and modelling strategies for independent learning, through giving learners techniques they can use to monitor their own learning, through regular consultation with students to help learners plan for their own learning and through the use of a self-access centre where a variety of self-directed learning resources are available.

Here, a teacher educator comments on his growing awareness of the issue of learner autonomy:

Learners' vs. teachers' perceptions

I vividly remember teaching one of my first classes with mainly students from East Asia. Starry-eyed and naively confident, I assumed all students would be eager to decide what they should work on and how. I had them draw up needs analysis, plan their own learning, select materials from the self-access centre and work independently on whatever they fancied. The busy-work taking place gave me the false impression all was well. Until, after class, one student, who had been particularly quiet all throughout, came to me and said, 'Why do you not teach us anything? Isn't that your job?' Looking back I realize that, in my attempt to be learner-centred in my teaching, I had completely ignored the students' wishes, backgrounds and expectations. Over the years, I have learned to take more time to discuss the rationale, and to give much more preparation and ongoing support, for self-directed learning.

Hayo Reinders, teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

 To what extent do you agree with the principles of learner autonomy? Is it something you would wish to encourage in your class?

The age factor in language learning

It is a common observation that children seem to learn new languages relatively easily, while older learners, particularly adults, are often not so successful. Nevertheless, there is also evidence that adults have the advantage in several important areas, such as those involving cognitive skills, making them more adept, for example, at learner autonomy.

In terms of children's apparent success, a reason that was offered in the 1970s (reviewed in Scovel, 1988) was that there was a critical period for second language learning (before puberty), and that once learners had passed this period, changes in the brain and in cognitive processes made language learning more difficult. This was the *critical period hypothesis* that led some educationists to argue for an earlier start for second and foreign language instruction, in order to capitalize on the special language-learning capacities of young learners. Unfortunately, the considerable amount of research devoted to this issue has not confirmed the theory that younger learners = better language learners (Ortega, 2009; Dörnyei, 2009). It is true that there are some aspects of language learning (such as pronunciation) where younger learners appear to have an advantage; learners who start learning at an older age often retain a 'foreign accent' in their English, which is not the case with young learners (Scovel, 2000) (see Chapter 11). However, there are many factors, aside from age-related ability, that account for the apparent ease with which

young children often appear to ‘pick up’ a new language relatively easily. In the case of naturalistic language learning of their first language, young learners are typically highly motivated to do so; they receive large amounts of input geared to their level of learning, as well as copious amounts of practice. They also receive rewards and benefits for their efforts, since learning the new language is the key to peer acceptance and to the satisfaction of basic needs. These factors are often not the same for adult learners studying English in classroom settings. Dörnyei (2009) points out that, in any given situation, there are invariably a multitude of factors involved, and age is often only one of them and not necessarily the most important one. There are also documented examples of unsuccessful child language learning, as well as of successful adult language learning (Dörnyei, 2009: 242).

Adults, however, may have the advantage in some respects, because there is evidence for differences in the ways younger and older learners approach language learning. Older learners are particularly good at vocabulary learning, for example (Cook, 2008), and they make use of different cognitive and learning skills from children, since adults use more abstract reasoning and thinking and can often learn more analytically and reflectively. I myself did not start learning a foreign language until I was in my twenties, but, at one stage, I was sufficiently fluent in French to use it as a medium of instruction in an applied linguistics programme in Quebec. Consequently, methods used to teach young learners and older learners employ different teaching strategies, reflecting the different age-related processes and strategies these learners can make use of, as well as their very different learning needs (see Chapter 8). The educational implications of the second language acquisition debate about the age issue in language teaching, however, are somewhat minimal, since decisions on when to commence the teaching of English in public education are often made largely on other grounds. They often simply reflect worldwide educational trends or fashions, or they may be linked to the need to prepare students for the use of English as a medium of instruction in secondary school, or to better prepare them for national or school examinations.



Which would you prefer to teach if you had to make a choice: adults or young learners? Why?

A teacher comments on his own ability to learn English as an adult:



An advantage for older learners

I did not start learning English until the age of 19 and, then, with a non-native teacher of English. Even though I have not reached a native-like level of pronunciation and accuracy, I have an upper-intermediate command of functional English, which very well serves the purpose of both formal and informal communication, inside and outside my workplace. I learned English a lot faster than young learners because I had the advantage of maturity, so my level of critical thinking was higher. I also had

the desire to apply the language I had learned to my real-life practice and a clearer goal of English language learning, i.e. to get a well-paid job. Now that I'm a teacher of English to different groups of students, I can reflect on the advantages for various age groups learning English. While youngsters in my young-learners classes, between 11 and 15 years old, tend to learn new language faster, they are more likely to forget what they were taught previously. However, adult students tend to present quite an opposite talent. Most of the time, they take their language learning more seriously, and they need to discuss the root of language problems before they accept them and [they] register in their long-term memory.

Theara Chea, teacher and teacher educator, Phnom Penh, Cambodia



If you started learning a foreign language at a very young age, think back on how you learned it. If you had to start learning a new language from tomorrow, how would you approach the process differently?

The role of language-learning aptitude

Language aptitude – a natural ability to learn a second language – has also been proposed as a factor that could account for individual differences in how well people learn a language as well as the fact that people differ with respect to the aspects of language they have difficulty with such as pronunciation or grammar. While the majority of people manage to learn their first language without much apparent difficulty, it is obvious that not all second language learners are equally effective in their language-learning efforts. Some people seem to be better at learning languages than others, or learn a language more quickly than others. Because of this, aptitude has been proposed as a factor in second language learning. Aptitude, however, is a difficult concept to define and measure. Attempts to research it, in the past, have focused on such factors as the ability to recognize and discriminate sound contrasts and patterns in a language, the ability to master pronunciation, to infer language rules, to recognize grammatical relationships and categories, and to learn words and meanings rapidly and efficiently. Special tests have been developed to measure people's aptitude for language learning, such as the Modern Language Aptitude Test and the Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery. Both tests have been used to identify learners who would appear to benefit from foreign-language instruction (Johnson, 2001).

Tests of language aptitude emerged during the period when audiolingualism was a popular teaching method and have declined in popularity since then. Researchers have been unable to agree whether aptitude is a valid construct, or whether aptitude tests measure little more than general intelligence and memory capacity (Dörnyei, 2009). While learners may differ in their performance on tests measuring aptitude, most researchers appear to concede that aptitude seems to determine the *rate* at which learners learn a language. Hence, some people seem to progress more quickly than others. This is not something a teacher can do much about. However, aptitude may also be linked to motivation. Students

who are more highly motivated to learn a language are willing to put more time and effort into it, and motivation *can* be influenced by teaching. Thus, motivation is a more useful construct in terms of its practical implications.



How would you rate your own aptitude for learning languages? What do you base this on?

The role of motivation in second language learning

Motivation refers to the learner's attitude, desire, interest and willingness to invest effort in learning a second language. It fuels the investment of time and effort learners need to commit to language learning. Some learners have a very strong interest in learning a second language and succeeding in doing so, and their level of interest may reflect a number of different factors. For example:

- Their interest in the language or the foreign culture.
- Attitudes towards the people or community who speak it.
- Their attitude towards the teaching/learning situation (e.g. the course, their teacher or their class).
- Their practical need for the language.

Learners with a strong sense of commitment to success are more likely to study seriously and to commit extra time and attention to their studies. From my experience, the effect of motivation is often very evident on visiting language institutes in some countries and observing the different levels of proficiency in the local language shown by foreign instructors. Some may have lived in the country for a year and already have a working command of the language; others may have been there for ten years, but have developed very little ability in the language. Conversation with teachers soon reveals how important motivation is for successful learners. Motivation affects both the actions people choose to achieve their goals, as well as the effort they commit to attaining their goals, and how long they are likely to persist with this effort (Dörnyei, 2001). A teacher comments on some unusual methods learners have used that show motivation:



Motivation and adult learners

One thing that fascinates me is the range of motivation which adults bring to language learning, not all of it in classrooms. Here are two highly motivated people I have met, both of whom used the radio to fulfil their goals.

The first learner arrived in my country as a refugee. Along with others in his group, he had escaped a regime where foreign languages (and radios) were banned. Unlike the others, he had quite good English, and I wondered why. It turned out he had secretly

listened to foreign-language broadcasts on a hidden radio. He was not discovered and made considerable progress.

The second person was serving tea at a street stall. She gestured that I needn't pay for my tea if I would help her pronounce some English words. She then produced a booklet of pop songs, which I was to sing along with her. It was a great relief not to be overheard by anyone I knew while I worked my way through the ridiculous words. With help from a succession of tea-drinking English speakers, her only goal seemed to be joining in radio pop songs.

Marilyn Lewis, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

As the anecdotes above illustrate, motivation to succeed in language prompts learners to make use of any avenues or resources available to them. Attempts to study the role of motivation in language learning have examined the attitudes of learners towards speakers of the target language and their culture (Gardner, 1985; 2010). Two types of motivation have been identified:

- 1 *Integrative motivation*, which reflects a positive attitude towards the target language and culture, and a desire to interact with it and assume some of its values.
- 2 *Instrumental motivation*, which reflects a primarily practical reason for learning a language, such as to pass a test or get a promotion.

The differences between these two kinds of motivation have been used to account for the fact that some learners may be satisfied to learn a comprehensible level of English, but have little concern for accuracy of grammar or pronunciation, as long as they succeed in making themselves understood, while other learners may seek to acquire an expert, error-free level of proficiency in English. Gardner's concept of motivation, however, was developed to account for the situation in bilingual Canada, where many learners aim for native-like proficiency in French or English, and have plenty of opportunities for immersion in the target language – which is not the goal of many learners of English in other parts of the world (Gardner, 1985; 2010).

An alternative view of motivation draws on self-determination theory (SDT) (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). Self-determination is the process of utilizing one's will. In this framework, a distinction is made between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. An extrinsic orientation reflects a utilitarian or pragmatic reason for learning the language, while an intrinsic orientation refers to pleasure derived from engaging in the activity. Some learners have a very urgent practical reason to learn a language. Others may simply enjoy the experience of language learning, as is the case of some polyglots – who may develop fluency in 20 or more languages, without having any practical need to do so.

Dörnyei (2005) proposed an additional dimension to motivation that focuses on the role of 'possible selves'. This suggests learners can be motivated by an imagined view of themselves – a view of the person they would like to become – and that mastery of English is a core component of this possible self and functions as a powerful motivational

tool. Yashima (2009: 156–9) describes a study of Japanese learners of English in which identification with English-using selves can lead to higher proficiency and more frequent communication through educational efforts towards creating an imagined international community: ‘...students expand their self by creating new images of themselves linked to global concerns and, through the process, find meaning in learning English while learning to use the language’.

Other recent theories of motivation have emphasized that motivation is dynamic and fluctuates according to contextual factors. For example, Dörnyei has examined the role of motivation in the language classroom (2001: 23) and proposes a model of motivation that has three aspects:

- 1 *Creating motivation*, which has to do with setting goals, forming plans and choosing a way of reaching a goal.
- 2 *Maintaining motivation*, which has to do with managing a task or activity in such a way that the learner wants to continue with the effort.
- 3 *Reviewing motivation*, which has to do with evaluating how things went and deciding what kinds of things will be done in the future.



Are the above three aspects of motivation a process teachers could engage in, or are they mainly areas learners have to attend to themselves?

Dörnyei’s model highlights many of the motivational aspects of learning English that teachers and learners confront on a daily basis. For example, learners sometimes commence a language course with unrealistic expectations of what they will learn and how quickly they will reach their goals. To address this issue, the teacher may need to set short-term goals for learners, and encourage them to review their success in achieving specific attainable learning targets. In terms of task management, learners, similarly, may lose interest in learning because tasks are too difficult, do not appear to have clear goals or are not engaging. And in reviewing learning, learners need to have successful experiences when opportunities to use English arise, and be given positive encouragement when they use English.

Classroom learning conditions can do a great deal to help maintain learners’ motivation to learn. Lessons that are motivating for students contain purposeful activities that are at an appropriate level; they are not overloaded with content; they promote learner involvement and engagement; and they give learners a sense of success, rather than of failure. In Chapter 6, we examine these aspects of lessons in more detail.

The role of identity

In Chapter 4, we considered identity as an important component of a teacher’s professional development. The role of identity is also an important aspect of second language learning.

An interest in identity reflects a shift from a cognitive view of learning, discussed in Chapter 2, to a socially-oriented understanding of learning (Norton, 1997, 2001; Morita, 2012). Identity refers to a person's sense of themselves as a discrete, separate individual, including their self-image and their awareness of self. Morita (2012: 27) defines identity as, 'an individual's sense of who they are in relation to the particular social context and community of practice in which they participate'. As was mentioned in Chapter 4, another way of thinking of identity is as the stories we tell or express about ourselves. An individual's sense of identity reflects the role a learner enacts in a particular situation, how he or she sees that role both as an individual and in relation to other people, and the kind of power the person has in the situation. When a learner develops the ability to speak English, he or she now acquires a new identity as a member of the community of English users. The learner and the community now have shared ownership of English, and this new status influences the learner's view of English, and also of themselves. Norton and McKinney (2011) emphasize that when learners speak a second language, they are not simply exchanging information with others but are also communicating a sense of who they are and what their role is within the social context. Learners are hence not only engaged in mastering the language but also involved in developing an identity through the use of the second language, an identity that is subject to ongoing change.

Identity theory focuses on how the individual language learner relates to his or her social world, whether in the classroom, the workplace or the community. However, in some contexts (such as adult immigrants settling into a new English-speaking environment), learners may find their identity options restricted, due to restrictions they encounter as a consequence of their class, gender, race or religion. Learners bring particular identities to the classroom (e.g. as a mother, an engineer, a teenager, a businessperson, a European, an Asian, etc.), but in the language classroom, their identity is redefined – e.g. as a beginning, intermediate or advanced-level learner. Learning is seen to involve identity construction or negotiation, and the learner's identity is defined in relation to their interaction with the teacher and others, in and outside the class.

Morita (2012: 31) cites an interesting (but hopefully unusual) example in which the identity assigned to a student in his class restricted his ability to learn, whereas use of English on the internet created a different identity for him and different opportunities for learning English:

An ethnographic case study [...] documented an interesting identity transformation of a Chinese immigrant teenager, through his electronic textual experiences. Whereas Almon was largely stigmatized as a low-achieving English as a second language student and struggled to develop English literacy in his school environment, his engagement with written English on the Internet with a transnational peer group in English allowed him to construct a more confident identity in this web-based context and to develop a sense of belonging to a global-English-speaking community.

A teacher comments on how assuming a professional identity influenced a learner's mastery of English:

Identity and an adult language learner

One of my adult students in the UK was a Hong Kong Chinese man with a PhD, who, although having lived in the UK for several years, has been unable to find satisfactory employment – a source of considerable frustration. During the time I taught him, his English was marked by frequent and obvious grammatical errors that he was aware of, but had little interest in addressing. Recently, I encountered him again in Hong Kong, where he has been spending time as a visiting lecturer at one of the local universities. The class he teaches has both international, as well as Hong Kong students, who address him as Dr. X. I noticed, during several extended discussions with him, that now that his status has changed, he is a much more confident user of English, and also makes more effort to use a standard variety of English.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

For some, the classroom may represent a site of struggle (Norton, 1997). Remaining silent is one way of protecting the learner's identity. Norton and McKinney (2011) highlight that although a learner may be strongly motivated to learn a language, he or she may become discouraged by the language practices he or she experiences in the classroom, if these at times become sexist, racist or homophobic. In that context, the learner may be judged to be a poor language learner despite being highly motivated to learn.

Since English has traditionally been identified with western and Christian-majority English-speaking countries, identity issues also arise as English becomes an international language (EIL) (see Chapter 1), and is 'appropriated' by learners from other cultures. Alsagoff (2012) points out that in learning English, some learners may also have to confront the fact that English often brings with it particular ideologies and practices that do not accord with those of the learners' own culture. She describes a study of the use of English by Muslim women in Malaysia, where the women did not always feel free to publicly demonstrate their knowledge of English. They felt that to do so could clash with their interlocutors' expectations about their identities as Muslim women.



How do you think teachers can arrive at an understanding of the identity issues learners may be facing?

The role of affective factors

Affect refers to a number of emotional factors that may influence language learning and language use. These include basic personality traits, such as shyness, and long-term

factors, such as attitudes towards learning, as well as constantly fluctuating states, such as anxiety, boredom, enthusiasm, apathy and so on. Emotions are often a feature of language classes. In some classes, one senses a feeling of positive interest and enthusiasm for learning. In others, there may be negative feelings of disinterest and boredom. And many classroom activities, such as tests, evoke stress and anxiety.

Researchers are interested in how affective factors influence cognition or learning. And since language learning is primarily a social activity – it involves interaction with others – it is bound to arouse emotions, some of which may be obstacles to successful learning and teaching (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). Here a teacher discusses the importance of confidence as an affective factor:

The importance of confidence

Self-assurance and confidence are the keys to successful language learning. To help boost my learners' confidence, I try to set goals that are specific and challenging, but attainable. I try to help my learners visualize the steps they need to take to reach their goal. I try to encourage them and make them aware of their progress, and help them realize that they are capable of learning. Once my learners develop confidence, the atmosphere of the class changes. Volunteering answers or questions becomes contagious. Their participation in group work and pair work changes; they no longer speak in a monotone, but the tone of their voices reflects their change in attitude. The message I try to give my learners is that confidence has nothing to do with other people – it comes from within.

Efren García Huerta, teacher, Izúcar de Matamoros, Puebla, Mexico

Anxiety

One of the most important affective factors is the presence of anxiety. Anxiety is a product of many language-learning and language-using situations, and has been shown to have an impact on learners' learning and/or production of a second language (Horwitz, 2010). For example, when a learner tries to use English with a native speaker or advanced speaker, issues of face are involved: How will I appear to them? Will I come across as awkward? What will they think of my English? These are often the questions that flash through my mind, too, when I am in situations that provide an opportunity to use foreign languages I know. In lessons, the learner may also be concerned about his or her understanding of how the class functions, how typical classroom tasks (such as group work) unfold, what his or her role should be in the class and whether he or she has correctly understood the teachers' intentions. And when the learner has to answer a question or perform an activity in front of the class, he or she may be worried about how well he or she may respond: Will I do it correctly? Can I give the correct answer? Anxiety can thus influence how willing a learner is to use his or her English, to take risks or to speak up in class. And sometimes learners may shy away from opportunities to practise their English with native speakers because they feel anxious about their ability to express themselves well.

Anxiety is thus a factor that can affect a learner's willingness to use English, both inside the classroom and outside it (Woodrow, 2006). It may make it difficult for a learner to recall things he or she studied quite recently, and cause difficulty in producing language. Woodrow (2006: 22) quotes a student's reaction:

When I speak to my teacher and ask some questions to my teacher, I usually feel very anxious. And when I [ask my teacher questions] in front of the class and speak some questions, I usually feel very anxious. I can't remember anything. I just 'ah ah ah'.

Some forms of anxiety are related to the classroom setting. Others relate to contexts where the learner tries to use English outside of the classroom, and whether the student is trying to use English with a native speaker or a non-native speaker.

These other contexts are reflected in these comments from a student who feels anxious when speaking to native speakers, except when she is very familiar with them (her teacher), or in situations when the language is likely to be highly predictable (e.g. in a store) (ibid.):

Talking with my teacher is OK, and with some people I know, but with other native speakers is the most stressful for me. But I am not afraid to speak to the storekeeper or something. I can speak to them. Just people on the street or on the train. But other situations I am afraid of speaking to them because I worry about my grammar mistakes.

A similar issue is reported in the following comment (author's data):

When I first started to try to use my French as a student in a French-language university, I avoided trying to use it with native speakers as far as possible and sought out situations where I could use it with other second-language speakers of French – international students from Vietnam, Laos and Africa. It took me another year before I began to feel comfortable using French with native speakers.

In a study of learner anxiety, Woodrow found that the five most stressful situations the learners (international students in an Australian university) reported were (ranked):

- Performing in front of classmates. (most stressful)
- Giving an oral presentation.
- Speaking in English to native speakers.
- Speaking in English in classroom activities.
- Speaking in English to strangers.

Woodrow found that learners tried to cope with anxiety in different ways. Some learners reported the need for perseverance:

I think to try speaking again and again is the best way to solve anxiety. Keep or let my mind to calm down, be natural – [like when I am speaking to Japanese people].

Others reported the need to improve one's language knowledge and skills, to think positively and to make use of compensation and relaxation techniques. Wright (2005: 357) reports a number of anxiety-management strategies which teachers can use to help reduce their learners' anxiety level:

- Increasing the wait time after asking questions and accepting the 'right to silence'.
- Moving to increased numbers of referential and open-ended questions with written answers.
- Acceptance of a variety of answers.
- Increasing peer support and group work.
- Focusing on content, not on form.
- Establishment of good relationships with learners – involving students in discussions of learning, and group counselling to examine students' self-perceptions.
- Using low-stress, positive classroom activities – role play, drama and oral interpretation of texts.
- More opportunities for student self-management of activities, plus learner training.
- Focusing on potential anxiety in all skills areas, as well as speaking – change the balance of perception.

In teaching English, it is, therefore, important to consider the emotional demands that learning a language involves – both in class and out of class – and to help students develop the emotional skills needed to use English in both these situations. Some teachers use songs, games and other activities to lower the anxiety level of lessons. Developing an awareness of the causes of negative emotions that language learning involves can also be achieved through activities in which students talk or write about how they deal with the affective dimensions of language learning.



Can you suggest ways in which teachers can help lower learners' anxiety about using English, both in and out of the classroom?

Here, a teacher encourages his students to write about affective factors influencing their learning:



Exploring affective factors through reflective writing

In a programme I taught in for first-year university students in Hong Kong, we introduced a module on reflective learning. One of the tasks students had to complete for this module was to keep a journal in which they wrote accounts of experiences they had using English outside of the classroom, how successful their experiences were, what problems they confronted and how they dealt with them. The anxiety they experienced, as they tried to use English outside of class, was a recurring topic students wrote about. During fortnightly tutorial, students and the instructor would meet to discuss the experiences they had written about and to share the strategies they used to deal with problematic situations.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

Willingness to communicate

Another aspect of diversity that can affect students' classroom participation, closely related both to learning styles and affective factors, is their willingness to attempt to use English in the classroom (also referred to as *WTC*) (MacIntyre, 2007; Peng and Woodrow, 2010). *WTC* is a factor that has been linked to variables such as personality, self-confidence, attitudes and motivation, and is linked to anxiety, as well as learners' views of their own communicative competence. As Peng and Woodrow (2010: 836) state: 'Learners who have higher perceptions of their communication competence and experience a lower level of communication anxiety tend to be more willing to initiate communication.' However, other situational factors are also involved, such as topic, task, group size and cultural background (Cao, 2009). For example, in some cultures, students may be more willing to communicate in front of their peers in the classroom than in other cultures. Wen and Clement (2003) suggest that in China, group cohesiveness and attachment to group members influence Chinese students' *WTC* in the classroom. A student may believe that if he or she speaks up in class, this may not be valued by other students, since it is judged as 'showing off' and an attempt to make other students look weak. And if students are very exam-oriented and do not see that communicative activities will help them pass an exam, they may have little motivation to communicate in a communication-oriented class. In other countries, such as Japan, willingness to communicate may be influenced by traditional student-teacher relationships, peer pressure and a desire for error-free responses, as this teacher comments:

Willingness to communicate and Japanese learners

ESL teachers new to Japan sometimes become discouraged. Teachers get frustrated with students who do not react, talk among themselves, do not volunteer to answer – in short, do not seem interested or motivated.

This is not a lack of motivation or willingness to learn. It is a combination of peer pressure, the traditional teacher-student relationship and a fear of making mistakes.

Peer pressure, to be one of the pack, to not think 'out of the box', is an implicit rule among students in a class. Even with students who have studied abroad and are more advanced in their English skills, you will see an unwillingness to show their prowess in English, as this would distinguish them from their classmates.

Traditional student-teacher relationships are listen and learn. Students are not accustomed to questioning a teacher during a class. More often, you will have a student come to you at the end of a class and ask their question(s) – if they do this at all.

Underlying the above two factors is the fear of making a mistake. Japanese students prefer to formulate the perfect response, grammatically, according to the rules they have learned. This detracts from spontaneity and immediate feedback. Once you understand and recognize this, you can work around it to draw them out.

Hiroko Nishikage, teacher and materials writer, Tokyo, Japan

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, then, we have examined some of the many different areas of diversity among language learners, from learning styles to affective factors. Language teaching today attributes a much greater role to learners in the language-learning process, as opposed to traditional approaches, which often assumed that learners were very much alike in their reasons for wanting to learn English, as well as the ways in which they learned a language. It was assumed that good language teaching meant controlling the learner, and that a good teaching method would lead the reluctant learner through the learning process. The emergence of learner factors as a focus of second-language research drew attention to the role of motivation and affect in learning, and also emphasized the importance of the individual differences among learners that we have considered. A different strand to the focus on the learner theme emerged with the learner-autonomy movement, which refers to the belief that attention to the nature of learners should be central to all aspects of language teaching, including planning, teaching and evaluation. Effective teaching strategies in language teaching thus need to be 'learner-centred'; that is, they need to reflect an understanding of the powerful contribution of learner factors to successful language learning.

Discussion questions

- 1 Examine an ESL/ELT coursebook. In what ways is the diversity of learners reflected in the book? If you are teaching, is this diversity appropriate for your teaching environment?
- 2 Review the six learning-style preferences. In which category, or categories, would you place yourself? Reflect on the influence of your own learning-style preference on the way you normally teach (or plan to teach).
- 3 Autonomy emphasizes the need for learners to take more responsibility for their learning. What are some examples of how this might be applied in the classroom?
- 4 One advantage adults have over children is their analytical reasoning skills. In what areas of language learning might analytical reasoning be helpful?
- 5 In some contexts learners may have either an integrative or instrumental motivation for learning a language. In your own language-learning experiences, which type of motivation do you think you possessed?
- 6 What are some steps a teacher can take to lower learners' anxiety in a language class?
- 7 Styles of communication in class may be affected by cultural differences. What steps might you take to encourage participation in a class where students don't seem to want to talk?
- 8 Work with a partner and compare your beliefs about the following issues: a) differences between boys and girls as language learners; and b) the reasons why some learners do not like to participate in classroom activities.

- 9 Discuss some strategies teachers can use to help learners recognize their learning styles, and if necessary, make changes in their learning styles.
- 10 Learners sometimes become demotivated because they don't feel they are making sufficient progress in their learning. Suggest some ways in which teachers can help improve learners' motivation to learn.

Appendix 1:

Three case studies of successful language learners

Review the three case studies below. What similarities and differences do you find among the way these three successful language learners managed their learning of English? Consider the following areas:

- 1 Age.
- 2 Learner autonomy.
- 3 Instrumental and integrative motivation.
- 4 Affective factors, especially confidence.

1. *Husai Ching, teacher and teacher educator, Morelia, Mexico*

Tell me a little about your background.

I was born in Mexico City in 1977. My family on my father's side is originally from China; I am the first male in my family line born out of China. My family on my mother's side is from the south-eastern Mexican state of Chiapas. I was raised in Mexico City, in a multicultural environment.

When did you first start learning English?

As a young child, I was sent to a bilingual school, where half of my classes were in English. I didn't receive any formal language instruction during my preschool days, but picked up English through a kind of TPR (total physical response). English was the language my teachers used when we were taught to carry out before-school activities, like drawing or decorating, and basic hygiene routines, such as washing hands and tidying up our classroom. I didn't receive any formal instruction in English until I started the elementary programme. I completed my basic education there, all the way from preschool to middle school, and learned English through being immersed in an English-medium environment for many of my classes. I regard myself as a proficient and independent reader, both in English and Spanish, and have been since I was eight, so by the time I finished middle school, my actual knowledge regarding the school subjects in the programme was probably well above the standard. When it came to high school, I tried a standard high-school

programme for a year, but I found it very demotivating, so I continued my high-school education in distance education mode, but this was all in Spanish.

The only things that kept me attending high school before I switched to distant learning were my parents' discipline and my English classes, which I enjoyed, not because of the actual learning that took place, but simply because I got a chance to communicate in a foreign language.

How did you maintain your English during this time?

I managed to maintain my level of English because I was always looking for practical uses for it. I volunteered at the hostel, I had penpals and I was doing independent reading in English on a whole range of topics, including linguistics, pedagogy, philosophy, psychology, theology, literature and many others. It was also helpful to charge my friends and relatives for translations related to their majors or jobs. A few years later, I realized that I wanted to learn *about* English, and I developed an interest in the language itself.

What made you want to learn English?

This is a very difficult question to answer. I do remember that from a very young age I wanted to master English, but, actually, I don't really remember what it was like before I started being able to communicate in English.

When did you decide to become an English teacher?

I decided to become an English teacher when I was 20 years old, mainly because one of my English teachers from elementary school became a personal friend and a very influential figure in my life, and she helped me realize that I was very competent at English and that I had the right personality for the job. I completed my initial TEFL training 15 years ago, as a part of the process needed to obtain a teaching position at one of the most renowned English schools nationwide.

Did you experience any plateaus in your learning?

Yes, I did. After middle school, I lost contact with most of my schoolmates, and it was hard to find other fluent users of English to spend time with. As a result of that, I ended up just knowing that I knew English, but having no actual use for the language.

What do you think accounts for your success in learning English?

I think the most important factor was being in an environment where I really had to use English for meaningful real-time communication needs (regardless of my assigned level as a learner of English). I came to develop a sense of enjoyment in being able to use English, a realization that real communication in English was actually taking place and that I was an active participant in it.

Do you still feel you need to continue your learning of English?

Yes, I do, though I believe that now, it is not so much about learning English as it is about enjoying communication in a foreign language.

What resources do you make use of to help you maintain your fluency in English?

I immerse myself in popular culture in English (movies, internet, magazines, etc.), as well as as much professional literature that I can find. I enjoy the fact that I am able to read as much as I like in English.

Do you feel it is necessary for learners to master the level of English of a native speaker?

I believe that language levels are a matter of the communicative needs they enable us to satisfy. I have met native speakers of English who were not able to succeed at certain writing tasks that I passed with flying colours. And I have failed in other tasks that were beyond my writing ability in Spanish, which is my native language.

What advice do you give to your students who want to achieve the same level of success that you have achieved?

I encourage them to try to move from being students of English to being users of English. I also try to help develop their confidence – to help them feel that they will be able to communicate in English and to understand it, as well. I want them to focus more on their success in communication, rather than worrying about things that didn't go so well. I also encourage them to surf the web, trying to do as many interesting and fun things as possible in English. Whatever they like learning about in their own language should feel right learning about in English. I am an active promoter of reading formal literature for pleasure on a daily basis, too. And, of course, I recommend singing along their favourite tunes in English, taking advantage of the great amount of music videos, with lyrics on screen, available on the internet.

2. Theara Chea, teacher and teacher educator, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Tell me a little about your background.

I come from a small village in a remote area of Kampong Cham Province, about 120 kilometres east of Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia. I went to an elementary school in my village and later to a high school about four kilometres away. Throughout my whole six years in my high school, French was taught as the only foreign language, of which I later could hardly recall more than two or three words.

When did you first start learning English?

I started learning English in early October 1999, at the age of 19, a few months after I moved to Phnom Penh for the first time, to do my university study. I attended a small language centre in which there were not many classes. As a student, I never had a chance to learn English from a native speaker. My two Khmer teachers, I later found out, did not have a degree in English teaching, and their levels of English were not as high as mine is now.

What methods did the teachers use?

My teachers used a traditional way of teaching, by getting us to read English sentences and then translate them into Khmer. Then they explained to us the grammar points and got us to complete exercises on the language we had just learned. Occasionally, we worked in pairs, sitting face-to-face with our classmate and taking turns to read the conversation scripts from the book. We did not do much listening, since it was not easy to access the materials.

What made you want to learn English?

I wanted a 'good job', even though I didn't know what the job would be. Cambodians, in general, believe that those who speak good English and get some computer skills will be able to get a job easily. But I later fell in love with the language and now benefit financially from being a teacher.

Did you experience any plateaus in your learning (e.g. when you felt you were not making sufficient progress)?

While my English has improved overall, it is not obvious that I have made an equal progress in all four skills. For example, my speaking has kept improving a lot since I started working at my current workplace, which is a multinational working environment. However, my writing has plateaued, because I am not required to produce any long pieces of academic writing.

How did you motivate yourself to keep learning?

Ten months after I first started learning English at that small language centre, my friends encouraged me to go to a university where English would be more seriously taught. I applied for admission, but failed the first time because my grammar was so poor. It was the fact that I did not pass the entrance exam to that university that kept me going. I went to get extra classes, in which I focused only on improving grammar and sentence structures. I finally passed the entrance exam two years after I first started learning English.

What do you think accounts for your success in learning English?

I'm highly motivated, and I use it every day. I read, listen and speak all the time in English.

Apart from classroom instruction, what other resources did you make use of to help you improve your English?

The BBC radio and English newspapers.

Do you still feel you need to continue your learning of English?

Yes. My goal is to reach 9.0 on IELTS; thus, continuing to learn English is still my homework.

Do you feel it is necessary to master the level of English of a native speaker?

To be admired by my students, I believe that I must demonstrate an excellent, native-like accent when speaking.

What advice do you give to your students who want to achieve the same level of success that you have achieved?

Develop self-study habits, and try to access English as much as possible.

3. *Jesús David Flórez Villa, teacher, Barranquilla, Colombia*

Tell me a little about your background.

I'm 22 years old. I was born and raised in the industrial city of Barranquilla in Colombia, in South America. I live in a middle-class dwelling with my parents, sister and grandmother. I attended elementary, middle and high school at a parochial school run by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. I graduated with honours in the year 2006. I began attending college in 2008 and am currently in my senior year. I'm an education major; the name of the degree I'm pursuing is (in Spanish) *Licenciatura en Idiomas Extranjeros*, which could be roughly translated as 'bachelor's degree in teaching foreign languages' (English and French). It goes without saying that I have decided to focus on teaching the former.

When did you first start learning English?

I first started learning English in primary school, as I assume most people around the world have. I should add, by the way, that when I was an elementary-school student, I utterly disliked our English-language class. When I reminisce about those times, it still amazes me, at times, that my relationship with the English language underwent such a drastic change. There is such a stark contrast between how the me of then viewed the language and how the me of today does so that sometimes people just can't believe that such a change of heart ever took place.

How did you maintain your English during this time?

I try to listen to spoken English, as much as I possibly can, and take note of any new lexical item, phrase or idiomatic expression that I come across. I started compiling a list of the aforementioned elements back in the year 2009, and, thus far, the list currently numbers 46 pages. I go over three pages every day to make sure I keep that knowledge fresh in my head. A great deal of all the vocabulary I have collected over the past three years I owe to English-dubbed anime (Japanese animated shows that are dubbed in the United States). Most of those shows are dubbed by the following three entertainment companies: Funimation Entertainment, located in Dallas, Texas; Seraphim Digital, located in Houston, Texas; and Bang Zoom entertainment, located in Los Angeles, California. I started watching these series in 2008, but didn't start compiling the list I mentioned until the following year, when I realized how much potential they actually had). These dubbed TV shows have been an invaluable source of information and practice; the language used is as authentic and contemporary as it can be, the accents portrayed are, in general, standard American English, although, at times, British, Australian and even European accents are used. In fact, I owe a lot of my strong listening skills to constantly watching these TV shows. If anyone happens

to be interested in doing this and, in a manner of speaking, follow in my footsteps, the websites from which I have had access to these TV series are: www.animeratio.com [and several others].

I have also found literature to be an excellent source of practice and a way to improve vocabulary. Having said that, I only recommend doing this if you have achieved an advanced level of proficiency. All the novels and short stories I have read, to this very day, are the complete and unabridged versions. I basically do the same as what I do with anime; I read and look up any word or expression that catches my attention. A smaller portion of the vocabulary list I mentioned earlier has had its additions from the works of literature I have had the pleasure of reading. (I began doing this, reading literature, that is, in September 2011). Among what I have read, I include: *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens; *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad; *Animal Farm* and *1984* by George Orwell; *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck; *White Fang* by Jack London, and several of his short stories; several short stories by Edgar Allan Poe and many others.

What made you want to learn English?

I believe that it was mostly American movies from the 90s. Yes, I know that may sound odd, but it's true, at least in my case it is. One such movie, which I believe made me want to learn English more than any other, was *Independence Day*.

When did you decide to become an English teacher?

I decided to become an English teacher back in 2006, during my senior year in high school. It was my high-school English teacher that inspired me to become one.

Did you experience any plateaus in your learning?

I believe the closest thing to a plateau that I have experienced so far has been when it comes to punctuation. I learned how to write and organize my ideas effectively in English, but there were times when I felt that my punctuation was just not 'up to scratch'. Fortunately, beginning last year (mostly thanks to my reading), I have begun to slowly but surely improve my punctuation. I still have some work to do, but I know I'm on the right track.

What do you think accounts for your success in learning English?

It is really hard to tell. As we all know, there is a plethora of factors that are at play when we learn a second language. In my particular case, there is one thing that I think I can attribute most of my success to: my very strong and very personal motivation for learning English. Suffice it to say that such motivation has its roots in one of my lifelong dreams: to live and work in the United States of America.

Do you still feel you need to continue your learning of English?

Yes, I do. Changes in language take place every day; words and expressions come and go; idioms fall out of use or into abeyance; alternative grammar gains ground among younger speakers and so on, ad infinitum. And, besides, a committed NNEST [non-native English student] will never let his/her skills dampen.

What resources do you make use of to help you maintain your fluency in English?

As I mentioned earlier, unabridged literature and English-dubbed anime. I would like to add to this American TV shows that one can easily find and watch on YouTube and some Americans I have become friends with. In sum, every resource I have at my disposal I use to maintain my fluency. (Skype has been the most recent one, as of today.)

Do you feel it is necessary for learners to master the level of English of a native speaker?

This is another question which is really difficult to answer. Most teachers would say it is not imperative that students have a native-like command of the language. There are, however, some who would disagree. I feel that this is something that is ultimately up to each individual learner to decide. For my part, such a decision should come from how much they need English in their particular life circumstances and how willing they are to let English be a source of change in their lives.

What advice do you give to your students who want to achieve the same level of success that you have achieved?

I would tell them: Don't be afraid to make mistakes; don't let other people discourage you; make good use of the internet – it can help you in a lot of different ways; be patient and perseverant; but, above all, believe in yourself – believe you can do it, and you will move mountains.

Appendix 2:

Learning styles

Take the learning-styles quiz by Griffiths, published in Mercer et al., *Psychology for Language Learning: Insights from Research, Theory and Practice* (2012: 165).

An inventory of language-learning styles

Please rate each of the following learning style preferences according to the scale:

5 = strongly agree; 4= agree; 3 = neutral; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree

I like to learn language ...	5	4	3	2	1
1. By reading.					
2. By writing things down.					
3. By speaking in the target language.					
4. By hearing the target language spoken.					
5. By seeing, e.g. diagrams, pictures, etc.					
6. By moving around.					
7. By manipulating, e.g. models, cards, etc.					
8. By being corrected.					
9. With others.					
10. In an environment I find pleasant.					
11. By memorizing.					
12. By having what I need to learn clear and unambiguous.					
13. By concentrating on details.					
14. By thinking before speaking or writing.					
15. In order.					
16. By playing games.					

For every item where you answered 4 or 5, give yourself one point next to the type of learner on the next page that you think is described. When you finish, add up the points. What type of learner are you?

- Visual learner.
- Auditory learner.
- Kinaesthetic learner.
- Tactile learner.
- Group learner.
- Individual learner.
- Task-oriented learner.
- Social learner.
- Dependent learner.

Do you have any other preferences regarding how you learn languages?

Further reading

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6

The language lesson

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What is the teacher's role in the lesson?
 - Views of successful lessons.
 - Cognitive dimensions of lesson planning.
 - The lesson's learning outcomes.
 - The role of lesson plans.
- What is the structure of a lesson?
 - Opening.
 - Instruction.
 - Pacing.
 - Closure.
- How can the effectiveness of lessons be increased?
 - Adjusting the lesson plan during teaching.
 - Reviewing lessons.

6.1 Introduction

In teacher-training programmes, teachers are taught to plan lessons as graded sequences of activities that reflect recognized formats, such as the presentation–practice–production sequence found in many traditional coursebooks. There are, of course, many different dimensions to an effective language lesson, and teachers have their own ways of creating effective lessons. If the teacher has planned his or her own lesson, he or she will generally have chosen content that links to previous learning, that is appropriate to the level of the class, that addresses something the learners need to learn or practise and that, hopefully, is also engaging and motivating for the learners. If the teacher is teaching from a textbook, he or she will typically do more than simply present the material in the unit. The teacher will look for ways to make the content of the lesson relevant to the learners' needs and interests and will build additional learning support around the lesson, as needed. But the notion of an effective lesson is difficult to characterize. Two teachers may both teach the same lesson from a textbook or teach from an identical lesson plan and teach it very differently; yet both lessons may be regarded as very effective. And are success and effectiveness the same? Learners may enjoy a lesson a great deal, even though it fails to achieve its goals. On the other hand, a teacher may feel that he or she covered the lesson plan very effectively, but the students did not appear to learn very much from it. And while a teacher may feel that he or she did a great job in teaching a difficult lesson, a colleague who observed the lesson may have felt that it was not entirely successful. As Medgyes (2001) states, 'All outstanding teachers are ideal in their own ways, and as such, are different from each other' (2001: 440).



Why might two teachers teach the same unit from a book in very different ways?

6.2 The teacher's role in the lesson

Views of successful lessons

Teachers generally have a clear understanding of what they mean by an effective lesson, views that often reflect their teaching experience. You probably have a core set of principles that help shape the way you teach a lesson, as I do. One of my most important principles is, 'A lesson is serious work, but it can also be fun'. Here is how a teacher describes her approach to lessons (cited in Richards, 1998a: 110–11):

I feel that I need to create a relaxed classroom environment in which the students will participate and learn. I feel that if a teacher has a positive and enthusiastic attitude toward the class, the

students will feel the same. I try to prepare lessons that take their previous knowledge and expand on it. By using simple instructions, encouraging group participation and spontaneity, the students can develop more self-confidence. In Asian cultures, spontaneity is difficult to achieve because of 'losing face'; therefore, praise is essential to encourage the students to try. At the same time, the teacher must tactfully correct, and also have students correct each other in group activities.

By using a variety of activities in a lesson, students remain interested, and when the class is over, they can take what they have learned and use it in real life. I feel the class is successful when the students are actively participating and using the target language in free activities, games, etc.

I see my role in the classroom as an instructor and resource person. I'm able to present a language point and, being culturally sensitive, show them how they can use it effectively when necessary. I would, and do, encourage them to ask questions to better understand. In each class, I strive to help the student to use what they know and expand that knowledge, overcoming the obstacle of peer pressure or acceptance – losing face among their classmates. By encouragement and praise, I help them to verbalize what they already know or are learning.

Another teacher describes her student-centred philosophy of teaching (ibid.):

As the years go by, I feel less a 'teacher' and more a 'guide' or 'conductor' trying to extract what is inside my students; trying to give them the courage and develop a trust between themselves, so that their learning experience will be faster and easier and fun in the process! With that philosophy or a more humanistic approach behind me, I always try and create a lesson which enhances communication and cooperation between the learners where I take a back seat and they depend on each other more – a more student-centred lesson. So naturally a successful lesson would have incorporated all of this – me as a guide, an example, initially someone they can rely on for help and where slowly I can dissolve into the background while they are discussing in English the task they are doing – and where I reappear only to help, encourage and apologize for the lesson being over.

As the comments above illustrate, teachers approach lessons with a particular set of beliefs or principles that they seek to realize in their lessons. These result from their theorizing from practice (see Chapter 4). Some of these beliefs or principles may reflect ideas they were introduced to during their training, since, during their teacher training and academic studies, they will have been introduced to a variety of teaching principles, as we see in the reference to humanistic approaches and learner-centredness in the comments of one of the teachers above. Kumaravadivelu (1994: 32) discusses ten such principles that reflect a current understanding of good practice in language teaching:

- 1** Maximize learning opportunities.
- 2** Facilitate negotiated interaction.

- 3 Minimize perceptual mismatches between teacher intention and learner interpretation.
- 4 Activate intuitive heuristic processes (for example, by providing enough textual data for learners to infer underlying grammatical rules).
- 5 Foster language awareness.
- 6 Contextualize linguistic input.
- 7 Integrate language skills.
- 8 Promote learner autonomy.
- 9 Raise cultural consciousness.
- 10 Ensure social relevance.



For one or more of the principles above, can you give an example of how you have addressed this principle in a lesson you have taught or observed recently?

However, the experience of teaching also enables teachers to develop their own personal theories and principles that they try to reflect in their teaching. For example, a teacher may arrive at two important principles that relate to how to motivate reluctant learners, such as:

- Make lessons learner-centred.
- Make learning relaxing, rather than stressful.

As the teacher plans and delivers lessons, he or she then looks for opportunities to build these principles into his or her teaching. Breen (2001a) proposed that teachers use a set of core principles which are reflected in the kinds of teaching practices of which they make use. These principles are based on background knowledge and experiences so principles can shape practice, but practice can also lead to new principles. A particular practice (e.g. the principle 'make learning fun') may shape a number of different forms of classroom practice.

Cognitive dimensions of lesson planning

An important dimension of teaching depends upon the specialized cognitive skills teachers use to plan their lessons – skills that draw both on content knowledge as well as experience. The following example (author data) illustrates the nature of these skills.

An experienced teacher was given the following task:

A teacher has just called in sick. You are going to teach her 50-minute spoken English class, lower intermediate level, in five minutes. Your only teaching aid is an empty glass. What will your lesson look like?

The teacher thought about it for less than a minute and then elaborated her idea for the lesson.

- 1** I would start by showing the glass and asking students to form groups and brainstorm for five minutes, to come up with the names of as many different kinds of containers as possible. They would then group them, according to their functions. For example, things that contain food, things that are used to carry things, things that are used to store things in and so on. I would model how they should do this and suggest the kind of language they could use. (10 minutes).
- 2** Students would present their findings to the class to see who had come up with the longest list. (10 minutes).
- 3** For a change of pace, and to practise functional language, I would do some dialogue work, practising asking to borrow a container from a neighbour. First, I would model the kind of exchange I want them to practise. Then students would plan their dialogue following this outline:
 - a) Apologize for bothering your neighbour.
 - b) Explain what you want and why you need it.
 - c) Your neighbour offers to lend you what you want.
 - d) Thank your neighbour and promise to return it on the weekend.

Students would then perform their dialogues.



How do you think you would teach the lesson?

This is a good example of a teacher's specialized thinking skills (see Chapter 4), sometimes known as pedagogical reasoning skills. These are the special skills that enable English teachers to do the following:

- To analyze potential lesson content (e.g. a piece of realia – as in the example above – a text, an advertisement, a poem, a photo, etc.) and identify ways in which it could be used as a teaching resource.
- To identify specific linguistic goals (e.g. in the areas of speaking, vocabulary, reading, writing, etc.) that could be developed from the chosen content.
- To anticipate any problems that might occur and ways of resolving them.
- To make appropriate decisions about time, sequencing and grouping arrangements.

We saw in Chapter 4 how teachers draw on their subject-matter knowledge, their theories and principles, as well as their teaching experience, in making decisions of this kind. Shulman (1987) described this ability as a process of transformation in which the teacher turns the subject matter of instruction into forms that are pedagogically powerful and that are appropriate to the level and ability of the students. Experienced teachers use these skills every day when they plan their lessons, when they decide how to adapt lessons from their coursebook and when they search the internet and other sources for materials and content that they can use in their classes. It is one of the most fundamental dimensions of teaching, one that is acquired through experience, through accessing content knowledge and through knowing what learners need to know and how to help them acquire it. When I work with novice teachers, this is one of the crucial skills I try to help teachers develop. While experience is crucial in developing pedagogical reasoning skills, working with more experienced teachers through shared planning, team teaching, observation and other forms of collaboration can also play an important role in helping less experienced teachers understand the thinking processes employed by other more experienced teachers, as they plan and deliver their lessons.



What or who do you think have been the main sources of your pedagogical reasoning skills?

The lesson's learning outcomes

In planning lessons, the starting point is the description of the course aims and objectives. For example, the aim of a course on English for travel and tourism was described as follows:

'To prepare students to communicate in English, at a basic level, for purposes of travel and tourism.'

The course objectives include statements such as the following:

- The student can understand simple questions, statements, greetings and directions.
- The student can get the gist of simple conversations in spoken English.
- The student can use 50 useful survival phrases, questions, statements and responses.

But the learning outcomes of lessons are not limited to covering the language skills and content described in the course objectives. For example, the teacher's goals for a class he or she is teaching may include:

- To help develop a positive attitude towards language learning.
- To have a successful experience in language learning.
- To encourage students to work productively and cooperatively.
- To give students control over their own learning.

These goals may be the unstated assumptions or principles that guide the teacher's actions during a lesson. A teacher describes the difference between a teacher's objectives and the learning outcomes of the lesson, as follows:

Planning for learning outcomes

When teaching methodology, or when working with a novice teacher in my school, I always emphasize the difference between a teacher's objectives and the lesson's learning outcomes. While the teacher's objective may be to encourage student participation or to minimize teacher talking-time, for example, the learning outcomes have to do with what students will be able to do at the end of the lesson that they couldn't do before it. Learning outcomes have to be observable, so to describe them, we need to use observable behaviour, such as: 'Students will be able to produce ...', 'Students will state the difference between ...', 'Students will identify the main idea and the supporting details of the text', etc. Behaviours such as 'understand', or 'think about', for instance, are not observable, so they have to be operationalized in ways such as: 'Students will show that they understood the text by ...'. 'Cover page 10' or 'Teach the present perfect' are definitely not learning outcomes! Learning outcomes also have to be lesson-specific, not generic ones, such as: 'Students will work in pairs and small groups' or 'Students will talk a lot'. These are classroom procedures or techniques that a good teacher following a communicative curriculum probably follows every lesson! Another common pitfall is for outcomes to be too broad or ambitious: 'By the end of the lesson, students will be able to use the simple past.' How? In free communication? Planned or unplanned? In controlled exercises or open-ended ones? Orally or in writing? A more realistic outcome for a lesson at the A2 level, for instance, would be: 'Students will be able to describe what they did the previous day, using the verbs *wake up*, *take*, *eat*, *go*, and *watch* in their correct past tense forms.'

Isabela Villas Boas, teacher and teacher educator, Brasília, Brazil

Learner-focused teaching also involves developing learner-centred lesson outcomes, in addition to those that focus on linguistic dimensions of lessons (Dörnyei, 2001). One way to do this is to include activities that involve public display of the learning outcome. Here is how one teacher does this:

Learner-centred lessons

I always look for activities in which the students can present something they have learned to the rest of the class. For example, at the end of a speaking lesson, students might work in groups to plan a little role play. The groups will act them out and vote on which one they liked best. Or if we have been working on descriptive writing at the end of the lesson, I might have groups develop a short description together and put it on a poster. Then we will put the posters up around the walls of the classroom for everyone to read and compare.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

Another teacher describes another way in which he addresses learner-centred outcomes:

Building motivation into the lesson

The high-school students I teach in Thailand have very little contact with English in their daily lives, since both in and out of school, Thai and the local-language variety – Esarn – are the only languages they encounter. So it's hard to create a sense that English is something that they will benefit from studying. In order to create motivation for using English, I try to build as much fun as I can into lessons and to link learning English to activities my students enjoy participating in. Games and songs are an obvious example. I provide readers and magazines for the school library. I establish 'English day' once a week in my class – a day when only English can be used, and I use student monitors to make sure everyone is doing their best to use English. Drama activities (skits and role plays) are also motivating, both for performers and audience. Sometimes good ideas come from students themselves, such as an English singing contest or a crossword competition.

Anuwat Kaewma, teacher and teacher educator, Sakon Nakhon province, Thailand

Lessons may thus have different kinds of objectives embedded in them, but whatever their goals, these objectives should be areas the teacher can identify, that he or she has thought about and, in some way, planned for. And the goals can be shared with the students, so that they come to realize that the teacher's lessons are planned and purposeful.

The role of lesson plans

Planning a lesson before teaching it is generally considered essential in order to teach an effective lesson and often receives considerable emphasis in teacher-training programmes, although teachers vary in the nature of the planning they do and the kinds of information they include in lesson plans. Experienced teachers generally make use of less-detailed lesson plans than novice teachers and often teach from a mental plan, rather than a detailed written lesson plan (Richards, 1998a) or description of aims and objectives. Tsui (2003: 187) observes:

Studies of teachers' planning processes and planning thoughts observe that experienced teachers seldom start with aims and objectives when they plan a lesson. Rather, they will start with materials or content, and think about students' interests and activities that may be required. They are more efficient in lesson planning, and they often plan their lessons mentally with only brief notes as reminders. Their planning thoughts are much richer and more elaborate than novice teachers. Novice teachers, on the other hand, tend to start with aims and objectives, and to stick closely to the prescribed curriculum guide. They tend to spend a long time preparing for lessons and have detailed lesson plans, which may include what they are going to say, what actions they intend to take, and even what they will put on the blackboard. The differences

observed between expert and novice teachers have been attributed to the fact that expert teachers have rich experience on which to rely, and they have mastered a repertoire of routines from which they can draw, whereas novice teachers have not.



What role does lesson planning play in your teaching? What kind of planning do you normally do?

And lesson plans often differ from the lessons teachers using them actually teach, since there are sometimes good reasons for departing from a lesson plan, depending on the way a lesson proceeds and develops. However, lesson planning is an administrative requirement of many schools, and teachers are often required to prepare yearly, term, unit, weekly and daily lesson plans. Senior (2006: 142) comments on the fact that while teacher-preparation courses usually emphasize the importance of preparing detailed lesson plans, student teachers find that experienced teachers often make different use of planning in their teaching:

They notice that few teachers around them spend time writing detailed lesson plans – and certainly not ones containing formal aims and objectives. They notice that it is far more common for teachers to be making lists of items in the order to teach them, or jotting down rough notes or reminders to themselves about what they intend to cover.

Senior (2006) suggests that the reason for this is because (as Tsui comments above) experienced teachers have a substantial knowledge and experiential base to draw upon in their teaching and are generally familiar with the specific needs and interests of the students in their class. Conversely, novice teachers, without such an experiential base, will make greater use of lesson plans and use more detailed lesson plans during their initial teaching experiences (Richards, 1998a). A teacher educator presents some metaphors for lesson planning:



Using lesson metaphors

As a teacher trainer, I find that both novice and experienced teachers greatly benefit from a discussion of lesson planning. There are so many ways to actually write and prepare a lesson, but what I find interesting is to ask teachers to consider what a lesson means to them on a more philosophical level. Ur (1996: 213) discusses raising awareness of the characteristics of a lesson by using metaphors. She asks which metaphor best expresses the essence of a lesson, such as a wedding, a TV variety show or a symphony. I have expanded this idea to include others, such as a cake, garden, painting, soccer match, marathon race, novel, multi-course meal, jigsaw puzzle or computer program. There is, of course, no right or wrong answer, but interestingly, every one of these has been chosen by students, with solid reasons to support their choices.

David Bohlke, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Singapore

Lesson planning serves a variety of purposes. One important purpose is to help the teacher think through the lesson in advance. Here, the teacher makes use of his or her pedagogic reasoning skills, referred to above – those specialized skills that enable teachers to transform potential lesson content into effective means of learning:

Justifying lesson planning

In my practicum courses, there are always students who complain and ask: ‘Why should we plan a lesson with all the rigour, and you “teachers” don’t even have a lesson plan for these courses?’ My answer is: ‘Well, it is an advantage to become experienced. At some point, I was novice, like you, and needed to write down a very detailed plan for the lesson. Otherwise, I could have forgotten or missed my way. It is a matter of developing an ability to do so, a discipline. For example, look at this bit of the movie *Karate Kid* (we watch the scene where Daniel-san complains about cleaning and polishing Mr. Miyagi’s car, instead of actually practising karate movements). I ask my students: ‘You see, why do you think Mr. Miyagi keeps Daniel cleaning and polishing?’ Students answer: ‘To learn the fine movements before the actual karate movements’, ‘To develop precise karate movements’, ‘To develop karate abilities’, etc. I continue: ‘Exactly, we first need to practise systematically, under certain rigour, in order to develop abilities or a discipline. That’s why you are required to write lesson plans again and again and again. Once you develop certain abilities and become experienced, you will manage a simpler, or more general, lesson plan, because you will know the area more, and you will become more aware of the students’ needs, etc.’

Verónica Sánchez Hernández, teacher and teacher educator, Puebla, Mexico

In training programmes such as the CELTA (the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, formerly the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) and the more advanced Delta (the Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, formerly the Diploma in English Language Teaching for Adults) – courses offered by Cambridge English Language Assessment for novice and experienced teachers – the lesson plan also provides evidence of having researched and analyzed language for teaching purposes. But in addition to the conceptual and cognitive processes activated through lesson planning, planning also serves a number of other functions. These include:

- To provide a framework or a ‘road map’ for the lesson.
- To help think through and rehearse the teaching process.
- To provide security.
- To determine the sequence and timing of activities.
- To help realize the teacher’s principles and beliefs.
- To provide a record of what has been taught.

A teacher educator discusses the value to novice teachers of the lesson plan:

Planning and the novice teacher

Writing down a detailed lesson plan, preferably using a set template, helps novice teachers visualize their lesson elements and revise the plan. For example, by writing out the interaction patterns for each activity, the teacher will then be able to identify whether he or she is alternating between teacher–students, teacher–student and student–student types of interactions. Another important function of a written lesson plan is to help the teacher organize the materials that need to be taken to class, such as flashcards, CDs, props, felt pens, construction paper, etc. It is not uncommon for teachers to forget materials in the teachers’ room or in their locker. Leaving the classroom to pick up materials or asking a student to do so may disrupt the flow of the class or lead to classroom-management problems. Writing out a lesson plan and explicitly stating the time to be spent on each activity is also a great exercise in learning how to estimate the duration of activities. More often than not, novice teachers will over-plan their lessons and actually manage to accomplish only half or perhaps 75% of what they had planned. The result is that the lesson will probably lack an appropriate closure.

Isabela Villas Boas, teacher and teacher educator, Brasília, Brazil

A lesson plan reflects decisions that have been made about the following aspects of a lesson:

- **Goals:** What the general goals of the lesson are.
- **Activities:** What kinds of things students will do during the lesson, such as dialogue work, free writing or brainstorming.
- **Sequencing:** The order in which activities will be used, including opening and closing activities.
- **Timing:** How much time will be spent on different activities.
- **Grouping:** When the class will be taught as a whole and when they will work in pairs or groups (see Chapter 7).
- **Resources:** What materials will be used, such as the textbook, worksheets or DVDs.

Richard-Amato (2009) suggests that language lessons can generally be divided into five different phases:

Opening: Links are made to previous learning, or the lesson is previewed.

Simulation: A lead-in to the main activity is provided to create interest in the lesson.

Instruction: The main activity of the lesson.

Closure: The lesson may be reviewed and future learning previewed.

Follow-up: Independent work or homework is assigned.

6.3 The structure of a lesson

Opening

The opening of a lesson consists of the procedures the teacher uses to focus the students' attention on the learning aims of the lessons. Openings generally occupy the first five minutes of a lesson and can have an important influence on how much students learn from a lesson. They can serve a variety of purposes. For example:

- To help learners relate the content of the new lesson to that of the last lesson or previous lessons (cognitive contribution).
- To assess relevant knowledge (cognitive contribution).
- To establish an appropriate 'set' in learners: i.e. to prepare them for what is to follow (cognitive or affective contribution).
- To allow tuning-in time – which may be especially important in situations where learners have come directly from a very different environment (e.g. a sports class).
- To reduce the disruption caused by late-arriving students (pragmatic contribution).



What are some other purposes of lesson openings?

The way a lesson opens reflects a number of decisions that a teacher makes, either consciously or unconsciously. A number of options are available. For example, a teacher could choose to:

- Describe the goals of the lesson by stating the information or skills the students will learn.
- Describe the relationship between the lesson or activities and the students' needs.
- Describe what students are expected to do in the lesson.
- Describe the relationship between the lesson or activities and a forthcoming test or exam.
- Begin an activity without any explanation.
- Point out links between the lesson and previous lessons.
- State that the activity the students will do is something they will enjoy.
- Do something in order to capture the students' interest and motivation, such as playing a song.
- Review learning from a previous lesson.
- Preview the lesson.



Which of the strategies above do you usually use to open a lesson?

The kind of activity or procedure the teacher uses will depend upon the purpose of the lesson opening. For example, the teacher may choose to begin the lesson with a short review because they want to provide additional opportunities to learn previously taught materials and to correct areas that students are having difficulty with. This could be accomplished by:

- Asking questions about concepts or skills taught in the previous lessons.
- Asking students to demonstrate something they have learned.
- Giving a short quiz at the beginning of class on material from previous lessons or homework assignments.
- Having students meet in small groups to review homework.
- Having students prepare questions about previous lessons or homework. They can ask questions to each other, or the teacher can ask them to the class.
- Having students prepare a written summary of the previous lesson, if appropriate.
- Having the students ask the teacher about problems on homework, and having the teacher review, reteach or provide additional practice.

Instruction

This refers to the sequence of activities that constitute the body of the lesson. In language lessons, the lesson sequence or lesson structure may reflect general learning principles, the type of lesson content (e.g. a reading lesson or a writing lesson) or the method the teacher is using, such as communicative language teaching, a text-based approach or task-based approach. Examples of general learning principles affecting the shape of lesson are:

- Receptive skills should precede productive skills.
- Language awareness activities should precede task-work
- Model texts should be analyzed before students create their own texts.
- Accuracy-focused activities should come before fluency activities.
- Activities should prepare students for personalized language use.
- Listening and reading lessons should have a pre- and post-comprehension phase.
- Guided practice should be followed by freer practice.

An example of one of these principles is shown in this sequence of activities in a listening lesson:

- *Pre-listening*: Activities that prepare the students for listening, e.g. by activating background knowledge or having them predict topics that might occur in the text.
- *While listening*: Activities that focus on identifying information in the text.
- *Post-listening*: Activities that involve reviewing comprehension and dealing with any difficulties the text posed.

An example of where the teaching method determines the lesson sequence would be the sequence of activities typically found in lessons based on the structural-situational method – the P-P-P lesson sequence (see Chapter 3):

- 1 *Presentation*: The new structure is introduced and presented.
- 2 *Controlled practice*: Learners are given intensive practice in the structure under the teacher's guidance and control.
- 3 *Free practice*: The students practise using the structure without any control by the teacher.
- 4 *Checking*: The teacher elicits use of the new structure to check that it has been learned.
- 5 *Further practice*: The structure is now practised in new situations or in combination with other structures.

In communicative language teaching, the following sequence of activities is often used:

- 1 *Pre-communicative activities*: Accuracy-based activities which focus on presentation of structures, functions and vocabulary.
- 2 *Communication activities*: Fluency-based activities which focus on information-sharing and information-exchange.

In task-based teaching, a three-part lesson sequence is often used (Willis 1996):

- 1 Pre-task: introduction to topic and task.
- 2 Task cycle: task, planning, report.
- 3 Language focus: analysis, practice.

Over time, teachers develop their own formats for lessons, and students are often able to predict the kinds of lessons to expect from their teachers.

Another feature of lessons is the transitions that occur between the different phases of a lesson. Experienced teachers indicate transition points clearly, manage transitions efficiently and minimize the loss of momentum that can occur during changes in activities. Less effective teachers, on the other hand, tend to blend activities together, fail to monitor events during transitions and take excessively long to complete the movement between segments of a lesson. Effective teachers support learning by maintaining students' attention during transition times. They do this in a number of different ways: they might list the lesson activities on the board before the lesson starts so students can see how activities are connected, or establish routines for setting up groups to minimize disruption caused by transition between activities.

Pacing

The pacing of a lesson refers to the extent to which a lesson maintains its momentum and communicates a sense of development. How much time to allocate to each part of the lesson is thus an important decision which teachers must make while planning and teaching a lesson. Strategies teachers use to help maintain pacing during a lesson include:

- Avoiding needless or lengthy explanations and instructions, and letting students get on with the job of learning.
- Using a variety of activities within a lesson, rather than spending a whole lesson on one activity.
- Avoiding predictable and repetitive activities.
- Selecting activities at an appropriate level of difficulty.
- Setting a goal and timeline for activities: activities that have no obvious conclusion or in which no time frame is set tend to have little momentum.
- Monitoring students' performance on activities to ensure that students have had sufficient, but not too much, time.

Over time, teachers develop a sense of when to speed things up or slow them down.

Closure

Another important phase of the lesson is the way the teacher brings the lesson to a close. Closure refers to those concluding parts of a lesson which serve to a) reinforce what has been learned in a lesson, b) integrate and review the content of a lesson and c) prepare the students for further learning. Strategies which teachers use to achieve closure include:

- Summarizing what has been covered in the lesson.
- Reviewing the key points of a lesson.
- Asking students to demonstrate something they have learned from the lesson.
- Relating the lesson to the course or lesson goals.
- Pointing out links between the lesson and previous lessons.
- Showing how the lesson relates to students' needs.
- Making links to future lessons.
- Praising students for what they have accomplished during the lesson.

Examples of teachers' lesson plans are given at the end of Chapter 3 and at the end of most of the chapters in Part 3 of this book, 'Language and the four skills'.



Can you recall some effective closing strategies you have used or observed in lessons?

Managing the parts of the lesson requires careful planning, as one teacher educator describes:



Planning and managing lessons effectively

The process of learning a language is like building a house. You need good foundations on which to lay the solid walls so that when we place the roof, the house stands still and does not collapse ... Likewise, learning a language requires time and skill to place each brick on the one underneath in a stable and robust way.

Students may be unsure as to where their teacher is leading them to, but as long as they have confidence that their teacher knows where they're going, they'll be fine. A lesson should be self-contained and work well as a stand-alone teaching unit, but needs to be coherently connected to the rest of the lessons in the course for the students to follow and be aware that everything they do fits in a bigger picture. Therefore, the teacher should make the link between units clear to the students so that they can see the relevance of each lesson within a whole. At the beginning of each lesson, it is convenient to recap on the contents of the previous one, preferably by eliciting them from the students. It is surprising how quickly they forget what was done during the previous session. Homework can serve this connecting purpose, too, so going over the tasks set as homework at the start of the session can help.

I find that it gives the students confidence to know what the lesson will be about. I tend to give them an overview of the session before I start, without revealing too many details which they don't need to know at that stage. Sometimes I may outline what I will expect from them at the end of the session. Other times, it is better to keep an element of surprise for an activity or session to work.

Another important element of the lesson is to set a time for each activity or task and let the students know this time so they can gauge the pace at which they need to work. The teacher needs to be prepared to alter these times, and even the order of the activities, as the lesson progresses. When planning a lesson, the teacher sets some objectives, tasks and times, but sticking to them regardless of the students' needs and reactions is a recipe for failure.

A good balance between skills in a lesson is advisable, but, again, we need to allow some flexibility.

Finally, I try not to do anything in class that students could do anywhere else in their own time. People's time is very valuable, and you don't want students to walk away from your lesson feeling that they have been wasting their time.

Maite San Juan, teacher and teacher educator, Barcelona, Spain

6.4 Increasing the effectiveness of lessons

Adjusting the lesson plan during teaching

Lessons are complex events, and lessons reflect the complexity of the processes involved. A successful language lesson is not necessarily one that realizes its lesson plan. During the lesson, unanticipated things happen, and teachers often have to revise their plans as the lesson progresses. Wright (2005: 89) (drawing on the work of Doyle and others) describes classroom life as involving multidimensional activities that often involve events that are immediate and unpredictable: they also occur in a public arena and may reflect knowledge of experiences and activities that have been experienced over long periods.

The following are some of the unplanned decisions (known as interactive decisions) teachers reported they made during lessons and their reasons for the departures they made from their plans (Richards, 1998a: 115):

- *Timing factors:*
 - Dropped activity because of time.
 - Added activity to fill out time.
- *Affective factors:*
 - Added activity to liven up class.
 - Modified activity to increase interest level.
- *Pedagogical factors:*
 - Changed sequence of activities.
 - Elaborated an activity.
 - Changed grouping arrangements.
 - Changed or dropped an activity because of difficulty.
 - Dropped activities that didn't seem necessary.
 - Added activities to strengthen lesson.
- *Language focus:*
 - Modified activity to change the language focus.
 - Added activity to provide more language work.

A teacher describes how these unplanned moments can be an opportunity to teach vocabulary:



Using unplanned moments in the lesson

While having a clear lesson plan that encompasses goals, learning outcomes, activities, sequencing, etc. is fundamental for effective learning to take place,

incidental teaching is also of utmost importance. Teachers have to be sensitive to unplanned but rich learning opportunities that arise during a class and let go of their lesson plan, even if for a short while, to take advantage of students' interest and motivation. Incidental teaching of vocabulary, for example, occurs frequently in a communicative classroom, where the teacher focuses not only on the vocabulary in the lesson plan but also on the words that come up during the discussions. In this case, teachers should seize the opportunity to write the words and expressions up on the board and perhaps review them at the end of the class. This is vocabulary that students will be more likely to learn because it is meaningful to them. Teachers who cling to their lesson plans have a hard time dealing with this type of incidental teaching. On the other hand, there's a fine line between seizing an opportunity for incidental teaching and letting students digress from the lesson with questions that are out of context or comments that are too tangential.

Isabela Villas Boas, teacher and teacher educator, Brasilia, Brazil

These examples illustrate the notion of teaching as improvisational performance (see Chapter 4). No matter how brief or detailed a lesson plan the teacher has, during a lesson, the teacher monitors students' performance and makes many individual decisions, based on how the lesson is proceeding. These decisions may involve providing an explanation of a concept or language item, clarifying procedures to carry out a task, questioning students about language knowledge or changing the focus of an activity, as this teacher describes (cited in Richards, 1998a):

I realized that they were having difficulty with the vocabulary, so I decided to add extra vocabulary work and spent more time eliciting vocabulary than I'd planned. By building in an extra vocab activity, they were able to do the writing task more successfully.

Teaching can, therefore, be viewed not so much as the process of realizing plans, but as a creative interaction between plans, student responses and teacher improvisation. One teacher expresses it this way (ibid.):

I always think of lesson plans as a kind of springboard. I never write them out in full and usually just work from a few points I want to cover. But I am always ready to drop my plan if something comes up that I see the students want to spend more time on. Or perhaps they are having a difficulty with language that I had not anticipated so I might need to spend more time on vocabulary or grammar or something.

Another teacher reports after a lesson (ibid.):

I changed my mind twice during my last lesson, sensing that what I'd planned was too much for the students. I think I must have taken into account their body language, subconsciously almost. I'd been going to get them to complete worksheets individually as homework for the next class, but then I decided to get the class as a whole to collaborate and do it as a whole-class activity, pooling their knowledge. It worked really well.

Two teachers may create two very different lessons from identical lesson content, through the unique elaborations each teacher creates while teaching a lesson.



In your own teaching, or experiences studying a second language, can you recall some unplanned lesson moments that turned out to be productive for the lesson?

Reviewing lessons

Improvement in one's understanding and practice of teaching can take place through using the experience of teaching to reflect on and review one's teaching practices. The purposes of reviewing one's teaching are various. For example, the teacher may wish to assess the effectiveness of lessons. This involves answering questions such as these:

- What kind of language learning opportunities did the lesson provide?
- How many opportunities were there for students to practise using the language?
- Were the activities they took part in sufficiently challenging to increase their skill in using what they already know as well as to expand their awareness of things that were new?
- Did the lesson create a motivation to learn and provide opportunities for success?

The teacher may also want to explore other issues related to his or her teaching. For example:

- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in his or her teaching.
- Understanding the students' response to his or her teaching.
- Collecting information on his or her teaching for personal or institutional purposes.

Reviewing and evaluating one's teaching can be accomplished individually or through collaboration with others. Self-review can take different forms. These include:

- Audio or video recording of lessons.
- Making a written report of lessons, for example, using a checklist.
- Reflecting on lessons using electronic or other forms of journal writing.
- Documenting teaching events and incidents through narratives, case studies or accounts of critical incidents in teaching.

Other types of review can involve the following:

- Student evaluations.
- Observations of lessons by other teachers, using checklists or observation forms.

An example of an observation form for reviewing the effectiveness of a lesson is given in Appendix 2.

6.5 Conclusion

Lessons are complex and dynamic events, and in a successful lesson, the teacher is engaged in many different kinds of monitoring – attending to learners' responses to the lesson to ensure that issues such as pacing, development, task difficulty, motivation, learner understanding and language focus are addressed, and making adjustments where necessary to ensure a successful outcome. For that reason, a lesson plan is just that, and the fact that a lesson realizes its lesson plan is no guarantee that it was a good lesson. The success of a lesson is based on the extent to which it contains worthwhile and appropriate learning experiences and engages the learners in meaningful learning. This may sometimes mean departing from the lesson plan to ensure the principles of good teaching are realized. Improvisational teaching, discussed in Chapter 4, is often at work in the effective execution of lesson plans. In Chapter 7, we will consider a variety of classroom-management issues that arise in teaching.

Discussion questions

- 1 Do you make use of descriptions of aims and objectives when planning lessons? What do you think are the advantages and limitations of using these in lesson planning?
- 2 Review the lesson-planning template given in Appendix 1. Would this template work for classes you teach? If not, how would you revise it?
- 3 Review a unit from a textbook. What sequence of activities occurs in the unit and what do you think is the justification for the sequencing that occurs? Do you think you would depart from the sequencing if you taught the unit?
- 4 Imagine you are planning a discussion class (intermediate level) that will involve discussing the impact of technology on people's daily lives. What activities would you suggest for opening the lesson?
- 5 Do you sometimes plan lessons together with another teacher or teachers? What might some benefits be of shared lesson-planning?
- 6 Teachers and learners sometimes have different views of the effectiveness of lessons. What criteria do you think students often use when deciding on the effectiveness of lessons?
- 7 How useful do you think it is to observe other teachers' lessons? How do you think it is best to prepare for observation of another teacher's lesson?
- 8 Read the lesson-observation form from a language institute in Brasilia, Brazil, in Appendix 2. Would you focus on the same aspects of lessons if you observed another teacher's class?

Appendix 1:

Sample lesson-plan template

Type of lesson: _____

Course: _____

Class: _____

Level of students: _____

Duration of lesson: _____

Lesson aims: _____

Materials used: _____

Groupings: _____

Anticipated problems: _____

LESSON PROCEDURES:

What the teacher
will do

What the learners
will do

1 OPENING:

a) Links to previous learning

Time:

Steps: 1

1 _____

1 _____

2

2 _____

2 _____

etc.

b) Lead-in to the main activity to create interest in the lesson

Time:

Steps: 1

1 _____

1 _____

2

2 _____

2 _____

etc.

2 INSTRUCTION:

The main activities of the lesson

Time:

Steps:	1	1 _____	1 _____
		_____	_____
	2	2 _____	2 _____
etc.			

3 CLOSURE:

Review and preview of future learning

Time:

Steps:	1	1 _____	1 _____
		_____	_____
	2	2 _____	2 _____
etc.			

4 FOLLOW UP:

Assign independent work or homework

Time:

Steps:	1	1	1
		_____	_____
		_____	_____
	2	2	2
		_____	_____
etc.			

SELF-EVALUATION AND COMMENTS AFTER THE LESSON

[illegible]

Appendix 2:

Lesson-observation form

CASA THOMAS JEFFERSON

TEACHER OBSERVATION REPORT

Name of teacher:		Class:		Hour:	
Name of observer:		Branch:			
Date:		Number of students:			

To the observer: for each of the criteria below, check the appropriate column.

F- Fully; M- Most of the time; P- Partially; NA- Non applicable

A	Planning – Evidence of effective lesson planning and preparation	F	M	P	No	NA
	1. The lesson was logically sequenced.					
	2. The activities were suitable for the age, level and needs of the group.					
	3. The activities were directly related to the aims and objectives of the lesson.					
	4. The class contained a variety of activities appropriate for the different learning styles (visual-receptive, audio-receptive, and motor-receptive).					
	5. Practice in different language skills was provided.					
	6. The teacher designed student-centred activities.					

B	Instructing – Effective language and lesson objective scaffolding	F	M	P	No	NA
	1. The teacher made the aims and objectives of the lesson clear to the learner and provided linguistic scaffolding.					
	2. The lesson was well paced.					

	Instructing – Effective language and lesson objective scaffolding	F	M	P	No	NA
	3. Instructions and explanations were brief and clear.					
	4. The textbook and materials were effectively integrated into the class (realia, flashcards, games and a variety of media skills, such as Internet access, audiovisual aids, broadcast communications, etc).					
	5. The teacher was able to adjust instruction when the lesson was not working.					
	6. The teacher used resources and strategies that build on learners' reasoning, problem solving and critical thinking skills, helping them become independent learners.					
	7. The board was effectively used as a teaching tool.					

C	Learning	F	M	P	No	NA
	1. Genuine communicative interaction took place.					
	2. The teacher encouraged the students to use the target language all the time. / The teacher spoke in the target language all the time.					
	3. Student participation was encouraged through questions, examples, definitions, explanations, comments and peer correction.					
	4. Student talk was maximized and teacher's was minimized, when possible.					
	5. The teacher fostered collaborative learning by means of effective pair-work / group-work activities.					

Part 2 Facilitating student learning

D	Assessing	F	M	P	No	NA
	1. Students' errors were monitored and corrected effectively.					
	2. Student performance was effectively monitored, throughout the class, to check if the lesson objectives were being reached.					

E	Interpersonal Dynamics – Supportive environment that engages all learners	F	M	P	No	NA
	1. The teacher demonstrated awareness of individual students' needs.					
	2. The teacher made a conscious effort to pay attention to all students equally.					
	3. The teacher praised and encouraged the students.					
	4. The teacher used gestures, body language and/or humour to enliven the class.					
	5. The teacher modelled and promoted respectful, caring interactions which helped maintain a classroom atmosphere that was conducive to learning.					
	6. The seating arrangement was appropriate for each activity and allowed accessibility to the teacher.					
	7. The teacher made an effort to keep students attentive, engaged and interested throughout the class.					

F	Language, content, culture and digital literacy	F	M	P	No	NA
	1. The teacher spoke clearly and loudly enough for all to hear. / The teacher adjusted his/her speech to the English-language level of the learner.					
	2. The teacher used correct English grammar and pronunciation.					

	Language, content, culture and digital literacy	F	M	P	No	NA
	3. The teacher developed the student's awareness of the L2 culture. / The teacher maintained/modelled an impartial attitude towards cultural differences and/or conflicts.					
	4. The teacher was able to use the technological resources available in the classroom, coherently integrating them to enhance learning through the careful design and management of the activities and tasks to meet curricular goals and objectives.					

G	Attentiveness to institutional regulations	F	M	P	No	NA
	1. The class started / ended on time.					
	2. The teacher adopted an exemplary posture in class (e.g. dress code, physical decorum, etc.)					
	3. Teacher enforced institutional regulations and expectations regarding students' attitudes (e.g. gum chewing, slouching, using the cell phone, etc.)					

H	The Learners – Learners' performance and attitude in class	F	M	P	No	NA
	1. The learners were motivated and participated in all activities.					
	2. The learners used the target language among themselves and with the teacher.					
	3. The learners related very well with the group and the teacher.					
	4. The learners consistently used relatively correct English and demonstrated ability in self-correction.					

7

Managing classroom learning

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What are the basics of classroom management in language teaching?
 - Creating a supportive classroom climate.
 - Establishing an understanding of acceptable classroom behaviour.
- How can grouping arrangements be used effectively?
 - Whole-class teaching.
 - Individual work.
 - Pair work
 - Group work.
- What does classroom management during the lesson involve?
 - Giving instructions.
 - The teacher's discourse.
 - Engaging with all students in the class.
 - Managing time and pace.

7.1 Introduction

A crucial aspect of a successful lesson is the extent to which the teacher is able to create a positive environment for learning. Classroom management refers to ways in which both the physical and the affective dimensions of the class are arranged in order to provide an environment that promotes successful teaching and learning. In an ideal classroom, students pay attention to what the teacher is trying to achieve; they behave with respect towards the teacher and other students in the class; they participate actively in activities the teacher has assigned; and the class functions as a cohesive group that collaborates to help make the lesson a positive learning experience. When classes function in this way, the teacher is able to focus on achieving the instructional goals he or she has set for the lesson. In some classes, however, the teacher may have to work hard and use specific strategies and procedures to maintain a productive classroom learning environment. These aspects of teaching relate to issues of classroom management, which is concerned with creating an effective classroom climate, using the time and space available in the classroom efficiently and effectively, and establishing a shared understanding of appropriate norms for classroom interaction and behaviour. Classroom management is concerned with more than discipline, since it relates to how teachers and learners see their roles in the classroom and the kind of learning community that develops in the classroom. Wright (2005: 3) describes the central issues involved in classroom management as responses to three issues:

- The importance of human relations and the emotional dimensions of teaching and learning in classroom management (see Chapter 5).
- The concept of participation in classroom life, and how management practices contribute to participation patterns.
- How the ever-present factors of time and space, which define formal education, influence management practices.

Although classroom management is an aspect of the teaching of any subject, language classes present their own issues in relation to classroom management. The subject has received relatively little serious attention within applied linguistics (with the exception of Wright's exceptional book on the topic), but it is an issue that novice and experienced language teachers deal with on a daily basis. Two trends have led, in recent years, to a rethinking of the role of classroom management in language teaching. One was the emergence of communicative language teaching and learner-centred philosophies, such as the learner-autonomy movement (see Chapter 5) and cooperative learning, which prompted a rethinking of traditional teacher-fronted teaching, as well as the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom. A focus on learner-centredness in the classroom led to new learning arrangements, such as pair and group-based activities, which require different styles of participation and management from traditional teacher-directed teaching. The second trend was the emergence of what has been termed post-method teaching. This refers to teaching which is not based on the prescriptions and procedures of a particular method, or which follows a predetermined syllabus, but which draws on the teacher's individual conceptualizations of language, language learning and teaching. That is, the practical knowledge and skills teachers develop from training and experience and the

teacher's knowledge of the learners' needs, interests and learning styles, as well as the teacher's understanding of the teaching context (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). The teacher's 'method' is constructed from these sources, rather than being an application of an external set of principles and practices. The classroom becomes a learning community in which the teacher and the learners collaborate to achieve shared goals. The teacher is a resource person or facilitator, guiding the learners, based on their emergent needs, and providing opportunities for scaffolded and mediated learning (see Chapter 2). This approach, likewise, creates new roles for teachers and learners, new possibilities for language learning experiences in the classroom and a new approach to classroom management.



Before reading the next section, what factors do you think are important in creating a positive and supportive environment for learning in the language classroom?

7.2 Basics of classroom management in language teaching

Creating a supportive classroom climate

When you observe different classes in a school, sometimes you are struck by differences in the atmosphere of different classes. Sometimes one visits a class in which there is a very supportive and positive atmosphere. As Dörnyei (2001: 41) puts it, there is a:

...pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere... you can sense it after only a few minutes' stay in the particular class. There is no tension in the air; students are at ease; there are no sharp – let alone hostile – comments made to ridicule each other. There are no put-downs or sarcasm. Instead, there is mutual trust and respect. No need for anyone to feel anxious or insecure.

These dimensions of a lesson have to do with the classroom ethos, or climate of the class, and achieving such an atmosphere depends on how both the teacher and students build up a sense of mutual trust and rapport. Obviously, this is not something that a teacher 'learns' from a teacher-education course, since it depends to a great extent on the personal qualities of the teacher and the dynamics of an individual class. *Climate* refers to the atmosphere of the classroom, and results from the nature of the relationships between the students and the teacher, the kinds of communication that take place between them, and the enthusiasm the teacher has for teaching and his or her skills in managing the students' learning. A good climate shows that the teacher is concerned with the emotional dimension to learning, as well as the pedagogical side. In considering the emotional aspects of language learning, it is important to recognize that classroom language learning can, at times, create anxiety for learners. Learners may also be frustrated at their apparent lack of progress or the difficulties of a task, and some learners may fear loss of face and be reluctant to speak out or participate actively in activities. By not being able to communicate in their mother tongue, their sense of identity or self-worth may be challenged. Several factors that contribute to a positive classroom climate are considered below.

A personal relationship between the teacher and the students

Good relations with students mean that respect and trust is shared between teacher and students. Students have confidence in the teacher, and they are aware that the teacher cares about them and wants them to have a successful learning experience. Maintaining a friendly relationship with students, however, still requires that the teacher maintains his or her role as a teacher and that students are willing to listen and pay attention to him or her. If this level of trust and respect is not maintained, problems of control and order can soon emerge, and it can be difficult for a teacher to regain the students' confidence, as I observed recently with a student teacher I supervised. She made the decision that, in order to be taken seriously by her class of teenage boys, she should try to be 'cool' and to be like them. Unfortunately, this meant that they did not respect her as a teacher, and she soon lost control of the class. So there can sometimes be a tension involved when the teacher is enacting different identities in the classroom – that of 'teacher', which involves distance or unequal power, and that of an 'older friend', which suggests a more equal relationship. A teacher gives advice on maintaining good relationships, even with 'problem' students:

Dealing with discipline problems

I only teach adults, so there are generally fewer 'discipline' issues than with high-school students, for instance. But it is still very easy to get angry with one's learners when they don't do what you want. Unfortunately, it is often not the learners who are the problem.

I had one teacher trainee (ex-army), on a CELTA course, who had a big issue with a young Brazilian guy who wouldn't follow the trainee's instructions. The learner kept getting sidetracked and talking to his partners about things completely divorced from the 'topic of the lesson'. In feedback on his lesson, the trainee said that this guy 'needed sorting out' and that he wasn't a 'team player'. In fact, he was a very normal elementary-level student who was very happy to improvise when the trainee gave instructions that were vague, incomprehensible or irrelevant, which was most of the time.

It may seem obvious, but no matter what the provocation is, never lose your temper with your students. They are usually doing the best they can, and the problem is usually with your lesson planning or your instructions. Also, it simply doesn't work. Whenever you lose your temper, you not only alienate the learner you are yelling at, but also the rest of the class, as well. If you genuinely think the student is being a lazy, disruptive waste of space, take a deep breath, count to ten and continue. Talk to them after the class, and try to find out what the real problem is. I take the 'deeply concerned / am I doing something wrong' approach. It doesn't always work, but is better for both of you than losing your temper.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

Even such a basic thing as remembering students' names can have a powerful influence on how the teacher builds rapport with the class and establishes a positive classroom climate. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003: 28–9) give the following suggestions:

- You may want your students to sit in the same seats for the first few classes to use that place memory. Then, get them to change seats, and learn their faces divorced from a place.
- Photograph or videotape students. You can look at the picture or tape and test yourself away from the classroom, and just before you go to class.
- Make students learn each other's names. Use games and fun activities for this purpose.
- Make students quiz you outside of class. Get them to ask, 'What's my name?' when they meet you outside of class.

Enthusiasm for teaching

Among the factors that account for the qualities of exceptional language teachers is their enthusiasm for teaching, the high expectations they set for their learners and the relationships they have with them (Dörnyei, 2001). Enthusiasm can be communicated in many different ways, such as by showing interest in the students and the activities being used. If students sense that the teacher is positive and enthusiastic about the coursebook or materials that he or she is using, they are likely to share the teacher's enthusiasm. You can communicate expectations for student success through praising students' performance, by giving help to weaker students when needed and, generally, by demonstrating the belief that (as one teacher expressed it) 'Every student in my class is a winner!' Establishing a warm and caring attitude towards students also contributes to building a positive class atmosphere. This means treating the students as people and not just as numbers, through showing an interest in their lives, their interests and problems, without going further than the boundaries set by the teacher's professional relationship. Dörnyei (2001) lists a number of ways in which a teacher can convey personal attention to his or her students:

- Greet students, and smile at them.
- Notice interesting features of their appearance (e.g. a new haircut).
- Learn something unique about each student, and occasionally mention it to them.
- Ask them about their lives outside of school.
- Show interest in their hobbies.
- Express, in your comments, that you've thought about them and their individual effort is recognized.
- Refer back to what you have talked about before.
- Recognize birthdays.
- Move around in class.
- Include personal topics and examples about students in discussing content matters.
- Send notes/homework to absent students.



What are some ways in which you try to build rapport with a new class of students?

Students collaborating to help achieve their shared goals

Establishing good relationships among students in the class is also important. This involves working towards a sense of cooperation, rather than competition, among students, using group consensus-building activities and avoiding activities that could lead to strong disagreement or tension. Students also need to feel that they are in a safe learning environment where they can take risks and try things out, without feeling inhibited or having other students make fun of them. They should feel comfortable working with other students who may be stronger or weaker than they are in certain areas and should support each other in their learning. And all of the members of the class need to feel that they are valued members of the group and have equal opportunities to benefit from lessons. A teacher comments on the value of collaborating:



The comfort of the group

My learners' interest level picks up when activities involve their personal thoughts and feelings, as well as when they share ideas and feelings with their peers. They enjoy collaborating and helping each other and, for this reason, mixed-ability groups work well. With mixed-ability levels, the students create a community of trust and cooperation and enjoy learning from each other's differences. They share ideas and responsibilities, and I love to see this happening in my class. I can see that they often feel more comfortable learning within a group than from teacher-directed teaching. So this requires a shift in my role as a teacher – more to that of a facilitator than a presenter.

Anuwat Kaewma, teacher and teacher educator, Sakon Nakhon province, Thailand



Do you have any particular strategies you use, or know of, to help students feel comfortable working in groups?

Establishing an understanding of acceptable classroom behaviour

Nobody can learn effectively in a class that is rowdy; where students come and go as they please; where the teacher sometimes arrives late; where students pay little attention during the lesson to what the teacher is trying to say or do, use their cell phones or send

text messages; or where students insist on using their mother tongue in class, as much as possible, rather than making any attempt to use English among themselves. A well-behaved class respects an understanding of the spoken and unspoken rules that govern the norms of acceptable classroom behaviour. These 'rules' may differ with students from different cultural backgrounds, so it is important that the teacher and students agree on what the rules for acceptable behaviour are early in a course. Senior (2006: 98) recommends that, with a new group of students, norms for acceptable classroom behaviour need to be established early on. In this way, an atmosphere of mutual trust can be established and maintained. When a disruptive form of behaviour does occur (such as when a student continues to speak to another student while the teacher is talking), experienced teachers often respond in a humorous way (e.g. with a humorous gesture), rather than by expressing anger. In some classes, there may be one or two students whose behaviour is sometimes disruptive. An over-enthusiastic student may dominate questions or answers, a student may not cooperate during group work, or there may be a student who distracts those around him or her. Dörnyei (2001) recommends that group pressure is the best response in these situations. If norms of acceptable behaviour have been agreed upon, the teacher can gesture to another student to remind the disruptive person of appropriate classroom behaviour.

Scrivener (2012: 232) suggests that students can be invited to devise class rules and decide how behaviour can be managed:

- 1 Choose or agree a method by which students can work out what the class rules should be. This could perhaps be done by starting with group brainstorms and then having a whole-class meeting to agree and finalize them.
- 2 Once the rules have been agreed, students also need to discuss and agree how they should be enforced.
- 3 Write up a final version as a contract and display it prominently on a poster or notice. You may want to ask students to formally show their acceptance of rules or sanctions by signing the document or adding their thumbprint or personal seal.
- 4 Go back to the rules occasionally, maybe once a month, and get the class to review whether they are working and if they need to be added to or revised at all.

A teacher educator describes how he agrees on class rules with students:

The value of class rules

My students really appreciate having a set of class rules, and it's one of the first things we do in class. We collaborate on what these rules are for both teacher and students. I like to then draw up a class contract that is written on poster paper and put on the wall. A simple and serious-looking contract works fine, but I do keep the discussion light-hearted. After we all agree on the class rules, we then discuss and agree on what

the consequences of breaking the rules will be, such as contributing a few coins to our end-of-class party. I try to avoid English as punishment, as in requiring a student to sing a song if he or she breaks a rule. Once we all agree on the rules and consequences, we all sign the poster. What's absolutely imperative is that the teacher adheres to the contract fairly and consistently.

David Bohlke, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Singapore



What are some of the rules you establish in your classroom?

7.3 Using effective grouping arrangements

A key factor in creating a classroom community is the use of classroom space. Most classrooms have furniture consisting of a combination of the following: desks, tables, a 'teacher's desk', blackboard/whiteboard or some writing space, 'visual aids', such as an overhead projector, and teaching aids, such as computers. Teachers and students, in many cases, position themselves relative to the furniture and other parts of the classroom. The students are usually seated in different configurations such as in rows or pairs or groups, again in relation to the furniture. The 'horseshoe' configuration remains popular when there are chairs with a writing tablet. In order to create a community of learners, seating arrangements should allow for students to make eye contact with others and to interact with others either in pairs, small groups or with the whole class.



What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of a) the teacher choosing the seating arrangements, or b) the students choosing their own seating arrangements?

Effective grouping arrangements seek to maximize opportunities for interactions between the teacher and the class, as well as interactions among the students themselves. Senior (2002: 402) emphasizes the importance of group-sensitive teaching in language classes:

Language learning is, by its very nature, a collective endeavor, and learning takes place most effectively when language classes pull together as unified groups. [My research shows] that experienced language teachers set up learning tasks to accommodate not only the learning but also the social needs of their students. Such teachers, it seems, have an intuitive understanding of the fact that all language classes are composed of individuals who, with careful handling, can be melded into cohesive learning groups. The evidence suggests that skilful teachers regularly take steps to reinforce the feeling that everyone in the class is progressing along a

collaborative learning path, rather than learning in isolation from one another. It therefore seems that experienced teachers have adopted a class-centred approach to their teaching.

There are four possible ways for students to work, and each offers different learning potentials: whole-class teaching, individual work, group work and pair work.

Whole-class teaching

This mode of teaching involves teaching all of the students together, and the extent to which lessons are taught in this way will depend on the type of lesson the teacher is teaching and the particular stage of the lesson (Cross, 1995). A lesson may begin with a whole-class activity and then move to pair, group or individual work. Whole-class, teacher-fronted teaching can serve to focus students' attention quickly on a learning task. When carefully carried out, it can lead to the achievement of lesson objectives quickly and effectively, since time management is maximally under the teacher's control. Additionally, although whole-class teaching has often been criticized for reflecting a teacher-dominated teaching style, if teaching is viewed as a jointly constructed activity in which the teacher mediates, assists and 'scaffolds' learning tasks for students (see Chapter 2 for further discussion of scaffolding), we can identify a more positive role for whole-class teaching. Scaffolding, as we noted earlier, means providing the temporary support students need as they develop their language skills, support that can gradually be reduced as their language learning progresses. Activities that provide scaffolding (National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences and Bransford et al., 2000):

- Motivate or enlist the learner's interest related to the task.
- Simplify the task to make it more manageable and achievable for learners.
- Provide some direction in order to help learners focus on achieving the goal.
- Clearly indicate differences between learners' work and the standard or desired solution.
- Seek to reduce frustration and risk.
- Model and clearly define the expectations of the activity to be performed.

When used appropriately, the scaffolding and support provided by whole-class teaching can serve to enrich the learning opportunities provided in the lesson. For example, Verplaetse (2000, cited in Johnson, 2009: 72) analyzed teacher-fronted discussions in a high-school science class and found that these in fact were successful in creating active levels of interaction among both native and non-native speaking students. A variety of strategies were used by the teacher to elicit communication and interaction, such as asking questions, guiding students' comments and participation, giving feedback, repeating what students' had said and giving positive responses. These strategies all contributed to the students' successful negotiation and understanding of content.

When planning a lesson, it is important to consider when whole-class teaching is appropriate and when the transition to other types of learning will occur in order to promote student-to-student interaction and to allow students to work on tasks at their own pace.

Individual work

There will also be points in a lesson where students will best work individually, such as when they are reading or listening to a text or completing exercises in a textbook or workbook. Individual work allows students to work at their own pace and to work on activities suited to their proficiency level or interests. It also allows the teacher to provide individual support or assistance to learners. To quote Anthony Seow (personal communication): 'In terms of effective use of time, individual work also allows students to be on-task quickly, especially if the teacher's instructions are clear and precise. Individual work often presents fewer discipline problems, since social interaction is temporarily suspended. It also allows for personal reflection and for individual students to set targets for their own learning.'

In planning individual work, it is important to consider how well students understand what is expected of them and whether the task provides adequate challenge, support and motivation to sustain their interest.

Pair work

Pair work provides opportunities for sustained interaction and has long been advocated as a key means of promoting both linguistic and communicative competence. Grouping students in pairs needs to take into consideration the ability level of the students, their language and cultural background, and other factors that will facilitate a positive approach to learning, although students who are not familiar with this learning arrangement may need careful orientation and preparation for pair-work activities. Pair work has a number of advantages:

- Students can learn from more capable peers.
- There is increased opportunity for individual practice.
- Learning becomes a social, rather than an individual, activity.
- Students' motivation to learn can improve since the difficulty of tasks is reduced if students work together.
- Students receive more input.
- Opportunities for negotiation of meaning.
- Students are exposed to other viewpoints and cultures.
- It makes large-class teaching easier for the teacher.

Some activities lend themselves readily to pair work, such as interviews, dialogue practice and discussion tasks. Many activities that are usually completed individually can also be completed in pairs, such as guided writing tasks, gap-fill exercises and many vocabulary and grammar-focused activities. However, students from some cultural backgrounds may be more comfortable with pair work (and group work) than others. Some students may feel that it is the teacher's job to teach, and that they are unlikely to benefit from learner-to-learner practice. Kuo (2011: 288) comments:

The increase of student speaking time and the opportunity for interpersonal and intercultural communication constitute major pedagogical strengths of classroom student–student interaction, as learners engage in using/practicing their L2, thereby developing fluency and a variety of communication strategies. The unintelligibility, however, or linguistic inaccuracy of learner language represents a major setback to the positive effects of learner interaction on second language learning. Learners' apparent need for corrective feedback ... (but the lack of it) then further diminishes the perceived usefulness of classroom student-to-student interaction.

The case for pair work needs to be made to learners who may be reluctant to participate in it and clear guidelines established for how pair activities operate. A teacher describes how he structures pair work carefully for students:

Planning for pair work

I find pair work to be a very effective teaching strategy; however, it needs to be carefully planned for. I always try to make sure students are adequately prepared for a pair-work task (e.g. by dealing with potential pronunciation problems that might occur). For example, if students are practising a two-person dialogue, I indicate the number of times they should practise the dialogue, when they should change roles and when they should practise the same activity in different pairs. I also monitor the formation of pairs to make sure that students are not always practising with the same partner. Sometimes I ask students to modify a dialogue they have practised (e.g. by extending it or by changing the content in some way), and this introduces a fun element as they read out their adapted dialogues and compare them. Sometimes I have pairs write their own dialogues, using grammar, vocabulary or functions we have practised. At the end of a course, I ask them to evaluate the kinds of pair-work tasks they have practised.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

One internet teacher-training resource offers the following guidelines for the use of pair work (www.usingenglish.com/articles/wellbalanced-use-pairwork.html):

- 1** Check your lesson plan for a good mix of pair work, group work, students working on their own, team games, whole class student-led activities and whole class teacher-led activities. You can do this by number of activities or by percentage of class time.
- 2** Calculate an estimated average student talking time (STT) for your lesson plan, and see if you can raise the figure by using more or less pair work, making sure you include realistic estimates for how long it will take to explain activities and rearrange the class.
- 3** Have a space at the top of your lesson plan to list the pair-work stages, group-work stages, etc., so that how many there are of each [grouping arrangement] becomes obvious.

- 4** Find out about how much pair work has been used in classes your students have been in before (e.g. classes with a different teacher in your school), and what kind of things they are used to doing in pairs, so that you know whether you should introduce it to them slowly or not.
- 5** Find out how much pair work is used in the school system your students went through.
- 6** Find out if there are any cultural factors that could make pair work popular or unpopular.
- 7** Ask the school manager what the student reaction to pair work has been in end-of-course feedback questionnaires.
- 8** Ask for your school's student feedback questionnaires to be changed to get more information on what they think about how pair work is being used.
- 9** At each pair-work stage, tell your students, 'Now I want you to work in pairs so that ...', so [you are] also making the reasons clear to yourself.
- 10** Write the reasons for each stage on your lesson plan.
- 11** Go through your lesson plan one more time to see if you could usefully add pair work.
- 12** Go through your lesson plan one more time to see if you could miss out any of the pair-work stages or usefully change them to group work, individual work or whole-class activities.

Once teachers familiarize themselves with the kind of procedures suggested above, they will be employed more or less automatically. A teacher comments on the value of encouraging pair work:

The value of pair work

I find that students are sometimes afraid to speak in front of their peers. To provide a safe environment for them to speak, pair-work activities provide a chance to try out their English without the feeling of being observed, just as one does in a natural conversational exchange outside of the classroom. In pair work, when mistakes do occur, peer correction allows them to get feedback from an equal, rather than from an authoritative figure (the teacher). It takes time for students to learn the techniques needed for peer correction, but I find it works well. Sometimes students work in groups of four. Each pair first develops a role play, and then the pairs perform their role plays. The pair who observe give suggestions for improvement before taking their turn. A similar process can be used for writing activities. By providing a safe environment for them to practise, students develop confidence, enabling them to practise communication without fears or barriers.

Jorge Luis Beltrán, teacher, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico

Group work

Group-based learning is widely used in all forms of teaching and significantly changes the interactional dynamics of the classroom (Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003). In language classes, it can help promote self-esteem; it increases student talking-time; and it can also increase student motivation by providing a risk-free environment for language practice. However, setting up group activities poses a number of challenges. These include:

- *Time*: The logistics of putting students into groups can be time consuming.
- *Cliques*: Students often seat themselves in cliques by age, language group, friendship and so on.
- *Limited language proficiency*: Low-level students may have difficulty following instructions and be intimidated if working in a group with stronger students, leading them to remain silent.
- *Control*: Some teachers may feel that they are no longer in control of the class.

When groups are set up, students may also feel nervous about working with others for the first time. Ehrman and Dörnyei (1998, cited in Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003: 14) describe how a Hungarian university student first felt in a language course:

At the beginning, when I didn't know the group, I was always nervous – when nobody knows the others yet and doesn't even dare to approach and start getting to know them. Everybody is alone and so very shy; you don't know what you can joke about and what you can say to others without offending them; you don't even know if they are good people or bad ones ... It's all so uncertain. You don't know how other people's minds work.

A teacher educator explains the importance, however, in preparing students adequately for group work:

Learners' attitudes to group work

Group work is a staple feature of the language lesson. How else can we provide opportunities for talking, particularly in large classes? When group work is first introduced to students accustomed to up-front teaching, there can be resistance. Sometimes this is because they don't see the point of it. Perhaps their teacher says, implicitly at least, 'Trust me. I know what I'm doing.' Once, during a classroom observation, I was introduced by the teacher as the lecturer in a course she was taking. This gave one student the chance to say something that was bothering him:

'Are you the person who invented group work?'

'No. Why?'

'We hate group work around here.'

In a later discussion with the teacher, it turned out that whenever she had run out of her prepared lesson material, she would say, 'Get into groups and talk about ...' Apparently, the students had come to see this as a time filler, with no outcome and no purpose. Like many other organizational options, groups are useful provided they are not used as a default option when other ideas have run out.

Marilyn Lewis, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand



If you are teaching students whose educational background or experience does not lead them to value group work, how would you make a case for group work with them?

For groups to function productively, an emotional bond needs to develop among group members. They need to respect each other, develop shared understanding and goals and support each other's learning and learning difficulties. Successful implementation of group work involves a number of considerations:

- *Group size:* Groups of four are easiest in terms of classroom management.
- *Group formation:* Group members can be selected by the teacher or by the students themselves. The goal is to establish groups of students who can work comfortably and productively together.
- *Shared understanding of the role and value of group work:* If students are not convinced of the value of group work, the teacher may need to discuss the goals and purpose of group work and deal with any concerns students have about it.
- *Mixed proficiency levels:* One way is to mix the groups with learners of different proficiency levels, as they can help each other with different tasks. Higher proficiency students can be given more challenging tasks, such as acting as the group reporter, or they can be asked to take notes about the group's discussion.
- *Noise levels:* One student in each group can be appointed as a noise monitor, to keep the noise at acceptable levels.
- *Non-participants:* Students who are unfamiliar with group work may not value group-based learning work. In this case, gentle persuasion may be needed. Alternatively, group members can be given different roles, such as scribe, facilitator, reporter, etc., to best suit their needs.
- *Unequal completion times:* Have a back-up plan to limit the amount of disruption from groups who may finish early (e.g. an additional task for students to complete, or early-finishing groups could be asked to discuss their work with other early groups).
- *Monitoring group performance:* Silver (2008) suggests that teachers:
 - Pause regularly to visually survey the class as a whole, each group and individual students.

- Keep visits to each group short so you can continuously observe all in class.
- Give students feedback to note when they are on track, as well as off track.
- When students seem to be going in the wrong direction, look and listen to see what they are doing before jumping in.
- When you do intervene, comments should be intended to guide students back to the point at which they could do the work themselves.



What are the pros and cons of grouping students a) by proficiency level b) by mixed proficiency levels?

When using a particular grouping arrangement, such as pair work or group work, it is important to make the purpose of the grouping arrangement clear to the students. Having students work in pairs or groups does not serve any useful purpose if the teacher continues to teach to the whole class, despite the fact that students are in pairs or groups.

Two frequent group-based learning activities are project work and problem-based learning. Projects can take many forms and can last anywhere from 30 minutes to several class periods, or longer. Group-investigation tasks involve the class choosing an overall theme, such as sport, with each group deciding to study one sport, such as tennis, or one aspect of sport, such as how to promote a particular sport. Members of the group carry out research and present their findings to the class. With problem-based learning, students focus on solving a real-world problem and collect information or carry out research to investigate the problem, and give suggestions or an action plan to resolve the problem.

Choosing grouping arrangements is not simply an issue of pedagogic appropriateness. It can also be a sensitive issue, since some students may prefer to work individually; some may not wish to cooperate with particular students; and some may not see the value of learning in groups. I remember one student saying to me when I was setting up a group activity, ‘Do we really have to?’ The role and value of pair and group work can itself be a topic for group discussion, enabling the teacher to get a sense of what students think about it and providing a chance to clarify what these learning arrangements seek to achieve and how they can benefit learners. Learning styles (see Chapter 5) can be an important factor in deciding under which conditions each of these grouping arrangements is most appropriate.

7.4 Classroom management during the lesson

Good class management continues throughout all phases of the lesson. Below, we consider how teachers give instructions, what sort of discourse they use with students, how they engage with all students in the class and, finally, the important issues of how they manage the timing and pace of the lesson.

Giving instructions

We saw in Chapter 6 that the opening phase of a lesson serves an important function in focusing the students on what they will do during the lesson and what the aims of the lesson are. The teacher's skill in giving instructions is an important aspect of this phase of the lesson, as well as at other times during the lesson when instructions are given. Thornbury (2005b) describes a number of features of lesson instructions, many of which will typically be used by teachers as they explain different learning activities. For example, teachers usually say something to indicate that one activity has finished and a new one will begin (e.g. by saying 'OK, so now let's move on to ...'); they may also briefly explain what an activity consists of and what its purpose is (e.g. 'so now what we are going to do is listen to a story in order to practice ...'); they will usually explain what grouping arrangement is to be used (e.g. 'for this activity I want you all to work in pairs'); they will clarify what the learners will be doing during the activity (e.g. 'in this activity you will hear a story, and then you will ...'); they may clarify what language skills the activity will involve (e.g. 'this will be mainly a listening activity but it will also involve ...'); they may need to explain what the learners will be required to do at the end of the activity (e.g. '... and after you have completed your worksheet I will ask you to ...'); the teacher may also suggest how best to complete the activity (e.g. '... the strategy I want you to use when you first listen to the story is just to focus on ...'); the teacher will suggest the amount of time the class will spend on the activity (e.g. '... we will spend about 20 minutes on this activity ...'); the teacher will signal that the students should begin the activity (e.g. '... let's start now please everybody').

Scrivener (2012: 128–9) describes many features of effective instructions, many of which are basic common sense (these may be found in the appendix). Yet, it is not uncommon to observe teachers giving instructions that are too long, too short or too difficult to understand. Similarly, it is not uncommon to observe teachers having to stop an activity to clarify instructions that were not well communicated at the beginning of the activity. A teacher educator explains that teachers may be entirely unaware of the complexity of their instructions:

Giving clear instructions

As part of their initial teacher training, most teachers become aware of how to give clear and comprehensible instructions and have opportunities to pre-plan, script and practise giving instructions, and to get feedback on the quality of their instructions. With further practice and feedback, many teachers become very good at giving instructions that enable their students to get on with the planned tasks efficiently and effectively. Instruction-giving then becomes one more skill in a teacher's repertoire

that may be performed almost automatically, unconsciously, without much thought or effort on the teacher's part.

However, just as proficient drivers sometimes fall into bad habits, once teachers stop paying attention to how they deliver instructions, the quality of their instructions may suffer without their realizing. And just as an experienced driver who got caught speeding may benefit from a refresher speed-awareness course, so can teachers benefit greatly from analyzing and evaluating their own instruction-giving from time to time.

With the widespread availability of smartphones and tablets, teachers can record their instructions very easily and inconspicuously at the touch of a button. I asked a group of experienced teachers to do this recently and to bring their voice recordings along to an in-service training session. During the session, we analyzed a video recording of a teacher giving instructions and did a number of awareness and analysis activities aimed at reminding participants of how instructions can become complex and difficult to understand if teachers do not monitor and grade their own language use (for example, some of the authentic instructions we analyzed had four clauses, embedded and cleft sentences, and a high incidence of phrasal verbs and colloquialisms). Then the teachers listened to their own instructions and evaluated them. Many were shocked at the realization that there was a significant gap between their idea of how they gave instructions and their actual delivery, as evidenced by their voice recordings.

Silvana Richardson, teacher and teacher educator, Cambridge, UK

For familiar activities, of course, instructions may sometimes be unnecessary. I recently visited a school to observe a teacher's class and was intrigued by how well the students were able to carry out a fairly complex activity, despite rather vague instructions from the teacher. When I remarked on this to a colleague, she commented: 'Oh, well, they had probably been rehearsing for a week in preparation for your visit!'

The teacher's discourse

The nature of the discourse teachers provide during lessons is also an important aspect of teaching. One aspect of teacher discourse is the adjustments teachers make to their language in order to facilitate the communication process. For example, teachers will often use these strategies:

- Repeating requests and instructions.
- Speaking more slowly.
- Using pauses to give learners more time to process the teacher's speech.
- Modifying pronunciation towards a more standard speech style.
- Modifying vocabulary, replacing infrequent words with more commonly used words.

- Modifying grammar, such as avoiding using complex syntax when simpler syntax can be used.
- Avoiding the use of colloquialisms and idioms.
- Modifying discourse, for example, by making meanings more explicit.

Another feature of teacher discourse is the teacher's use of questions. Questioning is one of the most common classroom techniques and often constitutes a large portion of teacher-talk during lessons. Questions serve many different functions, such as to stimulate and maintain students' interest, to organize classroom procedures, to introduce new content, to check students' understanding of the instructions themselves or of an item of grammar or vocabulary (concept checking), and to provide feedback. Teachers often use a succession of questions to help develop oral skills and to teach vocabulary. Effective use of questions can enhance the kind and quality of input learners receive during lessons. Questions also serve to scaffold instructions, since they can be used to guide students through a task by breaking the task down into manageable sections and by providing any support needed to complete a task.

The types of questions used in language lessons are sometimes grouped into convergent questions (those that elicit a single answer such as, 'Where is the city of Osaka?') and divergent questions (those that can be answered in different ways, such as 'Why do you think people migrate to Australia?'). Another distinction is sometimes made between display questions (questions that ask learners to display what they have learned) and referential questions (those that seek real information). The following example shows a teacher using a display question:

- T: What day was yesterday?
S: It ... Sunday.
T: It was Sunday. Repeat.
S: It was Sunday.

Engaging with all the students in the class

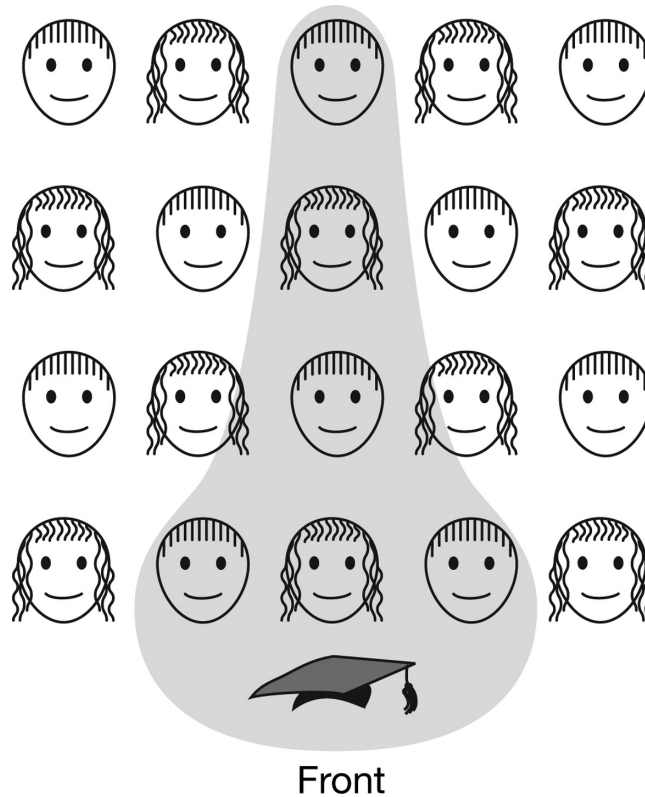
Despite teachers' best intentions, they often unintentionally interact with some students in the class more frequently than with others. This creates what is referred to as the teacher's action zone. This is seen by the following comments from a supervisor on a teacher's class:

When you were speaking to the whole class, the students in the middle front-row seats answered most of your questions. When you moved around the class, you spent much more time with some groups than with others.

The action zone in a lesson is indicated by:

- Those students with whom the teacher regularly enters into eye contact.
- Those students who questions are addressed to.
- Those students who are nominated to take an active part in the lesson.

So the action zone of a lesson may look like this:



The action zone reflects the fact that the teacher may look more often to one side of the class than the other, may call on girls more often than boys or vice versa, may call on students whose names are easiest to remember or may call on brighter students more often than others. In order to develop a more inclusive action zone, a teacher can:

- Invite a colleague to observe his or her lessons, from time to time, to see how inclusive they are.
- Rearrange the class seating (e.g. in a circle) to provide more opportunities for interaction.
- Change students' seating regularly so the same students are not always at the front or back of the class.
- Teach lessons from different places, e.g. not always from the front of the class.

Managing time and pace

As mentioned in Chapter 6, time is an important constraint on how lessons develop, and use of time plays a central role in the lives of teachers. Wright (2005: 79) comments:

Teachers have to manage time at several levels at any one time: from the multi-dimensional 'moment' in a lesson, to the daily and weekly rhythms of working with groups and juggling non-contact time for reading students' work and preparing lessons, to the institutional rhythms and to their own lives.

Use of time in lessons is an important aspect of teaching and plays a role in ensuring a lesson flows smoothly. A useful way of understanding the use of time in a lesson is through thinking of classroom time as consisting of four different categories:

- *Allocated time* is the time allotted for teaching a class in the timetable, such as the typical 40- or 50-minute class period.
- *Instructional time* is the time actually available for teaching after you have completed non-instructional activities, such as taking attendance, returning homework and so on. Perhaps in a 40-minute class period, 30 minutes of instructional time might be available.
- *Engaged time* is that portion of time in which the students are actively involved in learning activities (also known as *time on task*). Perhaps it took some time for students to start assigned activities, since they spent some time chatting, organizing their desk or computer and so on. Perhaps 25 minutes of the instructional time was actually engaged time.
- *Academic learning time* is the amount of time during which students are actively engaged and participating in an activity and learning successfully from it. If an activity was too difficult or not well set up, students may spend some time on ineffective learning routines and strategies before they finally find a successful way of completing the activity.

Many teachers find that they do not manage to spend more than 80% of their allocated time on actual teaching, since non-curricular activities are often time consuming. Wright (2005) suggests that teachers manage time in two main ways – through planning for use of time in a lesson plan and through monitoring their use of time, during lessons, when teaching. Teaching manuals accompanying textbooks normally suggest how much time should be allocated to particular activities in a lesson, although so many things can happen during a lesson that timing decisions made prior to teaching can only be approximate. If teachers engage in improvisational teaching (see Chapter 4), they may use time in unplanned and unpredictable ways. A teacher comments on how he conveys to students the planned part of the lesson:

Managing class time

Before each lesson, I usually note, on a corner of the whiteboard, the activities the lesson will involve and how much time will be spent on each activity. This not only sends a message to the students that I have planned my lesson, but also gives both the students and myself a sense of where the lesson is going and how time will be spent during the lesson. If a student arrives late to class, I can also point to the board and let him or her know where we are up to in the lesson.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

The pace of a lesson is a subjective issue, since what appears fast to some learners may appear to be slow to others. And it is often difficult for a teacher to judge the pace of a lesson, since he or she is often occupied with other aspects of the lesson. Scrivener (2012: 262–3) recommends inviting a colleague to observe a teacher's lesson (or a part of a lesson), particularly one where the teacher is working with the whole class, and to ask the colleague to consider questions such as the following:

- Compared to your own teaching, do you feel that my lesson moves faster or slower or about the same pace as your own lesson?
- Can you name some bits of the lesson that seemed to be done faster than you would have done them yourself?
- Can you name some bits of the lesson that seemed to be done slower than you would have done them yourself?
- Choose one strong student and one weaker one. How do you think the pace of the lesson seemed to them?

The students themselves can also provide feedback on the pace of a lesson. Scrivener suggests asking questions such as the following:

- Did the work in this lesson seem too fast, too slow or about right for you?
- Name one part of the lesson that you would have liked to go faster.
- Name one part of the lesson that you would have liked to go slower.



Do you sometimes invite a colleague to observe your class? What are some other questions you could ask colleagues during peer observation?

The areas considered in this section involve planning, strategizing and reflection, but they are not an exact science. Good classroom management techniques can only be learned through experience.

7.5 Conclusion

The discussion above might suggest that effective classroom management means learning a vast array of techniques and selecting a technique that is appropriate for addressing particular issues. In fact, the way teachers deal with classroom management often reflects their individual teaching style and a teacher's personality. How teachers create a supportive classroom atmosphere, bond with students and create a motivation to learn and succeed in engaging students in the content of lessons and learning activities will not be the same for every teacher. A teacher's identity and role in the classroom, the relationship that the teacher has with his or her students and the type of students in the class all impact

classroom management. Management issues will be very different depending on whether the teacher is teaching children, teenagers or adults, whether the class size is large or small and whether it is a heterogeneous or homogeneous class. What works well for one teacher may not necessarily do so for another. Similarly, what works in one culture or with learners from one cultural background may not necessarily work in a different culture or with different learners. However, providing opportunities for teachers to share and compare their approach to classroom management is an important component of teacher development and can often lead to more effective classroom management practices in a school.

Discussion questions

- 1** We have said that the students' confidence in the teacher is one of the factors which shapes good relations between the teacher and the class. What specific behaviours develop students' confidence in a language teacher?
- 2** What other factors contribute to a supportive classroom climate? What are some strategies that could be used to turn an unmotivated, unresponsive class into a more productive learning community?
- 3** With reference to a specific teaching-learning context you are familiar with, what topics should be avoided for classroom discussion because they are likely to cause division and tension among learners? How would you manage a situation where a student raises one of these topics?
- 4** In determining a code of classroom conduct, what are some behaviours you consider completely unacceptable?
- 5** Have you observed or experienced any seriously disruptive incidents or problems in a language class? Share your ideas on how to respond to them.
- 6** We mentioned that students may feel their self-worth is challenged when they are unable to communicate in their mother tongue. Under what circumstances could you make a case for allowing students to use their L1 in a) a monolingual classroom and b) a multilingual classroom? Under what circumstances is the teacher's use of the L1 valid in a monolingual classroom?
- 7** What grouping arrangements are possible in classes? Some teachers teach classes of 50 or more students. Which of these arrangements do you think would work best under these circumstances?
- 8** If students resist pair work and express a desire to work on their own, how would you respond to their concerns?
- 9** What kinds of difficulties have you experienced in using group work? How do you usually deal with them?
- 10** What are some features of lesson instructions? What strategies do teachers use to clarify meaning when giving instructions? If possible, observe a class and note down which of these strategies the teacher used.

- 11 What is meant by the term 'action zone'? What are some strategies teachers can use to ensure that they interact with all of the students in the class?
- 12 One critique of communicative approaches to language teaching is that there is often interaction for interaction's sake. Do you agree? What are some limitations of communicative interaction?
- 13 Using the suggestions in this chapter, design an observation instrument (e.g. a checklist) that could be used to observe how a teacher deals with classroom management issues in teaching. If possible, observe a teacher's class and evaluate how successful you think classroom management was, according to the areas in your list.

Appendix:

Good classroom management techniques

Below are techniques that demonstrate how to achieve the important goal of giving clear instructions to learners, from *Classroom Management Techniques* by Jim Scrivener, a teacher educator and materials writer in Hastings, UK (2012). Which, if any, of these techniques have you tried? Which do you feel are the most important?

Techniques: Giving instructions to lower-level classes

The reason that some instructions are unclear or misunderstood is often because they are too long, too complex or delivered too fast. Try some of these techniques:

- 1 Use grammar and vocabulary that is at or below the learners' current level.
- 2 Use short sentences. Don't put more than one instruction in one sentence. Chunk your instructions: one piece of information at a time.
- 3 'The least that is enough.' Don't ramble. Keep instructions simple, concise and to the point. Avoid digressions.
- 4 Speak a little more slowly and clearly than you would normally do.
- 5 Pause after each instruction to allow understanding: processing time.
- 6 Sequence the instructions. Deliver them in the order that you want students to follow them.
- 7 Use signposting language, e.g. 'First ...', 'Then ...', 'Finally ...'.
- 8 Where practical, get students to immediately do each separate part of the instruction, step by step, rather than waiting until they have heard the whole sequence.
- 9 If students can see your lips as you speak, this can aid comprehension.
- 10 Write a few key words on the board as you speak to help listening, understanding and memory of the instructions. Alternatively, use little sketched icons (for example, a pen and paper) to help students.
- 11 Use gestures and facial expressions to support your instructions.
- 12 'Punch' the keywords, i.e. say the essential words in a sentence with a little more stress and separation from other words than you might typically give it. For example, 'Write your answers on the ... *other* ... side of the paper'.
- 13 It's often worth checking if an instruction has been understood. Rather than asking 'Do you understand?' ask a question that checks if they caught specific points, for example, 'How many questions are you going to answer?'
- 14 Choose the best moment to give out any materials, or tell students to open books, exercises, etc. Once they are staring at a text, they will lose concentration on what you are saying. It's often best to keep books closed and materials undistributed until after the key instructions have been delivered. Having said that, with some activities, students will need to have materials to hand, in order to clearly follow the detail of an instruction.
- 15 Don't let students start doing the task before you have finished giving and checking instructions with the whole class. Having some people rushing into the work distracts others and adds to the noise level. And, of course, they may well not have fully understood what to do anyway. Say, 'Wait – don't start yet', and make sure everyone really knows what to do before you say, 'OK – start now'.
- 16 Until you are comfortable with giving good clear instructions, plan them before the lesson.

Techniques: Showing materials, doing worked examples and giving demonstrations

The clearest way to help learners understand what they have to do is usually to show them.

1 Indicate the tasks

Hold up any documents or books they need to work with. Point clearly at the exercise or text. Don't take your hand away too quickly.

2 Show materials

If learners will need to use any materials in a task (e.g. word cards), hold these up, and read out what is on one or two examples. If you have an interactive whiteboard, you could show a zoomed-in version on it. Otherwise, you could make an enlarged photocopy.

3 Do worked examples

When you set an exercise, do one or two worked examples on the board before students start to work on it themselves. When you show example questions, allow a little thinking time for the whole class to work out possible answers and suggest them to you. It may be useful to write up a wrong suggestion and elicit reactions and reasons why it is incorrect – all before filling in the correct answer.

4 Demonstrate the task yourself

You can deliver a monologue of yourself doing the task, making your actions and thought process explicit. For example, 'So, now I'm looking at the photographs of different notices. I want to find any words that are wrong. Ah ... "Do not walk in the grass" – That sounds wrong. I'm crossing out "in" and writing "on".'

5 Role play the task with a student

For pair work or group tasks, get a volunteer student or students up front with you to do a live role-play demonstration of the task. You do not need to do the whole thing. Usually, it's sufficient to show how to start the activity.

Further reading

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8

Age-appropriate pedagogy

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What pedagogy is appropriate in English courses for young learners?
 - Characteristics of young language learners.
 - Course-design options for young learners.
 - Principles of teaching English to young learners.
- What pedagogy is appropriate in English courses for teenagers?
 - Characteristics of teenage language learners.
 - Course-design options for teenage learners.
 - Principles of teaching English to teenagers.
- What pedagogy is appropriate in English courses for adults?
 - Characteristics of adult language learners.
 - Course-design options for adult learners.
 - Principles for teaching English to adults.

8.1 Introduction

Second language learning is an age-sensitive process. Young learners, teenagers and adults bring very different approaches and understandings to language learning. They have very different needs, goals and interests; they bring different beliefs, attitudes and motivations to second language learning and make use of different learning styles and strategies. These differences determine the design and delivery of courses and materials for learners of different ages. This chapter examines the different needs and dispositions that young learners, teenagers and adults bring to second language learning and seeks to identify the key issues involved in designing courses and materials for learners of different ages. For each age group, three areas are identified and compared: the essential characteristics of the age group, the course-design options available and the basic principles for teaching students.

8.2 English courses for young learners

For the purposes of this chapter, 'young learners' refers to children who learn English in grade school, i.e. generally up to the age of 12. In many parts of the world today, the teaching of English now starts when children are as young as seven, or even earlier, a reflection of the importance governments attach to English language education and the need to improve standards of English language learning for their citizens. As Graddol (2006: 10) observes:

Despite the extraordinary changes of the last few years, one thing appears to remain the same. More people than ever want to learn English ... English learners are increasing in numbers and decreasing in age. We've become used to the idea of English growing in popularity across the world. Far from being news, it has become one of the few enduring facts of global modern life.

Two factors account for the expansion of courses for young learners worldwide. Education planners argue that the earlier children are introduced to learning English, the better the learning outcomes will be. Introducing English earlier in the curriculum is believed to improve the levels of English that learners will attain by the end of their schooling. In addition, some suggest that children are natural language learners. They are willing to take risks, are not worried about making mistakes, and learning English is part of their natural curiosity about the world at large. In many countries, there is also pressure from parents to see their children begin studying English at an early age 'because of perceived social and economic benefits, for example, as a symbol of a better life, or as providing increased social mobility and enhanced status' (Enever and Moon, 2009: 6). Consequently, in many countries, curriculum reforms in education have included the teaching of English as either a required or optional subject, often starting at Grade 3 (between ages eight and nine). Teacher training organizations now offer specialized courses in teaching English to young learners, and publishers provide a growing range of materials for the same audience. If English instruction is not available in primary or grade school, parents in many countries now send their children to private institutes to ensure that they have an advantage when they begin learning English in secondary school.



Do children start learning English at primary / grade school in your country? Is this an optional or required course?

Characteristics of young language learners

While there is a great amount of research into first language learning in children and the learning of second languages through naturalistic exposure and use outside of the school setting, our interest here is in the learning of a second language by young children through instruction in a classroom setting. Young children arrive at school with many characteristics that make them ideal second language learners. They have lively imaginations. They are curious about the world about them. They learn fast from their peers, their siblings, their parents and the media. They are talkative. They enjoy play and games. They watch and imitate what others do. However, a number of factors make their learning experiences different from those of older learners. For some aspects of language learning, younger learners have advantages over older learners. For others, older learners may have an advantage. The following are some of the most important characteristics of young learners, factors which influence approaches to teaching English to learners of this age (Pinter, 2002; Wood, 1998; Cohen, 2002).

Experiential learning

Young learners are more likely to learn through the experience of using the language, rather than through studying rules and practising them. This means that their learning will be based on activities and using language that is linked to behaviour, actions and the classroom context. They learn language as it occurs, as a part of doing things.



What are some teaching methods that focus on learning through experience, rather than through studying and practising rules?

Attention

Young learners have short attention spans. Their attention span is closely linked to their interest in things around them. They enjoy short activities and tasks that reinforce new language. These activities and tasks need to be repeated and reinforced often in enjoyable, yet challenging, learning environments.

Active learning

Young learners are active. They are mentally active, such as when they are totally engaged and focused when listening to a story the teacher is reading to them. They are also often

physically active, learning through play, through manipulating objects or through playing with toys and other objects that may keep them occupied for hours. One consequence of this high level of activity is that teaching young learners requires a huge amount of energy on the part of the teacher.



Which kinds of physical activities do you think are useful in teaching young learners?

Phrase-based learning

Young learners enjoy learning socially useful language, including phrases and longer utterances, without understanding exactly what they mean. They learn language in chunks, or whole phrases, and may have little interest in knowing how the phrases are constructed and what their grammatical components are. A teacher comments on this process:



Phrase-based learning in children

In my experience with young learners, I have noticed that they rely initially on phrase-based learning. Unlike older learners, whom we expect to acquire language through internalizing rules and using them to create new sentences, young learners seem to delight in using phrases and fixed expressions. Their brains appear to come with a built-in tape-recorder, enabling them to easily pick up new words and phrases. They enjoy play situations where they can demonstrate their use of the phrases they have learned. So I make the most of games, skits, dialogues, songs and other activities that provide repeated opportunities to practise new expressions. Sometimes expressions are those that occur in our coursebook – others are those that arise from situations we are practising in the lesson. Of course, the children sometimes confuse new expressions if left too much on their own, so I provide as much support as possible to help fix the phrases in their minds. The walls of my classroom are covered in pictures and drawings showing the new phrases we have been practising, and each week some come down and new ones go up. My challenge as a teacher is to provide a context which both reduces the risks of misinterpretation and is interesting enough to attract all the learners' attention. So what I try to do is plan lessons which provide learners with as many instances of language usage as possible, as well as reduce risks of misinterpretation.

Danial Sadeqi, teacher, Tehran, Iran

Interaction

Young learners learn through interacting and using language in context, rather than through learning abstract language. They are not interested in studying language as a

system, but rather in using it as a means of communicating and interacting with others. What this means is that they want to see results here and now – something that they can demonstrate or show to their parents when they go home.

Language ego

Young learners are less likely to be inhibited than older learners about speaking English and making mistakes in front of their peers. They are willing to take risks and try out unfamiliar things. This is usually a benefit for the teacher, since it means they don't need much persuasion to take part in activities.

Motivation

Young learners are less likely to be motivated by longer-term goals than older learners (e.g. obtaining a grade in a school exam) and are likely to seek motivation through the tasks and activities they accomplish in the classroom.

Self-monitoring

Young learners lack the awareness of learning strategies that typifies older learners. In other words, they do not have available study strategies, mnemonic devices, literacy skills and other learning resources.

Course-design options for young learners

English courses for young learners at primary level vary from country to country. They may involve as little as one or two class periods a week initially, to as much as one or more class periods a day. Such courses often provide a gradual preparation for more traditional or intensive language teaching, beginning at upper primary or secondary level. In some contexts the primary or grade school course may be regarded as a preparation for the introduction of English at secondary school. Where a minimal amount of time is provided, courses initially focus on games, songs and action-based activities, and the gradual introduction of the English alphabet (if the children's mother tongue makes use of a different writing system), vocabulary and expressions. There is often no formal language-based syllabus at this stage. The following aims are often found in English courses for young learners (Pinter, 2002: 38):

- To develop children's basic communication abilities in English.
- To encourage enjoyment and motivation.
- To promote learning about other cultures.
- To develop children's cognitive skills.
- To develop children's metalinguistic awareness.
- To encourage 'learning to learn'.



What do English courses for young learners look like in your country (or a country you are familiar with)? How intensive are they, and what teaching methods are used?

Vale and Feunteun (1998:33) suggest that the goals of teaching English to young learners are:

- building confidence;
- providing the motivation to learn English;
- encouraging ownership of language;
- encouraging children to communicate with whatever language they have at their disposal (mime, gesture, key word, drawings, etc.);
- encouraging children to treat English as a communication tool, not as an end product;
- showing children that English is fun;
- establishing a trusting relationship with the children, and encouraging them to do the same with their classmates;
- giving children an experience of a wide range of English language in a non-threatening environment.

In Taiwan, English has been taught for two periods a week (80 minutes) since 2005. The three main goals are described as (Her, 2007):

- To cultivate students' basic communicative capacity in English.
- To cultivate students' motivation for, and interest in, learning English.
- To increase students' multicultural knowledge and awareness.

The curriculum guidelines are described as follows (Her, 2007):

They are made up of a set of core competencies/attitudes ... and competency indicators (listed under the three headings: 'Language skills', 'Interests and learning strategies' and 'Cultures and customs'). These are followed by a section headed 'Teaching materials guide', which is subdivided into sections dealing with 'Topics and themes', 'Communicative functions' and 'Language components'. The language-components subcategory is further divided as follows: 'Alphabet', 'Pronunciation', 'Vocabulary' and 'Sentence structure'. This is followed by sections headed 'Teaching and materials guidelines', 'Principles of materials compilation', 'Teaching methods', 'Assessment' and 'Teaching resources'. Finally, there are appendices. The first appendix contains a reference list of 'Topics', 'Themes' and 'Text types'; the second contains a 'Functional communication reference list'; the third contains a 'Vocabulary reference list' and an 'Essential language-structure reference list'.

Another example of how primary courses can be organized is a theme-based primary ESL/ELT curriculum, developed in Medellin, Colombia (Cadavid, 2003). It has as its goals to

successfully start the process of learning a foreign language, to reinforce some topics in other content areas, to increase the children's motivation towards language learning and to help children begin to develop language-learning strategies. The curriculum contains five themes: 'This is me'; 'My school and neighbourhood'; 'Exploring my body'; 'My country'; 'My world'. The curriculum is described as a spiral curriculum as it gradually begins to expand in terms of the themes it deals with. As the course progresses, there is a stronger connection between English and one of the content subjects, natural science.

In some countries, a CLIL-based approach (see Chapter 3) to teaching young learners is being introduced (Coyle et al., 2010). This may include theme-based modules, involving class-based communication with learners in another country, or subject-based learning (e.g. drawn from the regular curriculum), using bilingual materials where subject and English teachers work together, or it may involve an interdisciplinary approach, where the English course prepares students for a subject they will encounter in their content classes. This approach involves subject and language teachers working together following an integrated curriculum.

Principles of teaching English to young learners

The features described above suggest a number of principles that can inform the following approaches to teaching young learners (Slattery and Willis, 2001; Shin, 2006; Kirsch, 2008; Paul, 2003).

1. *Build teaching around activities and physical movement*

Link language learning to physical activities by having children use and hear English for making things, drawing pictures, completing puzzles, labelling pictures, matching words and pictures, playing games, acting out movements in response to instructions and other activities that involve hands, eyes and ears. Teachers often make use of TPR activities (activities based on linking language with actions, drawing on the method known as *total physical response*). Many listening activities for young children use this principle, such as activities in which children listen and respond to commands (e.g. 'sit down', 'turn around', 'touch your nose'), listen and choose a picture, listen and draw a picture or listen and number a sequence of actions in a picture. Similarly, speaking activities with young learners may involve use of songs, dialogues, chants and fixed expressions that students can practise in different situations. Vale and Feunteun (1998: 35) explain these activities as follows:

Course materials should encourage children to do a range of practical activities or tasks that require dexterous as well as intellectual skills. These tasks will give the language a practical context that has obvious meaning to children. The results of the tasks – whether a chart, a badge, a beetle, or a collection of bottles – form a natural language text, created and owned by the children themselves. The teacher can then go on to exploit and practise selected aspects of this language text.



What other kinds of tasks and activities do you think are likely to be motivating for young learners?

2. *Build lessons around linked activities*

Since young learners have limited attention spans, it is important to include several short activities in a lesson and to move quickly from one activity to another. Activities of five to ten minutes in length are most successful. A balance between the following kinds of activities is often useful (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990):

- Quiet/noisy activities.
- Different skills: listening, talking, reading/writing.
- Individual work / pair work / group work / whole-class activities.
- Teacher–pupil / pupil–pupil activities.

3. *Build lessons around tasks*

Cameron (2001) recommends using tasks as a framework for teaching young learners. While teaching older learners often involves choosing ways of teaching a predetermined language syllabus, with young learners the opposite approach is often used. Activities are selected that are engaging and purposeful, and the teacher finds ways of linking language to activities. A task is a meaning-focused activity that requires learners to draw on and use their existing linguistic resources to complete a task, such as drawing a picture from oral instructions, or working in pairs or groups and sequencing a series of pictures to complete a story. Cameron (2001: 31) suggests that the key features of classroom tasks for young language learners are:

- They have coherence and unity for learners (from topic, activity and/or outcome).
- They have meaning and purpose for learners.
- They have clear language-learning goals.
- They involve the learner actively.



Can you give examples of tasks for young language learners that have the features referred to above?

Vale and Feunteun (1998: 18) give this example:

If nine-year-old pupils carry out a survey on the colour of eyes and hair among children in their class (and their parents), the language point could centre on *have/has*:

‘Ten children have brown eyes.’

‘How many children have green eyes?’

Here, the activity-based approach offers the opportunity for children to work on a practical task, and succeed at their own level, incorporating their own abilities and experience. The results, created by the children, of this practical task can be used as the context within which language practice can take place. This contrasts strongly with language-based starting points, such as 'This is a pencil.' 'Is the pencil green or red?'

4. *Provide scaffolding*

The notion of *scaffolding*, covered in Chapters 2 and 7, is especially important with younger learners. Scaffolding refers to how a child learns through collaboration with a more knowledgeable partner (a parent, a classmate, a teacher) when working within the zone of proximal development (see Chapter 2 for more detail). The ZPD is the area between the level at which the learner is currently able to perform and the next level of performance he or she is able to achieve when working with a more advanced learner or partner. It is the area where learning takes place. Pinter (2002: 11) gives this example:

... think of a four-year-old boy who is sitting down to share a storybook with a parent, when he notices that the cover of the storybook is full of colorful stars. He is eager to start counting the stars and he is able to count up to about 15 or 16 but beyond that he gets confused with the counting. ... Left to his own devices, he will probably abandon the task of counting. However, a parent or teacher, or even an older brother or sister, can help him to continue. They can prompt him by inserting the next correct number or by giving a visual clue.

When children work collaboratively on tasks (such as sequencing pictures in a story, completing a puzzle or completing an information-gap task), more proficient learners can often provide the scaffolding less proficient learners need.

5. *Involve students in creating resources that support their learning*

Learners can draw pictures of the characters they hear in a story or create puppets to help retell a story. They can colour pictures of items and characters from stories. They can find pictures in magazines, related to a theme or topic in a lesson, and bring them to class. When I taught primary classes in Quebec, we did not use a textbook. The children created their own coursebook, as the course developed, using the resources that formed the basis of the course.

6. *Build lessons around themes*

Lessons can be built around topics or themes, such as animals, friends, food or family, for very young learners; and for older learners, themes can be drawn from subjects in their other classes and the community, such as transport, country life, travel and famous people. Theme-based lessons provide continuity across activities and enable English learning to be connected to the children's lives.



What kinds of topics or themes do you think are suitable for young learners?
What kinds are not likely to be suitable?

7. Choose content children are familiar with

Teaching can also be built around familiar content from the children's culture, such as stories and events (e.g. national holidays or cultural practices). Since the learners will be familiar with talking about these topics in their native language, it will be easier for them to connect with how they can talk about them in English. A teacher (cited by Cadavid, 2003) comments:

It's really possible and even more effective, introducing content, avoiding explicit grammar. The students don't care so much about structure, but about what they are saying.

Storytelling is also often recommended as a useful activity for young children (Vale and Feunteun, 1998: 40):

Reading and listening to stories provides one of the richest sources of language and creative thought input for children and adults alike. For children, fantasy, magic, adventure, beauty are all introduced in a way that they can identify with – and understand. Stories play a key role in the language development of children and are a constant source of enjoyment.

8. Use activities that involve collaboration

Children enjoy socializing with other children, and activities that work best with young learners are those in which children are working with others in pairs or groups, rather than remaining in their seats, listening to the teacher. Activities that involve collaboration require careful preparation to ensure that children have the words and expressions they need in order to carry out an activity. Moon (2000: 59) suggests the following checklist in planning collaborative activities, such as those involving pair work and group work:

- Prepare children carefully for the activity.
- Organize them in ways appropriate to the goal of the language-learning activity. The best person to teach English at this level is often the children's regular class teacher, who is familiar with what the children already know and what they are capable of. However, such teachers often do not have a sufficient level of proficiency in English to teach English.
- Structure the activity carefully so there are clear working procedures and outcomes.
- Show them how to do the activity.
- Involve them in your demonstrations.
- Be positive about their efforts.

- Loosen your control of the activity gradually.
- Engage their interest through having a clear and meaningful purpose for the activity.

9. *Create a supportive learning community in the classroom*

A class of young learners needs to become a community of learners – that is, a group of learners with shared goals, needs and concerns. Thinking of a class as a community means seeing it as a place where each child in the class cooperates and collaborates to achieve the class's common goals. This leads to more productive learning. Children who interact and collaborate with other learners develop a more positive attitude towards learning and a greater sense of self-confidence than those in other learning arrangements. There are many benefits to learning through cooperation:

- Learners develop a sense of solidarity and shared interests and concerns.
- Learners have higher expectations for success.
- Motivation increases because each person is seen to make a contribution to the collective outcome.
- Satisfaction is increased when all members of a group share in the success of their efforts.



What are some ways in which a sense of community can be established in a classroom of young learners?

10. *Use enjoyable activities that children can accomplish without frustration*

Young learners enjoy taking part in activities that they can successfully achieve, but which also offer some kind of challenge. Activities of this kind depend on the teacher providing language input and modelling for young language learners, where the teacher and the materials are the primary source of language. Moon (2000: 11–12) gives the following example of a lesson on prepositions for eight to nine-year-olds, which seeks to reflect the following principles:

- Children need to understand the meaning of new language.
- Children need a variety of activities.
- Children need activities that are enjoyable and stimulating.
- Children learn through using English for a communicative purpose.
- Children benefit from being actively involved.
- Children benefit from practising together, independently of the teacher.

Consider the sample reference below in regard to Moon's principles listed above:

A sample lesson*Warm-up game / revision*

The teacher calls out six children (in pairs) to the front of the class to carry out some instructions, e.g. 'Stand in front of your partner.', 'Stand behind your partner.', etc. The rest of the class have to guess which pair will be fastest in carrying out the instructions.

Dialogue

The teacher draws pictures of two girls and builds up a dialogue on the board with the children's help. One of the girls has to draw a plan of a classroom for homework and needs help from her friend to find out where pupils are sitting. With the pupils' help, the teacher elicits questions and answers, e.g. 'Where is Asna sitting?' 'She is sitting on the left of Aishah.' Children practise the dialogue in pairs.

Communication game

Children work in pairs to fill in the missing names of children on a picture of a birthday party. There are two versions of the picture, so Pupil A has names that Pupil B does not have, and vice versa.

11. Provide rich language support

Since the learners will have little knowledge of English to call upon, they need careful language support for learning activities. Success will depend on the teacher providing language models, demonstrating the way the activities can be carried out in English and providing the language support an activity depends upon. For example, reading and writing might include reading a story aloud, providing pictures or graphic organizers to help children understand and discuss the language patterns and structure of a story, and shared writing tasks in which the teacher and the children collaborate on producing a simple piece of writing.

12. Give clear goals and feedback

Children like to be successful at things they do in class. In order to achieve this, it is important to set clear goals for children and to let them know when they have been successful, or if not, why not. Praise for success is very important for young learners, for example, by using stars, stickers, points or smiley faces.

13. Use English for classroom management

Use English for instructions, for routines such as forming groups, for introducing activities, for giving feedback and for other teaching processes. Shin (2006) suggests using familiar songs and chants to begin lessons.

14. *Use the mother tongue when needed*

While the goal of teaching young learners is to use as much English in class as possible, when teaching homogeneous classes, it is quite appropriate to use the mother tongue when necessary to explain the meaning of words and expressions and to help explain activities. Occasional use of the mother tongue provides a comfort zone for young learners, though the teacher and students should not become over-dependent on it. For example, a teacher cited in Cadavid (2003: 88) describes how she tells stories in English and has children respond to them in Spanish:

They told me in Spanish what happened in the story. They enjoyed the activity and did a drawing according to the story in their notebooks taking into account everything they remembered about the story.



What policy for the use of the mother tongue in teaching is in place in your school? Do you agree with it?

15. *Bring speakers of English to class*

Where possible, it is useful to invite speakers of English to class to meet the learners. These could be children from an international school or older children who are now quite advanced in English. They can ask and answer simple questions, take part in a role play and do other activities that will interest and motivate the learners. A teacher educator comments on the value of inviting English speakers to class, as well as the value of task-oriented activities, as previously mentioned:



Activities that work with younger learners

Teaching young EFL learners is no easy task. It can sometimes take more brain, as well as brawn, than teaching adult EFL learners. However, careful planning and thorough preparation can certainly make the task easier. Here are some of the ideas for teaching English to young EFL learners (based on my experience in the Chinese context):

- *Activities:* Young learners normally don't buy 'chalk and talk'! Activities can be built around small games, various competitions, action songs, etc. Activities must be carefully planned and engage each and every student (otherwise, those who are not engaged may become 'troublemakers'). And activities must have the learning objectives incorporated in them. In other words, successful activities are the ones that make students learn English unconsciously while having fun. In the final analysis, it's imperative to be activity or task-conscious when preparing materials for, and teaching, young learners.

- *Picture stories:* It is a good teaching activity in which young learners are asked to draw a series of pictures (not necessarily good pictures) which tell mini stories. Then they are asked to add sentences to these stories. The sentences need not be long or full sentences. They can even be single words or phrases. Learners are encouraged to ask the teacher or classmates for help if they want to use certain words they do not know.
- *Speakers of English and scaffolding:* Where speakers of English are available, it would be best to bring them to class so young learners can try out what they have learned by talking to speakers of English. However, the problem may be that while young learners in the EFL context tend to be eager to take this kind of opportunity to learn something new, they may, at the same time, lack the confidence and courage to talk to speakers of English. It is, in fact, possible for the teacher to make the best use of this opportunity by carefully planning activities in which scaffolding can take place when speakers of English are brought to class. For example, it can be planned that, through taking part in the activities, young learners are encouraged (or required) to communicate with the speakers of English for the purpose of learning some new content.

Ao Ran, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China; Singapore

16. Choose appropriate forms of assessment

Assessment approaches need to be used that are appropriate with young learners. These can include a) profiling: monitoring children's progress in different areas and building up a written profile of what they have learned, b) a portfolio: keeping samples of children's work in a folder to share with parents and c) setting targets: discussing with children what they hope to learn and setting targets for learning, such as key words, question patterns or phrases. The goal of assessment for young learners is often ongoing (or formative) assessment (see Chapter 20); that is, to gather information that is useful to both children and teachers through building up a day-to-day picture of children's learning progress (Moon, 2000).

8.3 English courses for teenagers

Teenagers are defined as learners between the ages of 12 and 17. The majority of this age group study English at secondary school, either in state or private school systems. Teaching teenagers poses different problems from teaching young children or teaching adults. As any adult familiar with teenagers knows, the teenage years are a time when young people are maturing and forming their own identities, identities that sometimes clash with the roles expected of them by adults and teachers. Lewis (2007) comments on the reactions many teachers have when faced with the challenge of meeting a class of teenagers. Typical images come to mind of bored and disruptive students, some asleep in their chairs, others playing practical jokes, things which create anxiety and apprehension on the part of the teacher. As a result, teenagers have the worst reputation of any age group within ELT.

The mind of some teenagers is well captured in these words from Mark Twain (cited in Lewis, 2007: 5):

When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.

Teenagers constitute one of the largest groups of English language learners worldwide, and teaching school-aged learners is now a field of specialization itself within ESL/ELT (Legutke, 2012). However, teenagers may represent two very different populations. One group are those attending high school in EFL countries and for whom English is a subject they are required to study at school, a subject toward which their attitudes may be quite ambivalent. A quite different group are those whose families have moved to an English-speaking country and who now need to cope with learning their school subjects through the medium of English.



What do you think are some of the problems that might be anticipated in teaching English to teenagers?

Characteristics of teenage language learners

Teenagers bring different dispositions and potential to language learning than younger learners or adults, and these factors have a considerable impact on how they approach learning, and the teaching strategies that they respond to. Teenagers are going through physical changes that may affect their appearance, as well as their emotions. They may be sensitive about how they appear and how people perceive them, and becoming confident in their changing identity may pose challenges and cause mood shifts. Legutke (2012) comments:

The emotional turmoil of the teen years – coming to grips with insecurity and vulnerability, and at the same time finding appropriate ways of expressing their new selves, is played out in secondary school. For these crucial years the classroom becomes a focal point where the creativity unleashed by puberty and adolescence can both inspire learning, but where also the ambiguities and the turbulence of these phases can render learning quite difficult or even problematic.

Basic characteristics

Some of the characteristics that can influence teenagers' participation in language classes are (Arnett, 2001; Caissy, 1994):

- They prefer interacting with peers during learning activities.
- They are often preoccupied with self.
- They have a strong need for approval and may be easily discouraged.

- They often challenge the authority of adults.
- They need regular activity because of increased energy levels.
- They seek to become increasingly independent.
- They have a strong need to belong to a group and seek peer approval.
- In their search for identity, they may model behaviour after older, valued students or non-parent adults.
- They are often very sensitive to ridicule or embarrassment.



What do you think are some of the implications of the features above for teaching?

Prior language-learning experience

Increasingly, when children arrive at secondary school today, they have already had some previous English language learning experiences. They may have had several years of English instruction at primary school – an experience that may have already established attitudes towards English and towards learning English. They may also have had considerable contact with English outside of the school context, through travel, the media and the internet. Legutke (2012) observes:

Although the classroom has never been the only space for encounters with English, no past generation has had such wide *out-of-school exposure to English*. Three main sources have been identified: media, personal networks (family and friends), and intercultural contacts through travelling.

Sometimes this prior exposure may result in classes with very mixed levels. A few students may have lived or studied abroad, while others may not have had such opportunities and may still be struggling with language learning. Hence, English learning at secondary school should acknowledge (and build on) the learner's pre-existing knowledge base. It may be necessary for the teacher to negotiate learning targets for the class and to develop different goals and different activities for some students than others, depending on the extent of their previous learning.

Technologically sophisticated

Teenagers have grown up with computers, the internet, multimedia and social networking, and in a world full of huge amounts of rapidly changing information. They can be characterized as *digital natives* (Palfrey and Gasser, 2008; Rosen, 2007). They know how to explore the internet to find things they need. More than 80% of Americans aged 12 to 17 use the internet and nearly half log on every day (Louge, 2006). They spend hours every day in front of computers, text messaging, playing video games and watching video clips. They use the internet as a means for socialization, and many adolescents prefer

being online to using other media, including the phone, TV and radio. The internet is transforming the social world of adolescents, allowing them to connect and interact with teenagers anywhere in the world. Their learning is built around rich forms of multimodal input and heavily driven by visual images. Lewis (2007) points out that many teenagers enjoy the opportunity technology affords for them to produce their own materials. They can prepare reports and other documents that look as if they have been made by professionals. Teenagers can use mobile and other technologies to make video or audio files. Using a computer also makes it possible to engage multiple senses – oral, visual and auditory – and this can make working with the different language skills – either individually or in integrated mode – much more engaging and authentic.

Language teachers and students today have access to many forms of internet-based learning, and teenagers generally expect their language classes and their language learning experiences to reflect the kinds of technology they are familiar with. Legutke (2012) comments:

These teenagers have not only learned to expand their social relations in the real world to virtual communities, maintaining friendships through online networks, but also succeeded in recreating their real selves through multiple representations on the net (e.g. in Facebook or MySpace communities). Digital natives can easily both access vast amounts of multi-modal texts [i.e. texts that make use of different forms of printed and visual media] and construct them by collating written with visual and audio-visual text elements.



Can you suggest uses of technology that are useful for learning a) listening, b) pronunciation and c) speaking?

Enjoy learning through social interaction

Teenagers generally enjoy activities that involve interacting with their peers. While group work has long been promoted as a useful activity to foster language development, it has additional benefits for teenagers, since they depend upon friends and peers for emotional support and self-validation. Some of the benefits of group work in classes for teenagers are:

- It enables learners to interact in a structured environment that is managed by other teenagers, instead of the teacher.
- It increases motivation, since they share in the outcome and the process.
- It builds on, and develops, interpersonal relations.
- It involves fewer opportunities for embarrassment than teacher-directed activities.
- It helps learners become more confident about using English, since they are interacting with their peers.

Have out-of-class learning opportunities

Teenagers also have many opportunities for learning English outside of the classroom. For example, in countries where English-language movies and television programmes are

shown in English, such as in Northern Europe, and make use of subtitles, rather than dubbing the original into the viewers' language, teenagers often report that they 'pick up' much of their English through watching movies and television. A teacher comments on the importance of giving teenagers enough autonomy so that they take responsibility for their own learning:

Reflections on teaching teenagers

The biggest difficulty I faced when I started teaching teenagers was to shift from a style of teaching where I made most of the decisions to one where I gave as much autonomy as possible to my learners. This meant the maximum use of group activities and techniques, drawing from the repertoire of cooperative learning. I find it essential to build on opportunities for teenagers to showcase their talents. Teenagers often know a lot more than we realize and have vast amounts of information they enjoy sharing about their special interests. It's important to let them take responsibility for what and how they learn, whenever possible. Sometimes this means leaving the classroom entirely for activities that take place elsewhere in the school or neighbourhood. When the students have the opportunity to bond with peers, they are also more willing to take risks and not be afraid of feeling awkward when they try to use their English. Group work is good for this. In class, sometimes the brighter students are afraid to outperform their peers, in case they are thought to be showing off. It's good to make as much use as possible of materials that come from their world, rather than from published materials. For example, I ask them to find YouTube clips that they want to watch and react to. They also enjoy writing skits and short documentaries that they can film and share in class. They are drawn to things that have strong visual content, as well as pop songs, developments in IT and technology, entertainment, celebrities, sports and so on. I let them use their mother tongue, when necessary, and try to use humour as a way of making them feel relaxed.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

Independent learners

Teenagers often enjoy independent, or self-directed, learning. They like to take the initiative in deciding what to learn and how to learn it. Independent learning for teenagers involves:

- Doing activities they want to do.
- Working on activities they feel have a personal benefit to them.
- Being actively involved in tasks.
- Getting helpful feedback and direction.
- Having opportunities to reflect on what has been learned.
- Working at their own pace.

- Having choice in where and when they work.
- Working in company with others.
- Having a feeling of being in control of the situation.

Teenagers want to take more responsibility for their own learning, as mentioned, and they want to be treated as intelligent and responsible young people. They may feel they have the right to question authority figures and voice their own ideas and opinions. This may create classroom-management issues, at times, which require spontaneous solutions from teachers (see Chapter 7).



Can you give an example of an activity that has some of the characteristics mentioned above?

Lack of specific language-learning goals

Unlike adults, who often study English by choice, and who may have very specific needs for learning English, teenage learners may have had no choice in the fact that they are studying English. The benefits of knowing English in the future may not be apparent to them at this point in their lives. They may not see the purpose of some learning activities, because unlike older learners, they do not look ahead to consider what the skills they are practising will lead to. Teenage learners tend to evaluate activities according to how intrinsically interesting or motivating they are, rather than in terms of how well these activities prepare them for something external to the classroom. So they may get bored easily, and the teacher may soon find classroom discipline is a problem – a situation student-teachers sometimes encounter when they are assigned a teenage class as part of their practicum.

Value a humanistic learning environment

The affective dimensions of the classroom (see Chapter 5) are important to teenagers, such as the feelings the students have towards the lesson, to the teacher and to other students, and the learning atmosphere of the classroom. As Duncan (2010) observes:

Learners will respond to a teacher that cares, especially teenage learners who carry a romantic spirit and crave authenticity, personality and presence over content. Establishing an appropriate teacher–student relationship with teenagers is crucial, one where the teacher ‘connects’ with the learners and is valued and respected but not viewed as an authority figure.

For the teacher, a challenge is finding ways of helping teenagers develop a positive view of themselves and of the class so that they have positive expectations for the teacher and his or her lessons. Senior (2006: 81) suggests the following ways of achieving this:

- Communicate acceptance or respect for, and caring about, students as human beings.
- Establish a business-like yet non-threatening atmosphere.

- Communicate appropriate messages about school subject matter.
- Give students some sense of control with regard to classroom activities.
- Create a sense of community among the students.

Course-design options for teenage learners

Teenagers studying English may be learning in very different circumstances. Some may be studying English at state schools, in countries like Spain, South Korea or Colombia, using books based on a syllabus designed by the local ministry of education. At lower levels in the secondary school, the books may respond to the specific interests of teenagers. However, at upper levels in the school, the English programme is often targeted at school-leaving or university-entrance examinations, with a strong focus on reading and grammar and often providing few opportunities to address the interests of teenagers. In many countries where this happens, some students take additional classes in private institutes, where more flexibility and choice in teaching approaches and materials is allowed. Teachers in private institutes often develop their own materials for teaching teenagers or use textbooks specially prepared for this market by international publishers. Many institutions also offer intensive courses for teenagers (e.g. during summer vacations), designed to offer an alternative learning experience for teenagers to the one they might have experienced in their regular school classes. In the case of learners whose families have moved to an English-speaking country, their English course may be preparing them for mainstreaming (to enter a regular school programme where all courses are taught in English), in which case a content-based or CLIL approach is often used (see below and Chapter 3).



Did you study English or another language as a teenager? What approach was used?

Theme-based approaches

With a theme-based or topic-based approach, an overall theme provides a framework for organizing content and for developing a variety of activities based on grammar, vocabulary and the four skills. For example, a course may be organized around student-centred activities, based on the news, culture, festival and cities. The advantages of such an approach include:

- Teenagers get to work in groups helping and teaching each other.
- They choose what to read.
- They get to set their own questions and goals.
- The teacher acts as a facilitator and co-learner.
- Teenagers get to feel good about what they do know, rather than feeling bad about what they don't know.

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

CLIL is a learning approach in which another subject from the school curriculum (the content) is studied through the medium of English or another foreign language. Coyle et al. (2010: 21–2) give the following examples of CLIL approaches for teenagers (see Chapter 3):

- *Dual-school education*: Schools in different countries share the teaching of a specific course, or module, using VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol, e.g. Skype) technologies, where the CLIL language is an additional language in both contexts.
- *Bilingual education*: Learners study a significant part of the curriculum through the CLIL language for a number of years, with the intention of developing required content-learning goals and advanced language skills.
- *Interdisciplinary module approach*: A specific module, for example, environmental science or citizenship, is taught through CLIL, involving teachers of different disciplines.
- *Language-based projects*: In this case, the language teacher takes primary responsibility for the CLIL module. This may be done through international partnerships and is an extension of both content-based and communicative language teaching. The module involves authentic content learning and communication, through the CLIL language, and is scaffolded through language-teacher input.

Principles of teaching English to teenage learners

Courses for teenagers seek to motivate learners, to make connections to their lives and interests, and to develop language skills through participation in activities in which the learners have choices over what and how to learn and what the goals of learning will be. The following principles underlie the methods used to teach teenagers.

1. Choose activities that motivate learners

Lindstromberg (2004: 607) suggests that activities for teenagers should have the following characteristics:

- *Variety*: A lesson should contain a number of different activities – perhaps four to six, depending on the length of the lesson.
- *Achievable goals*: Activities should have clearly understood and achievable goals, as well as a tangible or observable outcome, such as a student text or a performance.
- *High interest*: Activities should generate interest. Game-like activities are good for this purpose. Elements of activities of this kind are:
 - A degree of competition.
 - Goals other than simply practising language.
- *Foster use of English*: Activities serve as the basis for communicating interesting messages.

- *Use non-language stimuli:* Pictures, objects, mime, music and sound effects can be used to motivate students.
- *Personal relevance:* Activities connect with the students' lives.
- *Current relevance:* Topics are of current interest to learners of their age.
- *Active:* Activities involve movement, rather than prolonged periods of seat-work.
- *Humour:* Activities allow for humour and thus create a positive atmosphere for learning.
- *Unpredictability:* Novel and unpredictable activities are used to maintain interest and prevent boredom.



Can you suggest some activities that have these characteristics?

2. Create a positive classroom climate

Senior (2006) suggests a number of ways in which a positive classroom climate can be created, such as by using humour to create an informal class atmosphere, by building rapport with the students through discussing common interests and concerns and by teachers showing that they are friendly and approachable, and are there to help their students. Other factors Senior discusses include creating a safe learning environment for students, where they are not afraid to take risks or make mistakes, establishing professional credibility and a sense of purpose in lessons, as well as establishing appropriate norms of classroom behaviour. As this teacher educator points out, high expectations on the part of the teacher can be very important in creating a positive classroom climate:



The value of high expectations

In addition to a good understanding of how learners of a particular age learn and what age-appropriate methods, approaches and techniques can be implemented, my experience teaching EFL to teenagers has taught me that teachers need to have certain dispositions and qualities that help create conditions for their learners of specific age groups to learn.

For me, the beauty of working with teenagers is that my job is not just limited to teaching a language, but that it is mainly concerned with *educating people*. The teacher's role is, therefore, crucial, and who the teacher is and how the teacher behaves is just as important as what the teacher teaches and how he or she teaches it. One of the most critical lessons that my teenage students have taught me is the importance of high expectations, role-modelling behaviours and consistency, together with what Rogers (1969) called *unconditional positive regard* – accepting them as people, irrespective of what they do.

I spell out at the beginning of the year that I expect the best and not just 'whatever. com' of them; and that by 'the best', I mean best behaviour towards everybody in the classroom and the school, and that they perform to the best of their ability. In turn, I try hard to prepare engaging, varied, motivating lessons, to listen and value them and to be fair at all times, which is particularly challenging when they repeatedly test boundaries, something that comes naturally with 'teenage territory'! But once they realize that I mean what I say, I do as I say, and that I try to the best of my ability to support them and encourage them to be the best they can be, together we create a purposeful and enjoyable environment, in which learning does take place.

Silvana Richardson, teacher and teacher educator, Cambridge, UK

3. Establish appropriate rules for classroom behaviour

In order to teach a successful lesson, there needs to be an atmosphere of respect and trust between teachers and students and a shared understanding of appropriate forms of classroom behaviour. As with young learners, the class needs to develop a sense of community, of people working together cooperatively to achieve shared goals. Norms for appropriate classroom behaviour need to be established so that the students develop a sense of responsible and cooperative behaviour during lessons. This can be done in several ways. For example:

- By asking the students to discuss what they feel appropriate rules for classroom behaviour should be.
- By proposing different ways of dealing with classroom issues and by asking students to discuss them.

Lindstromberg (2004) suggests a number of strategies for addressing classroom management with teenage learners, some of them similar to those suggested earlier for younger learners. These include:

- Remember students' names, and use their names when addressing them.
- Use efficient ways of seating students at the beginning of lessons, and assign seating in ways which promote positive interaction among students.
- Change activities or the pace of the lesson when students' concentration begins to sag.
- Find effective ways of getting students' attention and giving instructions and directions.
- Interact positively and respectfully with students at all times.
- Keep students busy and occupied during the lesson.
- Demonstrate fairness at all times in dealing with students.
- Be punctual, and expect students to be so as well.
- Avoid displays of anger, and avoid situations where students might lose face.

4. *Personalize the students' learning*

Teenagers' lives centre around themselves. They look for connections between classroom learning and their own lives. Teenagers are interested and knowledgeable about things that are current and newsworthy in their world. To connect to the world of teenagers, it is necessary to find relevant topics by surveying students and asking for their suggestions, or by locating materials on the internet that are current and engaging and then build lessons around them. One activity that allows students to explore topics of interest to them is blogging. Blogging allows children to follow different areas of interest. Popular blogging topics with teenagers are:

- *Books, movies and TV programmes:* Students can write reviews of books that they have read, or TV programmes and movies they have seen.
- *Nature:* Students may choose to write about topics such as how to conserve fuel, how to plant trees to protect the environment or how to protect endangered species.
- *Gadgets:* New products and technology and multimedia products and their uses.
- *Travel:* Places students have visited and how they feel about particular places.
- *Celebrities:* The lives of pop stars, actors and other celebrities are always of interest to teenagers.
- *Social issues:* Students may like to write about the problems of drugs, alcohol addiction, gambling, smoking or other social issues that the teacher feels are appropriate.
- *Social media:* Students may enjoy writing about software or blog interfaces or may enjoy discussing the advantages of socializing interfaces such as Facebook or Twitter.

However, Lewis (2007) recommends that teachers should avoid trying to guess what is 'in' or 'cool' for teenagers and should, wherever possible, choose activities that allow students to choose their own topics. For example, students could choose a favourite sport or game and describe its rules; they can find things they would like to complain about in their school or class and write a letter of complaint; they can write reviews of recent movies they have seen; or they could prepare biographies of their favourite actors or singers.

5. *Give students choices over what to learn*

Teenage learners like to exercise choice over what and how they learn, so it is important to find ways of involving students in deciding on the content of lessons. For example, for a discussion activity, they can work in groups and each group prepares a short general-knowledge quiz on a topic of their choice, using the internet as a source of information. Each group can then take turns testing another group's general knowledge. Students can also be encouraged to bring in books they would like to read for extensive reading exercises, rather than having the teacher decide these for them. For listening activities, the students can be encouraged to move away from audio recordings provided with books and listen to their favourite songs, or watch TV shows or DVDs.



Can you suggest other ways in which students can be involved in choosing the content of lessons?

6. *Allow students to showcase their talents*

Teenagers enjoy having the opportunity to demonstrate their creativity and individuality and also enjoy activities that involve a healthy level of competition. Projects in which students collaborate to produce a class magazine or newspaper, or organize a photo competition with English-captioned photos, provide opportunities to use English in a motivating and enjoyable context. Students can prepare a skit based on a situation of their choice, perform it in front of their peers and have the class decide which skit was the most fun or the most unusual.

7. *Choose appropriate forms of assessment*

In assessing students' learning on teenage courses, possible forms of assessment should be used that reflect the teaching strategies used in teenage courses, as well as the ways in which teenagers like to learn English. These include:

- Portfolios, in which students assemble examples of their work over a period of time, and that allow students choice over what to include and the opportunity to demonstrate their individual achievements.
- Project work, such as surveys and other activities that draw on real-world and out-of-class information and that allow for the demonstration of individual creativity, as well as language skills.
- Creative tasks, such as poems, stories, fiction and skits.
- Performance in group activities, such as role plays, interviews and group discussions.

In each case, students themselves can be involved in selecting assessment activities and deciding on criteria for assessment. However, when teenagers are working towards high-stakes tests, other forms of assessments that prepare them for such tests will also be required. These are discussed in Chapter 20.

8.4 English courses for adults

Teaching English to adults raises different issues from teaching younger learners, and approaches that were successful with younger learners may be less so with older learners. The fact that teaching adults is a specialized field of teaching is reflected in professional qualifications offered by organizations such as Cambridge English Language Assessment (see Chapter 1) – for example, the CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

Characteristics of adult language learners

Adult language learners benefit from previous experience and established styles of learning. As such, they share a number of characteristics.

Basic characteristics

A classic account of the characteristics of adult learners summarized the principles of adult learning in the following way (Brundage and MacKeracher, 1980: 21–31):

- Adults who value their own experience as a resource for further learning, or whose experience is valued by others, are better learners.
- Adults learn best when they are involved in developing learning objectives for themselves which are congruent with their current and idealized self-concept.
- Adults have already developed organized ways of focusing on taking in and processing information. These are referred to as cognitive style.
- The adult learner reacts to all experience as he or she perceives it, not as the teacher presents it.
- Adults enter into learning activities with an organized set of descriptions and feelings about themselves which influence the learning process.
- Adults are more concerned with whether they are changing in the direction of their own idealized self-concept than whether they are meeting standards and objectives set for them by others.
- Adults do not learn when overstimulated or when experiencing stress or anxiety.
- Those adults who can process information through multiple channels and have learned 'how to learn' are the most productive learners (see Chapter 5 on learning styles).
- Adults learn best when the content is relevant to past experience or present concerns, and the learning process is relevant to life experiences.
- Adults learn best when novel information is presented through a variety of sensory modes and experiences, with sufficient repetition and variations on themes to allow distinctions in patterns to emerge.

These principles are reflected in the characteristics of adult learners of English (Knowles, 1998; Orem, 2005, 2012). A teacher comments on the kinds of learners encountered in adult classes:

Age-appropriate methods

In my teaching experience with English classes for immigrants, two groups of adults illustrate the difficulty of treating 'adults' as a homogeneous category.

One group were people who had arrived in a third country via refugee camps. When they joined classes with other immigrants who had arrived independently and by choice, they would show considerable resistance to anything that smacked of 'fun'. It was as if, having been deprived of independence for some time, they couldn't bear to do anything that seemed better suited to children.

Because the other students in the classes enjoyed and benefited from communicative tasks, I developed one or two strategies to overcome their resistance. One was to avoid using words like 'games', and not to suggest that they would have fun doing something. A word like 'exercise' seemed to be acceptable. Also I chose pictures from authentic sources, such as newspapers, rather than pictures of humorous or cartoon-like characters. Another strategy was to spell out the purpose of whatever we were doing, in terms of out-of-class needs. ('You will find you have to ...') Asking an interpreter to make this application clear reinforced the point.

Other adults were at the opposite end of the spectrum in their attitude towards materials, contradicting the advice to avoid English-language materials designed for young children. These were preliterate adults with young children at school or kindergarten. They said (sometimes through interpreters) that they were very happy to be shown how to read the materials their children were bringing home. In this case, they were using the readers by proxy, as it were, on behalf of their own children.

As with so many teaching decisions, it was a case of finding what motivated each group.

Marilyn Lewis, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

Value previous experience

Adult language learners can draw on a wide variety of previous learning experiences and knowledge that may include work-related experiences, as well as family responsibilities if they are parents. A class of adult learners often contains people of very different educational, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. There may be great differences in life experiences, education and social background. This can often provide a rich resource to draw upon in teaching.



What are some activities that allow adult learners to draw on their own experience?

Manage their own learning

Adults like to be involved in managing their own learning and are more autonomous and self-directed than younger learners. They may wish to decide what topics and skills they want to study in class, and what kinds of materials they wish to use. They will have

opinions about what works best for them. They may prefer the teacher to be a facilitator, rather than a manager or controller of their learning. They are able to take responsibility for many aspects of the class, such as deciding on grouping arrangements. As a facilitator, the teacher's role is to guide the learners.

Have well-established learning styles

Adult language learners may have particular learning style preferences. These may be seen in preferences for:

- Specific kinds of classroom activities.
- A more teacher-fronted teaching approach.
- Handouts and other learning aids.
- Instructions in both oral and written form.

Have specific goals in mind

Most often, adult language learners are in class for a specific reason. They know what they want from a course and expect a course to be well planned, with clear learning outcomes. They may have preferences for particular aspects of language that they wish to study. They often have busy lives and are strongly motivated to acquire skills and knowledge that will empower their lives and that they see an immediate relevance for.



If you were to learn a new language, what specific goals would you have in mind?

In addition, adults generally expect to see a good reason for learning and for completing the activities the teacher assigns them and want to see clear practical results, especially results that they can apply – at work and in daily life.

A teacher educator comments on tailoring courses to students' practical needs:



Planning courses for adults

I was often involved in teaching intensive reading courses to some classes of Chinese in-service teacher trainees during summer and winter holidays. Those trainees were all junior high school teachers of English who would receive their first degrees upon successful completion of the courses. They were varied both in terms of age (ranging from approximately 24 to 30) and teaching experience (ranging from about 3 to 8 years). But one thing was common – they were all mature, motivated and practical, and knew clearly why they attended the course and what the learning outcomes should be.

Some attended the course because they did want to learn more things so they would be better equipped in their future teaching. There were others who mainly wanted to pass the exams and get the degree so they could be promoted to a higher rank. There was, in addition, the daunting challenge that they, as is the case with all other learners, had quite diversified learning styles and strategies, which I as a teacher had to be fully aware of and constructively respond to. So the following were the typical homework I had to do before and in the course of teaching:

- *Needs analysis:* It was carefully conducted before I started to prepare for the course by consulting the teacher who had been in charge before I took over, as well as some of my former students who were teaching in similar contexts.
- *Supplementary reading materials:* Since I had to adhere to the prescribed textbook, I was only in a position to choose, based on needs analysis, a small number of supplementary reading materials to suit different learning purposes of students. This was usually done a few days before teaching each lesson.
- *Learning styles and strategies:* Questionnaires were administered at the very beginning of the course to find out what students' learning styles and strategies were. The information collected was used as important guidelines for the methods and techniques I should adopt in teaching.

Ao Ran, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China; Singapore

Have a high level of maturity

Adults have their own opinions about things and expect these to be respected. As mentioned, they expect to see their maturity and life knowledge respected in the classroom. They may come from cultures where there is a high degree of respect for older people, and young language teachers need to recognize this.



What are some ways in which a young teacher can acknowledge the experience and wisdom that adult learners bring to the classroom?

Use first language as a reference point

Adult learners often make sense of learning a new language by referring back to their understanding of their first language and other languages they know. Their experiences of learning other languages may have established preferences for particular kinds of classroom language learning. They may often feel comfortable with activities that involve comparison with their first language. Their mother tongue is an important part of their identity and may play an important role in their culture, so the English teacher needs to acknowledge it as a positive resource and find ways of affirming and recognizing its role in the learners' lives.

Benefit from regular encouragement

Many adult learners may not have taken part in formal instruction for many years and some may never have experienced formal instruction at all. Attending a class can be an intimidating experience for such learners. For them, encouragement and positive feedback on their learning is essential, without such feedback appearing patronizing.

Course-design options for adult learners

There are a number of different ways of organizing adult courses (Marshall, 2002; Murray, 2005; Orem, 2005). In addition to general English courses focusing on a single skill or integrated skills, there are some more specific ways to organize courses. (See Chapter 3 for a discussion of approaches and methods.) The following have much in common, but differ in terms of how a course is planned and what the units of organization are:

Competency-based courses

In view of the fact that many adults require practical language skills that will enable them to cope with real situations related to work and social survival, many adult courses are organized around competencies (see Chapter 3). The starting point in planning courses for adults is, therefore, an identification of the tasks the learner will need to carry out within a specific setting (e.g. such as in the role of factory worker, restaurant employee or nurse) and the language demands of those tasks. The competencies needed for successful task performance are then identified and used as the basis for course planning.

Theme-based approach

Adult courses also may be organized around themes (McKay and Tom, 1999: 17):

Organizing instruction around themes ensures the learners' interest and motivation because these topics are related directly to their lives. Within each theme the class builds a body of common knowledge, vocabulary, structures and functions, which provide a sense of security and continuity over time. Gains in fluency and accuracy occur while the students focus on content. Different themes elicit different functions, vocabulary and structures, and within a theme these recur, providing an opportunity for recycling of material.

Task or activity-based approach

Tasks are defined as activities resembling/mirroring situations the learner uses English for in real-life settings. (See Chapter 3 for an account of how this approach is used in task-based language teaching.) The tasks or activities the learners will use English for are first identified and used as the basis for planning a syllabus, as well as for designing classroom activities (Beglar and Hunt, 2002). The procedures involved are:

- 1 Conduct a needs analysis to obtain an inventory of target tasks or activities.
- 2 Classify these into different task types.
- 3 From the task types, derive pedagogical tasks (classroom activities that can be used as the basis for practice).
- 4 Select and sequence the pedagogical tasks to form a task syllabus.

An example of a task-based syllabus is Astika (2004), which describes the use of a task-based approach in developing a course for tour guides. Needs analysis made use of observation of tour guides at work, interviews with guides and interviews with experts and teachers of tour guides.

Principles of teaching English to adult learners

1. *Start with needs analysis*

An analysis of adults' needs involves use of a variety of procedures, such as questionnaires, interviews and observations, to find out in what situations the learners need to use English, what activities they use English for, what skills they need to focus on (e.g. listening, speaking, writing), what their goals are and what they expect to gain from the course (see Chapter 17). Depending on the learners' proficiency in English, if questionnaires are used, these could be in English or the learners' native language. Some information can be collected before a course begins, but other information can be collected as a component of classroom activities. McKay and Tom (1999: 8) suggest:

Once the students are placed and classes begin, the teacher will need to combine information about what the students know, what they want to know, and what the programme would like them to know, in order to determine what to teach. Because students are now in the language classroom with the teacher, this information can be collected through language learning activities that are integrated into the curriculum.

It is also useful to find out as much as possible about learning-style preferences. What kinds of teaching and learning do they feel most comfortable with? How do they expect the teacher to conduct the classes? Will they feel comfortable if the teacher corrects errors in front of other students, or would they rather be informed of these after class? Are they comfortable with group work and with groups made up of both men and women? In the appendix, you will find a case study with sample questions used to assess learner expectations. These particular questions were developed for a younger audience, but may be adapted for learners of different ages.

2. *Develop clear statements of learning outcomes*

It is important to develop clear statements of course aims and outcomes. Sometimes one set of aims can be prepared for teachers and another set prepared for learners. The latter

set will be expressed in language the students can understand. An example of the former is the following:

Maryland adult ESL program standards

The following are key objectives for adult ESL programs:

- Develop the learner's English literacy skills, including speaking, reading, writing and understanding the English language.
- Reflect on the learner's goals, while considering their roles as family members, community participants, workers and lifelong learners.
- Provide learners with the skills to apply English accurately and appropriately in a variety of home, community, workplace and academic settings.
- Use assessment activities to document the learner's progress toward advancement to other training programs, employment, post-secondary education, self-sufficiency, attainment of a secondary school diploma and other goals.
- Integrate second language acquisition with relevant life experiences by emphasizing development of critical thinking, problem solving and other culturally specific skills necessary for self-sufficiency.
- Provide a non-threatening learning environment that respects adult ESL learners and integrates their cultural backgrounds and experiences into the instructional process (www.dllr.state.md.us/gedmd/eslstandards.pdf).

Learning outcomes can be categorized by particular areas that the teacher or learning institution wants to develop in their learners. For example, one set of aims could relate to the development of independent study skills. Nunan (1988: 3) suggests the following:

- To provide learners with efficient learning strategies.
- To assist learners in identifying their own preferred ways of learning.
- To develop skills needed to negotiate the curriculum.
- To encourage learners to set their own objectives.
- To encourage learners to adopt realistic goals and time frames.
- To develop learners' skills in self-evaluation.

Other aims will relate to the teaching of specific aspects of language proficiency. These will reflect the needs identified in the needs analysis and can be described in terms of skills and competencies. They should reflect goals that are attainable, within the time frame of the course and are at an appropriate level. The Common European Framework of Reference (see Chapter 17) is a useful model to describe outcomes, but there are many other descriptions of outcomes for adult courses, available online.

3. Prepare students to use English in real-life situations

Adult learners are generally learning English for a particular purpose. Beginner-level learners will expect their classes to prepare them to cope with situations they encounter, such as a doctor's appointment, an interview with an immigration official, talking to a child's teacher in English or having a telephone conversation with an overseas business client. More advanced learners may have other more specific needs, such as passing a test required for citizenship or immigration purposes or in order to complete an adult education course.

4. Use materials from the learners' world

Bring materials to class that will help learners make links to real-life language use, such as magazines, brochures, advertisements, sections from magazines, video clips and anything that can be used to link classroom teaching to the learners' lives.

5. Provide a safe learning environment

Learning a language in a classroom with other adults involves taking risks, and there are issues of face and confidence involved. Over-correction of students' errors should be avoided, as well as any activities that could cause embarrassment or discomfort. Adult learners are generally fluent language speakers in their mother tongue and will frequently feel frustrated by their inability to remember a word or to be able to express what they want to say in English. It is important to establish a classroom environment in which learners feel comfortable and where they are willing to try things out and take risks. A teacher comments on how she helps students to feel comfortable in the first week of class:



Providing a safe environment for adult learners

When teaching adult learners, especially in group classes, I have always taken the time to address issues such as embarrassment and frustration. Since I dealt mostly with EFL, and learners shared the same native language, I developed my own 'affective-filter-lowering' activity. It is simple and quite effective, and frequently resulted in establishing a bond or stronger tolerance in the group. Usually, in the first week, I started a class by writing key words on the board. These words were in the learners' native language, and all related to the learning process they were embarking on. I invited learners to either choose one word they identified with or to simply share what those words meant to them. The second step was to ask them to split the words into two groups: obstacles to learning and facilitators to learning. This activity allowed me to gather more information on the group and the individual issues in that class, as well as encourage them to consider not the problems they may encounter but the possible strategies to be used to overcome those issues. For the learners, the activity offered awareness that their personal issues with foreign language learning were very likely

shared by many other members of the group. This reduced isolation and encouraged tolerance, while helping us to build a list of strategies to focus on.

Here is my list of words: *imprecision, explain, paraphrase, distortion, ambiguity, misuse, simplify, courage, misunderstanding, guess, anticipate, breakdown, uncertainty, attempt, discomfort, error, adventure, embarrassment, purpose, tolerance, block and smile.*

Priscilla Brooking, teacher and teacher educator, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Sydney, Australia

6. Use the learners' first language as a resource

Rather than trying to eradicate use of the students' first language, it can be used as a resource. Bilingual word cards, translation tasks and activities where learners compare how things are said in English and their mother tongue can be motivating for older language learners and can help validate their own culture and background.

7. Encourage learning outside of class time

Adult learners may have limited time available for class study. Learners need to focus on how they can improve their learning outside of the classroom and how they can find opportunities for additional contact with English and practice in using it (such as by watching TV or using the internet). Students can bring examples of situations where they used English outside of class, and discuss their experiences and what they learned from them.

8. Be prepared for mixed-ability levels

Many adult classes contain learners with very different ability levels. In any one class, learners may differ in how well they can speak, read, write or understand English. If the teacher aims at the middle level, some students may not be sufficiently challenged, while others may find the activities too difficult. The ideal solution is to use activities in which all students can participate, but which they can perform at their own level. McKay and Tom (1999: 210) point out that, in any activity, there are three elements: materials or input, task and performance level. They suggest that in mixed-ability classes, the difficulty level can be adjusted by modifying any of these elements. The choices are:

- Same input, same task.
- Same input, modified task.
- Different input, same task.
- Same task, different performance level.

For example, although students might receive the same input (e.g. an advertisement of a kitchen product in a magazine), they can process the text in different ways (same input, different task). Some students (the more advanced ones) might prepare a different text to

go with the pictures in the advertisement; some might choose words from a list provided to describe the product; others might make a list of similar items they have in their kitchens.

9. Choose appropriate forms of assessment

In view of the fact that courses for adults are generally designed to prepare students with the skills needed to use English in real situations, outside of the classroom, the ability to perform representative activities that have been the focus of classroom instruction should form the primary focus of assessment of what has been learned. Checklists are often used in which the students' performance on tasks is rated on a scale (e.g. 3 = *very well*; 2 = *fairly well*; 1 = *not very well*). The Common European Framework of Reference provides sets of descriptors (the *can-do* statements) in the different domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing, which can be adapted to match the demands of different types of performance (such as *I can describe my skills and abilities*; *I can talk about my hobbies and interests*).

Self-assessment is also an appropriate strategy for adult learners. Nunan (1995) suggests that self-assessment helps adults become autonomous learners:

Self-assessment techniques also help learners identify preferred materials and ways of learning. They can be involved in evaluating most aspects of the curriculum, including their own progress, the objectives of the course, the materials and learning activities used, and so on ...

Nunan also recommends the use of learner diaries in which students monitor their language use. For example, they might complete a weekly entry of the following kind:

This week I studied: _____

This week I learned: _____

This week I used my English in these places: _____

This week I spoke with these people in English: _____

This week I made these mistakes: _____

My difficulties are: _____

I would like to know: _____

My learning and practising plans for next week are: _____

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the important differences between young, teenage and adult language learners by comparing characteristics of learners, course-design options and principles of teaching for each age group. Young learners are active and experiential. Course options range from no formal syllabus to an integration of language and content. Teenagers

are maturing and forming their own ideas. Course options range from exam-focused curriculums to programmes catering to student interests to ones preparing students for mainstreaming through content-based approaches. Adults have well-established learning styles and specific objectives. Programmes may be task-based, theme-based or competency-based, or offer more general skill development, and may be aimed at students with different educational levels and real-world goals. Each teaching circumstance – that of young learners, teenagers and adults – is unique, and teachers working in these situations for the first time often find that they have to rethink some of their assumptions and practices in order to develop a pedagogy appropriate to learners of particular ages.

Discussion questions

- 1 In ESL/ELT contexts, do you think it is more beneficial to commence the teaching of English at primary/grade school or to delay teaching English until secondary school and to teach it more intensively at this stage? What are the advantages or limitations of each choice?
- 2 Choose one age group. What topics would you include in a short teacher training course for teachers who wished to learn more about teaching learners of this age group?
- 3 Choose a theme such as animals or clothing. How might a lesson on the theme differ if it was for a) young learners, b) teenagers or c) adults?
- 4 Choose a coursebook for young learners, teenagers or adults. To what extent does the organization and pedagogy of the book reflect the principles discussed in the relevant sections of this chapter?
- 5 Suggest themes that would be suitable for a course for teenagers in your culture or teaching context.
- 6 How do you think error-correction strategies might differ in teaching young learners, teenagers and adults?
- 7 What are the benefits of using project work with young learners, teenagers and adults? Suggest projects that would be suitable for each age group.
- 8 Do you agree that learners can improve their learning through watching television and movies? If so, how can these resources be used effectively with teenage learners?
- 9 Adults often present mixed-ability levels. What options are available for having students work at their own level?

Appendix:

Investigating learner strategies in a primary school ESL/ELT class

Look at the journal questions below, which were given to students, adapted from a case study that appears in Richards and Lockhart (1994). Which, if any, would you change if you were teaching adult learners? Teenage learners? How can you apply this case study to your own teaching context?

INITIAL REFLECTION

We were interested in learning more about the learning strategies used by our pupils. We felt that we needed to know more about the strategies used by successful learners in our classes. We also wanted to find out how the children were responding to our teaching. The following questions were used to guide out the investigation:

- 1 What learning strategies are used by good language learners in our classes?
- 2 Do our learners use English outside of the classroom?
- 3 Do they feel good about learning English?

PLANNING

We identified two children, both aged seven, who we believed were good language learners. We chose these two learners because they seemed to be learning English more successfully in the class. We decided to collect information on the learners by the following means:

- Classroom observation.
- Learner journals.
- Interviews.

We planned to observe the learners over a term.

ACTION

From classroom observation, we built up examples of our learners doing things such as the following:

- Listening attentively.
- Asking questions.
- Using the target language both in and outside of the classroom.
- Interacting with others in English.
- Volunteering answers.
- Using resources such as dictionaries.

We also interviewed the students to find out what they found easy, enjoyable, interesting or difficult in particular activities, and why. The learners also kept journals, in which they wrote about their feelings

and attitudes towards language learning. They were given the following questions to stimulate their journal writing:

- What are some of the things you learned in today's lesson?
- Are you learning enough language in the classroom?
- Are you using the language you learned outside of the classroom? Where are you using it? Do you look forward to language lessons?
- What are some of the things you don't like about language lessons?
- How do you remember what you have learned?
- Who do you practise with?
- How much time do you spend on homework?
- Do you often do extra homework not assigned by the teacher?
- Do you feel you are good at language learning?
- Do you sometimes read books in English?
- Which parts of language learning do you like best and why?
- Did you learn anything new this week?
- Do you enjoy being tested on your knowledge?
- How can you learn more?
- Do your parents or other family members help and support you with your language learning?

OBSERVATION

In looking over our data, we found that our students used a variety of strategies to help them become successful language learners. For example, we asked, 'How do you remember what you've learned?' Answers included:

It's easy to remember when you listen.

I do it over and over again.

I practise with friends and family.

I write things down I want to remember.

I stick sentences on my wall in my room.

I spend lots of time going over my book, because I like it and I learn. I would still study if my teacher didn't see or mark it.

REFLECTION

Even though we didn't learn anything particularly surprising from our investigation, it was useful to confirm and make explicit some things we knew intuitively. We have learned a useful strategy to use

in order to more effectively facilitate our students' learning. The strategy involves asking the following questions:

- How did you go about doing this?
- Which way of doing this works best for you?

Further reading

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Part

3

**Language and the
four skills**

9

Grammar

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What is the nature of grammar?
 - Sentence and text grammar.
 - Accuracy, fluency and complexity.
- What is the role of grammar in a syllabus?
 - Criteria for choosing syllabus items.
- What is meant by spoken grammar?
 - Some characteristics of spoken grammar.
- How does grammar affect language learning?
 - Features of learner language.
- What affects learners' accessing and use of grammar?
 - Factors affecting use of grammar.
 - Focus on form.
- What approaches are used to teach grammar?
 - Inductive learning vs. deductive learning.
 - Developing accuracy, fluency and complexity.
- How should grammatical knowledge be assessed?
 - Choice of task types.

9.1 Introduction

Grammar has traditionally played a central role in language teaching, but a definition of what grammar really is and how it should be taught has been a topic of controversy throughout the history of English language teaching. As we noted in Chapter 3, older traditions of language teaching saw knowledge of grammar – or *grammatical competence* – as providing the key to successful language learning and language use. In the nineteenth century, the grammar-translation approach made extensive use of grammar-based translation exercises – activities that are still used in some places today. Later methods used grammar-based oral and written drills to develop language skills, and language syllabuses were built around graded sequences of grammatical patterns and structures. In the 1980s, the discipline of second language acquisition, as well as the communicative approach, prompted a reassessment of the role of grammar in language teaching, as the focus moved to communicative interaction, rather than grammatical knowledge, as the essential condition for second language learning.

More recent approaches to language teaching such as task-based, text-based teaching and content-based teaching focus on the role of grammatical knowledge in carrying out tasks, in creating texts and in understanding content and information. Language teaching today also draws on the findings of corpus linguistics, discourse analysis and conversation analysis and acknowledge interrelationships between grammatical and lexical knowledge. This chapter will consider the nature of the grammar and its role in language teaching today and issues that are involved in teaching and assessing grammatical knowledge and use.

9.2 The nature of grammar

Sentence and text grammar

It is useful to consider the role of grammar at two levels – the level of the sentence and the level of extended discourse or texts. Sentence grammar refers to knowledge of parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses and syntactic structures used to create grammatically well-formed sentences in English. Knowledge of this kind tells us which of the sentences below are grammatically correct and which are not:

- When I will arrive, I SMS you.
- I will SMS you when I arrive.
- I learning French for three years.
- I have not been feeling well lately.
- Spanish spoken a lot in my family.
- Computers are used in almost every industry today.

This is the kind of grammar that is the focus of many grammar-reference books and grammar-practice books for students. For example, here is information about the past simple tense in a grammar-reference text (Carter and McCarthy 2006: 608–9):

Past time is seen as a time before the moment of speaking or writing, or as 'time around a point before the moment of speaking'. References to past time are most typically indicated in the verb phrase through the simple and progressive forms of the past tense.

The past simple: definite time reference:

References to definite past time, clearly separated from the moment of speaking, are normally made using the past simple. The most common type of reference to the past is through definite time adjuncts and definite time adverbial clauses.

- Did you watch that film *yesterday*?
- He went *at the end of November*.
- My grandfather died *about four weeks ago*.
- *When I was a lad*, I lived on a farm.



Many students have access to a grammar book that presents the rules of sentence grammar. When do you think they use such a book? Do you think they are effective?

Traditional approaches to grammar teaching and the design of coursebooks reflected a view of language that saw the sentence and sentence grammar as forming the building blocks of language, language learning and language use (McCarthy, 2001) as seen in coursebooks based on the audiolingual method or situational language teaching. The goal of language teaching was to enable learners to understand how sentences are used to create different kinds of meaning, to help them to master the underlying rules for forming sentences from lower-level grammatical units, such as phrases and clauses, and to provide practice in using them as the basis for written and spoken communication. Correct language use was achieved through a drill-and-practice methodology, and through controlled speaking and writing exercises that sought to prevent or minimize opportunities for errors (see Chapter 3). Practice in producing grammatically correct sentences was viewed as the key to learning, embedded within a methodology with the following features (Ellis, 2002: 168):

- 1 A specific grammatical feature is isolated for focused attention.
- 2 The learners are required to produce sentences containing the targeted feature.
- 3 The learners are provided with opportunities for repetition of the targeted feature.
- 4 There is an expectancy that the learners will perform the grammatical feature correctly; therefore, practice activities are success oriented.

- 5** The learners receive feedback on whether their performance of the grammatical structure is correct or not. This feedback may be immediate or delayed.



Are coursebooks with these features still used in your country?

We can see an example of classroom practice that reflects this focus on accurate mastery of sentence grammar (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 155–6):

[The students are looking at materials which have phonetic spellings of two characters, Benny and Penny, and drawings of two items, shirts and shorts.]

T: OK...Who can make the first sentence here?...Who wants to make a sentence about Penny...or about...Abdullah?...Make a sentence about Penny, please.

S1: What does Benn...

T: No, no questions yet...just make a sentence.

S2: Which one?

T: No...no questions.

S2: Ah...it's Benny?

T: Yes, tell me something about Benny.

S2: Benny washing...

S3: IS washing. Benny IS washing.

S2: Uh, shirt...er...on the last day...on the last day...no.

T: Yesterday?

S2: Yes.

T: OK...What did he wash yesterday?

S2: He was wash...er,...He washing.

T: Mohammed, can you help him?

S3: Benny washed his short...shirt.

T: Hmm...we don't say washed though, do we?

S3: WashED.

T: No, just one syllable...we say washt.

S4: Wash.

S3: Washt.

S2: Washt.

T: And we say 'tuh'...we write 'ed', but we don't say washED...we say washT...

Ss: washT...washT...washT...washT.

T: Yes, good, now Khalid, what did Benny do yesterday?

S2: He washt his shirt.

T: Good... Mohammed, can you make a sentence about Benny?

S3: He washed his shirt.

T: No, look at the picture.

S3: Oh, shorts, he washed his shorts.

T: That's right. Good.



What was the role of grammar in languages you have studied? Did it move beyond sentence grammar?

The importance of moving beyond the sentence level is now recognized in current approaches to grammar. Learners also need to know how grammar is used when sentences are connected in longer stretches of discourse to create texts (see Chapter 16). This can be called *text grammar*. For example, here is information about the past tense and other grammatical features that are used in a frequently used text type known as a *recount text*:

Recounts are either personal recounts, factual recounts or imaginative recounts. *Personal recounts* usually retell an event that the writer was personally involved in. *Factual recounts* record an incident, e.g. a science experiment or a police report. *Imaginative recounts* describe an imaginary role and give details of imaginary events, e.g. a day in the life of a pirate.

Grammatical features of recounts:

- Written in the past tense.
- Frequent use made of adverbs which link events in time, such as *when, next, later, after, before, first, at the same time, as soon as*.
- Recounts describe events and so make frequent use of verbs (action words) and adverbs (which describe and add more detail to verbs).
- Use of personal pronouns (personal recount).
- Passive voice may be used (factual recount).

The following example of student writing is an example of a factual recount (author data):

A trip to Bali

There were so many places to see in Bali that my friend decided to join the tours to see as much as possible. My friend stayed in Kuta on arrival. He spent the first three days swimming and surfing on Kuta beach. He visited some tour agents and selected two tours. The first one was to Singaraja; the second was to Ubud.

On the day of the tour, he was ready. My friend and his group drove on through mountains. Singaraja is a city of about 90 thousands people. It is a busy but quiet town. The street are lined

with trees, and there are many old Dutch houses. Then they returned very late in the evening to Kuta.

The second tour to Ubud was a very different tour. It was not to see the scenery, but to see the art and the craft of the island. The first stop was at Batubulan, a center of stone sculpture. There my friend watched young boys were carving away at big blocks of stone. The next stop was Celuk, a center for silversmiths and goldsmiths. After that he stopped a little while for lunch at Sukawati and on to Mas. Mas is a tourist center.

My friend ten-day-stay ended very quickly beside his two tour, all his day was spent on the beach. He went sailing or surfboarding every day. He was quiet satisfied.



Can you find examples of text grammar in the text above?

Accuracy, fluency and complexity

Another dimension to grammatical knowledge involves the distinction between accuracy, fluency and complexity.

Accuracy

Accuracy refers to the learner's ability to produce discourse that is free of grammatical errors. While grammatical errors may reflect gaps in the learner's knowledge of grammar, they may also be related to the amount of planning or reviewing time available (e.g. in writing an essay), the extent to which the learner is focusing primarily on meaning as opposed to grammatical form when using language, or the extent to which the learner is using controlled or automatic processing (see Chapter 2).

Fluency

Fluency refers to the ability to produce continuous speech without causing comprehension difficulties or a breakdown of communication. Pawley and Syder, (1983) in a well-known paper, suggested that fluency depends on having available a large number of fixed sequences or chunks that can be accessed quickly (see Chapter 13) so that the speaker does not have to start constructing an utterance from scratch.

Communicative language teaching generally emphasizes the importance of a focus on both accuracy and fluency in language teaching. Other methods such as the natural approach (see Chapter 3) suggest that accuracy will take care of itself once the learner has developed the capacity to monitor his or her language use. The differences between accuracy-focused and fluency-focused teaching can be summarized in the following table:

Accuracy-focused teaching	Fluency-focused teaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects typical classroom use of language. • Focuses on the formation of correct examples of language use. • Produces language for display (i.e. as evidence of learning), calling on explicit knowledge. • Elicits a careful (monitored) speech style. • Reflects controlled performance. • Practises language out of context. • Practises small samples of language. • Does not require authentic communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects natural language use. • Calls on implicit knowledge. • Elicits a vernacular speech style. • Reflects automatic performance. • Requires the use of improvising, paraphrasing, repair and reorganization. • Produces language that is not always predictable. • Allows students to select the language they use. • Requires real communication.



Can you suggest three examples of activities that practise accuracy and three that practise fluency?

Complexity

The development of fluency in language use may mean greater and more accurate use of known language forms, but it does not necessarily imply development in the complexity of the learner's language. For the learner's linguistic system to take on new and more complex linguistic items, the restructuring or reorganization of mental representations is required, as well as opportunities to practise these new forms. Van Patten (1993: 436) suggests that restructuring involves processes:

...that mediate the incorporation of intake into the developing system. Since the internalization of intake is not a mere accumulation of discrete bits of data, data have to 'fit in' in some way and sometimes the accommodation of a particular set of data causes changes in the rest of the system. In some cases, the data may not fit in at all and are not accommodated by the system. They simply do not make it into the long-term store.

Several factors can facilitate restructuring, most notably change in communicative needs. As the range of topics and contexts for language use changes, different grammatical resources are needed. Describing daily routines will require less complex grammar than discussing hypothetical situations, for example. Learners whose use of English is restricted to a very limited range of contexts, situations and activities are unlikely to have the need to develop a more complex knowledge of grammar.

9.3 Grammar in a language syllabus

Criteria for choosing syllabus items

Language courses generally contain a grammar strand, and a number of criteria can determine which items of grammar will be included and in what order they will be sequenced.

Importance

While a language may contain a large range of grammatical distinctions and constructions, not all of these are necessarily useful to second language learners. A grammar syllabus in a course will typically focus on what are considered core features of English grammar. Core items are those that are simple and more central to the basic structure of English than items that are complex and peripheral. By these criteria, the following items would be taught early on in a course:

- Subject–verb (*The train arrived.*)
- Subject–verb–complement (*She is a journalist.*)
- Subject–verb–adverb (*The children are in the bedroom.*)
- Subject–verb–object (*We ate the fruit.*)
- Subject–verb–object–adverb (*I put the fruit in the bag.*)

Other features of core grammar include articles, adjectives, present simple tense, past simple, present continuous, prepositions of time and place, *be*, *have got*, *can*, *should*, *would*, *will*, *yes/no* and *Wh-* questions.

Difficulty

Grammar items may be selected based on the difficulty they present to students in tests or on lists of common errors made by second language learners. Contrastive analysis was used to predict difficulty in earlier periods of language teaching (see Chapter 2); however, this would only be an option in teaching monolingual classes.

Differences between languages

This also relates to contrastive analysis and involves selecting items that are most different from the grammar of the learner's mother tongue. Adverb positions often differ significantly between languages and, for this reason, may require greater attention than items that are similar among languages. For example, in French, adverbs can occur between the verb and the direct object, unlike in English, where they occur after the direct object (compare

the French word order of *John opened suddenly the door* with the English word order: *John opened the door suddenly*).

Usefulness and frequency

A grammar item may be useful because learners will encounter it very frequently (such as irregular forms of verbs or the subject–verb–object sentence pattern), or because they will need it in the situations where they will be using English (such as the use of the passive voice in scientific writing or items that are typically tested on a university-entrance test). Corpus research has provided a great deal of information on the frequency of grammar items in different kinds of discourse, information that can inform the design of grammar syllabuses. (A corpus is a set of texts and language samples in a particular area, e.g. newspaper articles, casual conversations or lectures, that can be analyzed using computer concordancing programs in order to identify patterns of usage. It is a principled collection of texts, such as business letters, classroom language, learner writing or telephone conversations that can be used for different kinds of analysis). For example, Reppen (2010: 23) comments:

From corpus research, we know that academic reading relies heavily on nouns. From corpus studies of academic texts, we know that the ratio of nouns to verbs is heavily tipped towards nouns. In contrast, we find that in spoken language, conversation and even academic lectures, the use of nouns and verbs is fairly evenly distributed.

Corpus research is increasingly being used in the design of syllabuses for coursebooks. However, in language teaching teachers often have their own beliefs about what grammatical items they expect to see in a course and when they should be introduced – perhaps based on their own experience as language learners. For example, the progressive is often introduced very early in English coursebooks, although corpus research suggests the present tense is much more frequent than the progressive in spoken English. According to corpus research therefore the progressive should appear much later in the syllabus than is found in most courses. (Biber and Reppen, 2002).



Why do you think the progressive is introduced very early in the syllabus of many coursebooks?

9.4 Spoken grammar

Decisions about the choice of items to include in a grammar syllabus traditionally reflected information that was based on the study of written language. But the vast amount of research into spoken language found in corpus research as well as in disciplines such as

discourse analysis has revealed many differences between the grammar of written and spoken language. It will be useful to consider a few examples from research on spoken grammar and its implication for teaching grammar.

Characteristics of spoken grammar

McCarthy and Carter (2001: 51–75) present a number of criteria for spoken grammar, including the following:

Establishing core units

Spoken grammar raises the question of what a ‘core unit’ of grammar really is. In spoken language, the sentence is not the basis for a typical ‘turn’ or utterance. Conversational turns often consist just of phrases or of incomplete clauses or of clauses with subordinate clause characteristics, but which are apparently not attached to any main clause, as this partial transcript shows:

[Speakers are sitting at the dinner table talking about a car accident that happened to the father of one of the speakers.]

Speaker 1: I’ll just take that off. *Take that off.*

Speaker 2: *All looks great.*

Speaker 3: [laughs]

Speaker 2: Mm.

Speaker 3: Mm.

Speaker 2: I think your dad was amazed, wasn’t he, at the damage.

Speaker 4: Mm.

Speaker 2: It’s not so much the parts. It’s the labour charges for...

Speaker 4: *Oh that. For a car.*

Structures that are incomplete, interrupted or whose grammatical form is unclear such as *Take that off* are common features of speech, and this example is not actually an imperative in this conversation, but rather an elliptical form, a shortening of *I’ll take that off [the insurance claim]*.

Phrasal complexity

Students are routinely taught the order of adjectives before nouns in English (e.g. size before colour), and that there is considerable potential to have a large string of adjectives before the noun. While this could be appropriate in certain kinds of academic discourse, in conversation the number of adjectives tends to be limited. McCarthy and Carter (2001) provide these spoken and written examples:

Spoken:

- Yeah, it's *a big house*, six bedrooms.
- It's *a large house*, lovely, just right.

Written:

- Living in *a big, dirty communal house*, eating rubbish...
- The *cosy lace-curtained* house...

As they point out, 'it is not a question of what *can* be said, but what *is* routinely said'.

Tense, voice, aspect, and interpersonal/textual meaning

Learners are usually taught that certain verbs such as *want*, *like* and *have to* aren't used in the progressive form. However, they may be used in the progressive form in conversation to show an indirect or polite stance toward the listener:

[Telephone enquiry to travel agent]

Customer: Oh, hello, my husband and I *are wanting* to go to the Hook of Holland next weekend.

As McCarthy and Carter (ibid) indicate: 'Here, once again, we have a case for separating spoken and written grammar, and for making sure that our spoken grammar reflects the range of tense and aspect choices open to speakers to create appropriate interpersonal meanings.'

Position of clause elements

Grammar books tend to give fixed rules on the positioning of elements in the sentence and teach learners to avoid common learner errors, such as, 'He speaks very well English'. However, in casual conversation, positioning may be very flexible, as shown by these examples:

- I was worried I was going to lose it and I did *almost*.
- You know which one I mean *probably*.

Even more notable in conversation are elements placed entirely outside of the clause position, in what is known as left (or right) dislocation:

- *A friend of mine*, his uncle had the taxi firm when we had the wedding.

Clause-complexes

Corpus evidence strongly argues for a re-examination of the types of clause-complexes found in spoken and written language and the need for rethinking the accepted

descriptions of main and subordinate clauses. For example, non-restrictive *which*-clauses may carry important evaluative information or be a response to feedback. McCarthy and Tao (1999) provide the first example and McCarthy and Carter (2001), the second (as cited in McCarthy and Carter, *ibid*):

● *Example 1:*

I can't angle it to shine on the music stand, and the bulb's gone, *which doesn't help*.

● *Example 2:*

Speaker 1: Well, actually one person has applied.

Speaker 2: Mm.

Speaker 1: *Which is great*.

While examples such as those above illustrate some of the differences between spoken and written grammar, the implications for teaching are not necessarily immediate, for a number of reasons. Firstly, differences in spoken grammar reflect features of casual conversation among native speakers. For advanced learners it may be useful to draw their attention to features such as these when they occur in authentic speech (e.g. on videos or the internet), although it is unlikely that they will need to use them productively. Secondly, some may reflect features of regional speech or of particular age groups. Despite these limitations, however, in the future we can expect to see grammatical syllabuses and resources for language teaching increasingly give more attention to the most frequent and distinctive features of spoken grammar. The following example from the *Touchstone* course (McCarthy et al., 2005), shows how information about *not* and *isn't* in spoken English is presented in a coursebook:

In conversation ...

People use *'s not* and *'re not* after pronouns.

She's *not* strict.

They're *not* nice.

Isn't and aren't often follow nouns.

My boss *isn't* strict.

My co-workers *aren't* nice.

9.5 Grammar and the language learner

Learning how to draw on grammatical knowledge in creating both sentences and texts is a central issue in second language learning and has been the focus of extensive research in applied linguistics. The language that learners produce when they are learning English reflects many different factors, such as their stage of grammatical development, the kind of

communication they are engaged in and the learner's first language, as well as the strategies the learner is making use of in communication (see Chapter 2). A number of processes are often involved, although it is not always possible to assign a feature of learner English unambiguously to a specific cause. In the example below a teacher describes how learning a foreign language can give a better understanding of learners' problems with grammar:

Understanding the learners' perspective

Living in Mexico, I learned Spanish. Some aspects of Spanish did not seem to cause problems, but other aspects did, such as the use of the subjunctive in Spanish. I tried to use the subjunctive, yet never really understood that it was a completely different tense in Spanish and that it required a way of thinking that was not part of my native language. I often used strategies to compensate for not knowing how to use the subjunctive correctly. These strategies helped me to get across my ideas. They seemed to work until I myself understood how to use the subjunctive. This mental process has helped me understand how students may be approaching learning English. Learning another language has given me empathy with my English students. While it is not necessary to know another foreign language if your native language is English, it does help the teacher understand and perhaps appreciate what our students are experiencing in the learning process.

Martha Lengeling, teacher and teacher educator, Guanajuato, Mexico

Features of learner language

Language transfer

Transfer is the effect of one language on the learning of another. Positive transfer occurs when both the native language and English have the same form or linguistic feature. Languages may share aspects of grammar, such as some patterns of word order and the use of adverbs, and these may allow for positive transfer. Negative transfer or *interference* is the use of a native-language pattern or rule that leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language. For example, a French learner of English may produce *I am here since Thursday*, instead of *I have been here since Thursday*, because of the transfer of the French pattern, *Je suis ici depuis jeudi*, and *I like very much coffee*, instead of *I like coffee very much*, transferring the pattern *J'aime beaucoup le café*. The following sentences show the result of transfer from Spanish:

- What understand the children?
- Can the director to speak with me now?
- Will not to watch TV the boys tonight?


Learners with some language backgrounds, such as German, are likely to have fewer difficulties learning how to use definite and indefinite articles in English, because German

has an article system. Japanese learners, on the other hand, find the English article system difficult, because Japanese does not have a similar article system to English. An attempt to predict the linguistic difficulties of English by comparing the grammar of English with the grammar of other languages resulted, in the 1970s, in an activity known as *contrastive analysis* (see above and Chapter 2). A teacher comments on how she addresses the issue of language transfer:

Teachers as learners, too

Being a native speaker of Portuguese and having worked with Brazilian learners for nearly two decades, predicting difficulties and language-transfer issues had been quite easy. Since I started teaching multicultural classes in Australia, I have always found it useful to learn grammar features of my students' native languages. This knowledge, however basic, has enabled me to better predict language-transfer issues and subsequent difficulties, when introducing new language features to learners. As a result, I make more informed decisions regarding how to present, explain and practise language items, which result in classes that are tailored to the groups in question. On top of that, as learners become aware of my efforts to 'walk in their shoes' and tend to their difficulties, a feeling of camaraderie is established, which contributes to a more successful learning atmosphere. In multicultural groups, where cultural awareness plays an important role, this kind of effort on the teacher's part helps build error tolerance and empathy among learners.

Priscilla Brooking, teacher and teacher educator, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Sydney, Australia

 **Have you ever attempted to learn about the grammar features of your students' native language(s)? If so, has it helped you to predict potential grammatical difficulties?**

Overgeneralization

The process of overgeneralization refers to extending the use of a form, by analogy, to an inappropriate context. This is a normal and natural process, and both learners of English as a second language as well as children learning English as a first language often extend the use of grammatical rules to contexts where they do not occur, as in *I broke the vase* or *We goes to the beach*. Other examples of overgeneralization are seen in the following:

- Under no circumstances, we will accept these terms.
- They didn't like it; not I liked it.
- She was unhappy at the development; so I was.
- Now I see why did they behave like that.

Sometimes overgeneralization may mean over-using a grammatical form, such as the *-ing* form, as with these examples:

- I don't know why people always talking me.
- Yesterday, I didn't working.

A common form of overgeneralization is seen when learners attempt to make irregular verbs fit regular patterns, as with *break*, above, and also with cases such as *seened* (for *saw*), *ated* (for *ate*) and *wented* (for *went*). Ortega (2009: 117) comments:

This process typically manifests itself after a certain level of development has been reached, in that it presupposes that learners have at least partially figured out some regularity. After systematically overgeneralizing, the learning task is to retreat from the overgeneralization and to adjust the application of the form or rule to increasingly more relevant contexts.

Simplification

Simplification occurs when learners reduce a complex aspect of grammar to a much simpler set of rules, and reflects a process that is used when messages need to be conveyed with limited language resources. For example, instead of making the distinction between *he* and *she*, the learner may use the masculine pronoun, or instead of distinguishing between first and third person in verbs (*I like*; *she likes*), the learner may use the first person rule for all persons (*I like*; *he/she like*). Ortega notes (ibid.) that simplification is common in the early stages of language learning and particularly in naturalistic learning situations. Simplification of aspects of grammar such as question tags occurs in some varieties of English. In colloquial Singapore English, for example, one encounters:

- That was your sister, is it?
- You are from the States, is it?

Underuse

Sometimes learners may underuse a form they have studied and practised many times. For example, the learner may avoid using some constructions with *if*, such as *If I had known, I would have told her about it*, and use, instead, *I didn't know so I didn't tell her*, because it appears to them as more direct and easier to understand.

Overuse

At other times, a learner may become over-dependent on certain grammatically correct forms and use them in preference to other forms that might be known and available. For example, the learner may become dependent on a phrase such as *last time* to refer to past events and use it when other ways of referring to past time could have been used:

- I like Thai food. I tried it *last time*.
- I know her. We met *last time*.

Fossilization

Sometimes a learner's grammatical development appears to have stopped at a certain level, and recurring errors of both grammar and pronunciation have become permanent features of a learner's speech. This is referred to as fossilization. Fossilization refers to the persistence of errors in a learner's speech, despite progress in other areas of language development (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). For example, here are a few examples of fossilized errors in an adult, fluent speaker of English who uses English regularly and effectively, though often with a high frequency of what we might regard as basic grammatical and other errors:

- I doesn't understand what she wanted.
- He never ask me for help.
- Last night, I watch TV till 2 a.m.
- She say she meeting me after work.

Fossilized errors, such as those above, tend not to affect comprehension, although they might be stigmatized, due to the fact that they often reflect errors that are typical of very basic-level learners (such as omission of third person -s). Since fossilized errors do not generally trigger misunderstanding and hence do not prompt a clarification request from the listener, the learner may simply never notice them or be aware that they are there. The noticing hypothesis (see below) suggests that unless the speaker notices such errors, it is unlikely that he or she will correct them. A teacher educator comments on his experiences encountering fossilization among students:

The fossilization problem

Fossilization, I am sure, is not an uncommon phenomenon in the ESL/EFL context. And it was often a common topic for me and my Chinese colleagues at the university. We were actually shocked at the fact that fossilization should exist in such young learners as freshmen or sophomores. For example, there were a few students who didn't seem to be able to use the correct subject-verb agreement and some others who refused to say good-bye to their incorrect pronunciation, though we as teachers repeatedly took turns to raise their awareness. It may be true that some types of fossilizations do not hinder communication, but my experience tells me that they may erode students' confidence in writing and speaking English, once they realize that they have fallen victim to these chronic complications, i.e. fossilizations of both grammar and pronunciation.

Ao Ran, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China; Singapore



If fossilized errors do not cause a communication breakdown, do you think they need to be corrected?

9.6 Accessing and using learned grammar

A common concern for teachers is helping learners access and use grammar that has been learned. Failure to use previously taught or learned grammar may result from several factors.

Factors affecting use of grammar

Performance factors

The learner may be focusing on formulating an idea and, due to other factors in the situation, may not produce error-free discourse. These factors include time pressure, the setting and the degree to which the learner has the opportunity to control the channels of communication.

Automatic processing

The distinction between controlled and automatic processing (see Chapter 2) suggests that learning involves development from a stage where tasks require considerable control, management and planning to a stage where they can be performed under automatic processing – a level where little conscious effort is required. The context for communication may influence the degree of automatic processing and hence the level of accuracy involved. A learner may speak relatively fluently, using automatic processing with good control of grammar, when carrying out a task with a partner. The same learner, when making an oral presentation in front of the class, may now be more conscious of his or her language (controlled processing comes into effect), and this may actually interfere with accuracy, resulting in more grammatical errors than were seen in the pair work task.

Task factors

The distinction between the two kinds of processing above suggests that use of grammar may also depend on the kind of task the learner is engaged in, since the amount of attention to accuracy may differ according to whether the task is reading a story aloud, telling a story, free conversation, an interview, a discussion, a written task and so on. Some tasks may require little attention to accuracy (such as free conversation), whereas others require much more (e.g. a written task). For some tasks, such as telling a story, the speaker may have access to available plans or schemas, from previous knowledge, that reduce planning time and effort. The result may be discourse that is linguistically different from discourse used during conversational interaction. It may be less hesitant, and the speaker may be able to employ more complex forms than were found in unplanned conversational interaction. Accuracy of performance on tasks may also depend on the amount of planning time that the task involves (Skehan, 1998).



If you speak English (or another language) as a second language, what kinds of activities pose the most and the least difficulty for you in terms of using grammatically accurate language?

As with accuracy, the degree of fluency a person achieves may also depend on the context (e.g. speaking in public before an audience, rather than face to face), the kind of task the learner is attempting and the amount of time involved. Other factors that can influence fluency include the following:

Familiarity

If an activity is familiar because it has been frequently encountered previously, it is likely to be performed more fluently – hence, the importance of practice in developing fluency. Practice can lead to the development of routines and strategies for managing the processes of communication, and as these processes become automatized, more fluent output may result. Nation (2011) points out that with fluency-focused activities, there is a focus on the message, including relatively easy content, the need to increase speed and to generate substantial amounts of language.

Difficulty

It follows from the above that tasks that are difficult either because of the nature of the task or the lexical load of the task are likely to involve more cognitive efforts than simple tasks, and this can influence how fluently they are performed.

Focus on form

Research suggests that acquisition of grammar is facilitated if learners have opportunities to focus on form (i.e. to ‘notice’ aspects of grammar) at some stage during the performance of an activity – either before, during or after carrying out an activity. Harmer comments (2007: 54):

Students acquire language best when they have focused on it, either because they need it or have come across it in a meaning-focused communicative task or because in some other way, they have noticed language which is relevant to them at a particular time.

The nature of the output learners are engaged in has also been identified as an important factor in promoting complexification of the learners’ grammatical knowledge (Swain, 1999; Skehan, 1998). The notion of *stretched output* refers to learners engaging in classroom tasks that call upon them to ‘stretch’ their language resources and to use more complex syntactic structures. Swain describes the use of dictogloss

activities, in which the teacher reads a short passage, at normal speed, containing specific grammatical structures. Students take notes and then work in small groups to attempt to reconstruct the passage, using the correct grammatical structures. (Dictogloss targets the use of written language.) Skehan (1998: 58) suggests that from these activities there emerges a mismatch between what the learner knows and what he or she needs to complete the task. The pressure to express meaning prompts the learner to search for the syntax needed to do so. As a result there is a restructuring of the existing language system. This can be seen as a co-construction resulting from collaborative consciousness-raising and the sharing of grammatical and analytic resources.

Activities in which students notice the difference between their language and that of more advanced learners (referred to as 'notice the gap' activities) can also promote restructuring. For example, students might complete a task and then watch a video of more advanced learners carrying out the same task.

The role of feedback

The development of grammatical competence is a gradual and lengthy process, during which learners make use of a variety of sources of input about the nature of English and their use of English. Some of this is the feedback learners receive about their performance. Two important issues are: (1) How can the learner become aware of errors in his or her own production, and (2) What kind of instructional techniques are likely to be most effective in helping remove fossilized errors? Suggestions for addressing the first question involve learners becoming active monitors of their own language production through listening or viewing recordings of their own speech or through having others monitor their speech for fossilized errors in focused listening sessions. The second question raises the issue of error correction: What kinds of errors should be corrected, when and how?

9.7 Approaches to teaching grammar

Inductive learning vs. deductive learning

Current approaches to grammar in language teaching today vary from those that can be referred to as 'grammar first' to those that can be characterized as 'grammar last', as well as a range of positions in between. Approaches in the first category represent traditional views of the status of grammar in language learning. The assumption is that learners should build up knowledge and use of grammar step by step through activities involving presentation of grammar and controlled practice in using the grammar, then leading to more open-ended use of the grammar in simple, guided oral and written tasks. With this approach, teaching follows a predetermined, carefully graded grammatical

syllabus. Texts, dialogues and other forms of input serve as vehicles for presenting grammar.

An example of the latter category may involve using content, texts or tasks as the framework for selecting and practising language use, where grammar is only taught as it is needed to discuss the content, create the texts or carry out the tasks. This approach is seen in text-based teaching, task-based teaching, content-based teaching and CLIL (see Chapter 3). Less radical approaches involve including both a grammatical syllabus and communicative tasks, which together form the basis for teaching activities. This approach is typically seen in global ESL/ELT coursebooks such as *Headway*, *Interchange* and *Four Corners*.

Regardless of approach, teachers have a choice whether to teach grammar inductively or deductively. In an inductive approach, students are encouraged to ‘discover’ the rules themselves, based on the input presented to them. In a deductive approach, the rules are given to the students, along with language exemplifying them. There is no single ‘right’ way to teach or learn grammar. Many teachers use a combination of these two approaches, based on their students’ learning styles. Here, a teacher describes the advantages of using corpora to help students discover grammatical patterns:

Corpora as a tool for guided discovery

I’m a big believer in guided-discovery learning and fostering an environment where learners are cognitively active. When students discover information themselves, deeper learning transpires, the information is more memorable, students tend to be engaged, and other skills are encouraged, as well, such as problem-solving. Online corpora are one tool I use for this type of teaching. I also like the fact that if students get comfortable with using a corpus and concordancer, it becomes a tool they can use autonomously.

I use corpora in the classroom in a variety of ways. They are great for learning about many facets of language, including vocabulary, lexico-grammatical patterns and collocations. I personally like to use the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

One way to utilize COCA with advanced or upper-intermediate students is to help them discover the difference between *hope* and *wish*. Using the KWIC (keyword in context) feature, students can see each word in a natural context. The parts of speech are color coded, so students can easily look for the words in their verb forms only. I provide some guiding questions before they begin in order to facilitate their understanding. I want them to see that *hope* is used when something is still possible and *wish* is used when something is no longer possible/likely, so my questions are designed to make that difference salient. Going further, students investigate which verb tenses occur with each word by answering more guiding questions. They find that *hope* often occurs with present tense discussing future possibility, whereas *wish* occurs with past tense, in reference to the present, or past perfect, in reference to the past. If students have

studied conditionals, I try to help them make the connection that the meaning–tense connection follows the pattern of unreal conditionals, where past tense refers to the present and past perfect refers to the past.

Marcella Caprario, teacher, New York, NY, US



Learners sometimes have strong preferences for either inductive or deductive grammar work. What is your own preference? Do you use both techniques in class?

Developing accuracy, fluency and complexity

There are several ways in which classroom activities can help learners develop the use of grammatically appropriate language, acquire more complex forms and also improve their fluency. These involve providing support at three different stages: prior to the activity, during the activity and after completing an activity.

Providing support prior to the activity

Here there are two goals: (1) to provide language support that can be used in completing a task, and (2) to clarify the nature of the task so that students can give less attention to procedural aspects of the task and hence monitor their language use during their performance, while carrying out a task. Skehan notes (1996a: 53): ‘Pre-task activities can aim to teach or mobilize or make salient language which will be relevant to task performance.’ This can be accomplished in several ways.

By pre-teaching certain linguistic forms

These forms can then be used while completing the task. For example, prior to completing a role-play task which practises calling an apartment owner to discuss renting an apartment, students can first read advertisements for apartments and learn key vocabulary they will use in a role play. They could also listen to and practise a dialogue in which a prospective tenant calls an apartment owner for information. The dialogue serves both to display different questioning strategies and to model the kind of task the students will perform.

By reducing the cognitive complexity of the activity

If an activity is difficult to carry out, learners’ attention may be diverted to the structure and management of the task, leaving little opportunity for them to monitor the language they use on the task. One way of reducing the cognitive complexity of the activity is to provide students with a chance for prior rehearsal. Dialogue work prior to carrying out the role play referred to above might serve the function of introducing students to the relevant structures.

By giving time to plan the activity

Time allocated to planning, prior to carrying out an activity, can likewise provide learners with schemas, vocabulary and language forms that they can call upon while completing the task. Brainstorming activities fall into this area.



What kind of support would be useful to provide to learners prior to their practising an interview task?

Providing support during an activity

A focus on language and skill in performance can be facilitated during the completion of an activity by choosing how the activity is to be carried out. The way it is implemented can determine whether it is carried out fluently, with a focus on target-language forms, or disfluently, with excessive dependence on communication strategies and with employment of lexicalized, rather than grammaticalized, discourse as well as the overuse of ellipsis and non-linguistic resources. Factors which can be varied in order to increase or decrease the level of fluency include:

- *Participation*: Whether the activity is completed individually or with other learners.
- *Procedures*: The number of procedures involved in completing an activity.
- *Resources*: The materials and other resources provided for the learners to use while completing an activity.
- *Order*: The sequencing of an activity in relation to previous tasks.
- *Product*: The outcome or outcomes students produce, such as a written product or an oral one.

For example, in conducting a survey task, the design of the resources students use could have a crucial impact on the appropriateness of the language used in carrying out the task. If the survey form or questionnaire students use provides models of the types of questions they should ask, it may result in a better level of language use during questioning and make other aspects of the task easier and hence more fluent, since less planning will need to be devoted to formulating appropriate questions.

Similarly, the order of an activity in relation to other tasks may influence the use of target structures. For example, if students are to carry out an activity that requires the use of sequence markers, a prior activity which models how sequence markers are used may result in more frequent use of sequence markers during the performance of the target task (see Swain, 1999).



What kind of support to help students during the 'carrying-out phase' would be useful in a group discussion task with intermediate-level students?

Providing support after the activity

Grammatical appropriateness can also be addressed after a task has been completed. There are several activities of this type:

Public performance: After completing an activity in small groups, students carry out the same task in front of the class or another group. This can have the effect of prompting them to perform the activity using more accurate language, as well as more fluently, and can lead to stretched output as noted above.

Repeat performance: The same activity might be repeated with some elements modified, such as the amount of time available. Nation (1989), for example, reports improvements in fluency, control of content and, to a lesser extent, accuracy when learners repeat an oral task under time constraints.

Performance by others: The students might listen to more advanced learners (or even native speakers) completing the same task and focus on some of the linguistic and communicative resources employed in the process.



What kind of post-performance support could be provided for a role play?

9.8 Assessing grammatical knowledge

Assessment of grammar reflects the philosophy or approach that provides the framework for a language course. Grammar has a different status in communicative language teaching, task-based teaching and text-based teaching, for example, and each approach or method consequently involves a different strategy for assessing grammar. Traditionally, grammar was seen as the major contributor to second language development, and a student's performance on a grammar test was often seen as a measure of his or her overall language proficiency. Grammar was tested as an independent component of language ability. However, while this approach is still common today, increasingly grammar is assessed as a component of communicative ability and performance – particularly in relation to the productive skills of either writing or speaking. Jones (2012) comments:

At the lower end of Cambridge English Language Assessment's range of exams, both the Key English Test (KET) and the Preliminary English Test (PET) assess the four main skill areas and do not incorporate a separate grammar component. On the other hand, the higher-level exams do contain a separate 'Use of English' paper that, according to the First Certificate in English (FCE) Handbook, 'focuses on the language knowledge of structures and system(s) that underpin a user's communicative language ability in the written medium'.

And as Hughes (2003: 172) observes:

Control of grammatical structures was seen as the very core of language ability, and it would have been unthinkable not to test it. But times have changed. As far as proficiency tests are

concerned, there has been a shift towards the view that since it is language skills that are usually of interest, then it is these which should be tested directly, not the abilities that seem to underlie them.

Hughes suggests that grammar continues to be tested as a component of either a proficiency test or an achievement test, i.e. with a focus on *grammatical knowledge*, rather than *grammatical ability*, since a) grammar tests are relatively easy to administer and score, and b) grammar continues to be a separate component of many language courses. Here, we will consider the testing of grammar when it is a separate component of a course of study. Grammatical accuracy as a feature of other skills is discussed in other chapters (e.g. Chapters 13 and 15), and issues related to scoring in Chapter 20.

Choice of task types

Jones (2012) distinguishes three task types that commonly occur in grammar tests.

Selected response

A multiple-choice question is an example of this task-type, where students select one appropriate response from choices provided:

The building _____ in 1906.
a. built c. had built
b. was built d. has built

A matching task is another version of a selected-response question. For example, the student is required to match each question with an appropriate response:

Question	Response
1. Going to see a film tonight?	A. No, I didn't.
2. How was the film?	B. Yes, I probably will.
3. I can't stand war films. Can you?	C. Actually, I quite like them.
4. So you went to the cinema?	D. All right, nothing special.

Questions such as the above test students' recognition of grammatical items, rather than their ability to use them.

Limited-production tasks

These require some production of grammatical items, but in a controlled manner. Examples are:

Rearranging:

Make a sentence out of these words.

like movies American lot I a

Gap-filling:

Fill in the gaps in these sentences.

A. What are you doing tonight?

B. I _____ (study) for tomorrow's test.

A. What kind of test?

B. We _____ (have) a grammar test.

Hughes (2003: 175) gives examples of using a longer passage for gap filling, and a rewriting task, where a set of related structures can be tested.

Gap-filling:

In England, children go to _____ school from Monday to Friday. _____ school that Mary goes to is very small. She walks there each morning with _____ friend. One morning they saw _____ man throwing _____ stones and _____ pieces of wood at _____ dog. _____ dog was afraid of _____ man.

Rewriting:

Say the same thing in a different way.

1. Tony is good at tennis.

Tony plays _____.

2. I saw Sara six years ago.

It's been six years _____.

3. When we arrived, a policeman was questioning the bank clerk.

When we arrived, the bank clerk _____.

However, commenting on tests of this kind, Purpura (2004) states:

Since the early 1960s, language educators have associated grammar tests with discrete-point, multiple-choice tests of grammatical form. These and other 'traditional' test tasks

(e.g., grammaticality judgments) have been severely criticized for lacking in authenticity, for not engaging test-takers in language use and for promoting behaviours that are not readily consistent with communicative language teaching. Discrete-point testing methods may have even led some teachers to have reservations about testing grammar or to have uncertainties about how to test it communicatively. While there is a place for discrete-point tasks in grammar assessment, language educators have long used a wide range of simple and complex tasks in which to assess test-takers' explicit and implicit knowledge of grammar.

Purpura goes on to say that discrete-point items lack construct validity, i.e. they don't test the ability that they are designed to test:

For example, if we wished to make claims about test-takers' ability to use grammar to argue for or against some public policy, a selected-response task would not be likely to provide the type of evidence needed to support this claim, since a selected-response task does not require students to understand and respond to an interlocutor's opinions, express a coherent set of opinions, provide support for opinions and work collaboratively to resolve policy implications. The challenge, then, is to specify the characteristics of a task that will, in fact, provide a consistent measurement of the construct we are trying to get at in this particular situation.

Extended-production tasks

According to Jones (2012: 254), 'these tasks measure an examinee's ability to use grammatical forms and structures to convey meaning at discourse level, through writing and speaking... and could include essays and report writing and speaking tasks involving information and problem solving, simulation and role-play activities'.

9.9 Conclusion

The role of grammar in language learning, language use, and language teaching, is one of the most complex issues in language teaching and one which continues to attract controversy and debate. Issues related to grammar are often framed as simple choices. Should one use a deductive or inductive approach? Should a focus on form occur before or after students complete a task? Should feedback on errors occur when an error is made or at a later time? The overview provided in this chapter has, hopefully, highlighted the fact that a number of factors need to be considered before issues such as these can be addressed, such as the stage of development the learner is at, the context in which language is being used, the learner's preferred learning style, the learner's first language, the type of task or text involved and so on. One point on which agreement is more certain however is the fact that grammar does not exist in isolation: it is always part of something else, evident in both sentences and texts, and is also an important component of each of the four skills. However, grammar should not simply be left to chance. A well-planned language course should reflect the central role grammar plays in both written and spoken language and provide learners with opportunities to develop grammar as a communicative resource.

Discussion questions

- 1** Examine two coursebooks of a similar level and compare the range of grammatical items they include and the way they are taught.
- 2** Select a reading text from a coursebook. What features of text grammar does it contain?
- 3** What kinds of accuracy-focused and fluency-focused activities do you use in your teaching?
- 4** Take a text from a low-level coursebook and rewrite it so that it would be suitable for learners of a higher level. Then examine the kinds of changes you made. In what ways is the language of the revised text more complex?
- 5** Some learners are not very concerned with the accuracy of their grammar and are satisfied if they can make themselves understood. What arguments could you offer to suggest they take the issue of accuracy more seriously, if you believe it is important?
- 6** What are some other beliefs you think your learners hold about the role of grammar in language learning? How might these beliefs influence their approach to learning?
- 7** Collect some samples of written errors from your learners. Do you find examples of a) language transfer, and b) overgeneralization?
- 8** Select a grammatical item from a coursebook. Suggest ways of teaching the item a) inductively, and b) deductively.

Appendix 1:

Teaching the passive voice

Look at the sample lesson plan for teaching the passive voice and the handouts prepared for students, submitted by Marcella Caprario, a teacher in New York. What stages does the lesson consist of? What approach to teaching grammar does the lesson reflect?

Sample lesson plan for teaching passive voice with newspaper articles

1 Goals

- To raise students' awareness of the passive voice, to encourage noticing of this structure.
- Students will be able to identify the basic formal structure of the passive voice.
- Students will be able to articulate some of the reasons for using the passive voice.
- Students will work together communicatively, using linguistic problem-solving skills.

2 Resources

- Two short newspaper articles of appropriate level, containing examples of the passive voice. It is best if the articles have a variety of tenses and/or a mix of singular and plural.
- Comprehension questions for reading.
- Guided-discovery worksheet.
- Gap-fill or other controlled-practice activity.
- Video recording device (optional).

3 Timing

- 90 minutes (the length of the performance portion depends on the size of your class).

4 Grouping

- Solo, pairs, small groups (three to five), whole class.

5 Activities

- Reading.
- Grammar tasks.
- Dialogue writing.
- Role-play / dialogue performance.

6 Sequencing

- Lead in.
 1. Teacher distributes a brief high-interest newspaper article of appropriate level that has at least a few examples of the passive voice, with some general comprehension questions.
 2. Students answer the comprehension questions and briefly discuss the article in pairs.
 3. Teacher checks comprehension.

- Once students comprehend the article well, teacher shifts to a language focus by writing the passive-voice examples from the text on the board and distributes the guided-discovery worksheet.
- 1. Make sure all students are familiar with the metalanguage on the worksheet, particularly *doer* and *receiver* of a verb. Teacher can put a chart on the board showing the metalanguage next to an example, if the students need more scaffolding:

present tense	<i>go/goes</i>
base verb	<i>go</i>
V3	<i>gone</i>

2. Students copy the sample sentences from the board onto the worksheet.
3. Students complete Section A (form focus). I recommend using a think–pair–share model where students work alone first, then with a partner and, finally, the teacher elicits the correct answers from the whole class.
4. Students complete Section B (meaning/use focus) in the same manner.
5. Students complete Section C (structure formula and consolidation of previous sections) in the same manner again.

There are several reasons for using passive voice, all of which are probably not exemplified in one brief article. The teacher may wish to make students aware of this fact, but highlight that the general reason behind any use of passive is to draw focus onto the receiver of the action and/or away from the doer.

- Teacher distributes the second brief article.
 1. Students scan for examples of the passive voice and underline them.
 2. In pairs or small groups, students discuss why the writer has used the passive voice in each case.
 3. Teacher goes over the answers when groups have finished.
- Practice.
 1. Teacher distributes a gap-fill or other controlled-practice activity.
 2. Teacher checks answers.
- In small groups of three to five, students create their own news stories, which they will perform for the class as a news-broadcast role play. Students should try to use the passive voice in appropriate places, but also to be creative. Video-recording these can be fun if the students are up for it. (I use my Android to record.) Teacher takes note of any errors in the passive voice.
- Closure.
 1. Teacher writes errors on the board when performances are finished, and students use the guided-discovery worksheet to help them make corrections in pairs or small groups.
 2. Students come up to the board to write corrections. (If time is an issue, teacher can elicit the corrections and write them him/herself.)

3. Teacher reviews the lesson and assigns homework:
 - a Students look for an article with at least one example of the passive voice. They should underline all examples of the passive and write down why they think it was used. Collect this assignment next class.
 - b Students choose one of the stories their group came up with for the news role play and write up a brief news article, using appropriate examples of the passive voice. Collect this assignment next class.

Handout

PASSIVE VOICE

SAMPLE SENTENCES (copied from the board):

Sentence 1:

Sentence 2:

Sentence 3:

Sentence 4:

SECTION A – FORM

- 1** Circle the verb *be* in each sample sentence.
- 2** Underline the main verb (the one with *be*) in each sample sentence.
- 3** What form is the main verb in? Circle a choice below.
past present base V3
- 4** What time periods are the sentences talking about? Circle all correct choices below.
past present future
- 5** How do you know the time period in each sentence? _____
- 6** What is in the subject position (before the verb), the doer of the verb or receiver? _____
- 7** If the doer of the verb is included, what word appears directly before it (we can call this the 'doer phrase')? _____
- 8** If the 'doer phrase' is included in the sentence, where does it occur? _____

***** STOP HERE *****

SECTION B – WHY USE IT?

- 1** What is the action (verb) in each sentence? (List them all.)

- 2** Who or what is the doer of the action in each sentence? (List them all.)

- 3** In these sentences, which is the speaker or writer more focused on, the doer of the action or the receiver? _____

- 4** Do we have to include the doer in each sentence? _____

- 5** Can you guess why the speaker or writer put the focus on the receiver of the action in each example? (There may be different reasons for different sentences.)

*** STOP HERE ***

SECTION C – PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

What's the form? Use your answers from Section A to help you.

 Subject + +
(+).

What are some reasons for using this form?

Do you think it is more common to include the doer of the verb or leave it out when using this grammar structure? Why do you think so?

Appendix 2:


A secret

Look at Activity 4 below from the textbook *English Unlimited* (Clementson et al., 2010). How do the activities address the differences between spoken and written grammar?

11.1

A secret

LISTENING



Jhulan and Rahul, Suresh's parents

VOCABULARY
Relating a conversation

PRONUNCIATION
Quoting

WRITING AND SPEAKING

1 **3.2** Listen to part of a conversation between Suresh and Meninda.

- Who has a secret? Who are they keeping the secret from?
- What do you think it might be about?

2 **3.3** Listen to a conversation between Meninda and her sister Indra about Suresh, their cousin. Were your ideas in 1 correct?

3 a What can you remember? Who:

1 wants Suresh to take the job?	4 has turned down a job?
2 wants to go travelling for a year?	5 is going to be upset?
3 tells Suresh to talk to his parents?	6 is going to talk to Suresh?

3 b Listen again to check.

b What do you think about Suresh's plan? Do you think he should tell his parents?

4 Look at the sentences from the conversation and discuss the questions.

<p>Say is the most common word used to report direct speech.</p> <p>Meninda also uses these very informal expressions to report direct speech.</p>	<p>1 He said, "You know I've been offered this great job ..."</p> <p>2 Then I said to him, "Have you found something better?"</p> <p>3 He says, "Look, I want to tell you something. ..."</p> <p>4 ... and then he says to me, "Well, I said no!"</p> <p>5 And he goes, "No, I've got a more interesting plan."</p> <p>6 I went, "You can't do that! You've got to tell them!"</p> <p>7 So I'm like, "Yeah! So what are you going to do?"</p> <p>8 I was like, "When are you going to tell them?"</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1 Do the highlighted words and expressions report:
• the exact words people say? • a summary of what they say?

2 Do they introduce:
• only statements? • only questions? • both statements and questions?

3 When the speakers use the present tense, is this:
• to show when something happened? • to make a story more dramatic?

5 a When you quote someone's exact words, you pause and your voice goes up.

3.4 Listen to these extracts from Meninda and Indra's conversation:

MENINDA So then he said, // ↑ "You know I've been offered this great job by that law firm?"
So of course I say yeah, and then he says to me, // ↑ "Well, I said no!"
I said, // ↑ "You're mad!" Then I said to him, // ↑ "Have you found something better?" And he goes, // ↑ "No, I've got a more interesting plan!"

b **3.4** Listen again, then practise saying the sentences.

6 a Meninda and Indra persuade Suresh to tell his father about his plans. In pairs, discuss these questions.

- How do you think Suresh and his father will feel?
- What do you think the result of the conversation will be?

b Write the conversation between Suresh and his father.

Suresh: "Dad, there's something I need to tell you." ...

c Imagine you're Suresh. Work with a new partner and relate the conversation to Meninda. Use some of the highlighted expressions in 4.

7 **3.5** Listen to the actual conversation between Suresh and his father. Were your conversations similar or different?

So, I say, "Dad, there's something I need to tell you." So he goes, ...

Appendix 3:

Adding information

Look at Activity 2 below from the textbook *Viewpoint* (McCarthy et al., 2012). Which of the characteristics of spoken grammar, discussed in this chapter, does this activity include?

- 2 Grammar Adding information**
- A Check (✓) the sentence that has a complete meaning if you remove the words in bold. Then read the grammar chart.**

1. We love to read about celebrities' problems, **which the media will often invent**. ☐
2. There are even shows **that pay for plastic surgery**. ☐

Defining and non-defining relative clauses

Grammar extra
See page 146.

Defining relative clauses define, identify, or give essential information about a noun.

There are shows **that/which pay for plastic surgery**.

We love to read about the people **(who/that) celebrities date** and the clothes **(that) they wear**.

Non-defining relative clauses give extra information about a noun.

They do not begin with *that*. Notice the use of commas.

Celebrity magazines, **which outnumber news magazines**, are everywhere.

It's natural to talk about celebrities, **who we see as successful people**.

A *which* clause can add information or a comment to the clause before it.

This obsession is normal, **which is reassuring**.

Celebrities come into our homes, **which almost makes them family**.

In conversation ...

That is more common than *which* in defining relative clauses.

Non-defining and *which* clauses often give opinions as well as information.

Common errors

Do not use *which* for people, or *what* in relative clauses.

- B Complete the interview extracts with *who*, *that*, or *which*. If you can leave them out, write parentheses () around them. Sometimes there is more than one correct answer.**

1. **Miki** I like to read about the problems (~~the~~) celebrities are having. _____ makes me feel better about *my* problems. I don't want to know all the details of their marriages, _____ should be private, but ... just a few things.
2. **Tariq** I'm interested in celebrities _____ can do other things. For example, there's Natalie Portman, _____'s a scientist. She's published in journals, _____ is interesting.
3. **Miguel** Well, I'll occasionally read the gossip in magazines, _____ is probably all untrue anyway. It's a distraction from work, _____ I think we all need. And it gives me something to talk about with my co-worker Jo, _____'s really into celebrity gossip and stuff.
4. **Salwa** Actually, I'm not interested in celebrities, _____. I feel set a bad example. You know, they often think they can do anything just because they're famous, _____ is ridiculous, really.

3 Viewpoint Who's into celebrity gossip?

Class activity Ask your classmates the questions. Are you a celebrity-obsessed class?

- Are you interested in celebrities? If so, what interests you about them?
- How closely do you follow celebrity gossip? Which celebrities are in the news at the moment?
- What other celebrity gossip have you heard about in the last year?

"I'm interested in the clothes that celebrities wear. I mean, they wear some weird things, which is always fun."

In conversation ...

Use *I mean*, ... to repeat your ideas or say more.

4 Speaking naturally *which* clauses See page 138.

Further reading

- Ellis, R. (2006) 'Current issues in the teaching of grammar: An SLA perspective', *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 83–107.
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10

Vocabulary

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What is the nature of vocabulary knowledge?
 - Dimensions of knowing a word.
- What are the main targets for vocabulary learning?
 - Core vocabulary.
 - Academic vocabulary.
 - Technical vocabulary.
- How can vocabulary be learned effectively?
 - The gradual nature of vocabulary acquisition.
 - Direct or indirect vocabulary learning.
 - The role of memory.
 - The role of learning strategies.
- What are the principles for vocabulary instruction?
 - Planning vocabulary teaching.
 - Integrating vocabulary teaching into the lesson.
- How can vocabulary be assessed?

10.1 Introduction

Words and grammar are often thought of as the building blocks of language proficiency. A learner with a large vocabulary is well equipped to develop skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking. And since vocabulary (or *lexis* as it is referred to in applied linguistics) plays a role in all of the four skills, every English lesson is, at least in part, a vocabulary lesson. The learning of vocabulary often appears to be a daunting task for learners, since all languages contain large numbers of words. Many English dictionaries, for example, list over 100,000 words. However, learners often have restricted needs for vocabulary learning. Vocabulary development in a second language involves developing a core vocabulary which is common to many different domains, genres and text types, as well as building up more specialized vocabulary related to the learner's own interests and needs, whether these are academic, occupational or social. Learning vocabulary is an incremental process that involves frequent encounters with words and their uses over time. The task learners and teachers face is to answer the following questions: How many words do students need to know, and how can words best be taught and, more importantly, remembered? And to what extent is the learning of vocabulary the teacher or the learner's responsibility? This chapter explores these and other issues in the domain of vocabulary learning and teaching.

Goals for vocabulary teaching

Vocabulary does not normally constitute the focus of an entire language course. It is a component of every course, but the emphasis it receives will vary according to which skills the course addresses, the level of the course and the learner's background. Learners with romance-language backgrounds will find that they already 'know' many words in English, since English contains thousands of words of French or Latin origin. However, students with Chinese or Russian as a first language have no such advantage. And since every language contains more words than anyone could master in a lifetime, the goals of vocabulary instruction are not to 'teach' vocabulary, but rather to provide opportunities for learners to improve their knowledge and use of vocabulary related to their specific needs. This means that the teacher's role is to identify learners' vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary needs; to select materials that can be used as a vocabulary-learning resource; to design activities within a course that focus on vocabulary development and retention of words that have been encountered; and to help learners develop strategies for managing their own vocabulary learning. In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to understand the nature of vocabulary and vocabulary learning and to consider the different instructional options that can be used to facilitate second language vocabulary development.

10.2 The nature of vocabulary knowledge

There are many aspects to knowing a word, as is illustrated in Nation's description of dimensions of word knowledge (Nation, 2001):

Form	
Spoken	R What does the word sound like? P How is the word pronounced?
Written	R What does the word sound like? P How is the word written and spelled?
Word parts	R What parts are recognizable in this word? P What word parts are needed to express this meaning?
Meaning	
Form and meaning	R What meaning does this word form signal? P What word form can be used to express this meaning?
Concepts and referents	R What is included in the concept? P What items can the concept refer to?
Associations	R What other words does this make us think of? P What other words could we use, instead of this one?
Use	
Grammatical functions	R In what patterns does the word occur? P In what patterns must we use this word?
Collocations	R What words or types of words occur with this one? P What types of words must we use with this one?
Constraints on use	R Where, when and how often would we expect to meet this word? P Where, when and how often can we use this word?

R = receptive knowledge
P = productive knowledge

We generally think of words as single lexical items, although words often occur in multi-word groups, which are discussed below. And research using corpus analysis has revealed a great deal about the kinds of word groupings that occur in natural language use and how words are used in both spoken and written English. O’Keeffe et al. comment (2007: 60):

And what corpora reveal is that much of our linguistic output consists of repeated multi-word units, rather than single words. Language is available for use in ready-made chunks to a far greater extent than could ever be accommodated by a theory of language which rested upon the primacy of syntax.

O’Keeffe et al. (ibid.: 65–7) give examples of the most frequent two- to five-word chunks in a five-million word corpus, which include:

Two-word chunks: *I mean, sort of, and then, do you, if you, don't know.*

Three-word chunks: *I don't know, do you think, you know what, but I mean.*

Four-word chunks: *At the end of, I don't know if, or something like that.*

Five-word chunks: *You know what I mean, all the rest of it, and all that sort of.*



Do you include multi-word units like these in your teaching? What resources are useful for introducing learners to these kinds of expressions?

Dimensions of knowing a word

Word relations

The meaning of a word depends not only on its core meaning but also on its relationship to other words. For example, *start* is linked to *finish* (an antonym), to *begin* and *commence* (synonyms) and to other words having the same core or root: *restart, starter, starting*. Some words exist in a hierarchical relationship to other words. *Seat*, for example, refers to a category of words that includes *chair, bench, stool* and so on. Learning words, therefore, involves learning a network of relations among words, and these are important in teaching and learning vocabulary. It is easier to learn words if they are presented in connected groups, rather than as a list of unrelated items.

Multiple meanings

Many words have multiple meanings, and the more meanings a word has, the more likely a learner is to encounter the word. A learner may first learn *hold*, in the sense of gripping something in the hand, and later encounter it in many other uses, such as *hold on, hold up, hold an idea, hold a position* or *hold a meeting*. The first meaning of *hold* above can be regarded as its 'core' meaning and often would be the meaning taught first, although it might be possible to learn a fixed expression, such as *hold on* – said, for example, on the telephone – without knowing the core meaning. Other less central meanings generally would be acquired later. Vocabulary learning is not simply about learning new words, but also about learning new uses of previously encountered words.

Register

Register refers to the kind of vocabulary that normally occurs in a particular kind of discourse (e.g. teacher talk, children's talk, men's talk), in a particular subject area (legal talk, business talk, medical talk) or in a particular social situation (public talk, private talk), in a particular mode of discourse (spoken language vs. written language) or even in a particular location (e.g. the capital compared to a regional area). Some words have very general usage (e.g. *laugh*), compared to others that are found in particular registers (e.g. *chuckle, giggle, guffaw*); some are used in more formal than informal contexts

(e.g. *boss, kid* vs. *employer, child*); and some may be more typical of everyday, as opposed to literary, usage (e.g. *face* vs. *visage*). A doctor talking to an adult patient might speak of *acute abdominal pain*, but to a child, the same condition might be referred to as a *tummy ache*. I was once on a panel interviewing applicants for a university teaching position. One applicant on entering the room greeted the panel with 'Hi everyone'. Her choice of *hi* as opposed to the more formal *good afternoon* nearly cost her the position she was applying for.

Collocations

The term *collocations* refers to restrictions on how words can be used together, such as which prepositions are used with particular verbs or which verbs and nouns are used together. Knowledge of collocations is vital for effective language use, and a sentence that is grammatically correct will look or sound 'awkward' if collocational preferences are not used. For example, we can say *blond hair*, but not *blond car*; *lean meat*, but not *slim meat*; *perform a play*, but not *perform a meeting*. We say *bitterly disappointed*, rather than *sourly disappointed*. Many common verbs collocate with particular nouns. We *do our hair*, *make our bed*, *do the dishes* and *make a noise*. Things *turn* or *go grey, brown* or *white*. But people *go mad*, rather than *turn mad*. Similarly we *catch a cold*, we *take a photo*, we *have a meeting*, we *take a phone call*, we *make progress*, we *lose track* of something and so on. Vocabulary development, therefore, involves expanding knowledge of the collocational patterns that known words can enter into. The most common verbs in English collocate with particular nouns, and the permitted combinations that occur are unpredictable, creating an important aspect of vocabulary learning. O'Keeffe et al. (2007: 53) comment:

One may conclude that collocations, along with semantically transparent and opaque idiomatic chunks, form the main component of the multi-word lexicon and that the multi-word lexicon is at the heart of advanced-level lexical knowledge, given that the challenge, at this level, is as much to do with grappling with observing recurrent collocations and chunks (which will most often consist of words already known individually), as it is with simply pushing for a (never-ending) linear increase in the vocabulary size based on single words never seen before.

Multi-word expressions

Much use of language involves the use of words in multi-word expressions. These are items made up of two or more words, and whose meaning can often not be understood from knowing the meanings of the individual words in the expression, making them particularly problematic for second language learners. For example, knowing *hold* does not help in understanding *hold up*, and knowing the meaning of *face* does not necessarily mean the learner will understand the following idiomatic expressions: *let's face it*, *on the face of it*, *keep a straight face*, *face up to* or *fall flat on one's face*. Multi-word expressions in English include idioms, such as those above; phrasal verbs, such as *turn off* the light, *take out* the garbage; phrasal prepositional verbs, such as *put up with*, *look forward to*; as well as fixed expressions made of as many as five words, such as *as far as I know* or *in a manner of speaking*.

A marked feature of conversational discourse is also the use of a subset of the multi-word units – conversational routines – which often have specific functions in conversation, and which give conversational discourse the quality of naturalness (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992). These perform a variety of functions in spoken English, and the teaching of these and other multi-word units is a feature of some recent English courses, such as the *Touchstone* series (McCarthy et al., 2005). Hence, when a learner uses English, in order for his or her usage to sound natural, utterances need to be expressed in the way they are conventionally said in English, and this is something that it is often not possible to predict. For example, why do we say, when we meet someone for the first time, ‘Nice to meet you’ and not ‘To meet you is nice’? Both have the same meaning, but the former is said and not the latter. Our linguistic, or grammatical, competence provides the basis for creating many different ways of saying things; however, only a small subset of possible utterances is ever actually said. Nation (2001: 343) recommends the use of activities, such as the one below, to help learners memorize multi-word units, particularly with low-level learners:

- 1 Write each chunk on a small card, with its translation on the other side so that there has to be active retrieval of its form or meaning.
- 2 Repeat the chunk aloud, while memorizing it.
- 3 Space the repetitions so that there is an increasingly greater interval between learning sessions.
- 4 Use mnemonic tricks like the keyword technique, putting the chunk into a sentence, visualizing examples of the meaning of the chunk, and analyzing its parts. This increases the quality of the mental processing and helps learning.
- 5 Don’t learn chunks with similar words or meanings together. They will interfere with each other.
- 6 Keep changing the order of the word cards to avoid serial learning.



Can you think of other ways of helping learners remember multi-word units?

Grammatical properties of words

Although grammar and vocabulary are often presented separately, the boundary between them is not rigid. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to separate the two. To use vocabulary effectively, learners need to be able to learn the main grammatical categories of words, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, and to know what grammatical patterns words fit into, such as which verbs can be used with the present continuous and which normally cannot, which nouns are countable and which are uncountable, which verbs are transitive and which are intransitive, which adjectives can be used predicatively and which cannot and what the normal order of adjectives is when more than one occurs. For

example, many different kinds of adjectives can occur before a noun in English, including those describing opinion, dimension, age, shape, colour, origin or material. Normally, no more than three adjectives occur before a noun, and when they do so, the order of adjectives follows a regular sequence (although we noted in Chapter 9 that use of more than two adjectives before the noun is more common in written than in spoken English):

- A beautiful old French house (opinion–age–origin).
- A huge round red cushion (dimension–shape–colour).
- A hideous brown plastic ornament (opinion–colour–material).
- A tiny old Italian ring (dimension–age–origin).

Learners also have to learn the many different prefixes and affixes that can change the grammatical function of words, turning *happy* into derived forms such as *unhappy*, *happiness*, *happily* and so on. Knowing the meanings of the most frequent affixes and what their grammatical functions are can help learners learn the meanings of many words they encounter in texts, and using knowledge of prefixes and suffixes to recognize new words is an important way in which learners expand their vocabulary knowledge. (See Appendices 1 and 3 for two different lesson plans for teaching affixes and word families.)

Cross-linguistic differences

The way languages categorize meanings often appears arbitrary, and there are often considerable differences between languages. English, for example, distinguishes between *peas* and *beans*, a distinction that appears obvious to speakers of English, but not necessarily to Koreans, who make no such distinction. *Family* in English refers to what people in some languages mean by *immediate family*, and for whom *family* is closer to *relations* in English. Words that appear similar in two languages, but which have different meanings are sometimes referred to as *false friends*, such as *demand* in English and French. In English *demand* refers to a forceful request, whereas *demandeur* in French simply means to request. A teacher comments on an amusing confusion of two such false friends:



Words with different meanings in the L2

While quite pregnant with my first child in Mexico, I was waiting for a city bus to go by, and a student of mine stopped and greeted me. We chatted for a few minutes, and he asked me in Spanish, 'How long have you been waiting?' I looked at my watch and said, 'Not long.' He looked at me again and asked, again, the same question. It finally dawned on me that he was asking me how long I was pregnant – how far along was I in my pregnancy, and not how long I had been waiting for the bus. The verb in Spanish could be used for two actions [and means *wait* or *expect*]. One could be waiting for a bus or a person, but also the word could be used for expecting a baby. We started

laughing, because he and I realized our misunderstanding with a simple word. I finally said I was eight months pregnant. This is an example of how confusion can be part of a simple conversation and how we solved this miscommunication in two different languages.

Martha Lengeling, teacher and teacher educator, Guanajuato, Mexico

Nation (2001: 56) suggests that the grammatical learning burden of words depends on similarities or differences between English and the learner's first language:

If a second language word takes the same grammatical patterns as its rough equivalent in the first language, then the learning burden will be light. If words of related meaning, like *hate* and *like*, take similar patterns, then the learning burden of one of them will be lighter because the previous learning of the other will act as a guide.

10.3 Targets for vocabulary learning

How many words does a learner need? And how many words do native speakers know? The latter issue is difficult to measure since one could hardly devise a test of the 100,000 or so words in a dictionary to see how many words native speakers 'know'. Usually, estimates of the size of people's vocabulary are based on how many words they recognize from a sample of the words in a dictionary, with an estimate of their knowledge of the total number of words in the dictionary done from there. Studies suggest that English native-speaking university graduate students have a vocabulary size of about 20,000 'word families' – a head word and all its related words, such as *democracy*, *democratic*, *democratize*, etc. (Schmitt, 2000). However, most second language learners will know or need far fewer words, unless they plan to do advanced academic work in English.



The following are 25 words that commence entries for words beginning with the letter 'C' in a dictionary. How many of these words do you know? How many of them do you think learners need to know?

cab, cabal, cabaret, cabbage, cabbie, caber, cabin, cabinet, cable, caboose, cache, cachet, cack-handed, cackle, cacophony, cactus, cad, cadaver, caddie, cadence, cadet, cadge, cadre, caesarean, café

Identifying the number of words learners need to learn was a major focus of early research in applied linguistics, an area of research that focused on vocabulary control, or procedures for limiting the number of words to be taught. This was a principle that was used in the 1930s to develop a basic vocabulary syllabus for teaching English as a foreign language and for the preparation of graded readers. The aim as stated by Jeffery (in West, 1953: v) was:

To find the minimum number of words that could operate together in constructions capable of entering into the greatest varieties of contexts has, therefore, been the chief aim of those trying to simplify English for the learner.

Using available information on word frequencies in written texts, as well as other practical criteria such as usefulness in the classroom and coverage of common topics and concepts, the result was a list of some 2,000 words, which was published in 1953 as the *General Service List of English Words* (GSL – West, 1953), and which had a huge impact on the design of teaching materials and coursebooks. The GSL also included the frequency of the different meanings of words.

In discussing knowledge of words, an important distinction is usually made between a person's active, or productive, vocabulary and their passive, or receptive, vocabulary, since our passive vocabulary is generally much larger than our active vocabulary. In spoken English, for example, native speakers may use a relatively small number of words in daily conversation – as few as 1,500 different words – though they recognize far more words than they use. For passive vocabulary knowledge, researchers suggest that knowing a minimum vocabulary of 3,000 word families (which equals some 5,000 words) is required to enable a person to understand a high percentage of words on an average page of a text, and that 5,000 word families (some 8,000 words) is required to be able to read for pleasure (Laufer, 1998). Hazenberg and Hulstijn (1996) found that twice as many words as that were needed to read first-year university materials. It is also important to distinguish between knowledge of content words (those that carry the main meaning of sentences, such as nouns, main verbs, adverbs, adjectives and question words, e.g. *why, when, what*), demonstratives (*this, that, these, those*) and function words (those that express grammatical relationships, such as articles, prepositions, auxiliaries, pronouns, conjunctions and relative pronouns). There is a small, finite list of function words in English, but a very large set of content words. When people expand their vocabulary knowledge, they add to their knowledge of content words.

Core vocabulary

O'Keeffe et al. (2007: 37–47) suggest that based on their research on the frequency of items in spoken English, a basic or core spoken English vocabulary for second language learners contains several different categories of words:

- *Modal items*: These describe degrees of certainty or necessity and include modal verbs, such as *can, must, should, may*, etc.; lexical modals, such as *look, seem, sound*; and adverbs, such as *probably, definitely* and *apparently*.
- *Delexical verbs*: These are words with little lexical content but high frequency, such as *do, make, take, get*, and their collocations with nouns, prepositional phrases and particles.
- *Stance words*: These communicate the speaker's attitude towards something and include words such as *just, whatever, actually, really, basically, clearly, honestly* and *unfortunately*.

- *Discourse markers*: These are words that are used to organize talk and monitor its progress, such as *you know, I mean, right, well, good* and *anyway*.
- *Basic nouns*: These are nouns referring to common activities, events, situations, places and people, such as *person, problem, trouble, birthday*; days of the week; family members; and colours.
- *General deictics*: These are words that relate the speaker to the world in terms of time and space, such as *here, there, now, then* and *ago*.
- *Basic adjectives*: These are words that communicate everyday positive and negative evaluations of situations, people, events and things, such as *lovely, nice, horrible, brilliant, terrible* and *great*.
- *Basic adverbs*: These are adverbs of high frequency referring to time, frequency and habituality, such as *today, tomorrow, always, usually, suddenly* and *quickly*.
- *Basic verbs for actions and events*: These are verbs describing everyday activities, such as *give, leave, feel, put* and *say*.

Some of these types of words are not found in vocabulary lists for ESL/ELT learners because such lists have often been based on frequency counts of written language, rather than spoken English, which, as mentioned in Chapter 9, highlights the importance of corpus research in language teaching.

Beyond the core vocabulary, O'Keeffe et al. (2007: 48–9) suggest the following targets for vocabulary learning:

A receptive vocabulary of some 5,000 to 6,000 words would appear to be a good threshold at which to consider learners at the top of the intermediate level and ready to take on an advanced programme. Such a programme would ideally have the following aims:

- To increase the receptive vocabulary size to enable comprehension targets above 90% (e.g. up to 95%) for typical texts to be reached.
- To expose the learner to a range of vocabulary at frequency levels beyond the first 5,000–6,000 word band, but which is not so rare or obscure as to be of little practical use.
- To inculcate the kinds of knowledge required for using words at this level, given their often highly specific lexical meanings and connotations.
- To train awareness, skills and strategies that will help the learner become an independent vocabulary learner, and one who can continue the task for as long as he or she desires.

However, once learners reach the intermediate level, they often fail to make sufficient gains in their vocabulary knowledge. A study of college students' vocabulary development in China found that during their first two years of university study, an English major's vocabulary increased by 1,500 words on average each year; but in the later two years, their vocabulary increased only by 250 words on average each year (Fan, 2007).

Academic vocabulary

In addition to core vocabulary, there is another set of words common to academic disciplines, sometimes referred to as the basis for an *academic vocabulary* (see below).

Coxhead's Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000; 2010) refers to 570 word families that have high frequency in a wide range of academic texts and which are important words for students to know if they are pursuing academic studies. The words do not occur in the 2,000 most frequent words in general English and are grouped into ten sub-lists that reflect word frequency and range. The most frequent words on the list are:

analyse, approach, area, assess, assume, authority, available, benefit, concept, consist, context, constitute, contract, data, define, derive, distribute, economy, environment, establish, estimate, evident, factor, finance, formula, function, income, indicate, individual, interpret, involve, issue, labour, legal, legislate, major, method, occur, percent, period, principle, proceed, process, policy, require, research, respond, role, section, sector, significant, similar, source, specific, structure, theory, vary

A website that enables a teacher to determine the number of academic vocabulary items in a text is the *Compleat Lexical Tutor* (www.lex tutor.ca/vp/bnc/). By pasting a text there, the percentage of academic vocabulary it contains is calculated.

Technical vocabulary

Learners may also need to acquire a *technical vocabulary*; that is, the words that are most frequent in a particular subject area, such as computer science, law or medicine. A medical text, for example, may contain technical words such as *microbe*, *gene*, *organism* or *cell*.



Think of a class you teach. Which of these categories of words are important to your learners?

10.4 Learning vocabulary

The gradual nature of vocabulary acquisition

As we have seen above, there are many different dimensions involved in 'knowing' a word, and not all aspects of the meaning and usage of a word are acquired at once (Nation and Gu, 2007). Vocabulary acquisition is a gradual process as different aspects of vocabulary knowledge are learned. For example, a sequence of order of acquisition for words might (hypothetically) look like this:

Knowing:

- 1 how to spell the word.
- 2 how to pronounce the word.
- 3 the core meaning of the word.
- 4 the word receptively.
- 5 related words (antonyms, synonyms).
- 6 the grammatical function of the word.
- 7 the word productively.
- 8 other meanings of the word.
- 9 the affixes the word is used with.
- 10 the collocations the word occurs with.

However, learners differ in terms of how they build up their lexical knowledge and which aspects of vocabulary they acquire first, depending on their exposure to words and their first language. Schmitt (2000: 120) summarizes vocabulary learning in this way:

[Vocabulary acquisition] is incremental in a variety of ways. First, lexical knowledge is made up of different kinds of word knowledge and not all can be learned simultaneously. Second, each word-knowledge type may develop along a cline, which means that not only is word learning incremental, in general, but learning of the individual word knowledge is, as well. Third, each word-knowledge type may be receptively or productively known, regardless of the degree of mastery of the others. Taken together, this means that word learning is a complicated, but gradual, process.

Direct or indirect vocabulary learning

Vocabulary instruction is not generally the focus of a specific course, but is usually integrated into the teaching of other skills, such as a component of a reading or writing course, where it may either be taught directly or indirectly. However, general English coursebooks now often feature vocabulary input and practice as a syllabus strand. Direct vocabulary instruction (also referred to as explicit learning) refers to activities that seek to teach students particular words, or word groups, and to help them remember words they have already encountered. Incidental vocabulary learning is learning that takes place without specific vocabulary instruction. It is learning that is a by-product of engaging in other activities, such as reading or listening, and depends upon the frequency with which learners encounter words. Any form of reading is a good source of incidental vocabulary learning, since it involves learning words from context, and graded readers are a useful way of providing spaced repetition of core vocabulary (see below). Researchers have sought to determine the amount of vocabulary learners can acquire through learning from context. Grabe (2009: 272), reporting research by Nation (2001), comments:

If a student reads 100 wpm for 45 minutes per day for 222 days in the year, that student would read just under one million words in a year. If students learn one word in ten through context, they will learn somewhere between 2,000 and 4,000 new words, through extensive reading, in a year.

Extensive reading allows students to read for pleasure, where the reading is its own reward, and will be covered more fully in Chapter 14.



Extensive reading can clearly be of benefit to learners. How much extensive reading do your learners engage in? How do you encourage them to read more?

A teacher educator and researcher comments on the value of incidental vocabulary learning, through context:



Incidental vocabulary learning

In my EFL teaching experience in China, I found there wasn't a single student who didn't attach great importance to vocabulary learning (or, to put it more accurately, vocabulary memorization). However, the majority of students were apt to spend most of their time memorizing only the word lists from their textbooks, not caring much about the contexts in which these words were used. This, I found, was not very fruitful, and the words so remembered slipped the mind of the students easily, being isolated from their contexts. In exceptional cases, I observed that those who had not only larger vocabulary (both passive and active) but also [were] able to know how to use this vocabulary in the proper contexts were oftentimes among the top students. I talked to them and found that about 30% of their vocabulary was not from direct teaching, but from incidental reading (e.g. simplified readers and novels) and listening (e.g. to pop songs and news). Incidental vocabulary learning is helpful, probably because students who use this method are normally those highly motivated ones who often learn self-imposedly through different channels.

Ao Ran, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China; Singapore

Advocates of direct instruction argue that it provides better support for learning because it involves a greater depth or level of mental processing. Stated simply, 'the more one engages with a word (deep processing), the more likely the word will be remembered for later use' (Schmitt, 2000: 121). Vocabulary techniques that require a surface-level of processing of word meanings (such as writing down a word many times on a page) are less likely to result in learning than techniques that require relatively deep processing. An example of a technique that promotes deep processing is the keyword method (Hulstijn, 1997). This technique divides the learning of a vocabulary item into two stages. The first stage requires the learner to associate a new word with a keyword in the mother tongue that sounds like some part of the English word; the second stage requires the learner to form

a mental image of the keyword, interacting with the mother-tongue translation. Thus, the keyword method can be described as a chain of two links connecting a new word to its first-language translation, through the mediation of a keyword; the new word is linked to the keyword by a similarity in sound (acoustic link), and the keyword is linked to the mother-tongue translation by a mental image (imagery link). For example, if an English-speaking learner was studying Indonesian and wanted to remember the Indonesian word for *sport (olahraga)*, the learner could first make a connection with *rugby*, which sounds a little like *raga* – part of the Indonesian word. The learner could then make a mental image of a rugby player kicking a ball. Recalling this image would prompt the word *olahraga*.



What techniques have you used to help you remember new vocabulary in a language you have studied?

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, students who read extensively in English generally expand their vocabulary knowledge without explicit instruction, demonstrating that the extent of meaningful exposure to vocabulary is a valuable source of learning (Elley, 1991). Both direct instruction and incidental learning are, therefore, important sources of second language vocabulary development, and both processes support and complement each other. The teacher below describes his process for exposing students, in an incidental way, to additional vocabulary during the lesson:



Going beyond the book

When teaching vocabulary, I try to find extra words related to the topic that students find relevant and interesting. For example, when the book introduces price expressions, such as *that's cheap*, *that's expensive*, *it's not bad*, etc., I also introduce related expressions that could be used in conversation, such as *that's a rip off*, *that's a bargain*, *that's (not) worth it*, *that's way too much*. Since students are often familiar with the common expressions found in the book, the new expressions expand their vocabulary repertoire and also provide the basis for further practice. Asking students to come up with examples of things that they think are a bargain or a rip off adds interest and motivation to the lesson.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

The role of memory

A recurring issue in vocabulary learning is the difficulty in remembering words that have been encountered. Learning a new word is not instantaneous. A word may be encountered in a text, understood and then forgotten the next time it is encountered, and several encounters will be needed before it can be considered 'learned'. Memory is normally conceived as involving two different processes – short-term memory (holding memory for a short period, while it is being processed) and long-term memory (retaining information

for future use). Short-term memory is fast, while long-term memory takes a relatively long time. The goal of vocabulary learning is to establish new words in long-term memory. This involves, on the one hand, meeting the word repeatedly over an extended period of time and, on the other, connecting new words to known words through different forms of links and associations, such as word families or words with similar or dissimilar meanings. Baddeley (1997) suggests that when an item is successfully recalled, the likelihood increases that it will subsequently be remembered, and that the process involved in retrieving the item long term appears to be made stronger when it is used successfully.

Schmitt (2000) points out that productive vocabulary is more likely to be remembered than receptive vocabulary. Several conditions, considered below, have been proposed which increase the quality of learning and remembering (Nation, 2001; Laufer and Hulstijn, 2001).

Noticing

This refers to conscious focus on vocabulary as a learning goal and paying attention to aspects of words that might facilitate understanding and learning, such as similarities and differences between words, how the word is pronounced and the grammatical function of the word. Nation (2001: 64) suggests that noticing involves decontextualizing, a process that occurs ‘when learners give attention to a language item as a part of the language, rather than as part of the message’. Nation suggests that noticing occurs in a variety of ways:

- While listening or reading, the learner notices that a word is new, or thinks, ‘I have seen that word before’, or thinks, ‘That word is used differently from the ways I have seen it used before’.
- The teacher highlights a word while writing it on the board.
- The learners negotiate the meaning of a word with each other or with the teacher.
- The teacher explains a word for the learners by giving a definition, a synonym or a first-language translation.



Can you think of ways in which new words can become more noticeable to learners, for example, in a reading text?

Spaced repetition

This refers to meeting a word at a later time and emphasizes that a single encounter of a word is unlikely to lead to learning and that spaced, meaningful repetition over a period of time is needed. Research on learning suggests that repetition that is spaced over time is more effective than massed repetition over a short time period (e.g. a lesson) (Nation 2001).

A simple technique that provides for spaced repetition is for learners to write words on cards and to review them regularly over time, gradually removing the learned words and adding new ones. Flashcards can be very useful for memorizing vocabulary, especially if they are based on the principle of ‘spaced learning’ (a type of spaced repetition, also known as the ‘Leitner system’); this holds that vocabulary memorization is most efficient if the length of time between practising new vocabulary is gradually increased, but only for those items that were successfully recalled. For example, let us say a learner is trying to memorize two new words or expressions. On day one, the learner takes each card but only remembers Card 1 correctly. Card 2, the learner looks at again later in the day until he or she gets it right. The following day, both cards are checked again. Card 1 is memorized correctly and, therefore, will now be practised again two days after that, but Card 2 will be practised again the next day, and so on. The purpose is to minimize the number of times each card is checked: Words that are easy are memorized and checked at increasing intervals; difficult words more often. Computer software and mobile apps (SuperMemo is one example) are particularly useful for this, as they take the work out of remembering which card was memorized correctly and which one wasn’t, etc. They help learners to practise vocabulary only as often as necessary, while leaving more time for difficult words. Vocabulary recycling can also be turned into a game, as suggested by this teacher educator:

Vocabulary games for recycling

One popular idea for recycling vocabulary is the use of a vocabulary box/bag/jar. A teacher I observed recently used this effectively for vocabulary revision. One student was given a large jar and several slips of card and was assigned the job of ‘secretary’ for that lesson. Every time a new word came up which the students wanted to remember, they asked the secretary to write the word down and put it in the jar. This empowered the learners, giving them responsibility for choosing the words they wanted to recall. The teacher helped by pointing out if a word was not in frequent use or not particularly useful for their active vocabulary, but the students had the final decision about what went into the jar.

The vocabulary can then be recycled at an appropriate stage in the course – perhaps at the end of the week, or even as a warmer or filler activity. Students who arrive early can be encouraged to use the vocabulary jar to see how many words they can remember. Competitions and team games are often a fun and effective way of reviewing lexis and are usually popular with all ages of learners. Some activities I have found successful for revising vocabulary are: a ‘hot-seat’ game, where one student has to try and guess which word is being defined by his/her teammates or, alternatively, one student defines the word for the team; miming games, where one student mimes the word to the rest of the team; and ‘pictionary’ – one student draws the word for the team to guess. Learners could also group the words from the jar into groups or write gap-fill tests for their classmates. Another task would be to try and invent a story, incorporating some of the

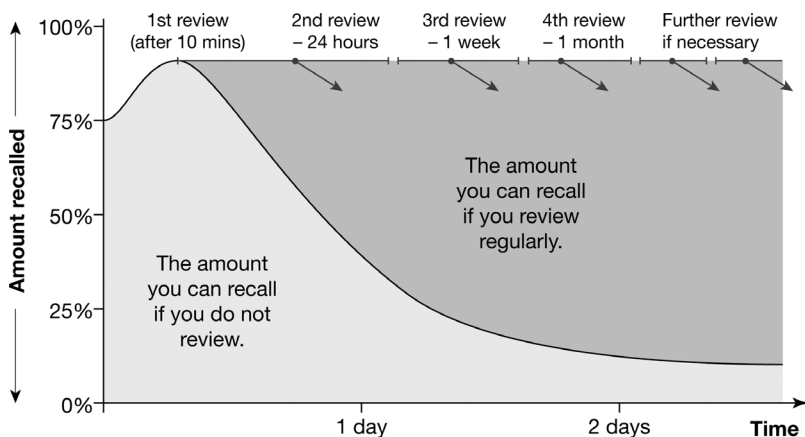
words. This would show whether they are able to use the vocabulary appropriately. All these tasks also help the teacher informally assess learning.

Many students are not disciplined enough to keep a well-organized and effective vocabulary journal. However, by doing it as a class activity initially, they may be motivated to keep better records and learn to recycle vocabulary for themselves.

Tina Appleton, teacher and teacher educator, Bath, UK

Zimmerman (2009: 10) suggests that repetition of words can be achieved by recycling important words, by including words from earlier lessons in homework and classroom practice, by compiling a list of key words from past units and placing them on a visible location in the classroom, and using activities in which students are encouraged to use newly learned words as often as possible – such as in a ‘words-of-the-week’ activity.

The diagram below shows the effect of reviewing on the recall of information.



Generative use

This refers to the use of a word actively and productively in speech or writing, as opposed to a passive encounter with the word; that is, it involves active practice in word use. Nation (2001: 68) suggests ‘Generative processing occurs when previously met words are subsequently met or used in ways that differ from the previous meeting with the word’.



Can you suggest activities that encourage generative processing of new words that were encountered in a reading or listening text?

Learner involvement

Tasks with higher levels of learner involvement, e.g. because they are motivating, memorable or challenging, are more likely to lead to vocabulary retention. A list of words

the teacher has prepared for learners to review is less likely to be remembered than a list of words students bring to class, based on words that are linked to experiences the students had out of class or words that the students had selected themselves from their coursebook and organized in ways the learners themselves have determined. The New Zealand educator Sylvia Ashton Warner wrote about this in her famous book *Teacher* (Ashton Warner, 1963). The book described how she developed powerful reading materials for young Maori children in rural schools in New Zealand, drawing on words they brought to school from their lives outside of the school.



What kinds of links or associations could be made to help learners remember these words: *repulsive*, *spicy*, *restore* and *reprimand*?

The role of learning strategies

Elsewhere, we described learning strategies as specific actions and behaviours that learners use to improve their skill in learning or using a second language (see Chapter 2). Learning strategies would appear to be particularly relevant to vocabulary learning, since words are items that are easy to recognize and focus on, so, in theory, they should be amenable to the use of specific techniques and procedures to facilitate learning. Schmitt (2000) distinguishes two kinds of vocabulary-learning strategies: strategies for discovering the meaning of words and strategies for remembering words that have been encountered.

Strategies for discovering the meaning of words

A number of strategies can be used to help understand the meanings of new words (Nation, 2001):

- *Analyzing word parts*: Using knowledge of affixes to identify or clarify meaning.
- *Using context*: Using information provided by the topic or by the preceding or subsequent words or sentences.
- *Comparisons with the mother tongue*: Where possible, comparison with similar first-language words.
- *Using resources*: Consulting dictionaries, glossaries or other sources. Electronic dictionaries, both monolingual and bilingual, provide convenient and quick access to word meanings.

Strategies for remembering words that have been encountered

The following are strategies that can help students remember words:

- *Recording*: Noting the word in a notebook, or in any other way, to allow later review, together with information about the word, such as examples of usage and a translation of the word.

- *Organizing*: Organizing words into groups, such as by word families or as part of a spidergram or semantic map.
- *Practising and producing*: Trying out the word several times in a sentence, either spoken or written, or finding other ways of using words.

Nation (2002) suggests a number of ways in which teachers can help learners revisit words they have previously encountered:

- 1 Spend time on a word by dealing with two or three aspects of the word, such as its spelling, its pronunciation, its parts, related derived forms, its meaning, its collocations, its grammar or restrictions on its use.
- 2 Get learners to do graded reading and listening to stories at the appropriate level.
- 3 Get learners to do speaking and writing activities, based on written input that contains the words.
- 4 Get learners to do prepared activities that involve testing and teaching vocabulary, such as 'Same or different?', 'Find the difference' and 'Word and picture matching'.
- 5 Set aside a time each week for word by word revision of the vocabulary that occurred previously. List the words on the board, and do the following activities:
 - a Go round the class, getting each learner to say one of the words.
 - b Break the words into parts, and label the meanings of the parts.
 - c Suggest collocations for the words.
 - d Recall the sentence where the word occurred, and suggest another context.
 - e Look at derived forms of the words.

See Appendix 2 for one teacher's lesson plan for how to revisit words that have been taught.



What strategies do you recommend to your students to help them remember words they encounter?

10.5 Principles for vocabulary instruction

A number of general principles have been identified for teaching vocabulary (Nation, 2001; Grabe, 2009; Gu and Johnson, 1996). These divide roughly into the areas of planning vocabulary teaching and integrating vocabulary teaching into the lesson.

Planning vocabulary teaching

Planning effective vocabulary teaching involves determining learners' vocabulary level, setting vocabulary-learning targets, reviewing the vocabulary content of coursebooks and including a vocabulary strand in skills lessons.

Determine learners' vocabulary level

Knowing the students' current vocabulary level can help the teacher select reading and other materials that are at an appropriate level of difficulty. A number of simple vocabulary tests have been developed that enable a teacher to estimate whether a learner's vocabulary is at the 1,000, 2,000, 3,000 word level or higher (Beglar, 2000). These tests generally make use either of a multiple-choice test or gap-filling format. For example, the following test items (from Nation, 1999) assess students' knowledge of words from the 5,000 to 10,000-word range:

- 1 The baby is wet. Her dia____ needs changing.
- 2 Second-year university students in the US are called soph_____.
- 3 The deac____ helped with the care of the poor of the parish.
- 4 The hurricane whi____ along the coast.
- 5 Some coal was still smol____ among the ashes.
- 6 She was sitting on a balcony and bas____ in the sun.
- 7 Computers have made typewriters old-fashioned and obs_____.
- 8 Watch out for his wil____ tricks.
- 9 If your lips are sore, try sal____, not medicine.
- 10 The new vic____ was appointed by the bishop.
- 11 The actors exchanged ban____ with the reporters.
- 12 A thro____ controls the flow of gas into an engine.
- 13 Anyone found loo____ bombed houses and shops will be severely punished.
- 14 The wounded man squi____ on the floor in agony.
- 15 The dog crin____ when it saw the snake.
- 16 The approaching storm stam____ the cattle into running widely.
- 17 The problem is beginning to assume mam____ proportions.
- 18 The rescue attempt could not proceed quickly. It was imp____ by bad weather.

The website www.lex tutor.ca lets students do this themselves. As mentioned earlier, 10,000 word families, roughly, are needed to read first-year university texts. It's important to remember, however, that since the gap-filling format tests productive recall of vocabulary, students may score higher on a multiple-choice test, which tests receptive familiarity.

Set vocabulary-learning targets

As discussed earlier, it is useful to determine realistic vocabulary-learning targets for students, perhaps by lesson, by unit or by week. However, the targets set should not overload students' capacities. For example, five to ten new words per lesson would be a realistic target, but the learning targets set will depend on the intensity and level of the course. It is better to teach a limited set of words and teach them in depth, with multiple encounters, rather than introduce a large number of words that may never be seen again.



How many new words do you think your learners should try to learn each week?

Review the vocabulary content of coursebooks

Commercial textbooks vary in terms of their vocabulary content and how the words they contain were selected. Hedge (2000: 133) contains a checklist for reviewing the vocabulary content of coursebooks, which includes: questions that address the adequacy of the selection of vocabulary items in the book; the aspects of vocabulary usage that are taught; the ways in which vocabulary is presented and practised; the ways in which vocabulary retention is addressed; and the support given in the teacher's book for vocabulary teaching.

See Appendix 4 for two sample vocabulary lessons in a current textbook.

Include a vocabulary strand in skill lessons

Any lesson can contain a vocabulary strand. Useful words should be identified that occur in listening, reading and other skill lessons and can be used as the focus for a class or homework activity. For example, Zimmerman (2009: 70) suggests that listening to a news report can be used to focus on countable and uncountable nouns by having students listen to a news report and first list as many nouns as they can. To do this they can focus on clues such as pronunciation and article usage. Later in pairs or groups they can compare lists, clarify meanings and classify the nouns as countable or uncountable.

Integrating vocabulary teaching into the lesson

Teach high-frequency and high-utility words

When students ask for assistance with words they encounter in a coursebook or reading passage, it is important to assess whether the words are of high frequency and value and which of them will be important words for student to know, as opposed to words that may only have incidental value and that are not worth spending too much class time on.

The mere fact that a student asks about a word does not necessarily mean it is worth a lot of class time. It is useful to become familiar with word lists that contain vocabulary targets for the first 3,000 words. Students should be encouraged to consider if words they encounter are worth memorizing and to ask about the frequency of new words they are exposed to.

Deal with vocabulary systematically

Nation (2001: 93–4) argues that teachers should deal with vocabulary in a systematic and principled way. In considering the vocabulary learners will encounter in a reading text, for example, he looks at a number of different ways of dealing with words, with the option chosen depending on the word in question and its importance in the text, or potential usefulness for the learners:

- Pre-teach.
- Replace the unknown word in the text before giving the text to the learners.
- Put the unknown word in a glossary.
- Put the unknown word in an exercise after the text.
- Quickly give the meaning.
- Do nothing about the word.
- Help the learners use context to guess, use a dictionary or break the word into parts.
- Spend time looking at the range of meanings and collocations of the word.



Which of the strategies above do you usually use?

Teach words in meaningful groups

One of the key problems in helping learners improve their vocabulary is finding effective ways for them to help remember words they have encountered. Gairns and Redman (1986) point out that our mental lexicon is highly organized and efficient, and that items that are related semantically are stored together. This is why it is much easier to recall a list of words that are grouped or organized in a meaningful way, as compared with trying to recall a set of words that are simply organized alphabetically. This could be by grouping them according to topic or in semantic groupings, such as opposites or synonyms.

Use graded readers

Graded readers (see Chapter 14) are prepared to controlled vocabulary levels and enable learners to consolidate known vocabulary, as well as expand their vocabulary knowledge

and develop their fluency in reading (Allan, 2008). If readers are chosen that are appropriate to the learners' vocabulary level, learners can typically understand 95% of the words in a reader and learn the remaining words through guessing from context or with the help of a dictionary. Nation (2001: 163) gives the following figures for a commercial graded-reading series:

Level	New words	Cumulative words
1	400	400
2	300	700
3	300	1000
4	400	1400
5	400	1800
6	700	2500

Graded readers are often assigned for reading out of class as an extensive reading activity.

Use the learners' mother tongue as a resource

If students in the class have the same mother tongue, it is the most obvious point of reference in studying vocabulary. Bilingual word lists, glosses in texts of mother-tongue equivalents of words and flashcards with an English word on one side and the translation equivalent on the other are all simple techniques many students find helpful in learning new vocabulary.



There is a debate about the role of the L1 in the language classroom, and this includes the area of vocabulary, with some teachers arguing that only English–English dictionaries should be used and others suggesting that translation dictionaries can play a role. What is your stance?

Teach students to guess words from context

Teaching students to guess the meaning of words from the context in which they occur has long been advocated as a useful strategy, although not all contexts allow the meaning of words to be inferred. The words in the context of the unknown word also need to be known if a student is to be able to guess a word from context. There are various ways in which context can help identify the meaning of words, however:

- *Contrast*: The word means the opposite of another word or expression in the text. Example: 'A frugal boss will never give a generous bonus at the end of the year.' [*frugal*: *generous*]
- *Cause*: The word is the cause of something described in the text. Example: 'Anorexia is a disease attributed to many deaths in young girls because they want to lose too much weight.' [*anorexia*: *lose too much weight* = *death*]
- *Consequence*: The word is used to describe the result of something. Example: 'Lung cancer can result from too much smoking.' [*smoking*: *cancer*]
- *Explanation*: The meaning of the word is explained, a definition is given or an example is given. Example: 'Kimchee, a Korean fermented cabbage, is a very delicious food.' [*Kimchee*: *fermented cabbage*]
- *Hyponyms*: A reader may be able to see the relationship between a familiar and unfamiliar word by looking at the general word class, such as *boat*, *ship*, *tanker*, where *tanker* is used as a hyponym of *ship*, the broader category. Example: 'We must prevent oil spills from supertankers. An example took place in 1970 near Spain, when an oil spill from a wrecked tanker exploded into fire. These types of ships are difficult to control in busy waters.' [*supertanker*: *tanker*: *ship*]
- *Definition*: Definitions of words may sometimes be found in the text. Example: 'Neuralgia, a sharp, violent pain along a nerve pathway, can be treated with aspirin.' [*neuralgia*: *nerve pain*]
- *Punctuation*: Readers can use the punctuation in the sentence to figure out the meaning of the word they do not know. For example, readers can use such clues as italics (showing how a word is defined), quotation marks (showing the word has special meaning), dashes (showing apposition, definitions) and/or brackets (enclosing a definition). Example: 'Taekwondo – a Korean martial art – is very good for self-defence.' [*meaning between two dashes*]
- *Inference*: Contexts give examples from which a reader can infer the meaning of a term. Example: 'The misogynist manager disliked all the women in his office, so they all resigned.' [*misogynist*: *woman hater*]

Nation and Coady (1988) recommend that in order to guess the meaning of new words the learner should first examine the new word to determine what part of speech the word is from. Then he or she should look at the context in which the word is used, both at the clause level and the sentence level. This will help eliminate some possible wrong inferences. Following a consideration of these two points, the learner should then attempt to identify the meaning of the word and then check to see if his or her guess is correct.

A teacher comments on the strategy of guessing words from context:

Teaching students to guess words from context

The more I teach vocabulary in the classroom, whether it be direct or incidental, the more I value the strategy of guessing word meanings from context. Even though a simple search in a dictionary is quick and easy for a student to find the correct definition of an unknown word, I often find my students forgetting the target word days or even minutes later, without deep or critical thinking of the word. If the focus of a lesson is to teach vocabulary, then having the students take time to analyze a word is much more beneficial for a deeper understanding, by having them use their critical-thinking skills. The overall goal when I teach vocabulary in the classroom is not only to have students learn new vocabulary words but to also teach them ways of learning on their own, without always relying on a dictionary. This strategy may be time-consuming and difficult at first, but repeated practice and critical thinking can help make this L2 skill of guessing meaning from context as natural as the way most people guess the meaning of words in their L1.

Brandon Narasaki, teacher, Tokyo, Japan

Encourage active learning

Students can become actively involved in their own vocabulary learning. For example:

- Students bring words and lexical items they have encountered out of class into class for discussion.
- Students keep a vocabulary journal in which they enter words they want to remember. The words can be organized by theme or category and examples included of the words in context, as well as other useful information.
- Students build up lists of words in different categories and their equivalents in the mother tongue and review these regularly.

A teacher comments on how he tries to encourage autonomous learning:

Helping learners remember words

One of the most difficult aspects of vocabulary learning for my students is remembering words that have been encountered or presented previously. Learning new words and remembering them requires effort, both on the part of the teacher as well as the learner. I review lessons my students have studied in the textbook and develop word sets with simple activities to go with them. I try to find other sources of input that use some of the words they have encountered (e.g. songs and games, or extracts from

movies or sitcoms). I also make use of graded readers where new words are recycled. I want my learners to become autonomous learners, to develop their own ways of understanding and remembering vocabulary, to share new words they have learned with other learners in group discussion and to compare different ways of remembering words. Hence, I believe both direct and indirect vocabulary teaching are needed to support vocabulary learning, to maintain knowledge of words and how they are used, to promote autonomous learning – in order to help students discover their own vocabulary-learning techniques.

Anuwat Kaewma, teacher and teacher educator, Sakon Nakhon province, Thailand



The teacher above argues for using both ‘direct and indirect vocabulary teaching’. What is your view on this? What would make for a good balance between the two?

Moras (2007) recommends as effective teaching and learning strategies the use of guided discovery and, like Nation and Coady earlier, contextual guesswork, as well as mastering effective dictionary use. Guided discovery involves asking questions or offering examples that guide students to guess meanings correctly. In this way, learners get involved in a process of semantic processing that helps learning and retention.



Some teachers are not in favour of students using a dictionary during tests. What is your view on this? Would there be cases when it would be best not to let students use dictionaries, either during tests or even during regular classroom hours?

Teach word-analysis strategies

Teaching students the skill of analyzing words can be part of regular instruction. Aebersold and Field (1997: 144) suggest the following procedures for analyzing parts of words:

- 1** Ask the students to look at a certain word and divide it into its parts. Tell them to look for familiar prefixes (word parts that precede the base and add semantic meaning), bases and suffixes (word parts that follow the base and add syntactic as well as semantic meaning).
- 2** Ask them what the base is and what it means. If they are uncertain about whether a part is a base or not, ask them to think of other words they know that have the same part.
- 3** If there is a prefix, ask them what it means.

- 4 If there is a suffix, ask what its grammar function is.
- 5 Have students check the meaning they have come up with to see if it fits the context of the sentence(s) they are reading. Can they think of a synonym for the meaning?

Use the resources of technology

Computers and the internet provide for an approach known as data-driven learning (DDL), in which a corpus of texts with concordancing software can be used to explore how words are used. As described by Allan (2008: 23):

The learner inputs the target word or words into the software and all examples from the corpus are returned, usually in a keyword in context (KWIC) format, with the target word in the middle of the line. These lines can be sorted in a variety of ways that may help to reveal patterns in meaning and usage... Learners then interact with the concordance and find answers to their questions about the target words by looking for patterns in [them], categorizing them and deriving their own hypothesis, rather than relying on a teacher's intuition or research.

An example of a useful corpus is the Cambridge English Corpus, a multi-billion word collection of written and spoken texts. If a learner wanted to find out how the word *agree* is used in English, he or she could look at examples in the corpus, such as those below. From the examples, the learner can see you can *agree on something*, *agree with somebody* and *agree to something* (www.cambridge.org/corpus):

...only time will tell. One thing scientists **agree** on: In 7.6 billion years, the sun will shrink...

...cutting costs won't be easy. VW last month **agreed** to guarantee jobs for 103,000 German employees...

...Knowledge is power, especially when **agreeing** to terms with a publisher...

...first bird. Today, ornithologists **agree** that penguins evolved from flying ancestors...

...stay active. Health professionals couldn't **agree** more. Many elderly still work in the...

...matters as much as you got it. I couldn't **agree** more. Here it seems the matter of getting him...

...most famous divas, the audience couldn't **agree** more. One thundering ovation after another followed...

...the hip-hop community. Even though I don't **agree** with all of your choices, I appreciate the consideration...

...She showed the document to him and he **agreed** it was inflammatory and should be destroyed...

You can try the above for yourself. Go to the British National Corpus (BNC) corpus website at www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk, and see if you can find out the difference between *scared* and *afraid*.

10.6 Assessing vocabulary

Vocabulary tests may be developed in a number of ways. Vocabulary placement or proficiency tests usually include a range of words representing different levels of difficulty so that the test will distinguish between learners with basic-, intermediate- or advanced-level vocabulary knowledge. Commercial proficiency tests are often designed this way. Achievement tests are based on a sampling of the words from materials the students have studied. An example of a diagnostic test is Nation's Vocabulary Levels Test, which measures the learner's knowledge of words at the 2,000, 3,000, 5,000 and 10,000 word levels. These sorts of diagnostic tests may also be used for placement purposes. A vocabulary test for placement purposes in a language course should include a sample of words from different levels of the course to determine the students' level.

Here a teacher comments on the appropriateness of guessing during a vocabulary test:

Assessing vocabulary during the course

Oftentimes in assessing vocabulary knowledge, students feel the need to guess if they do not know an answer when given any kind of 'test' in a classroom (believing that the higher their score, the better). However, it is often the case that when students guess a word, and if they guess correctly, their vocabulary assessment becomes inaccurate. A word they guess the answer to may show, in the results, that the student knows the word, but to the student, they did not know and simply guessed. Even though assessing a student's vocabulary knowledge in the classroom may seem a simple enough task, I believe it is very important to explain to the students that their grade is not affected by the results of their assessment. The 'test' is simply a measurement of their current vocabulary knowledge, and the more honestly they answer the questions, the better it is for the students' learning. So, for this kind of assessment, I always explain and reiterate to my students to *not* guess if they are not sure of an answer.

Brandon Narasaki, teacher, Tokyo, Japan

Nation (2001) suggests that vocabulary tests should contain about 30 items. A number of different item types can be used in vocabulary tests, depending on the kind of vocabulary knowledge being tested (e.g. receptive or productive knowledge). Testing procedures reflect two perspectives on vocabulary assessment. One approach is to test sets of words to measure students' lexical knowledge, perhaps referenced to a word-frequency list, in order to measure gaps in a learner's lexical knowledge. The other is to assess vocabulary in the context of a language-use task (Read, 2000). Each approach requires the use of different testing procedures. A test of the first kind might be one in which the learner is given words and selects the correct meaning from choices given. The other could involve testing understanding of the meaning of a word as it appears in a text. The following are examples of test items commonly used in vocabulary tests:

- *Multiple choice*: These are common in vocabulary tests, though are difficult to construct and only allow a small number of items to be tested.
- *Matching*: Words are matched with synonyms or definitions or with an L1 equivalent.
- *Sentence completion*: A sentence is given with a target word replaced by a blank.
- *Sentence writing*: Students are given a word and asked to use it in a sentence.
- *Gap-fill (or cloze) test*: The learner supplies a word to fill in a missing word in a text.
- *Self-rating*: The learner rates how well he or she knows a word.

While we have addressed the testing of vocabulary in isolation, vocabulary testing is frequently combined with the testing of other skills, such as grammar.

10.7 Conclusion

Vocabulary knowledge is a core component of all language skills; good language learners have large vocabularies and look for ways to expand their vocabulary knowledge. They use a variety of different strategies to help themselves understand words they encounter in spoken and written texts, as well as to help themselves remember them. While reading is a major source of vocabulary learning for students, all lessons contain vocabulary and need to be reviewed for their potential in learning vocabulary. Vocabulary instruction should aim to help expand and consolidate students' vocabularies, to help students develop strategies to manage their own vocabulary learning and to familiarize students with ways of approaching new words they encounter in reading and other contexts. Targets for vocabulary learning will depend on the learners' needs and the purposes for which they use English. The goal of vocabulary instruction is not simply to teach knowledge of words, but to help learners to become independent learners. Both direct and indirect approaches to vocabulary learning are helpful; however, direct support for vocabulary development is essential if learners are to acquire the words they need to become effective users of English.

Discussion questions

- 1 Examine a coursebook and look at exercises designed specifically to develop vocabulary. What aspects of vocabulary use do they teach?
- 2 Look again at the exercises you identified in question 1. What kinds of exercises are used to teach and practise vocabulary?
- 3 Choose a text that would be suitable for a particular group of learners you are familiar with but that contains a number of words they might not know. Which of the new words do you think are useful for receptive knowledge and which for productive knowledge?
- 4 Examine the first page of a local English language newspaper. How many examples of collocations and multi-word units does it contain?

- 5 If possible, interview two or three learners and find out how they try to remember words they encounter.
- 6 Examine a few pages from a textbook used in an academic course, such as engineering or agriculture. Check the vocabulary in the texts using the Compleat Lexical Tutor. How much academic vocabulary does it contain? How many words in the text would you classify as technical vocabulary?
- 7 With a partner, see if you can describe a vocabulary game for practising the names of fruit and vegetables.
- 8 Review the various ways that context can help identify the meaning of a word.
- 9 Using five low-frequency words from an authentic reading text, assume a learner role and apply Nation and Coady's (1988) five-step strategy for guessing the meaning of unknown words. How well does the strategy work? Were any of the specific suggestions for guessing meaning helpful?
- 10 Examine a coursebook, and use the checklist suggested by Hedge to review the treatment of vocabulary in the book. Did you find the treatment adequate?
- 11 Choose a reading text from a general English coursebook at a particular level, or choose an authentic reading text suitable for this level. Select five words you would focus on to allow the students to process the text in a meaningful way. What principles of instruction for teaching vocabulary did you apply to select these words?
- 12 Choose five words that appear in this chapter. How could you test someone's knowledge of these words?

Appendix 1:

Teaching affixes and word families

Review the lesson plan below, prepared by Ao Ran, a teacher and teacher educator in Yunnan, China, and in Singapore. What principles of vocabulary teaching does it reflect?

Complete the sample exercise (Handout 3) for practising word families. Did you experience difficulty with any of the items in the test? What strategies did you use to provide an answer? What other formats could be used to test knowledge of these words?

1 Goals

- To learn some common English affixes: *un-*, *in-*, *be-*, *-ly*, *-ive*, *-ible*, *-less*, *-ful*, *-ness*, *-er*.
- To learn some word families containing the above affixes: *sense*, *friend*, *use*, *do*, etc.
- To raise students' awareness of word families as a way to expand their vocabulary.

2 Resources

A. Handout 1: List of some commonly-used English affixes, with explanations: *un-*, *non-*, *in-*, *be-*, *mis-*, *re-*; *-ly*, *-ive*, *-ible*, *-less*, *-ful*, *-er*, *-ness*, etc.

B. Handout 2: List of word families of the words *sense*, *friend*, *use* and *do* prepared in the following way:

— SENSE

Verb: sense

Adjective: **sensible** – **senseless** – **sensitive** – **insensitive**

Adverb: **sensibly** – **sensitively** – **insensitively**

Nouns: sense – **nonsense** – **sensibility** – **sensitivity** – **insensitivity**

— FRIEND

Noun: friend – **friendliness** – **friendship**

Adjective: **friendly** – **unfriendly** – **friendless**

Verb: **befriend**

— USE

Verb: use – **misuse** – **reuse**

Noun: use – **usage** – **user** – **disuse** – **misuse** – **usefulness** – **uselessness**

Adjective: **usable** – **unusable** – **reusable** – **useful** – **useless** – **used** – **disused** – **unused**

Adverb: **usefully** – **uselessly**

— DO

Verb: do – **outdo** – **overdo** – **redo** – **undo**

Noun: do – **doing**

Adjective: doable – done – **overdone** – **undone**

(Word families based on *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 3rd edition, CD-ROM; Cambridge University Press, 1995)

- C. Handout 3: Hard copies of blank-filling exercises for practising word families, which are prepared in the following way:

do (v. and n.), **outdo**, **overdo**, **redo**, **undo**, **doing**, **doable**, **done**, **overdone**, **undone**, **dos**

- a) The roast lamb was dry and _____.
- b) He always tries to _____ everybody else in the class.
- c) It's a global problem – what can individuals _____ about it?
- d) Damn, my shoelaces have come _____ again.
- e) After a heart attack, you have to be careful not to _____ things.
- f) This project may be difficult, but I still think it's _____.
- g) There are no special privileges for the managers – we believe in fair _____ all round in this company.
- h) These new measurements mean that I'll have to _____ the calculations.
- i) Can someone help me to _____ my seat belt?
- j) Running a marathon takes a lot of _____.
- k) The washing-up's _____, but I've left the drying for you.

(Example sentences from *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 3rd edition, CD-ROM; Cambridge University Press, 1995)

- D. Handout 4: Hard copies of more blank-filling exercises to be used for homework.
- E. *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 3rd edition (CALD3) CD-ROM (1st and 2nd editions will also do) for the teacher to prepare word families (through the 'word-building' function), and example sentences for use during class and as homework.

3 Timing 50 minutes

4 Grouping No grouping needed.

5 Activities

- Question and answer (Q and A)
- In-class written exercises

6 Sequencing

- Opening
 1. Q and A: Teacher asks four or five questions as a lead-in activity, for example:
 - *What is the word that means 'not happy'?*
 - *What is the word that means 'not kind'?*
 - *What is the word that means 'not selfish'?*
 - *Is the word 'sad' a noun or an adjective? How can we turn it into a noun? An adverb? A verb?*

(It does not matter whether students have the right or wrong answers to these questions because the purpose is to steer them towards the theme of the lesson. In fact, it may produce a more beneficial effect if students do not know the correct answers to some or all questions.)

2. Teacher provides the answers to the questions and naturally transitions into the lesson.
3. Teacher describes the goals of the lesson.
4. Teacher states the activities students will do.
- Main activity
 5. Teacher gives students Handouts 1 and 2, and explains the affixes and the word families.
 6. Students are given a few minutes to digest and memorize the word families on Handout 2.
 7. Teacher then gives students Handout 3 for them to complete the blank-filling exercises.
 8. Teacher checks the answers after students finish the exercises.
- Closure
 9. Teacher reviews and summarizes what has been learned.
 10. Homework. Teacher gives students homework, which consists of the following:
 - a) Building word families, following the format in Handout 2 for the words *able*, *break*, *know*, *possible*, *learn*, *live*, *speak* and *believe*.
 - b) Handout 4.
 11. Teacher dismisses the class.

Appendix 2:

Word race

Look at the activity for reviewing vocabulary, prepared by Brandon Narasaki, a teacher in Tokyo, Japan. Compare it to the suggestions in the chapter for revisiting words. Would this activity be suitable for students you teach?

Activity objective: An activity to help students review a set of words taught in a class. Since this is purely a review activity, the word set should have already been taught before proceeding.

Required materials:

- 1** A PowerPoint or other presentation software document including the learning objective(s), rules and questions for the activity.
- 2** Projector, screen or any other way of displaying the presentation, so that all students can easily see.
- 3** One desk per group of students.
- 4** A review sheet for each group that includes at least a list of the target vocabulary used for the activity. This review sheet may include exercises students completed to learn the different aspects of the target vocabulary (e.g. word definitions, synonyms, parts of speech – example sentences with the way each word can be used, etc.).

Activity process:

- 1** Students will be placed into groups of no more than four (two to three is ideal to ensure each student has enough time to actively participate).

- 2 Once the groups have been decided, set up one desk for each group in a place where they are able to clearly see the presentation.
- 3 Explain the directions and reason for activity:

Directions:

- 1 Each group will elect one person to start by sitting in the group chair. Only one person per group is allowed to sit at a time, but after every three questions, a new member will sit (the frequency of changing the person who sits can be decided by the instructor).
- 2 The instructor will show slides of the preselected categories (e.g. definition, synonyms and word use), and the first person sitting down to raise their hand is allowed to guess the correct answer.

EXAMPLE: A slide shows the definition 'feeling or showing pleasure or contentment'. The first person to guess the word *happy* wins. Each word that is used as an answer must be from the target vocabulary set.

- 3 Even though the student sitting down is NOT allowed to use any notes, his or her group members standing up behind the chair are allowed to. The person sitting down may not look at her group-members' notes, but group members are allowed to verbally give the answer.
- 4 Once the person sitting down raises her hand to answer, his or her group members are not allowed to help any more.
- 5 If a student guesses incorrectly, another group may guess. Each student is only allowed to guess one time, so students should think about their answer before raising their hand.

NOTE: If pronunciation is a focus of the target vocabulary, students should be warned that pronunciation also counts (so improper pronunciation of a word may make an answer incorrect, even if the correct word is given).

- 6 For every correct answer, that group is awarded a point.
- 7 At the end of the activity, the group with the most points wins. To help motivate students to study for this activity or participate more actively, some sort of prize is useful (e.g. extra credit, less homework, snack, etc.).

The main categories I use for this activity include:

- Word definition (The definition of a word will be shown. Choose the vocabulary word that is being defined.)
- Synonyms (A word will be shown, and students must decide which of the target words from the unit has a similar meaning.)
- Word use (A sentence will be shown with a blank, and groups must decide which target word fits.)
- Word parts (A target word will be shown, along with several multiple-choice affix answers. Students must choose the correct affix that goes with the word. OR, a target vocabulary word will be shown, with its part of speech. Then, students must say the target word in a different form, based on what the question asks for, such as a verb.)

Appendix 3:

'Slap the affix'

Look at the activity below, prepared by Brandon Narasaki, a teacher in Tokyo, Japan, and compare it with the activity for teaching affixes in Appendix 1. With what type of students might each activity be most effective? What reasons might you have for choosing one activity over the other?

Activity objective: An activity to help review word families and the uses of English affixes (for this example, the focus will be on suffixes) and to help students become aware of the relationship of words in a *word family*.

Materials needed:

- 1 A preselected set of vocabulary items that students have studied and for which they have learned the different suffixes used to change a word's part of speech (e.g. noun → verb).
- 2 Before conducting the game, the instructor should create a set of words and suffixes to use in the game. I usually try to have about twenty questions each time I do this activity, to give the students enough practice to become comfortable with the rules and process of the activity (e.g. 'Change *happy* (adj.) into a noun' → *happiness*).
- 3 One set of index cards for each group (if more than one group is formed). Each set of index cards should have several different types of affixes.
- 4 I also always use a blank index card, with no suffix written, since oftentimes a word can be used as a verb, noun or adjective, without changing its form.

Activity process:

- 1 Depending on the size of the class, break the students up into groups of two to four. (I prefer at least three in each group, but any larger than four may demotivate some students from wanting to participate.)
- 2 Have each group of students stand around a separate table or large desk.
- 3 Give each group a deck of index cards, and have them spread the cards out on the table/desk.
- 4 Make sure the students read each index card to see the different suffixes on each one.
- 5 Explain the rules of the activity:
 - a The teacher will show the students one of the target words being learned (either write on the board [the word] say, or use a software presentation such as PowerPoint).
 - b The teacher asks the entire class what part of speech the word is (e.g. write *happy* on the board, and students should know this word is an adjective).
 - c Once the students know the original part of speech, tell them to 'slap the affix' that changes the word into a chosen part of speech (e.g. *happy* (adj.) → noun = *happiness*). The instructor should already have predetermined words to help avoid any unwanted surprises.

- d** Inform the students that they only have one chance to choose a card, so once they 'slap' a card, they must leave their hand down. Depending on the level of the students and the difficulty of the word, the instructor may need to wait until each student in each group has chosen a card to 'slap'.
- e** This activity is called 'Slap the affix' because the students have to race to slap the affix they believe to be correct, as quickly as possible (adapted from the common card game slapjack, a variant on snap). If two students slap the same correct affix, the fastest one wins.
- f** This may need to be demonstrated with an example, at least one time, so that students understand how to play.
- g** One person from each group should keep track of the score to see who has the most points at the end.
- h** At the end of the game, the person from each group with the most points wins.

Optional variations:

- I find it more entertaining and motivating to give the winners a prize. This could be in the form of extra credit, a snack, a gift card, less homework or anything the instructor feels would be appropriate.
- Another fun option is to save the last several questions of the game as 'betting rounds', where students can bet the points they accumulated in the game to increase their points. It is simpler mathematically if the betting is kept simple. For example, if a student bets two of his other points, he or she will get two extra points for winning the round or lose two points if he or she does not win in his or her group for that round. It is also useful for the students to know how many rounds are left near the end so they can strategize how to bet for each round.

Appendix 4:

Recognizing problems; A good night's sleep

Look at the two pages below from the textbook *Passages*, 2nd edition (Richards and Sandy, 2008). What kind of vocabulary knowledge is taught in each activity? Are these examples of direct or indirect vocabulary instruction?

5 Recognizing problems

vocabulary

A These verbs are often used to talk about problems. Use the verbs to replace the boldfaced words and phrases in the sentences below.

aggravate	a problem
avoid	
cause	
deal with	
identify	
ignore	
run into	
solve	



1. My friend **never does anything about** his problems.
My friend always ignores his problems.
2. Maria can look at a broken bicycle and **find** the problem right away.
3. My sister is never afraid to **try to take care of** a difficult problem.
4. Gil Dong always **makes** his problems **worse**.
5. Ruby always follows the recipe closely to **prevent** problems when she cooks.
6. Ming always **unexpectedly encounters** problems when he tries to fix things.
7. Carla is great at **completely fixing** any kind of problem at work.
8. Al is the kind of student who always **makes** problems for teachers.

B **Pair work** Do you know anyone similar to the people in the sentences above? Tell your partner.

"My cousin always ignores her problems. Her car is always making strange noises, but she never does anything about it."

6 Dealing with problems

listening

A Listen to Ray (R), Felipe (F), and Jennifer (J) talk about a problem that they each had. What did each person finally do about the problem? Write the correct letter.

___ ignore it ___ deal with it ___ aggravate it

B Listen again. Briefly describe each person's problem.

Ray: _____

Felipe: _____

Jennifer: _____

LESSON B • Tossing and turning

1 A good night's sleep

starting point

A Read the statements about sleep habits. Check (✓) the statements that are true for you.

- ☐ I sometimes lie awake at night, even if I'm really tired.
- ☐ I'm lucky I can get by on six hours of sleep, considering that most people need eight.
- ☐ I'm a light sleeper, so any little noise wakes me up unless I'm really tired.
- ☐ I can manage on five hours of sleep, as long as I take a nap during the day.
- ☐ Unless I get a good night's sleep, I can easily fall asleep at school, at work, or even while driving.
- ☐ I always set two alarm clocks just in case one of them doesn't go off.
- ☐ I only wake up early if I have somewhere to be in the morning.
- ☐ I never have any trouble sleeping.
- ☐ I'm exhausted every morning, even if I slept great all night.



B Pair work Compare your answers. Which statements did you check?

"I definitely lie awake at night, even if I'm really tired. I can't help it. I replay everything that happened during the day."

"You're not the only one. I do the same thing, especially when I'm feeling stressed."

2 Expressions related to sleep

vocabulary

A Put these expressions about sleep in the columns. Then compare answers.

be fast asleep	be wide awake	feel drowsy	nod off	take a power nap
be sound asleep	drift off	have a sleepless night	sleep like a log	toss and turn

Having trouble sleeping	Falling asleep	Sleeping a short time	Sleeping deeply
			be fast asleep

B Pair work Use the expressions to ask and answer questions.

"Do you ever take a power nap during the day?"

"Not really. Whenever I try to take a nap, I end up sleeping until the next morning. But let me ask you something. What do you do when you feel drowsy after lunch?"

Further reading

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11

Pronunciation

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What is the role of pronunciation as a component of English language teaching?
- What is the nature of pronunciation in English?
 - Segmental features.
 - Suprasegmental features.
- What are the goals of pronunciation teaching?
 - Are native-speaker targets realistic?
 - Pronunciation as a component of intelligibility.
 - Pronunciation as a component of fluent communication.
- How can pronunciation be learned effectively?
 - Factors in learning pronunciation.
- How should pronunciation be taught?
 - Planning for pronunciation teaching.
 - The pronunciation lesson.
- How can pronunciation be tested?

11.1 Introduction

Pronunciation plays an important role in communication. A person's pronunciation may tell the listener a great deal about his or her age, social class, regional and educational background and gender. When someone speaks English as a second or a foreign language, their pronunciation is often one of the first things one notices. Many second language users of English aim to learn how to speak it with an accent close to or indistinguishable from those of native speakers of English. Others may feel comfortable speaking English with an accent that reflects features of their first language, speaking with a Chinese, German or Mexican accent, for example. They may have no wish to change their accent in English, since they feel it reflects their cultural identity. However, sometimes a learner's pronunciation may make comprehension difficult, and teaching strategies are needed to address aspects of the learner's pronunciation that impede successful communication. Learning pronunciation in a new language is something that has many different dimensions. Some aspects of it are largely physical: the learner may have to acquire unfamiliar sounds and unfamiliar articulatory positions for sounds. Others are more social in nature, since pronunciation is linked to the expression of both personal as well as cultural identity. While comprehensibility and fluency may be a primary goal for many second language learners, their pronunciation of English is also an important aspect of learning English, since pronunciation may affect both how easy they are to understand as well as people's perceptions of them. Second language learners of English have to make decisions about the kind of pronunciation they wish to acquire – British, American, Australian or mother-tongue influenced pronunciation – and the messages they want to send through the way they speak English.

11.2 Pronunciation as a component of English language teaching

We saw in Chapter 3 that towards the end of the nineteenth century, the teaching of spoken English emerged as a priority in language teaching, rather than the study of language through grammar-translation which did not give priority to spoken language. The discipline of phonetics (the scientific analysis and description of the sound system of languages) was also established during this period, and with the development of the International Phonetic Alphabet in 1888 by the International Phonetic Association, techniques were available to enable the sounds of a language to be correctly transcribed. The association sought to improve the quality of instruction in spoken languages and emphasized the importance of phonetic training to establish good pronunciation habits. Teachers now needed training in phonetics, and learners, likewise, were trained in the accurate production of sound contrasts in English. The importance of pronunciation was emphasized in the oral-based methods that were adopted in English language teaching, in both the US and the UK (see Chapter 3), during the first half of the twentieth century. From that tradition, by the latter part of the twentieth century, an approach to teaching pronunciation had become established that involved an emphasis on accurate pronunciation from the earliest stages in language

teaching, through a focus on the distinctive sound features of a language (phonemes) as the core focus of a pronunciation syllabus. The discipline of contrastive analysis predicted pronunciation difficulties for learners, based on a comparison of pronunciation features of English and the learner's first language. Drills – particularly minimal-pair exercises – and guided pronunciation exercises that focused on individual sounds, as well as features of rhythm and intonation, appeared in classroom materials and in the recorded materials that supported pronunciation teaching in the language laboratory or classroom.

From the 1960s, there was a changed orientation to pronunciation, which was now understood from the perspective of communicative competence, rather than linguistic competence. Minimal pairs and similar exercises focused on individual sounds, but now attention shifted to the nature of pronunciation in discourse and to its role in casual and formal speech and in face-to-face communication. The scope of pronunciation teaching also expanded to consider its role within the interactional dynamics of the communication process and how it reflects the speaker's sense of identity. For example, an immigrant may identify largely with his or her own ethnic community and seek to retain features of the first-language pronunciation to signal this identity. Alternatively, an immigrant may seek to be seen as part of the larger community and aim to acquire the phonological features of that community's speech (Gatbonton et al., 2005). Communicative competence also questioned the positioning of phonological accuracy as a target in learning English, and contrasted this emphasis with the ability to participate in fluent language use without necessarily using target-language phonological norms.

A more recent paradigm shift in assumptions about the role of pronunciation was introduced with the emergence of the notion of English as an international language (EIL) or as a *lingua franca* (ELF) (see Chapter 1). This has led, on the one hand, to the recognition of local varieties of English with their own distinctive phonological features and, on the other, to recognition of the fact that in situations where second language speakers communicate in English, a native English speaker pronunciation may be irrelevant, and that this very large community of users of English may have very different goals for learning English than those reflected in traditional pronunciation courses (Walker, 2010). This topic will be discussed further below. The notion of EIL/ELF thus raises many issues for teachers and materials developers, since decisions need to be made concerning which pronunciation models to present to learners, what standard of pronunciation is aimed at and which varieties of spoken English students should most usefully be introduced to through listening materials.

11.3 The nature of pronunciation in English

Languages make use of many different features of sounds to communicate meanings. As well as the different sound units or phonemes that languages make use of, pitch (the relative highness or lowness of the speaker's voice), intonation (the pattern of pitch changes that occur across an utterance), vowel length, stress and rhythm are also basic features

of speech. The vowels and consonant system of a language are often referred to as the *segmental* level, and features which stretch over more than one segment, such as length, intonation and stress, as the *suprasegmental* level. From the total range of available sound possibilities, different languages choose resources in many different ways, and moving from a language with one set of features (the learner's mother tongue) to the sound system of English can be very difficult. Some languages may be relatively close to English in many of their phonological features, while others may be very different and hence pose considerable learning difficulty. These difficulties may be both those of perception and of production. The learner may not notice some of the distinctive sound features of English (such as the difference between /b/ and /p/, or /l/ and /r/), because the two sounds are not distinguished in his or her own language, or may not notice final consonants and consonant clusters in English (as in *beach*, *ask*, *lend*) because these sounds do not occur at the end of words in the learner's mother tongue. And some sounds may be difficult (such as /θ and /ð/, as in *think* and *this*) because they do not occur in the learner's mother tongue. Sometimes there may be a similar sound in the learner's mother tongue, but it is pronounced a little differently in English (such as the difference between /r/ in French and English).



What are some of the differences between the sound features of English and those of other languages you know?

Segmental features

Vowels

English makes use of a larger set of vowel contrasts than some languages, and there is a great deal of variety in the way native speakers of English use vowels, accounting for the recognizable differences between, say, a speaker of British, American or Australian English. American English has 15 vowels, while standard British English has some 20 vowels. New Englishes, such as Indian English and Singapore English (see Chapter 1), also differ in the vowel contrasts they employ. Learners will encounter English spoken with many different accents, and it is important for them to become familiar with some of the accents they will hear, both native and non-native. The fact that English has more vowel distinctions than are used in many other languages poses special difficulties for second language learners.

Differences between vowels are due to the differences in the height of the body of the main part of the tongue (high, mid or low), whether the tongue is towards the front or the back of the mouth, the degree of muscular tension involved (tense or lax) and the extent to which the lips are rounded or unrounded. Jaw position also influences vowels. Vowels in words like *cat* are produced with the jaw in an open position (open vowels), and words with a vowel like *seat* are produced with the jaw in a closed-jaw position (close vowels). Some vowel contrasts in English (such as the difference between *live* and *leave*, or between *bad* and *bed*) may be difficult for students to hear if the contrast does not exist in their mother tongue.



What vowel sounds in English are most difficult for your learners?

Many second language learners have difficulty recognizing and producing the difference between the vowel contrasts in *leave* and *live*, *late* and *let*, and *boot* and *book* – i.e. the difference between tense vowels and lax vowels.

English also makes use of diphthongs and triphthongs, which consist of a glide from one vowel sound to another, as in the diphthongs in the words *day*, *buy* and *rain*, and the triphthongs in the words *fire*, *lower* and *flower*.

Consonants

Learning to produce English consonants is greatly influenced by the learner's mother tongue. Research suggests that mispronunciation of consonants, as well as of some core vowel contrasts, is one of the most common causes of communication breakdowns (Jenkins, 2000; 2002). Some difficulties may be due to consonants that do not occur in the learner's first language, such as /θ/. This may lead to the substitution of familiar consonants such as /s/ or /f/. Or the learner's mother tongue may have a similar consonant to English (e.g. /p/, /t/ and /k/), but whereas these consonants, when they occur at the beginning of words in English (as in *pen*, *time*, and *can*) before a stressed vowel, occur with a slight puff of air (known as *aspiration*), the same sound in the same position may not be pronounced with aspiration in the learner's native language. (The aspiration used with these sounds in initial position in English can be seen by holding a piece of paper in front of the mouth when saying the sounds). The presence or absence of aspiration with these consonants in English has no effect on comprehension, so both the teacher and the learners need to decide if this is something they consider important.



Do you think it is necessary to correct learners who do not use aspiration as it is used in English in words beginning with *p*, *t*, or *k*?

The difference between some consonants in English is due to *voicing* (the vibration of the vocal cords), which accounts for the differences between the voiceless and voiced pairs /f/ and /v/, /p/ and /b/, /t/ and /d/, and /k/ and /g/. A learner's mother tongue may have one of the consonants in the pair (such as the voiceless one), but not its voiced equivalent.

Differences in syllable structure between English and other languages are also the cause of many of the pronunciation problems encountered by learners of English. Languages differ in how they group sounds into syllables and the kinds of combinations that are possible. English allows a greater range of sounds at the end of syllables than some languages.

In Cantonese and Vietnamese, the only consonants that can occur in final position in syllables are /n/, /m/, and /ŋ / (as in *sing*), and /p/, /t/ and /k/, so learners from these language backgrounds would find words like *bad* and *doll* difficult to pronounce, producing 'bat' and 'don', instead (Rogerson-Revell, 2011: 118).

Consonants in English may occur in different positions in words from their distribution in the learner's first language and may also occur in groupings (consonant clusters) that do not occur in the first language. This may lead learners to omit some or all of the sounds in a final consonant or consonant cluster or to insert a vowel into a consonant cluster or after a final consonant, producing 'beacha', instead of *beach*, referred to as *epenthesis*.

Consonants in English are also often blended or reduced in spoken English, depending on their position in words. In natural speech, the placement of stress and rhythm, as well as the rapid nature of spoken speech, result in several processes of modification. The most common are assimilation, elision and linking. Assimilation is the process by which a speech sound changes and becomes more like, or identical to, another sound that precedes or follows it. For example, *that person* becomes 'thap person', *good boy* becomes 'goob boy' or *in public* becomes 'im public'. *Elision* refers to the omission of a sound that would normally be pronounced if the word occurred on its own. For example, *want to* becomes 'wanna', and *don't know* becomes 'dono'. *Linking* refers to the blending together of words in fluent speech, such as when a final consonant joins the beginning of the next word if the word begins with a vowel. For example, *turn it on* becomes 'tur ni ton', or *fire exit* becomes 'fi rexit'.

Final consonants in English are not strongly pronounced (e.g. *stop, break, make*), unless the following word begins with a vowel. This may differ from the learner's first language (e.g. Russian), where final consonants are pronounced. If this feature is transferred to English, it often appears that the speaker is adding a vowel (e.g. 'stopa').



Some teachers feel it is important for learners to recognize that blended and reduced sounds occur in English, but it is not necessary for students to try to produce them, or not at the elementary level, at least. What is your view?

Consonant clusters also pose problems for many learners. Consonant clusters consist of a sequence of two or more consonants at the beginning or end of a syllable, as in *space, try, sketched* or *smashed*. Clusters of two or three consonants are common in English, and these can cause problems for learners whose languages do not make a similar use of consonant clusters. In attempting to pronounce clusters, learners may insert vowels before or between consonants, saying 'iscream' instead of *scream*, or 'screw' instead of *screw*, or they may delete some of the consonants in a cluster, saying 'oder' for *older*, 'hol' for *hold* or 'bother' for *brother*.



What problems do English consonants pose for your learners?

Suprasegmental features

Word stress

Words in English may contain one or more syllables, as we see in *car*, *carpet* and *carpenter*. In words of more than one syllable, one syllable carries greater stress and is lengthened, while the other syllables may be unstressed or have secondary stress. In *carpet*, the second syllable is unstressed. In *representative*, the third syllable has primary stress, and the first and last syllables have secondary stress. The majority of two-syllable nouns have primary stress on the first syllable, as in *father*, *mother* and *brother*. More than 60% of two-syllable verbs are stressed on the second syllable, as in *accept*, *deny* and *review*. Compound nouns like *carport* or *chequebook* have primary stress on the first syllable and secondary stress on the second. Unstressed vowels are often dropped in English, as when *family* becomes 'famly', *interesting* becomes 'intresting' and *evening* becomes 'evning'. Placing the primary stress on the wrong syllable in a word can cause misunderstanding, such as when *American* is pronounced 'AmeriCAN', with the primary stress on the last syllable. Another example from Thailand illustrates this point, as well (author's data):

Stressing the wrong syllable

I was discussing movies with a Thai friend recently and asked him what one of his favourite movies was. He said it was a movie called 'DESSindents'. I struggled for a while to catch the name of the movie he was referring to. 'It's called "DESSindents"?' I asked. 'That's right', he replied. I still could not make any sense of the word. So I asked him to spell it. 'I think it's D E S C E N D A N T S', he replied. 'Oh you mean "DescENDants"', I replied, stressing the second syllable of the word. 'Yes, that's it', he confirmed, reminding me how stress on the wrong syllable of a word can easily lead to a breakdown in communication.



Try reading a few sentences in English, and try to give all the syllables in the words more or less the same stress. Did you find this difficult to do?

Intonation and rhythm

Two important suprasegmental features are intonation and rhythm. Intonation refers to variations in pitch when speaking – that is, the raising and lowering of pitch during an utterance. Intonation is used to carry meaning over and above the meaning of the utterance itself, and the meanings carried by changes in intonation are an important part of the meaning of an utterance. Wennerstrom (2006: 72) comments:

Intonational meaning plays its role at the discourse level, involving the cohesion of a text as information is presented as new, given or contrastive, and as one phrase is linked to the next. In

interactive genres, intonation is central to turn-taking as each participant indicates the intention to retain or relinquish the floor. Topic shifts are also indicated intonationally, as are many matters of attitude and self-expression. Thus, in any speech event, participants are continuously providing meaningful cues about the discourse, through their own intonation, while attending to those in others' speech.

The patterns or 'melody' of an utterance, or unit of information, is known as an intonation contour. As was noted above, intonation contours have many different functions in discourse. For example, the word *ready* – said with rising intonation – is a question, while the same word with falling intonation is a statement. The utterance *I TOLD you so* – with stress and a noticeable pitch rise on the word *told*, followed by a falling pitch over the end of the sentence – indicates annoyance. Some intonation contours are associated with specific sentence types. Generally speaking, falling intonation can be associated with certainty, and rising intonation with uncertainty. Declarative sentences in English typically have an abrupt pitch rise on the last stressed word of a sentence, followed by a fall. For example, the sentence *Dyslexia is a reading disorder* has an intonation contour consisting of a rise on the first syllable of *reading*, followed by a gradual fall over the remaining syllables of the sentence. Yes/no questions, such as *Is dyslexia a reading disorder?*, typically have a long gradual rise in pitch from the beginning to the end of the sentence. *Wh*- questions usually have the same intonation contour as declarative sentences. For example, in the question *What kind of disorder is dyslexia?*, the abrupt pitch rise is usually on the second syllable of *dyslexia*.

Rhythm refers to the pattern that the distribution of stressed syllables gives to speech. English has a rhythm in which stressed syllables occur at regular intervals, and the length of an utterance depends on the number of stresses, rather than the number of syllables. So, for example, the sentence *Jean likes air travel* takes roughly the same amount of time to say as *Jean is travelling to Italy in November*, since both contain four stressed syllables. For this reason, English is termed a *stress-timed* language, as are Dutch, German and Mandarin Chinese. In languages like Spanish, Italian and Korean, on the other hand, syllables tend to occur at more or less regular intervals, and the length of an utterance depends on the number of syllables, rather than the number of stresses. For this reason, these are called *syllable-timed* languages. Transferring the rhythm of a syllable-timed language to English produces a staccato-like effect, though it has little effect on comprehension. It may, in fact, even facilitate understanding, making words easier to identify. The stressed words in English are normally content words, and the other words in an utterance (function words) are reduced and contracted. So the sentence *We shouldn't have arrived until later* is pronounced 'We *SHOULD*intuw *arrIVED* until *LATER*'.

Voice quality

Another feature of spoken language is the general articulatory characteristics used by speakers of a language, known as *voice-setting features*. When speaking, people adopt the typical voice-setting features of their language, giving a distinctive quality or 'colour' to the

speech. This phenomenon was described in an important paper by Laver (1980: 2), who gives the following examples of voice-setting:

... a quasi-permanent tendency to keep the lips in a rounder position throughout speech. Another would be a habitual tendency to keep the body of the tongue slightly retracted into the pharynx while speaking. Another would be the persistent choice of a characteristically 'whispery' mode of phonation. Settings give a background 'colouring' running through sequences of shorter-term segmental articulations.

Voice-quality setting is the phenomenon which accounts for our impressions of, for example, certain male speakers of some languages as speaking their language or English with a hoarse or husky-sounding voice, or female speakers from some cultures as speaking with a high-pitched quality to their voices. Similarly, some learners observe that native speakers of some varieties of English appear to overuse their lips when speaking, while speakers of French use more lip rounding than speakers of English. The concept of voice quality reminds us that voice-quality settings may differ from one language to another and may influence a speaker's accent; however, there are no practical applications to be drawn from research or data on this phenomenon (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010: 32).

11.4 The goals of pronunciation teaching

Are native-speaker targets realistic?

The role of English as an international language has refocused interest in the role of pronunciation in teaching English, as we noted above. In the 1970s, the target for learning was assumed to be a native-speaker variety of English, and it was the native speaker's culture, perceptions and speech that were crucial in setting goals for English teaching (see Chapter 1). Native speakers had a privileged status as 'owners of the language, guardians of its standards and arbiters of acceptable pedagogic norms' (Jenkins, 2000: 5). Today, local varieties of English, such as Filipino English and Singapore English, are firmly established as a result of indigenization, and, in contexts where English is a foreign language, there is less pressure to turn foreign-language speakers of English (e.g. Koreans, Mexicans or Germans) into mimics of native-speaker English, whether an American, British or Australian variety. The extent to which a learner seeks to speak with a native-like accent and sets this as his or her goal is a personal one. It is not necessary to try to eradicate the phonological influences of the mother tongue, nor to seek to speak like a native speaker. Jenkins argues that Received Pronunciation (RP), the standard British accent, is both an unattainable and an unnecessary target for second language learners, and she proposes a phonological syllabus that maintains core phonological distinctions, but is a reduced inventory from RP (see below). In addition, RP has very few speakers today, as we see in this observation:

RP is probably the most widely studied and most frequently described variety of spoken English in the world, yet recent estimates suggest only 2% of the UK population speak it. It has a

negligible presence in Scotland and Northern Ireland and is arguably losing its prestige status in Wales. It should properly, therefore, be described as an English, rather than a British, accent. As well as being a living accent, RP is also a theoretical linguistic concept. It is the accent on which phonemic transcriptions in dictionaries are based, and it is widely used (in competition with General American) for teaching English as a foreign language. RP [however] provides us with an extremely familiar model against which comparisons with other accents may be made (www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/find-out-more/received-pronunciation/).

Setting a native-speaker target for the learning of pronunciation has also been criticized on other grounds:

- *Because it is largely unattainable:* Unless learners commence learning English at a very young age, are exposed to very large amounts of native-speaker input and are strongly motivated to acquire a native-speaker accent, it is unlikely that they will acquire a native-speaker accent.
- *Because it is unnecessary:* Effective comprehension is not dependent upon the speaker having a native-speaker accent. What is more important is intelligibility and fluency, which depend upon a good control of grammar, vocabulary, a level of pronunciation which does not impede communication, and effective communication strategies, as well as the ability to communicate with ease and without excessive pauses and interruptions (see Chapter 9). The speaker's pronunciation should not arouse negative reactions or interfere with understanding, but variance in pronunciation is a normal feature of communication.
- *Because the learner may not seek it:* Many students prioritize fluency and comprehensibility over a native-like pronunciation. Waniek-Klimczak (2011: 118) reports:

Studies conducted among students in Poland prove that students majoring in English tend to aim at native-like pronunciation. In contrast, students with a similar proficiency level not planning to use English as their main professional interest seem less likely to make this choice. Interestingly, even in the English-majoring group, it is the fluency, ease of communication and confidence in speech that are mentioned as more important than a native-like accent.



Do you think your learners aim to master a native-speaker pronunciation?

Pronunciation as a component of intelligibility

There are several features of intelligibility. A person's English is intelligible if the listener can recognize the words and utterances he or she uses and can readily understand the meaning the speaker intends to communicate. Both pronunciation and word choice contribute to intelligibility. Research suggests that for more advanced learners, accurate use of stress, rhythm and intonation in English have a greater impact on intelligibility than accurate pronunciation of vowels and consonants, although this has not been

confirmed for basic-level learners (Lane, 2010). Zelinski (2008) reports that accurate word stress and accurate production of sounds in the stressed syllables are the two features that contribute most to intelligibility. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010: 283) paraphrase Zelinski (2008) who observes:

... because native listeners rely on both the word-stress patterns in the speech signal, the interaction between the two is important, so it makes little sense for the learner to focus just on the production of sounds or just the production of word-stress patterns. Special attention needs to be given to the accuracy of segments within strong syllables, as they provide a source of information upon which native listeners depend.

However, intelligibility also depends upon how familiar the listener is with the speaker's accent. An American visiting New Zealand or Singapore for the first time, for example, may have initial difficulty in understanding some aspects of the local varieties of English; however, it quickly becomes intelligible with familiarization. Pronunciation is hence just one factor influencing intelligibility. Intelligibility is also influenced by word choice, rate of speaking and use of grammar, as well as the general coherence of the speaker's discourse.

As noted above, Jenkins (2000) has suggested that some features of standard English are very difficult to master and do not play a crucial role in intelligibility. These include vowel quality, weak forms, connected speech, word stress, rhythm and pitch movement. These features are often included in traditional pronunciation courses and materials, but Jenkins, based on her research on interactions between non-native speakers, has described them as non-core. She suggests that, in teaching pronunciation, the focus should be on an 'international core for phonological intelligibility: a set of unifying features which, at the very least, has the potential to guarantee that pronunciation will not impede successful communication in EIL settings' (2000: 95). The core would consist of those features of pronunciation that are central to mutual intelligibility in contexts of cross-cultural communication. These would be a more realistic target for teaching and learning than the full inventory of features of standard native-speaker pronunciation.

The *core* features identified by Jenkins are:

- Aspiration after word-initial /p/, /t/ and /k/, e.g. *pen* /pen/, not /ben/.
- Vowel-length distinctions, e.g. *beans* /bi:nz/, not /bɪnz/.
- RP (not general American, or GA) pronunciation of the intervocalic *-nt* when it occurs before an unstressed syllable, e.g. *winter* /wɪntə(r)/, not /wɪnə(r)/.
- Full articulation of consonants in word initial clusters, e.g. *strong* /strɒŋ/, not /srɒŋ/.
- Epenthesis (i.e. insertion of a sound into a word in consonant clusters) is preferable to consonant deletion, e.g. *street* /sɛtə'ri:t/, not /sri:t/.
- Nuclear (tonic) stress production and placement within tone units.
- Adoption of the rhotic variant /r/, e.g. *here* pronounced /hi:r/, not /hɪə/.

Jenkins identifies the following as *non-core* features:

- Substitutions of /θ/, as in *think* /θɪŋk/, resulting in 'tink', 'sink' or 'fink', and of /ð/, as in *this* /ðɪs/, resulting in 'dis', 'zis' or 'vis'.

- Pitch movement on the nuclear syllable.
- Weak forms, e.g. *to* pronounced /tu:/, not /tə/.
- Vowel quality, e.g. *cake* /kerk/ pronounced /kaɪk/.
- Word stress, e.g. *perfectionist*, 'per FEC tionist', pronounced 'PER fectionist'.
- Features of connected speech, such as absence of elision, e.g. *facts* /fæks/ pronounced /fækts/, and assimilation, e.g. *good girl* /gʊd gɜ:l/ pronounced /gʊd gɜ:ɪl/.



Jenkins argues for what could be considered to be a reduced set of goals for language learners. Some have suggested this would encourage the study of a 'degraded' form of English. Do you agree?

Reducing features that might distract from the speaker's message

Most errors of pronunciation result from substitutions or omission of sounds, due to differences between English and the learner's mother tongue and to misplacement of stress in words (such as pronouncing *democracy* as 'DEMocracy'). Pronunciation can distract from the speaker's message and confuse the listener if words are mispronounced. Using *glow*, instead of *grow* or *pact*, instead of *fact* can, at times, cause confusion, although the context or situation in which words are used often makes comprehension possible, despite what might seem to be serious errors of pronunciation. Likewise, simplification of consonant clusters (e.g. 'damish', instead of *damaged*) can sometimes make for difficulty in understanding. Mispronunciations should be addressed earlier, rather than later, since once they have become established, they are often difficult to change, as fossilization may have occurred. Mispronounced words also may elicit a negative reaction. Some mispronunciations may suggest a stereotype of the speaker's cultural background, such as the /l/ and /r/ confusion in 'velly nice' or 'flied lice'. It is important to remember that the goal of pronunciation teaching is not necessarily to remove a learner's accent, but to address those features of pronunciation that the learner may wish to change and which can interfere with his or her message.

Pronunciation as a component of fluent communication

Familiarity with the stress and rhythm of spoken English, as well as knowing how to pronounce the words a speaker wants to use, can help students develop both fluency and confidence in speaking. A speaker who is uncertain or confused about how words are pronounced is likely to speak haltingly and to have difficulty grouping words into the chunks that characterize fluent speech.

The teacher's role as a model

A further issue is the models of pronunciation that have been provided by English teachers, many of whom have acquired English as a second or foreign language and may not have fully mastered many features of English pronunciation. If both the teacher

and the students omit many final consonants and consonant clusters or regularly mispronounce common vowels or consonants due to the influence of the first language, it is not surprising if these characteristics are unlikely to disappear from the learners' English. Teachers clearly need to be able to provide good models of pronunciation for their learners, particularly if the teacher's speech is the learner's primary source of contact with spoken English. Where the teacher has not fully mastered the features of English pronunciation, greater use should be made of recorded texts and other sources of non-teacher generated input, such as videos and electronic resources. A teacher comments on pronunciation issues affecting teachers of English with a regional or local accent:

The teacher's pronunciation

Teachers who have a very strong accent of their own face some difficult issues. There are often specific sounds, stresses and intonations that are specific to that accent and cause difficulties for those not familiar with it. When drilling, for instance, this can lead to problems for those learners who accurately copy the sounds of their teacher's accent, only to find that they have even more difficulty than usual being understood outside the classroom.

In general, I advise my trainee teachers to use their own accent, in order to avoid a kind of phoney hybrid that often occurs when one attempts an accent that is foreign. However, some compromises can be made, in order to help learners reach a middle ground between their own accent and that of the teacher. I think it is possible for us, as teachers, to smooth off the more extreme edges of our own accents in the classroom, without sacrificing our personal identity. This middle ground I hope will enable the learners to speak in such a way that they will be easily understood by a larger number of other English speakers of whatever accent group. For my own accent, I have found that it is useful to make a clearer distinction between some sounds than perhaps I would if I wasn't thinking about it. For example, in my accent, the words 'bear' and 'beer' are often indistinguishable, and that's fine for people familiar with a New Zealand accent. But for a learner, saying the two words the same way often leads to confusion. I, therefore, try, especially when drilling, to make a clearer distinction between the two. Perhaps in the future this 'middle ground' will become a more homogenous 'international English' accent.

NB: Obviously, a hugely significant factor here is the teaching context. For instance, I know that in some East-Asian contexts it is compulsory for teachers to use an 'American' accent, again without defining which one. These institutional constraints have to be dealt with by working teachers, as and when they are encountered.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

11.5 Learning pronunciation

Learning the phonology of a second language involves processes that share some features with other aspects of language learning – for example, 'noticing' (see Chapter 9) appears

to play an important role, as discussed below – and others that are specific to the nature of pronunciation. As we noted earlier, some aspects of learning pronunciation are largely physical. The learner may have to acquire unfamiliar sounds and new articulatory positions for the lips, the jaw and tongue, as well as new rhythmic patterns in speech. The articulatory positions, sound contrasts and patterns of stress and intonation in the learner's first language will have typically been established automatically, as a result of many thousands of hours of use and practice. This view of learning was proposed in information-processing, or cognitive, theory (see Chapter 2), which is summarized as follows by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010: 28), based on their personal communication with Barbara Baptista:

Information-processing theory predicts that, in the acquisition of second language phonology, learners will exhibit a distinct tendency to interpret sounds in the second language in terms of the set of sounds they control as part of their first language system. In addition, they will tend to process information automatically, even in the early stages of second language acquisition, since the higher-level tasks of conceptualizing and formulating utterances in the second language require controlled processing. This automatic processing of phonology, especially prevalent in adults, helps to account for the fossilized nature of much of second language pronunciation.

Factors in pronunciation learning

Incremental learning

New sound patterns do not emerge all at once. For example, a consonant such as the /θ/ consonant in *thanks*, which is difficult for many learners, occurs in a number of different positions in English words:

- Initially, as in *thanks*.
- Medially, as in *author*.
- Finally, as in *bath*.
- In initial consonant clusters, as in *throat*.
- In medial consonant clusters, as in *arthritis*.
- In final consonant clusters, as in *faiths*.

A list like this may constitute a hierarchy of difficulty or an order of acquisition for features of a sound, depending on the learner's mother tongue. (However, following Jenkins' views above, the teacher will need to decide if mastering /θ/ in all its positions is worth extended attention.) A new sound contrast may be acquired first in one location and later in other locations, but some locations may not be acquired at all.

Differences among learners

Some learners strive to achieve a high level of accuracy in pronunciation, while others may not feel that accuracy is especially important. Some learners appreciate immediate

correction of their errors, while others may not like to be corrected in public. And personality also plays a role. Avery and Ehrlich (1992) suggest that some learners are more outgoing and confident, and are less worried about taking risks than others, and this provides them with more opportunities to interact with native speakers, resulting at the same time in more opportunities to practise and improve their pronunciation. On the other hand, some learners might be inhibited and less outgoing, and this means they have fewer opportunities to practise using their English. It should also be noted that some learners may be reluctant to adopt a native-speaker target for pronunciation in the classroom because they do not wish to appear different from their peers, an aspect of the phenomenon known as *willingness to communicate* (see Chapter 5). A marked Mexican, Chinese or Korean accent may hence be used as a marker of group affiliation and identity. Group affiliation, seen in the learners' preference for an accent, may reflect their negotiation of identity among their classroom peers (Gatbonton et al., 2005).

Awareness of the physical aspects of pronunciation

It is useful for students to have a good understanding of the role the different parts of the mouth and other organs play in speaking (the tongue, the jaw, the lips, the vocal cords). The position of the tongue and lips during the articulation of some sounds can be shown through demonstration or through the use of diagrams. Many pronunciation manuals contain useful information of this kind, and the internet is also a source of helpful video demonstrations of tongue and lip positions for certain problematic sounds. Diagrams can be used to illustrate patterns of stress and intonation. Many automatic speech recognition (ASR) programs include this type of visual information.

Noticing pronunciation features before learning them

Learning is facilitated if learners notice features of English pronunciation in the language they hear, as well as in their own speech production (see Chapter 2). In addition, learners are often not aware of pronunciation errors in their own speech. An important first step in teaching pronunciation, therefore, is to make use of techniques that draw learners' attention to features of English and to errors. Minimal-pair recognition drills are one such technique, where students receive pairs of words (or pictures of word pairs), with and without final consonants, and tick which word from the pair they hear the teacher read (e.g. *choose/chew*; *buy/bite*; *fly/flight*). Technology can also play a role in teaching pronunciation (see Chapter 19). As mentioned above, automatic speech recognition, or ASR, can be helpful in making students notice differences in pronunciation among sounds and between their own and target-like production. ASR recognizes learners' speech and, in some cases, displays this graphically, usually alongside a model. The computer can be useful at times for the repetitive practice that students engage in. Many students like being able to practise privately and to get feedback immediately. A teacher comments on helping students notice final consonants:

A simple solution for final consonants

My Cambodian and Lao students have great difficulty with final consonants and consonant clusters, so they will constantly say things like, ‘*Oh, that’s very “ni”...*’ [and] ‘*I “li” it a lot*’. They simply don’t seem to be aware of the existence of final sounds. One thing I do regularly to draw their attention to them is to give them each a short passage to read, and I ask them to circle in red all the words that have a final consonant. Then I ask them to practise reading their passage aloud, paying attention to the final consonants, first to the whole class and then to each other.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

Techniques that focus on noticing features of pronunciation include:

- *Marking a text:* Students listen to a text and circle words containing specific sounds (e.g. final consonants, as in the example from the teacher above).
- *Same or different:* Students listen to pairs or sets of words or sentences which may or may not contain one different item (e.g. a feature the teacher wants them to notice). They check off whether the items they hear are the same or different.
- *Focused listening:* Students listen to a text which contains a number of highlighted words. As they listen, they mark the stressed syllable on the highlighted words.
- *Following a script:* When listening to an audio recording, students can read the script and try to identify examples of features such as blended and linked sounds.
- *Intonation signals:* Students listen to a text and mark with an arrow if sentences end with rising or falling intonation.



Do you think the internet is a good source of noticing activities? What kinds of internet sources do you think can be used to promote noticing?

Modelling features of English pronunciation

Learning can be improved by giving students a range of different sources of exposure to natural speech and using such input to draw attention to specific features of pronunciation. This can include both audio and video examples of rapid speech, as well as slower speech. Many audio programs now include speech-slowdown software and voice-recognition software. Speech-slowdown software is software that allows speech to be slowed down without changing its pitch, thus enabling learners to notice sounds they may not have recognized in rapid speech. Voice-recognition software gives learners feedback on their pronunciation. Several tools are available:

- 1 Voice-recognition software, which does not give any feedback directly, but does so indirectly by telling you that you’re not very good if it doesn’t understand you! However, the software gets used to you, so, potentially, this could lead to fossilization of bad pronunciation.

- 2** Pronunciation software, such as Tell Me More and Pronunciation Power, which include automatic speech recognition. They include models of native speakers' speech in graphical form, as well as students' own recordings that they can compare with the native-speaker model. Such software is more useful than voice recognition software, especially for remedial practice.

Both controlled and communicative practice

Controlled-practice activities of the type presented earlier in this chapter typically focus on both recognition and production of specific features of pronunciation and may not require much input in terms of ideas or content from the students themselves. Examples include drills, dialogues, minimal pairs and reading aloud. Communicative activities focus on interaction and meaningful communication (e.g. role plays, information-gap tasks, games). Following on from noticing and discriminating, there should normally be a progression from controlled to communicative practice in a pronunciation lesson, in an attempt to have learners use what they have practised in a more natural context. In some controlled-practice activities, students normally perform more slowly than they would during a communicative activity, making fewer errors than they do in the communicative activity. Gradually increasing the speed at which students carry out some controlled activities (e.g. dialogue practice, reading aloud), can help students better manage the transition from controlled to free practice. Often, however, learners may perform well on a controlled task, but fail to use what they have practised during a communicative activity. Repeated opportunities to move from controlled to communicative practice seem to be the only way to address this problem. A teacher suggests some games that are helpful as controlled pronunciation activities:

Pronunciation games

In class, I often use tongue-twisters and word games to practise difficult sounds, and my students enjoy them. This is how I use them. During a warm-up session, the students form groups of seven to eight, and each of them gets a flashcard containing a word or a short phrase, such as 'a big black bug bit a big black bear, and the big black bear bit the big black bug back'. The flashcards are placed face down. Then the teacher presents the phrase on the board, and students practise it a few times before the teacher erases it. Once they are ready, the teacher asks each student in the first group to pick up the card in front of each of them. Students have to say the phrase correctly and as fast as possible, while the teacher watches the time. The group that has the fewest mistakes and takes the least time is the winner. As a follow up, the teacher may give some feedback – for example, asking students whether they have noticed the difference in pronunciation between *black* and *back*, *bit* and *big* – and give further practice with sounds students might have difficulty with. My students enjoy tongue-twisters so much that I often hear them repeating them when I pass them in the corridor.

Anuwat Kaewma, teacher and teacher educator, Sakon Nakhon province, Thailand



Do you use tongue-twisters or similar activities to teach pronunciation? What is your view of their usefulness?

Learners monitoring their own pronunciation

Students need to be encouraged to monitor their own speech and to self-correct when they notice errors. This can be facilitated by activities that involve public performance (e.g. reading a dialogue aloud or performing skits in front of the class) and by requiring students to self-correct any errors they make. Peer-correction techniques in which students perform a task in pairs and note errors in each other's performance (e.g. a reading aloud task) can also help students become more aware of their own errors. Self-monitoring can also be assisted by giving students a diagnostic profile of their pronunciation problems and reviewing it from time to time to identify progress. Students can also make an audio recording of themselves on a regular basis, either on their own or with another student, completing different kinds of tasks (e.g. reading aloud or interviews) and monitoring their performance over time. Information can be noted in an ongoing learning journal. Software for mobile phones (e.g. Evernote) that includes the ability to record audio is particularly useful for note taking. Small microphones can be bought for a few dollars that will greatly enhance the recording ability of most phones (Levis, 2007). A teacher comments on the value of self-recording in monitoring pronunciation:



Monitoring through self-recording

Students' self-recording of their own speech is a very useful way for students to monitor their pronunciation. More often than not, students may find it easier to pick up speech errors they make by listening to their own recordings than through teacher or peer correction. It may be more effective if teachers prepare some recording materials, based on the students' frequently occurring errors, for students to read aloud and record. However, there were a few cases in my experience in which students couldn't discern the differences between their errors and the correct sample recordings. In such cases, I often encouraged students to practise using minimal pairs, through extensive listening and by familiarizing themselves with how these certain sounds are phonetically produced.

Ao Ran, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China; Singapore

Firth (1992) suggests a number of self-monitoring techniques, including a) giving students a reference point to use in assessing their own pronunciation (e.g. by asking themselves: 'Have I used both lips in making the sound /w/?'; b) having students decide on specific aspects of their speech that they wish to monitor, making an audio recording

of themselves reading a text, then checking to see how well they pronounced the sounds; c) selecting specific sounds or sound contrasts to focus on during a communicative activity, then judging their own performance or asking a classmate to do so; d) self-monitoring their performance outside of class, selecting one sound feature at a time to try to improve.

Providing feedback

Both teacher and peer feedback can help learners improve their pronunciation, though the former will be more important. Teacher feedback may involve helping the student understand how to produce a target sound correctly (e.g. by showing them the correct placement of the tongue for certain sounds) or pointing out an incorrect substitution a learner has made for a sound. Since not every pronunciation error can or need be corrected, those that are causing greater problems should be the focus. Sometimes a hand signal can be used to signal a particular type of error. Peer feedback can be useful during group activities, where one group member is assigned the task of monitoring group members' use of particular problematic sounds. A teacher points out how he gives pronunciation feedback in class:

Targeting key sounds

I identify key pronunciation features that are problematic at different times, such as word stress, final consonants, intonation or consonant clusters, and I write these on the top-left corner of the whiteboard. If, during a class activity, students use one of the targeted features incorrectly, I simply point to the feature they have mispronounced to encourage them to self-correct.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

Linking pronunciation to other lessons

Pronunciation can receive a focus in any lesson. Speaking lessons are the obvious place to work on different aspects of pronunciation that occur in dialogues, for example, but in other kinds of lessons, such as reading, listening or grammar, there are also opportunities to revise pronunciation work that might have occurred elsewhere. For example, a grammar lesson can include practice of such features as *-ed* endings for the past simple, third person *-s* of the present simple or intonation of tag questions. In a listening lesson, after a listening text has been used to practise listening skills, the students can receive the text of the listening and, as they listen to the text again, examine different features of pronunciation that occur in the text (e.g. linking sounds, unstressed words, blended sounds).

11.6 Teaching pronunciation

Planning for pronunciation teaching

Celce-Murcia et al. (2010: 284–9) suggest a six-stage process in developing a pronunciation course for a specific group of learners:

- 1 Find out who your learners are and what they need.
- 2 Find language that is relevant to your learners to use as practice material.
- 3 Use these samples of authentic language to illustrate and practise specific pronunciation features.
- 4 Provide frequent and sustained choral repetition with body movement (e.g. tapping, clapping, gesturing).
- 5 Give learners a chance to practise similar language in less-controlled activities.
- 6 Record learners' speech for feedback and review.

To achieve the first stage in this process, a diagnostic profile is needed, which can provide the basis for a pronunciation syllabus. Sample diagnostic-profile questions to consider may be found in Appendix 2.

Preparing a diagnostic profile

At the beginning of a course that will include a pronunciation strand (e.g. a speaking course), it is useful to carry out some form of diagnostic assessment of the learners' pronunciation problems. This should involve giving students several different oral-production tasks (both controlled tasks and communicative tasks) and identifying the pronunciation problems that occur. Tasks could include reading from a word list, reading a short passage aloud, an interview or free conversation. In the case of students who all have the same language background, similar pronunciation issues can be identified. In the case of students with different language backgrounds, the problems that emerge will be less predictable. Descriptions are available of pronunciation problems for students of particular language backgrounds (e.g. Lane, 2010).

Developing a pronunciation syllabus

The teaching of pronunciation poses challenges for many teachers and generally requires a multi-pronged, long term and systematic approach, rather than a hit-and-miss strategy in which pronunciation is dealt with only incidentally and occasionally, if at all. An initial decision will need to be made on the variety of pronunciation that will be used as the basis for the teaching. Generally, particular accents are favoured in particular parts of the world, such as British English in Europe, North American English in Mexico, Central and South America (except for Chile and Argentina) and mainly North American English in Asia. Course materials for these regions normally reflect the variety of English and accent

preferred there; however, it is important to distinguish between targets for production and targets for reception or understanding. While students in a particular region may seek to approximate a particular variety of English (e.g. North American) in their pronunciation, they should also be exposed to other accents to prepare them for the fact that they are likely to hear English spoken with many different accents, both native and second-language varieties. The status of English as an international language, as mentioned, also means that they should become accustomed to English spoken as a *lingua franca*, e.g. with Russian, Chinese, Indian and Mexican accents (see Chapter 1).

Some aspects of pronunciation, such as blending and assimilation, may be taught for reception initially and not necessarily taught for production. Many textbooks draw learners' attention to blended and linked sounds. However, the issue is whether these features actually need to be taught productively to students or whether their attention can be drawn to them for receptive purposes only – assuming that they may develop naturally as the student's proficiency advances, and if they don't, it may not matter much to the student.



What is your personal view on this? Do you explicitly teach these aspects of English pronunciation, and if so, do you focus on reception or also on production?

Lane (2010: 10) suggests that the following features are likely to be useful for students of any language background:

Consonants:

- /θ/ sound in *think* and /ð/ sound in *then*.

Contrasts involving the first sounds in *pet*, *bet*, *fête*, *vet* and *wet*.

- Retroflexed /r/: *red*, *drive* (/r/ produced with the tip of the tongue turned or curled up and back).
- Final consonants and consonant clusters: *bed*, *belt*.
- Grammatical endings.

Vowels:

- The vowels in *leave* and *live*.
- The vowels in *net*, *nat*, *nut* and *not*.
- *r*-coloured vowels in *beard*, *hard* and *hoard* (vowels followed by *r*).

Word stress:

- Vowel length in stressed and unstressed syllables.
- Vowel reduction in unstressed syllables.
- Stress patterns of classes of words.

Rhythm and intonation:

- Highlighting important words with stress and pitch.
- Thought groups (grouping words into meaningful phrases).
- Linking adjacent words.
- Intonation to mark utterance boundaries.

Beyond these general areas, the syllabus is likely to reflect the particular problems students have as revealed in a diagnostic test, problems identified by the students themselves and features covered in a coursebook that students may be studying from, as well as areas that the teacher feels more confident with. Acquiring the phonological system of a new language takes time. As we saw earlier, many features emerge gradually. It is important to decide which features of the learner's pronunciation affect intelligibility and give greater attention to features which are most disruptive.

The pronunciation lesson

Classroom techniques for teaching pronunciation involve activities that focus on recognizing features of pronunciation, using new features in guided repetition and practice activities, monitoring one's own pronunciation and expanding the contexts in which features are practised. These activities often follow a sequence that moves from mechanical to meaningful to communicative practice. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) propose a five-stage cycle of activities, moving from controlled to guided to free practice:

- 1 *Description and analysis:* Oral and written illustrations of how the feature is produced and when it occurs within spoken discourse: videos or animations of the position of the tongue and mouth can be effective here.
- 2 *Listening discrimination:* Focused listening practice, with feedback on learners' ability to correctly discriminate the feature.
- 3 *Controlled practice:* Oral reading of minimal-pair sentences, short dialogues, etc., with special attention paid to the highlighted feature in order to raise learner consciousness (Hewings, 2004).
- 4 *Guided practice:* Structured communication exercises such as information-gap activities or cued dialogues that enable the learner to monitor for the specified feature.
- 5 *Communicative practice:* Less structured, fluency-building activities (e.g. role play, problem solving) that require the learner to attend to both form and content of utterances.



Do you think a teacher should correct pronunciation errors during communicative practice? If so, at what stage in the activity?

The following concrete activities can be helpful in teaching various features of pronunciation:

Teaching vowel distinctions

Avery and Ehrlich (1992) recommend that to help learners learn the difference between tense and lax vowels one can a) first focus on the four tense vowels of English (e.g. in *meet*, *make*, *boot* and *boat*); b) provide examples of words that contain tense vowels, and exaggerate the pronunciation of the tense vowels by stretching them out (e.g. with words like *free*, *breathe*, *key*); c) have students practise saying phrases where a word with a tense vowel is followed by one beginning with another vowel (e.g. *I buy it*; *I owe it*); d) practise with words of more than one syllable where the stressed syllable is a tense vowel (e.g. *beehive*, *fireproof*, *daytime*).

To practise lax vowels, Avery and Ehrlich suggest a) showing how the mouth is relaxed when producing lax vowels; b) demonstrating the shortness of lax vowels using the hands in a quick clapping motion; c) having students practise saying words with lax vowels, such as *head*, *bend*, *push*, *would*, *did*, *sit*; d) having students practise minimal pairs that contrast tense and lax vowels, such as *dip/deep*, *slip/sleep*.

Teaching consonant distinctions

Avery and Ehrlich (1992) suggest a number of useful techniques for teaching consonants, including a) practising the use of aspiration with the consonants /p/, /t/ and /k/ (i.e. so that *paper* sounds different from *babber*, or *time* from *dime*), by holding a small piece of paper in front of the mouth when saying words that begin with these consonants. The puff of air will move the paper; b) to practise voicing: students can first feel voicing by placing their fingers lightly against their throat when making a voiced sound. They can then practise minimal pairs with a voiced and voiceless contrast, such as *bet/bed*, *set/said*, *safe/save*. If students find voicing final consonants difficult, practise minimal pairs (as in *back/bag*) and point out the longer vowel in the voiced final consonants; c) to help students produce consonant clusters in initial positions in words (e.g. as in *break*, *drive*) show them that they can insert a short vowel between the consonants (e.g. *bireak*) and then repeat the word several times with increasing speed until the inserted vowel disappears; d) to help students produce difficult final consonants (as in *build*), practise them with another word (e.g. *build up*) and then gradually remove more and more of the second word: *bill — dup ... bill — du ... build*.

A teacher comments on teaching consonant clusters to Japanese learners:



Consonants for Japanese learners

In order to teach students proper pronunciation of the English language, a teacher must understand the different features of that student's mother tongue. One important feature of English pronunciation is consonant clusters. If we use the example *spring*, it will highlight the issue that Japanese students and teachers experience.

Spring, pronounced in English, has an initial consonant cluster, one vowel, a final consonant and contains one syllable. Japanese students would pronounce this as *su pu rin gu*. This becomes five consonants with four vowels and four syllables. The Japanese language is based on syllables, consisting of a consonant followed by a vowel. Japanese students would add in each vowel and stress these syllables, as in their native language.

Hiroko Nishikage, teacher and materials writer, Tokyo, Japan

Celce-Murcia et al. (2010: 73) suggest that in teaching consonants:

- 1 Identify students' problem areas (different groups have different problems).
- 2 Find lexical/grammatical contexts with many natural occurrences of the problem sounds. Identify contexts for all the positions in which the sounds occur.
- 3 Draw on these contexts to develop activities for analysis and listening that will assist students in understanding and recognizing the target sounds.
- 4 Using the contexts chosen, develop a progression of controlled, guided and communicative tasks that incorporate the sounds for practice.
- 5 For each stage of practice (controlled, guided, communicative), develop two or three activities so that target sound(s) can be recycled and practised again in new contexts.

Appendix 3 gives an example of a textbook lesson for teaching consonants that was developed with Spanish speakers in mind.

Teaching word stress

- 1 In introducing new words, it is important to be sure that students know how to stress them properly. Teachers have different preferences for indicating stress, including underlining stressed syllables or putting circles above them. The conventions used in learner dictionaries for students are probably the simplest option. Lane (2010) has several recommendations including the use of (2010: 20) word lists and emphasizing the length of stressed vowels followed by practice with words containing stressed vowels; practising sets of words containing the same patterns of word stress; when new words are encountered, reading them out to point out the stressed syllables; using spelling pronunciation (e.g. *mijishin* for *magician*) to help students recognize the stressed syllable.

See Appendix 1 for a sample lesson plan showing how one teacher approaches the teaching of word stress.

A teacher trainer offers some additional suggestions:

●● Practising syllable stress

Sometimes after students have completed a reading activity, I choose 15 (or so) words from the reading that have different stress patterns and ask the students to group them into categories, such as those stressed on the first, second or third syllable. I check their groupings, correcting them if necessary, and students practise saying the words. They then take turns reading the text (or part of it) aloud in groups and monitoring each other's pronunciation of the words they have studied.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

Teaching intonation and rhythm

Intonation and rhythm can be taught by modelling and practising different intonation patterns. Students first need to recognize that in spoken English, content words are stressed rather than function words. Students can highlight the content words in a short text and then practise reading the text with stress on the content words. Some teachers use hand claps or sounds (e.g. Da de Da Da de Da) to model rhythm and intonation. It's also useful to model the intonation and rhythm of commonly used fixed expressions and routines (e.g. 'See you later'; 'I'd better get going because it's getting late'). Students should also practise linking final consonants to words beginning with a vowel, as in *find it* and *break off*.

11.7 Testing pronunciation

An important part of a speaking course is to help learners improve their pronunciation; however, pronunciation is not often formally assessed. In developing assessment procedures for pronunciation a number of issues initially need to be considered. For example:

- What is the purpose of the assessment? (e.g. to identify difficulties or assess improvement?)
- Will both recognition and production be assessed?
- What aspects of pronunciation will the test include? (e.g. both segmental and suprasegmental features?)
- What kinds of tasks will be used? (e.g. both controlled and open-ended tasks?)
- How many tasks will be used?
- Will all tasks be rated equally?
- What criteria will be used to assess performance on tasks?
- How will performance be rated and scored?

In assessing pronunciation, depending on the purpose of assessment, a choice is possible between a focus on individual sounds (an *atomistic approach*) or to base an assessment on the overall impression of the speaker's pronunciation (a *holistic approach*). Assessment tasks include the following:

Recognition tasks

- Students have a list of sentences or a short text and listen and mark particular sound features (e.g. stressed syllables).
- Students listen and tick a word from a minimal pair (e.g. 'What sort of *book/books* are you looking for?').
- Students listen and mark if a sentence ends with rising or falling intonation.

Production tasks

These range from those that require reading aloud to tasks that prompt more natural communication.

- Reading words from a list.
- Reading a short text aloud.
- Reading a dialogue.
- Summarizing a story.
- Describing a picture.
- Answering questions.
- Role play

A range of both controlled and less-controlled tasks are preferred since students might perform well in a reading task but differently in a task that involves more natural communication. Tasks that measure performance on particular sounds or sound features may be assessed as either correct or incorrect, while performance on communicative tasks are usually rated on a scale (e.g. 1 = good fluent pronunciation with few pronunciation errors; 5 = comprehension very difficult because of serious pronunciation problems).

To measure the extent to which students' pronunciation of specific sound features improves throughout the course, information from a diagnostic test provides a reference point and enables the teacher to identify targets for improvement. The targets will depend on the specific problems of individual learners or groups of learners. Regular assessment of progress towards these targets can be carried out throughout the course, using observation and self-assessment, as well as production tasks of the type noted above. At the end of the course, a final assessment may be made (using the same types of production tasks) and the learners' pronunciation assessed according to performance of the features identified on the pronunciation profile at the beginning of the course. However, in light of the emphasis on intelligibility as a goal in the teaching of pronunciation, assessment should not give

undue attention to accuracy as the principal criterion for assessment, but should focus on the extent to which the learner's pronunciation affects intelligibility. Intelligibility, of course, depends on other features apart from pronunciation, so it is important for the teacher to identify features that make comprehension difficult. In terms of pronunciation, these could include misplaced words or syllable stress and the inappropriate use of intonation, as well as mispronounced sounds that impede comprehension.

11.8 Conclusion

Pronunciation, like other areas of language teaching, has followed the general direction of the field, moving from a focus on individual sounds to a more complex understanding of communication and intelligibility. In comparison to the teaching of other aspects of language, the methodology of teaching pronunciation has not changed substantially in recent years, and pronunciation activities in current teaching materials and courses continue to focus on both controlled and communicative practice of segmental and suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation. A growing range of technological resources is now available to support the learning of pronunciation, providing support for both learners and teachers. What has changed, however, is our understanding of the goal of pronunciation teaching, with recognition that mimicry of native-speaker pronunciation is not always a feasible or desired outcome. The goal is, rather, to help learners develop fluent and intelligible speech, and to help learners overcome pronunciation problems that affect comprehension or that elicit negative attitudes. Pronunciation does not always receive the attention it needs in English courses, due to the perception that it is difficult to teach and that, in heterogeneous classes, it is difficult to determine priorities. However, well-developed pronunciation activities can have a considerable impact on students' abilities to communicate effectively in English and to become confident and fluent speakers.

Discussion questions

- 1 It was mentioned that 'The status of English as an international language also means that [learners] should become accustomed to English spoken as a lingua franca, e.g. with Russian, Chinese, Indian and Mexican accents'. Do you think this is important for your learners? If so, how would you accomplish this goal? Do you feel this might distract students from learning a standard pronunciation, and if so, does this matter?
- 2 In your opinion, is it ever important for some learners to aim for native-speaker standards of pronunciation? What reasons can you give?
- 3 Consider the following areas of English pronunciation: vowels, consonants, word stress, intonation and rhythm. Which of these do you think are easy to teach and which are more difficult? Why?
- 4 What are some ways in which teachers can give feedback to learners on their pronunciation problems?

- 5 Review a coursebook for teaching English. What aspects of pronunciation does it teach? What exercise types does it make use of?
- 6 Minimal-pairs recognition drills are common noticing activities for sounds. What noticing activities are possible for word stress and for intonation?
- 7 Peer feedback can be useful in pronunciation practice. What points would you include on a peer-feedback sheet that students could use when listening to each other?
- 8 Pronunciation work is often linked to other lessons. One important link is to grammar lessons. Why is a pronunciation focus important in lessons which present and provide oral practice of the following grammar points?
 - The past simple ('We *played* tennis' / 'We *invited* friends over' / 'We *cooked* dinner').
 - The present simple ('He *plays* the piano' / 'She *talks* fast' / 'Tim *watches* a lot of television').
 - Tag questions ('It's a lovely day, *isn't it*?' / 'You're from New Zealand, *aren't you*?').
- 9 Review the section on teaching pronunciation. If you had minimal class time for the teaching of pronunciation (no more than 10 minutes in a given class, once a week), make a list of ten specific pronunciation points that you might cover in a twelve-week course.
- 10 Learners who are normally amenable to peer correction in the case of their writing might be less amenable to peer correction of their pronunciation. Why might this be the case?

Appendix 1:

Teaching word stress

Study the sample lesson plan, prepared by Ao Ran, a teacher and teacher educator in Yunnan, China and in Singapore. What level class do you think it would be appropriate for? Can you think of ways to adapt the lesson plan for a lower-level class?

1 Goals

- To teach students some rules of word stress in English.
- To raise students' awareness of word stress in English.

2 Resources

- A. Handout 1: Hard copies of 25 disyllabic words and another 25 polysyllabic words, listed in two separate groups. For both groups of words, sub-group together the words which share the same rules for stress. So there are five sub-groups of five words under each of the two groups. For example:

Disyllabic words:

- ago, about, among, again, around
- worker, teacher, doer, actor, later
- contact (*n.*), contract (*n.*), converse (*n.*), desert (*n.*), conduct (*n.*)
- contact (*v.*), contract (*v.*), converse (*v.*), desert (*v.*), conduct (*v.*)
-

Polysyllabic words:

- pronunciation, administration, destination, exaggeration, articulation
- conclusion, exclusion, inclusion, revision, cohesion
- attendee, interviewee, absentee, addressee, appointee
-
-

- B. Handout 2: Separate hard copies of the above list, with stress marks on the stressed syllable of each word.
- C. Handout 3: Separate hard copies of another 25 randomly selected words, with a varied number of syllables and stress patterns.
- D. Handout 4: Word stress blank-filling table, containing ten stress patterns, each of which has five blanks where words will be filled in by students.

Part 3 Language and the four skills

For example:

Please fill in words after each stress pattern.

Stress Pattern	Word 1	Word 2	Word 3	Word 4	Word 5
— ' —					
— ' — —					
— — ' — —					
.....					

- E. Recordings of all the words in Handout 1, either made by the teacher or taken from dictionary CD-ROMs, such as *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 3rd Edition (1995).
- F. Language lab or a classroom with multimedia equipment. Where neither of these is available, the teacher may choose to use a cassette/CD player or read aloud all the words.

3 Timing 50 minutes.

4 Grouping No grouping needed.

5 Activities

- Listening activity.
- Question and answer (Q and A).

6 Sequencing

- Opening
 1. Teacher explains briefly and clearly the concept and types of stress in English with the help of a few PowerPoint or other presentation software slides.
 2. Teacher describes the goals of the lesson.
 3. Teacher states the activities students will do.
- Main activity
 4. Teacher gives students Handout 1. Then teacher plays the recording of the disyllabic words for students to underline the stressed syllables.
 5. Teacher checks students' answer by chorus or nominating individual students.
 6. Teacher then goes on to play the recording of the polysyllabic words for students to underline the stressed syllables.
 7. Repeat (5).
 8. Teacher gives students Handout 2 for them to double-check their answers.

9. Students having some level of awareness of word stress: Teacher continues by briefly summarizing the rules of stress and, at the same time, pointing out that there are exceptions to the rules they have just learned. In this way, teacher naturally leads to the next activity.
10. Teacher gives students Handout 3 and reads aloud all the words for students to underline the stressed syllables. Each word is read twice.
11. Repeat (5).
- Closure
12. Teacher summarizes what has been learned in this lesson.
13. Homework. Teacher gives students Handout 4 and briefly explains the requirements.
14. Teacher dismisses the class.

Appendix 2:

Diagnostic profile

Review the diagnostic pronunciation profile (Herbert, 2002; adapted from Firth, 1987). If possible, assess the pronunciation of a student who is willing or that of a colleague who is a non-native speaker. Give the speaker a score in each area from 1 to 5 (5 being the highest).

Objective: Students are assessed on a diagnostic reading and speaking task and a profile of their pronunciation features prepared, with as much information as possible identified for each aspect.

Suprasegmental level:

General speaking habits

Clarity: How easy is it to follow the learner's speech?

Speed: Is the speed of his/her speech appropriate?

Fluency: Is the learner's speech fluent, or are there frequent pauses and hesitations?

Intonation

How appropriate are the learner's intonation patterns in utterances? Is the learner using appropriate intonation for statements, *wh*- questions and yes/no questions?

Stress and rhythm

- 1** *Word-level stress:* Does the learner use schwa in unstressed syllables? Does the learner distinguish between stressed and unstressed syllables?
- 2** *Sentence-level stress:* Does the learner stress key words (lexical words) and unstress grammatical words?
- 3** *Linking:* Does the learner link words appropriately?

Segmental level:

Consonants

- 1** *Substitution:* Is the learner replacing phonemes with other sounds?
- 2** *Omission:* Are some consonants omitted?
- 3** *Articulation:* Are sounds being articulated properly?
- 4** *Clusters:* Are consonant clusters pronounced in initial, medial and final position?
- 5** *Linking:* Are consonants being linked?

Vowels

- 1** *Substitution:* Are correct vowels being used?
- 2** *Articulation:* Is the learner articulating vowels correctly (e.g. lip rounding)?
- 3** *Length:* Are vowels being given their appropriate length?
- 4** *Reduction:* Are vowels reduced in unstressed syllables?
- 5** *Linking:* Are vowels being linked to other vowels across word boundaries?
- 6** *Nasalization:* Is excessive nasalization being used?

Other features:

[as needed]

Appendix 3:


Help with pronunciation

Look at the lesson below from the textbook *face2face* (Redston et al., 2010). This particular lesson has been designed for a version of the course aimed at Spanish speakers. How does the lesson help students to notice the pronunciation feature being taught?


Help with Pronunciation /b/ and /v/

TIP! ● In English, it's important to distinguish clearly between the sounds /b/ and /v/.

- To make the /b/ sound, our top and bottom lips come together.
- To make the /v/ sound, we put our top teeth on our bottom lip.



/b/



/v/

1 **R7.14** Listen to these words. Notice the difference between the /b/ and /v/ sounds.

1 busy	visit
2 baker	very
3 builder	village
4 banana	Vanessa


2 **R7.15** Listen and fill in the gaps with *b* or *v*.

1 pu <u>b</u>	4 _ox
2 _oth	5 gi_e
3 _ideo	6 _ottle

3 a) Look at these sentences. Are the words in **bold** spelt correctly? Correct the incorrect words.

b

- 1 I'm a **xus** driver.
- 2 He's in a **jov** interview.
- 3 It was a very **borng** conversation.
- 4 I **bisit** every day.
- 5 She's got **seven** vags.
- 6 She's a **bery** busy boss.
- 7 They **libe** in a **big** **billage**.
- 8 How many **double** **vedrooms** have you got?



b) R7.16 Listen and check your answers.

c) P Listen again and practise.

4 a) Make sentences with these words.

- 1 and / Vicky / her / visited / bar / the / husband .
Vicky and her husband visited the bar.
- 2 bread / butter / I / and / love .
- 3 November / arrive / in / birds / The .
- 4 She's / eleven / in / bed / never / before .
- 5 seventy-five / favourite / My / is / number .
- 6 breakfast / We / biscuits / for / have / usually .
- 7 I / beach / to / the / evening / every / drive .
- 8 was / terrible / because / the / We / service / left .

b) R7.17 Listen and check your answers.

c) P Listen again and practise.

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Further reading

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12

Listening

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What are some approaches to teaching listening?
- What does listening to spoken discourse entail?
 - How we listen: one-way and two-way listening.
 - Features of spoken discourse causing difficulty.
- What cognitive processes are involved in listening?
 - Decoding the message.
 - Interpreting the message.
- How should listening be taught?
 - Listening skills.
 - The role of listening strategies.
 - Planning a listening course.
 - Sources of listening materials.
 - The listening lesson.
- How can listening be assessed?
 - Summative assessment.
 - Formative assessment.

12.1 Introduction

Effective listening comprehension skills are the basis of second language learning. A person may be exposed to hundreds of hours of a second or foreign language, but will not learn anything from this exposure unless he or she is able to understand what is being said. Learning to speak a language begins with comprehension. Depending on their learning situation and needs, learners need to be able to process different kinds of listening input, including casual conversations, instructions, discussions, messages and the many kinds of discourse they will encounter at school, at work, in their daily lives and through the internet and other forms of technology. Listening in a second language is a challenge for many learners, as we see in these typical comments from students:

- ‘People seem to speak so fast I can’t catch what they are saying half the time.’
- ‘I can understand my teacher most of the time, but people outside of class seem to speak very differently.’
- ‘It takes me a while to catch the point of what people are saying.’
- ‘I don’t recognize a lot of the expressions people use and sometimes completely misunderstand what they are saying. For example, the other day someone asked me, ‘What brings you to this school?’ I thought she was asking about transport, but she actually meant, “Why did you choose this school?”’

And listening outside of the classroom is often very different from listening in the classroom, on YouTube or in the media lab. Accents may be unfamiliar; previously familiar words may seem to disappear in the stream of speech; the discourse may appear to be disorganized; and focusing on what people are trying to say may be tiring or demotivating.



When learning another language, how did you experience listening to native speakers? How did you deal with situations where you were not able to understand everything said?

The teaching of listening is often an important component of English programmes and particularly of high-stakes tests such as TOEFL and IELTS. University entrance exams, school-leaving and other examinations often include a listening component, prompting a renewed interest in second language listening and how to teach it. In this chapter, we will examine the nature of listening and approaches to the teaching of second language listening.

12.2 Approaches to the teaching of listening

Early language-teaching methods, such as the direct method and audiolingualism (see Chapter 3), did not recognize listening as a separate skill in language learning. Listening

was assumed to be the mirror image of speaking and everything the learner could speak, he or she would surely be able to understand. Listening activities focused on recognizing structures and vocabulary that had been taught for oral production. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, a view of listening as a process that depended on the mastery of individual part-skills or microskills was introduced, and these increasingly became the focus of teaching and testing. A skills approach focused on such areas as discriminating sounds in words, especially phonemic contrasts, deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words and predicting the content of a passage. By the 1980s, a renewed interest in listening emerged. The changed status of listening was partly prompted by Krashen's emphasis on the role of comprehension and comprehensible input in triggering language development, which lies at the heart of his natural approach, a theory that supported the notion that language acquisition would occur automatically if learners were given rich, meaningful input (see Chapter 2). In the 1980s and 1990s, applied linguists also began to borrow new theoretical models of comprehension from the field of cognitive psychology. It was from this source that the distinction was derived between bottom-up processing and top-down processing (concepts discussed later in this chapter), a distinction that led to an awareness of the importance of background knowledge and schemas in comprehension (see Chapter 2).

At the same time, the fields of conversation analysis and discourse analysis, as well as corpus research, were revealing a great deal about the organization of spoken discourse and led to a realization that written texts read aloud could not provide a suitable basis for developing the abilities needed to process real-time authentic discourse. Authenticity in materials became a catchword and part of a pedagogy of teaching listening that is now well established in ESL/ELT. Today, listening has assumed a much more prominent role in teaching and learning English and is often tested on standardized exams – an acknowledgement that listening proficiency is an important aspect of second language learning and use, and if it isn't tested, teachers won't pay attention to it.

12.3 What does listening to spoken discourse entail?

How we listen: one-way or two-way?

Listening comprehension is basic to much language use and human interaction. In daily life, people are expected to understand what other people say, as well as to respond or react accordingly; they need to be able to do the hundred and one things that depend on listening, such as following directions and instructions, sharing anecdotes and experiences, taking phone calls and understanding advice and suggestions. Some common listening purposes are summarized below (adapted from Field, 2008):

Type of listening	Purpose	Listener role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casual conversations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To exchange social and personal information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen and respond.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone conversations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To exchange information. To take a message. To obtain goods and services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen and respond. Listen for specific details. Listen and give specific details.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To expand knowledge. To learn about various topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen for main points and details. Listen and make inferences. Follow the development of a topic and take notes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To expand knowledge. To learn about various topics. To interact with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen for instructions. Listen for key content and main points. Listen and respond.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Movies, drama, songs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To entertain and to gain pleasure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to follow plot. Listen to get gist of song. Listen to learn the words of the song.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To gain information. To act on information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen for specific items. Listen to do something.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To carry out a task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen for steps in task. Listen to do something.

The table above illustrates two different kinds of listening, which are referred to as *one-way listening*, or non-interactive listening, and *two-way listening*, or interactive listening. In one-way listening, such as listening to the radio, listening to a lecture or watching a movie, the listener is required to process what is heard, but is generally not able to interact with the speaker or speakers in order to facilitate comprehension. In two-way listening situations, such as those involving face-to-face interaction with speakers, the listener is able to interact with the speaker and use a variety of strategies to clarify the speaker's meaning. One-way and two-way listening make very different demands on listeners, which we will discuss below.

? What kinds of one-way and two-way listening situations do your learners (or learners you are familiar with) encounter in English? Which situations are most difficult for them?

The ability to follow natural speech in a second language for purposes like those in the table above is a skill that takes a long time to master. The learner needs to learn how to process spoken language – a form of discourse that has very different features from written discourse.

Features of spoken discourse causing difficulty

The features of spoken discourse that make L2 listening difficult include speed, the unplanned nature of spoken discourse, accents, and blends and reductions.

Speed

One of the most common observations second language learners make is that fluent speakers, particularly native-speakers, seem to speak very fast. Speech rates used by fluent speakers, in fact, vary considerably. Radio monologues may contain 160 words per minute, while conversation can consist of up to 220 words per minute. However, the impression of faster or slower speech generally results from the amount of intra-clausal pausing that speakers make use of.

Many learners may have had little exposure to authentic speech, if their exposure to English has been confined to the teacher's language (which is often carefully monitored or simplified) or to recordings accompanying their textbooks (which may make use of professional actors reading carefully from prepared scripts); hence, when they encounter natural 'unscripted' discourse, they may have difficulty following it. Several responses to this situation are possible that may be of help to students:

- Read a text aloud several times. On first reading, build in plenty of pauses between clauses and sentences. On subsequent readings, gradually remove the amount of pausing.
- Play recordings of natural or fluent speech several times, and on first listening, stop the recording briefly at intervals to give students more processing time. On subsequent plays, make fewer stops. Gradually increase the length of texts you use in this way.
- Give the students the text of a listening script, but delete every second word. Read the text, or play a recording of it, and have students follow the text and try to identify the missing words.

? Listen to the audio or video recordings that accompany textbooks you use, or are familiar with. To what extent do they reflect natural speech?

The unplanned nature of spoken discourse

While the discourse learners hear often reflects planning and attention to comprehensibility (e.g. the prepared scripts often used in teaching materials), two-way spoken discourse is usually unplanned and often reflects the processes of construction, such as hesitations, reduced forms, fillers, false starts and repeats. Spoken texts, too, are often context-dependent and personal, often assuming shared background knowledge (Brown and Yule, 1983; Lynch, 2009: 16). Some of the features of natural discourse are seen in the following example of a woman describing a fancy dress costume her friend wore to a party (Thornbury and Slade, 2006: 127):

- Jenny:** And then she had ... I can't think what else, I know ... eye shadow and the whole bit and then she had this old stick with a star on it. Um, and she had this stick thing ... this stick thing that had a star on it, and then she had a cape around her shoulder or something, and went 'poof' or something to people and then started ... laughing.
- Brenda:** Yeah, here's something. You'd just go and break off a tree and stick a star on it.
- Judy:** Reminds me of my mum with a Christmas tree every year. We've got pine trees along the back fence. Mum gets up the barbie or whatever she can stand on, she just yanks off a branch and there's the tree.

Some of the features of this exchange can be classified as follows:

Grammar	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chaining, rather than subordination. Ellipsis (omission). Unfinished utterances; false starts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>And then ... and then ... and she had ...</i> <i>(That/It) reminds me of ...</i> <i>And then she had ... I can't think what else.</i>
Vocabulary	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General words rather than specific terms. Idioms. Colloquialisms. Fillers. Fixed expressions. Vague language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>This stick thing.</i> <i>The whole bit.</i> <i>Barbie.</i> <i>Um.</i> <i>Here's something.</i> <i>Her shoulder or something.</i>
Information	
Looser information structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>And then she had ... I can't think what else, I know ... eye shadow and the whole bit and then she had this old stick with a star on it. Um, and she had this stick thing ... this stick thing that had a star on it.</i>

A teacher in Japan offers advice on helping students to understand spoken discourse, particularly challenging to Japanese learners because of the many differences between Japanese and English:

Difficulties encountered by Japanese learners

Most Japanese students of English cannot ‘follow’ spoken English because of the speed in which it is spoken and because of the many idiomatic expressions that exist in spoken English. In most cases, Japanese will not interrupt a person while speaking to ask them to speak slower.

When teaching listening in English in Japan, it is most important to concentrate on the rules of sound changes, such as reduction, linking, contraction and others. Once the students learn these rules, they will have a better chance of following the natural speed of English with the associated sound changes. Teaching the rules is the best way to give them the necessary start needed for listening.

Japanese students learn rules easily, and the grammar rules they learned in elementary school do not contain the idioms that are used in everyday speech. Basic idioms should be used, and explained, throughout teaching listening.

Hiroko Nishikage, teacher and materials writer, Tokyo, Japan

There are several ways in which learners can be introduced to the features of authentic spoken discourse (see Field, 2008: 281–2):

- Listening and comparing a ‘cleaned up’ version of a spoken exchange with the authentic exchange on which it is based.
- Focusing on a short section of an authentic text, transcribing it and analyzing what makes it distinctive.
- Reading a transcript of authentic speech and identifying such features as reduced forms; then listening to the recorded text.
- Providing a gapped transcript for completion, with features omitted which appear to characterize authentic informal speech.
- At a higher level, turning a piece of authentic conversational English into an appropriately constructed written text.

Accents

Learners of English will typically encounter many different English accents, including those of their teacher(s) and other learners, as well as other speakers of English they hear – either in face-to-face contexts or through technology and the media (see Chapter 11). Some unfamiliar accents may initially make comprehension difficult (as is sometimes

the case when university lectures in English are delivered by teachers speaking many different varieties of English). Field (2008) points out that when we encounter people for the first time, after a short time, we normally adjust our listening to reflect their individual speech rate, pitch and speed of speaking, as well as accent, and that second language learners would normally take a longer time 'to get used to a voice that employs the unfamiliar sounds, rhythm patterns and intonation of a foreign language' (Field, 2008: 158). Learners may initially have little difficulty understanding their teacher, but encounter more difficulty understanding English spoken, for example, with a marked French, German, Chinese or Indian accent. To prepare students to make the transition from the classroom to the real world, learners need opportunities to develop awareness of differences in accents. Field (2008: 160) suggests several ways in which this can be achieved, including:

- *Comparing speakers*: Students listen to a recording containing speakers with different accents, and students listen to identify any distinctive features of the speakers' English, such as speech rate, accent and pitch.
- *Same text, different voices*: Students listen to the same text recorded by speakers with different accents.

Field also recommends a gradual introduction to different accents:

- 1 An emphasis on the voice of the teacher, supported by occasional recordings.
- 2 A range of voices (male and female) in one standard national variety; initially, older speakers, who tend to speak more slowly; later, more rapid speakers.
- 3 The gradual introduction of one or two other varieties, ideally widespread or standard ones, each exemplified in a range of voices.
- 4 An expansion of the range of accents covered to include a greater number of native-speaker varieties.
- 5 Exposure to a range of non-native varieties – recognizing that a great deal of communication today takes place between individuals who speak the target language as a lingua franca.



What kinds of accents do your learners hear outside class? Do any of these pose problems for your learners? Why?

Blends and reductions

Words in spoken discourse often sound very different from the way learners expect to hear them, due to the fact that words are often reduced to accommodate to the rhythms of spoken English and are also blended together, sometimes leading to problems of recognition. (These are discussed in Chapter 11.) Activities that draw students' attention to the blends and reductions that occur in natural speech include:

- *Dictation*: The teacher reads short sentences with natural blends and reductions.
- *Noticing*: The teacher plays a recording of natural speech, and students mark blends and reductions on the transcript. They then compare with others.
- *Gap filling*: The teacher plays a text containing chunks that contain blended or ‘missing’ sounds and syllables (e.g. *should have gone, need to go, must have been, saw her leave*). Students have a transcript with the chunks omitted. They listen and complete the missing chunks.

12.4 Listening processes: bottom-up and top-down processing

Two different kinds of processes are involved in understanding spoken discourse. These are often referred to as bottom-up and top-down processing. Bottom-up processing refers to using the incoming input as the basis for understanding the message. Comprehension begins with the data that has been received which is analyzed until the meaning is arrived at. Comprehension is viewed as a process of decoding. Top-down processing, on the other hand, refers to the use of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of a message. Whereas bottom-up processing goes from language to meaning, top-down processing (discussed further below) goes from meaning to language.

Decoding the message: bottom-up processing

An important phase in understanding spoken discourse is extracting meaning from the stream of sounds the listener hears. For example, a listener may hear the following:

wunivthifirstthingsimgunnadownigetometoniteischeckmyemailmesagis ...

But understand it as follows:

One of the first things I'm going to do when I get home tonight is check my email messages.

Decoding is the process by which the listener extracts sounds, words and meanings from the rapidly flowing stream of speech. Bottom-up processing refers to using the incoming input as the basis for understanding the message. As noted above, comprehension begins with the data that has been received, which is analyzed as successive levels of organization – sounds, words, clauses, sentences, texts – until meaning is arrived at. The listener's lexical and grammatical competence in a language provides the basis for bottom-up processing (Field, 2003). The input is scanned for familiar words, and grammatical knowledge is used to work out the relationship between elements of sentences. Clark and Clark (1977: 49) summarize this traditional view of listening in the following way:

- 1 They [listeners] take in raw speech and hold a phonological representation of it in working memory.

- 2 They immediately attempt to organize the phonological representation into constituents, identifying their content and function.
- 3 They identify each constituent and then construct underlying propositions, building continually onto a hierarchical representation of propositions.
- 4 Once they have identified the propositions for a constituent, they retain them in working memory and, at some point, purge memory of the phonological representation. In doing this, they forget the exact wording and retain the meaning.

Field (2008) suggests that a focus on decoding is often neglected in teaching listening. Decoding has a number of dimensions.

Lexical knowledge

Much of the meaning of a message is communicated by vocabulary or, to be more specific, by content words that function as key words in an utterance. They tend to carry greater stress than function words, such as prepositions and articles or auxiliary verbs. In the following sentence, the key words are *never*, *been*, *India*, *wanted* and *go*:

I've never been to India, but I've always wanted to go there.

As we saw above, comprehension is sometimes made more difficult due to the fact that words are often blended with surrounding words. And if a key word is mispronounced (e.g. through placing stress on the wrong syllable – *DEMocracy*, rather than *deMOCracy*; *DEpendency*, rather than *dePENdency*) or not known, comprehension can break down (see Chapter 11). Training students to recognize key words can be achieved in several ways:

- Give students a list of content words, and ask them to listen to a text and number the words as they occur in the text.
- Give students a list of content words that could be used to make a sentence. Ask them to make sentences from the words. Then read the sentences containing the words.
- Give students a list of content words, and ask them to listen to a text and check which of the words on the list occur in the text.
- Give students a list containing pairs of similar sounding words, and ask them to listen to a text and check which words occur in the text.
- Give students the topic of a listening text, and ask them to list words they think might occur in the text. Then have them listen to the text and check their predictions.
- Give students a transcript of a text with key words deleted. Have them guess the missing words and then listen to the text to check their guesses.

Grammatical knowledge

Decoding also draws on the listener's knowledge of grammar (see Chapter 9). Such knowledge includes using knowledge of word order, tense distinctions, syntax (e.g.

recognizing signals of subordination and coordination) and parts of speech. A learner may not recognize the difference between similar sounding tenses and, consequently, may misunderstand the difference between *I've lived in Paris for a year* and *I lived in Paris for a year*, due to unfamiliarity with the English tense system. Other aspects of grammar that listeners need to recognize include:

- Recognizing if a sentence is in the active or passive voice.
- Distinguishing between sentences containing causative and non-causative verbs.
- Distinguishing between positive and negative statements.
- Recognizing sequence markers in spoken texts.
- Distinguishing between direct and indirect speech.
- Distinguishing between yes/no and *wh*- questions.

Field (2008: 88) offers a solution to how problems such as these can be addressed:

The answer is to expose learners to spoken material that contains multiple examples of the feature they have trouble with. There is absolutely no reason why a remedial exercise of this kind should involve a lengthy listening passage; instead, it might take the form of a micro-listening task, lasting as little as five or ten minutes. It might involve a set of (say) ten sentences, all of them exemplifying the problem in question.

Activities of this type include:

- Dictate sets of sentences with a particular grammatical feature.
- Read sentences containing tense differences, and have students tick the time reference on a chart.
- Read sentences containing a grammatical feature, and have students tick the intended meaning from pairs of given sentences.
- Read the beginning of sentence, and have students anticipate the type of information that will follow, based on the type of clause used (e.g. cause–effect).
- Play the first two or three sentences of a text, stop at different places and ask students to guess the type of word or word class that will follow (e.g. an adjective, a conjunction, a noun, an adverb).



What are some other classroom activities that can help learners develop decoding skills?

Interpreting the message: top-down processing

A bottom-up view of listening offers only a partial view of listening, since it does not account for how learners bring background knowledge and situational knowledge to

comprehension. Gee (2010) compares a bottom-up view of comprehension with a 'conveyer-belt' image of how understanding occurs. He argues that with focusing only on what is said rather than what is done, the meaning is something that exists as concepts or messages in the mind of the speaker. These messages have to be unpacked and expressed as words and phrases and then sent in containers on the 'conveyer-belt' to the listener. The listener then receives the container, takes out the content and stores it in his or her head. Hence, Gee (2010) identifies the image of a conveyer-belt with speakers and listeners sending and receiving messages in containers.

Several other factors apart from decoding are involved in arriving at what the speaker meant by saying something. For example, someone may say, 'It's hot inside this room', and we have decoded the sentence when we understand the speaker is referring to the temperature of the room. However, what the speaker means could actually be, 'Let's go outside', 'Could you turn on the air conditioner?' or 'Can you get me a cool drink?' How do listeners arrive at the interpretation of messages? To do so, they make use of different dimensions of top-down processing.

Context

The surrounding context of a text, including what was said before it, where the speaker and listener are, and what activities they are engaged in, provide a basis for assigning meaning to an utterance and can also, at times, account for misunderstanding, as the following example illustrates (author's data):

A couple of years ago, I was giving a workshop for teachers of English in China on teaching listening comprehension. During the coffee break, one of the teachers said, in fairly accented English, what I thought was, 'Have you always been interested in tape recorders?' I tried to make sense of her question and began to talk about the use of audio recording in teaching, which prompted a puzzled look on her part. After some confusion, I realized what she had actually said was something like, 'Are you interested in seeing the terracotta warriors?'



Can you recall an example where you misunderstood a word, due to the context in which you heard it used?

This example illustrates how listeners normally assume that something that is said is relevant to the situation they are currently in and will try to assign meaning to it on the basis of its assumed relevance. The topic of a conversation also provides a context (or a *co-text*) for what might be said later. As Field comments (2008: 130):

A listener who identifies the word *knickers* during a radio program about the Church might conclude that the word she actually heard was *vicars*. A listener who hears the word *dessert* in a talk about camels might assume that the speaker mispronounced *desert*.

Field further suggests how skilled and unskilled listeners make use of context (ibid.:132):

- Skilled listeners make use of context to enrich their understanding of the message. Less skilled listeners are not always able to achieve this wider understanding because their attention is so heavily focused upon details of the signal.
- Less skilled listeners make greater use of context and co-text to compensate for parts of the message that they have not understood ... The failure may be due to problems of decoding, problems of word and grammar knowledge or problems in recognizing the relationships that link ideas.

Background knowledge

Background knowledge refers to different kinds of knowledge listeners make use of in interpreting texts. This may be knowledge of the world and common situations and events, general knowledge or knowledge of how different kinds of texts are organized (e.g. narratives, descriptions, reports). Whereas bottom-up processing goes from language to meaning, top-down processing goes from meaning to language. For example, consider how we respond to the following utterance:

I heard on the news, there was a big earthquake in Turkey last night.

On recognizing the word *earthquake*, the listener generates a set of questions he or she wants to hear or obtain responses to:

- Where exactly was the earthquake?
- How big was it?
- Did it cause a lot of damage?
- Were many people killed or injured?
- What rescue efforts are under way?

These questions guide the listener through the understanding of any subsequent discourse that is heard and focus listening on what is said about the questions. Knowledge of this kind, about particular concepts and events, calls upon knowledge of what are termed *schemas*, a concept defined in Chapter 2. Because speaker and hearer share understanding of the 'going to the dentist schema', the details of the visit need not be spelled out. Only a minimum amount of information needs to be given to enable the participants to understand the scenario. This is another example of the use of top-down processing. Cultures may make use of different schematic knowledge for familiar situations and events, and students expecting a certain kind of information to occur in relation to a specific event based on their cultural background may be puzzled or confused when such information is different in another culture. (Issues of this kind are discussed further in Chapter 16 on discourse pragmatics.)



Can you think of examples where the schemas in two different cultures differ significantly? For example, compare the routines and procedure associated with a wedding ceremony in two cultures you are familiar with.

A teacher explains how he uses news broadcasts to teach listening skills:

Preparing students for listening

I always try, where possible, to make the focus of my English language classes both general and specific, a window on the world and current events, as well as a window on the language itself – for example, I use current radio news broadcasts for listening comprehension. Public news broadcasts, such as the hourly news coverage on the BBC World Service, begin with a brief introduction to the five or six news items to be covered in more detail later in the broadcast. I use the opening summary for global listening and topic identification, e.g. I give my students a jumbled list of the news topics mentioned at the start of the broadcast and ask them to listen and rearrange the news items in the order of presentation. As well as developing listening skills, this activity keeps my students in touch with what is happening in the world.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

Much of our knowledge of the world consists of knowledge about specific situations, the people one might expect to encounter in such situations, what their goals and purposes are and how they typically accomplish them. This is all part of schematic knowledge. We have knowledge of thousands of topics and concepts, and their associated meanings and links to other topics and concepts. In applying this prior knowledge about things, concepts, people and events to a particular utterance about a specific topic, comprehension can often proceed from the top down. The actual discourse heard is used to confirm expectations and to fill out details. Thus bottom-up and top-down processing can be seen as complementing each other.

Consider the meaning of the expression *Good luck!* and how its meaning would differ if said as a response to the following statements:

- a** I'm going to the casino.
- b** I'm going to the dentist.
- c** I'm going to a job interview.

The meaning of *good luck* differs according to the situation we mentally refer it to, according to the background knowledge we bring to each situation when it is used.

If the listener is unable to make use of top-down processing, an utterance or discourse may be incomprehensible. Bottom-up processing alone often provides an insufficient basis for comprehension, so both forms of processing are involved in normal comprehension.

In teaching listening, contextual knowledge and background knowledge can be activated, both before and during a listening activity. Depending on the type of text students will listen to, pre-listening activities include:

- Discussing what is known about a topic.
- Predicting what might be said about a topic.
- Predicting some of the words a speaker may use.
- Predicting the order in which information might be presented.
- Posing questions the text might answer.

While-listening tasks include:

- Comparing predictions with what was said in a text.
- Elaborating information that was gathered during the pre-listening phase.



What kind of background information would you bring to the topic *breakfast*?

Inferencing

An important aspect of the use of context and background knowledge in listening is inferencing – arriving at ideas, judgements or hypotheses on the basis of other ideas, judgements or hypotheses. Several processes are involved in inferencing:

- Extracting relevant information which is not stated explicitly.
- Reconstructing relevant information from both linguistic and non-linguistic clues.
- Arriving at an understanding on the basis of what follows on logically, and necessarily, from a given statement.
- Making connections between events, such as cause–effect, problem–solution and problem–explanation.
- Providing extra information that expands on the meaning of a text.
- Understanding what a speaker really means at the level of practical action.



What inferences are involved in the following exchanges?

- 1 A: I have two tickets for tonight's concert.
B: I have an exam tomorrow.
A: Pity.
- 2 A: Where's Bill?
B: There's a yellow Volkswagen outside Sue's house.
- 3 Johnny: Hey, Sally, let's play a video game.
Mother: How is your homework coming along, Johnny?

To practise inferencing, listening tasks can be used which have the following features:

- They focus not only on the decoding of surface meaning but also on interpretations.
- They make use of authentic, or authentic-like, texts and avoid exposing learners only to texts where meaning is expressed explicitly.
- They require learners to draw on background knowledge, context and experience in arriving at understanding.

Interactive listening processes

The processes listeners engage in with speakers as they seek to achieve understanding are also crucial in many listening situations. As mentioned earlier, two-way listening is interactive, whereas one-way listening is not. In one-way listening situations, the listener has to depend on decoding and interpretation to understand a message and often does not have the opportunity for repeated listening; in two-way listening situations, both speaker and listener can negotiate meaning – by modifying information, interaction or information. Lynch (2009: 63) gives the following examples of these processes:

- *Confirmation check*: Listener makes sure he or she has understood what the speaker means.
- *Comprehension check*: Speaker makes sure the listener has understood.
- *Clarification request*: Listener asks the speaker to explain, or rephrases.
- *Repetition*: Listener or speaker repeats his or her own or the other's words.
- *Reformulation*: Speaker rephrases the content of what he or she has said.
- *Completion*: Listener completes the speaker's utterances.
- *Backtracking*: Speaker returns to a point in the conversation, up to which they believe the listener has understood them.



Look at the following exchange between two students (author data). Can you find examples of the conversational adjustments from the list above?

A: What's new?

B: Not so much. How about you?

A: I slept until, ah, 15 yesterday.

B: Huh? 15?

A: 15 is 3 p.m.

B: Pardon?

A: Yeah, uh, I slept until ...

B: Until ... ?

- A: 15 o'clock.
 B: 15 o'clock?
 A: Yes, my body is ...
 B: 15?
 A: Yes. It's afternoon.
 B: Oh, I see. Why?
 A: I don't know.

Students need to be taught to use conversational modifications as a preparation for real-world two-way listening. This can be done in several ways:

- By providing conversations to practise models of different forms of modification.
- By giving students examples of conversations where misunderstandings occur and asking them to suggest suitable modifications.
- By giving examples of different modification strategies and asking students to prepare dialogues using the strategies. They then compare and practise.

12.5 Teaching listening: skills and strategies

Listening skills

The teaching of listening is often organized around the different skills that are believed to be involved in listening, such as listening for key words, listening and making inferences, listening for topics, listening for main ideas and listening for details. I attempted a detailed description of these skills in an early and still often-cited paper (Richards, 1983). These have more recently been reclassified by Brown (2003) into two levels: *microskills*, those that involve processing at the linguistic level as a bottom-up process; and *macroskills*, those that focus on the larger elements involved in a top-down approach to a listening task (Brown, 2003, adapted from Richards, 1983). Brown's list of microskills includes such things as: distinguishing between the distinctive sounds of English; recognizing reduced forms of words; recognizing stressed words; following rapid speech; following disfluent speech containing pauses and hesitations; recognizing different parts of speech; and recognizing linking words. What he refers to as macroskills includes: recognizing the communicative function of utterances; using information from the context and situation to work out intended meanings; inferring sequences and implied meanings and predicting outcomes; using listening strategies; and using real world knowledge and background information.

Descriptions of this kind are useful as guidelines, both for teaching and assessment. The notion of skills is also reflected in the descriptions of listening abilities found in the Common European Framework of Reference, or CEFR (see Chapter 17). For example, the performance of a learner at the basic level (A1 and A2 of the framework) is described as follows:

- Can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of immediate priority (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment), provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated. (A1)
- Can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type, provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated. (A2)
- Can follow speech which is very slow and carefully articulated. (A2)

We can compare this with the ability of an advanced-level listener (C1 and C2 on the CEFR):

- Has no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, delivered at fast native speed. (C1)
- Can understand enough to follow extended speech on abstract and complex topics beyond his/her own field, though may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar. (C2)
- Can recognize a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts. (C2)
- Can follow an extended speech event when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. (C2)

The starting point in planning a listening course or in developing listening materials is to develop a profile of the learners' listening abilities and the skills they need to acquire. This can be based on information from tests, observation, interviews with learners and from information on the listening demands the learners encounter (see Chapter 17).



If you are learning or have studied a foreign language or if English is a second language for you, which of the skills of the advanced-level listener, on the list above, are most problematic for you?

Listening strategies

Listening can also be considered in terms of the strategies listeners make use of while listening (Goh, 1998, 2000, 2005; Mendelsohn, 1995; Vandergrift, 2007). Strategies can be thought of as the ways in which a learner approaches and manages a listening situation. Research in listening strategies has identified three different types of strategies (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990): *cognitive strategies*, those that are used to try to understand messages we hear; *metacognitive strategies*, those that are used to plan, monitor and evaluate our understanding; and *socioaffective strategies*, strategies which either involve

other people in our efforts to understand or which we use to encourage ourselves to understand (Lynch, 2009: 79). A taxonomy of potential listening strategies is provided in Appendix 1. While the distinction between skills and strategies is a fuzzy one and the subject of debate among researchers, for practical purposes, strategies can be thought of as involving three levels of thinking about and responding to listening:

- 1 How can I prepare for listening?
- 2 How can I manage the process of listening?
- 3 How can I evaluate my success in listening?

Preparing for listening involves questions such as these:

- What kind of listening text is it?
- What is my purpose in listening?
- What kind of information will I listen for?
- What are some of the words I might expect to hear?

Managing the process of listening involves these questions:

- How can I match what I understand to what I expected to hear?
- What key words and ideas does the message contain?
- How can I remember the information I have understood?
- How can I signal comprehension or misunderstanding?

Evaluating success in listening involves these kinds of questions:

- Did I approach listening in the right way?
- What caused any misunderstandings I may have had?
- Should I change my approach to listening to this kind of text?

In the teaching of listening, students can be shown how to use strategies such as these when they are engaged in either in-class or out-of-class listening. Field (2008: 287) suggests that strategies can be incorporated into a listening programme in different ways. Teachers can:

- Draw upon knowledge of strategy use to interpret the decisions made by learners about the recorded material they hear.
- Raise learner awareness of listening strategies, both their potential value and their possible dangers.
- Include specific instruction that aims to increase strategy use and to ensure that learners match their strategies more effectively to the problems they seek to resolve.

A teacher comments on how students can draw on listening skills and strategies to improve their ability to understand authentic exchanges at natural speed. They then record their experiences in listening logs:



Listening logs

International students in intermediate and advanced oral-communications classes in English-speaking countries often complain that they do not hear the ‘real’ English that they travelled overseas to experience. My students in California told me that they could understand the teachers at our intensive English programme with little difficulty, but when they went to McDonald’s, they could not make sense of what the clerks were asking, even though they knew that these were simple transactions they should be able to follow easily. To build their opportunities to hear naturally occurring spoken English, I decided to assign my students an ongoing homework project I called ‘listening logs’.

To introduce this extensive-listening activity, I played a video of a popular TV show during class, without subtitles and without pausing the video. I asked the students to focus on getting the main ideas, not listening for details, and to note any new words that seemed important to the dialogue. After watching the show, I asked the students to summarize what they had seen in about a paragraph. They compared their summaries with classmates, and we discussed what the main ideas were and how to select the appropriate points for writing a brief summary. Then I asked the students to write a response to the content of the show – what they thought about the plot, characters and the issues raised during the show. I next directed them to write a few sentences reflecting, instead, on the experience of listening to the show without subtitles or pauses. We discussed what they felt and how they had needed to draw on different listening strategies than they were used to using when they had the opportunity to use supports. Finally, I asked the students to call out the new words they had noted while watching the show. The class, as a whole, came up with a wide range of words, indicating that individual students had caught different words from their classmates.

Having completed this viewing and reflection activity during class, the students were familiar with the various practices they would need to use as they pursued a range of listening activities outside of class time. I provided a list of potential events and shows that they could watch (see list below) and maintained a bulletin board in the classroom, with announcements of upcoming events at local bookstores and on the university campus. I also added a few stipulations: that the students were required to attend at least one live or unrecorded event (to ensure that they did not pause the recording or use subtitles) and that they must watch a range of genres of TV shows (to prevent them from watching ten episodes of a show that they had already watched in their first language). I collected the logs every four weeks, checking for completion of all the required tasks (summary, response, reflection and vocabulary) and for a range of events.

I found that the students had much less difficulty writing the summaries than they did responding personally or reflecting on the strategies they used, so I had to build in more instructional time on these topics and to scaffold the process more with some potential sentence starters they could use. Although the oral-communication class

included a textbook that introduced a long list of listening strategies, the students had not recognized that they could draw on these as they wrote their reflections. In a survey at the end of the class, the majority of students said they appreciated having to do the listening-logs activities and expressed surprise at how much better they had become at using listening strategies in their daily lives outside of the classroom.

Possible listening events:

- Author reading at a local bookstore.
- Visiting scholar/expert lecture at university.
- College class (but be sure to check first with the professor if you can sit in on the class).
- Craft or cooking demonstration at a store.
- Guided tour of historical site.
- Movie in the theatre.
- TV shows: choose different types of shows (documentary, mystery, science fiction, drama, competition, cartoon, comedy, sports, reality).
- TED talks (online).
- iTunes U lectures.

Betsy Gilliland, teacher and teacher educator, Honolulu, HI, US



Can you recall strategies you use when you are trying to understand something in a foreign language?

In teaching strategies, the following sequence is generally recommended (Field, 2008):

- Strategies are introduced individually.
- Strategies are explained explicitly to learners and even sometimes named.
- Strategies are modelled for learners to emulate.
- Strategies are practised in controlled tasks.
- Learners evaluate their own use of the strategies in less-focused listening tasks.

Goh and Yusnita (2006) describe the effectiveness of strategy instruction among a group of 11 and 12 year old ESL/ELT learners in Singapore:

Eight listening lessons which combined guided reflection and teacher-led process-based discussions were conducted. At the end of the period of metacognitive instruction, the children reported in their written diaries a deeper understanding of the nature and the demands of listening, increased confidence in completing listening tasks, and better strategic knowledge for

coping with comprehension difficulties. There was also an increase in the scores in the listening examinations of the majority of the students, particularly the weaker listeners, suggesting that metacognitive instruction also had a direct impact on listening performance.

Appendix 2 gives an example of a listening lesson found in a current textbook.

Planning a listening course

Teachers new to teaching listening may wonder how all of these skills and strategies are incorporated into a listening course. A number of steps are involved in planning a listening course, beginning with determining the kinds of listening skills the learners need to develop, developing the goals and objectives for the course and selecting suitable listening materials.

Finding out what listening skills and strategies students need

Learners' needs for specific listening skills and strategies will differ, according to whether their reasons for learning English are social, academic or work related, and according to their current level of listening proficiency. Determining learners' needs requires getting information from a variety of sources (see Chapter 17): from the learners themselves, from those who are in contact with the learners (e.g. teachers, employers), from studying the contexts in which the learners find themselves and from studying the language demands of those contexts, i.e. what types of discourse learners will be exposed to and what the characteristics of such discourse are (e.g. casual conversation, interviews, discussions, lectures, etc.). Sources of information include:

- *Tests:* Scores from a proficiency test, if available, can identify areas of listening difficulty.
- *Questionnaires:* A questionnaire can be used to collect information on the situations in which learners most often use English and what some of their common listening problems are.
- *Interviews:* Interviews with students and other teachers will complement information from a questionnaire.
- *Other sources:* Available coursebooks for teaching listening skills at different levels should be reviewed (e.g. books on conversational listening, academic listening, business communication) to see what skills are typically covered in commercial materials.

Developing course goals and outcomes

Information from needs analysis can be used to develop a statement of what the goals and outcomes of the listening course are (see Chapter 17). The goal statements should reflect the types of texts students will listen to and the kinds of skills and strategies these texts involve. Depending on the learners, text types could include casual conversation, recounts, narratives, information reports, explanations, expositions, informal discussion, debate, interview or negotiation.

The listening skills or competencies students in the course will address for each text type can also be described. For example:

Text type	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casual conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying topics. Following a topic. Following conversational discourse. Following rapid speech.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal recount. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying events. Following a sequence of events. Identifying attitudes.

An example of this approach in planning a course on academic listening skills is given in Lin (2005). The teacher first developed some general course objectives related to the need to understand lectures on general academic topics, to use a range of listening strategies as well as to take notes while listening, and then developed more specific communicative outcomes to address these objectives.

Sources of listening materials

A wide variety of sources for listening practice can be considered for classroom use, including materials created by teachers and learners and commercial materials, as well as audio and video sources taken from the media. A teacher comments on the value of using DVDs:

Using DVDs for listening practice

I find watching movies on DVD provides both good language practice as well as a welcome change from the regular classroom activities. However, students need good preparation for watching movies. First, I ask students to choose a movie they would like to watch in class. I give them a list of movies to think about, ones that are not too difficult and where the language is not too difficult. Movies with a clear action sequence and humour, such as the *Mr. Bean* movies, are good. Once the students have decided on a movie, I ask them what they know about it and why they want to watch it. I also prepare a very short summary or review of the movie for them to read. To help them follow the movie, I prepare a storyline for them to match to the action as

they watch the movie. I also use fairly detailed questionnaires, depending on the level, with questions students can think about as they watch. I also turn on the subtitles in English that come with the movie so that students can read and listen to the movie in English. After watching the movie, I may ask them to write summaries or reviews or to summarize the movie orally in groups. Or groups prepare questions and see if others in the class can answer them.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

Both *authentic materials* (e.g. listening texts taken from the real world and without modification) and *created materials* (e.g. listening texts adapted from real-world sources or specially written for classroom use) can be used. A mix of both is often needed. Authentic texts often reflect the nature of real spoken English and provide preparation for real-world listening. Some authentic materials, however, are too difficult for classroom use, so created materials also have a role to play. What is more important is that students experience authentic listening experiences and processes, those that prepare them to listen to real-world texts. At the same time, listening texts should reflect the same features as authentic texts and engage learners in authentic listening processes. In choosing materials, a number of factors need to be considered:

- *Linguistic difficulty*: This will depend on rate of speaking, the lexical and grammatical content of a text, accents, and amount and length of pausing.
- *Length*: Initially, texts of two (or so) minutes' duration can be used, with text length gradually increasing as the learners' proficiency develops.
- *Text types*: Texts can be selected according to the learners' needs, such as narratives, conversations, announcements, discussions, etc.
- *Task type*: The type of tasks learners will carry out with a text, since with a difficult text a simpler task-type can be used to make the text more accessible.
- *Content*: Texts on familiar content with concrete, rather than abstract, vocabulary will be used at the initial stages.
- *Organization*: Texts with a clear sequence and organization of content should be used before texts with less transparent organization.
- *Context*: Texts that depend only on auditory input will be more difficult to follow than those accompanied by visual or other support.

Sources for texts include:

- *Teacher made*: The teacher may prepare materials addressing specific listening problems that have emerged during a course.
- *Student made*: Intermediate to advanced-level students can be invited to record or video role plays, discussions, interviews, etc., which can be used with other learners.

- *Media-based*: Extracts taken from radio, television or the internet can often provide a good basis for a listening class.
- *DVD and video*: Extracts taken from DVDs or videos can often be used as part of a listening course, provided that they are at a suitable level.
- *Commercial materials*: Published listening courses are available for every kind of listening situation – from beginning to advanced – and for learners with specific needs.
- *Class visitors*: It may be possible to invite people to class to make a presentation or take part in an interview or discussion.
- *Audiobooks*: (either graded or original readers) – These are easy to download and listen to on mobile phones / MP3 players and good for extensive listening.

A teacher trainer suggests how teachers can prepare their own authentic recordings:

Making your own recordings

Authentic listening texts are great, but sometimes they're not so easy to find and may not be able to do exactly what you want. That's when you need to record your own. These days, it's easy to get technically high-quality recordings. The content, however, is another question. One key point to remember is *never* to script your text. Actors get paid an enormous amount of money to interpret texts in a natural and believable way. They are not always successful, as anyone who has had to sit through EFL coursebook recordings will testify. Language teachers are usually even less successful at reading from a script. The thing to do is decide what you want the speakers to talk about and then let them choose whatever language they want. That way, you will get a close approximation of 'natural' language.

For example, you may think the coursebook text on London restaurants is too culturally specific for your learners who are not studying in the UK. So get two of your colleagues to discuss the restaurants in the city where you are teaching. You can use the same frameworks, but use prompts that guide the speakers without putting words in their mouths, e.g. tell each other about your favourite restaurant at the moment, talk about the service, the food and the decor, etc., etc. This can also work for language-focused lessons. For example, you may want to use a listening text to provide a context to focus on narrative tenses. Get two or three friends together, and ask them to tell each other about a very clear memory they have from their childhood. This can also be a very useful way of evaluating the language you are teaching. Say you want to teach *-er* endings for comparison, but when you ask your friends to compare two different cities they've lived in, they use one or two *-er* endings at the beginning and then just use the present simple. What does this tell you about what proficient users of English do, compared with what some coursebooks say they do?

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

The listening lesson

A typical sequence in a listening lesson involves a three-part lesson sequence consisting of pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities:

The pre-listening phase

The purpose of pre-listening activities is to prepare the student for a listening activity by providing essential background information, by presenting any unknown vocabulary that is central to the listening task, and which cannot be guessed from context, and by helping the student select a suitable purpose and strategy for listening.

Pre-listening activities normally take no more than a few minutes to complete and should not become a lesson in themselves. Here are some examples:

- *Choosing a strategy:* The teacher introduces the kind of text the students will listen to and asks them to think about how they will listen to the text. What kind of information do they think it will contain? Should they listen for main ideas or for details?
- *Brainstorming:* Before listening to a text about a traffic accident, students try to come up with as many words as they can related to the topic.
- *Predicting:* Before listening to an account of a singing competition, students predict some of the things they may hear based on the topic of the story, e.g. 'The competition where everything went wrong'.
- *Picture description:* Students discuss a picture or pictures related to a text they will hear.
- *Questioning:* Students generate a list of questions they think might be discussed in a text they will listen to.
- *Story building:* To prepare students for key words, students are given a list of eight to ten action verbs from a text and try to put them in the form of a story.

The while-listening phase

This is the main focus of a listening lesson. It is the period during which students process texts for meaning and respond in different ways, according to the type of text they are listening to and their purpose in listening. It provides an opportunity for intensive listening practice and also helps students develop strategies they can use to improve their listening, such as focusing on key parts of a text and guessing words from the context. It's important that the activities teachers choose help the students process the meaning of the text, rather than distracting them because of the nature of the task – for example, by giving them a task that requires too much reading or writing. Often students complete a series of tasks at the while-listening phase, perhaps listening first with one focus (e.g. identifying main ideas), followed by a follow-up task with a different focus (such as listening for details). In developing tasks for use during the while-listening phase, it is important to keep in

mind the purpose of such tasks. Their primary purpose is to guide students through the listening process and to help them improve their understanding and use of listening skills and strategies. Tasks that have this aim should be ones that can be completed *during* the process of listening. The following are examples of tasks of this kind:

- *Predicting*: Students listen to the first part of a story and predict what happens next. They then listen to the next part of the text to compare their predictions.
- *Sequencing*: Students number, in sequence, a series of events that occur in a text.
- *True-false*: While they listen, students tick if statements are true or false.
- *Matching*: Students match pictures to things that are described.
- *Key words*: The teacher stops the audio just before a key word occurs and asks students what word they think they will hear. They then listen to compare.
- *Gap-fill (cloze) dialogue*: Students receive a dialogue with one speaker's part deleted. They try to guess the missing parts and then listen and compare.
- *Check predictions*: Students listen and check to see if predictions they made about a text are correct.
- *Chart filling*: Students complete a chart as they listen, based on information in a text.



Which of the tasks above do you use in your teaching? What other kinds of while-listening tasks do you use?

Listening classes sometimes contain learners of mixed ability levels. In these situations it may be useful to develop tasks of different difficulty levels that can be used with the same listening text. The vignette below describes how a while-listening task can be used when students may be of different ability levels:



An effective while-listening task

On a purely practical note, it's useful to get students to compare their answers to tasks between listenings, but often less experienced teachers gloss over this stage.

Imagine a detailed listening task with eight comprehension questions. The learners listen once and get a few answers right. The teacher says, 'Do you want to listen again?' Naturally, they say 'yes', so the teacher plays the tape again, and the learners aren't much further on.

A more effective method is to play the tape once; then ask learners to check with their partners. As they discuss, the teacher monitors carefully and decides, based on the number of answers the learners have got right, to play the tape again. By allowing the learners to pair-check, you are giving them the opportunity to eliminate the answers

they both have. This allows them to focus on the ones they disagreed on or both missed first time around, which moves them forward. After the next listening, students pair-check again and feed back.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

The post-listening phase

The post-listening phase is an opportunity to check students' understanding of a text, and where errors in understanding occurred, to explore what caused them and what follow-up is appropriate. This may involve a microanalysis of sections of the text, to enable students to recognize such features as blends, reduced words, ellipsis, etc., and other features of spoken discourse that they were unable to process or recognize. It is also an opportunity for students to respond to the content of the text in different ways and to make links to other skills, such as writing or discussion. And it can also be used to return to the text and examine some of its structure, grammar and vocabulary, and to expand students' language awareness, using activities based on some of the features of the texts (Richards, 2005). Here are examples:

- *Analyze problems:* The teacher checks comprehension problems with a text and replays the part of the text that caused difficulty, to identify the problem.
- *Extension activities:* Students carry out an activity as a response to what they heard. For example, they may prepare a letter to a newspaper after listening to a discussion of a problem in their city.
- *Language study:* The students examine a transcript of a text and review some of the language that occurred in the text. There may be follow-up written activities to practise new language.
- *Read and compare:* Students read a text on the same topic they listened to and compare information in the two texts.
- *Vocabulary development:* Students use some of the words that occurred in a text to complete a gap-fill (cloze) passage.
- *Summary:* Students prepare a summary of a text they heard and compare summaries in groups.

12.6 Assessing listening

Assessment of listening (and other skills) involves both summative assessment, designed to test achievement, and formative assessment, designed to encourage students to monitor their progress for further development. Fulcher (2010: 94) describes some very basic principles of testing that apply to the testing of all of the skills covered in this chapter and the other skills chapters to follow (see Chapters 13, 14 and 15). For example,

Fulcher (2010) suggests that if a test sets out to assess whether certain material has been taught over a two month period, then a test would have to be designed that reflected and identified what had been taught in the course. This could be done in several ways, such as by basing the test on a sample of items from the syllabus or on the kinds of skills and processes that had been taught during the course. Alternatively the test could be based on the course objectives rather than what was included in the syllabus or a combination of these two different approaches could be used within the test design.

In assessing learners' listening abilities based on the approach above (summative assessment), we first have to identify the kinds of listening performance we want to assess and the kinds of skills the performance involves, using either of the approaches referred to directly above. Then we have to find or create sample texts at an appropriate level and length that reflect the performance we want to measure (Hughes, 2003). Finally, we need to develop test items to use with the text, as well as scoring procedures. However, assessment can also be used to help students improve their learning and not simply to measure what they have learned (formative assessment); it can give learners a better understanding of how they approach listening tasks, whether the strategies they choose are effective and how they can monitor and regulate their own learning processes. Assessment is discussed further in Chapter 20.

Summative assessment

Effective summative assessment depends on clearly identifying what will be measured and choosing appropriate listening samples.

Identifying the listening performance we want to measure

This requires us to identify the kinds of listening texts to be used in a test and the skills that comprehension of the text involves. For example:

Text type	Component skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casual conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify formality level, e.g. casual or formal. Identify topics. Identify functions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional interaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize function. Follow sequence of the interaction. Identify outcomes of the interaction. Identify functional language.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recount. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify setting and participants. Follow sequence of events. Identify outcome.

Sourcing suitable listening samples

Depending on the text types chosen for the test, text sources could be specially prepared – or authentic examples of monologues, dialogues, reports, discussions, instructions, announcements, presentations, interviews, etc. These need to be controlled for features such as length, speed, linguistic content and dialect.

Developing test items

Since in a listening test we seek to measure comprehension and not note-taking speed, test items should not normally involve production of language. The following are examples of listening test items:

- *Identifying*: Students see a picture of a room, listen to a description of the items in the room and tick the items referred to in a list. The items themselves may not be mentioned directly, but should be inferable from the context. For example, students hear, 'Put the bag over there on the one by the window' and tick 'chair', the only item close to the window in the picture.
- *Sequencing*: Students listen to a narrative or recount and number a list of events in the order they are referred to.
- *Correcting*: Students listen to a phone message and correct a written version of the message that contains one or more incorrect pieces of information.
- *Inferring*: Students listen to conversations and identify from a set of pictures the place where the conversation is taking place.
- *True-false*: Students listen to a conversation or description and tick one or more true statements from a list.

Formative assessment

Several procedures are available to help learners monitor their listening development and to provide feedback on the development of their listening skills. The following suggestions are adapted from Vandergrift and Goh (2012):

- *Learner checklists*: These contain statements that identify different approaches to listening that a learner may use before, while or after listening to a text; for example, 'I have decided the way I will listen to the text and the kind of information I will listen for'. The learner completes some sections of the checklist before listening and some sections after listening. For example, post-listening statements could be, 'I used my knowledge of the topic to guess some part of the text'.
- *Questionnaires*: These can be used for self-assessment and also for diagnostic purposes by the teacher. They can focus on learners' beliefs about listening and their understanding of effective listening skills and strategies.

- *Listening diaries:* Students can monitor their listening experience in and out of class, and their entries can form the basis for conversations with the teacher and other learners.
- *Teacher checklists:* The teacher can use a checklist to monitor students' difficulties and progress over time, noting the kinds of texts they can manage and the kinds of skills they can use or have difficulty with, etc.
- *Interviews:* The teacher can discuss how students attempt listening tasks, the kinds of difficulties they encounter and how they deal with them.

12.7 Conclusion

Approaches to the teaching of second language listening have changed as understanding of the nature of listening has changed. In the past, the methodology of teaching second language listening often reflected the following assumptions:

- Comprehension was viewed mainly as decoding.
- The learner was viewed as a passive participant in listening.
- Comprehension was seen as a demonstration of learning.
- Students listened to native-speaker models on recorded materials, speaking both standard and prestige accents.
- Listening materials were based on specially written texts.
- There was little distinction between teaching and testing of listening.

Current approaches to the teaching of second language listening, by contrast, generally have the following features:

- Comprehension is viewed as a mix of bottom-up and top-down processes – both decoding and interpretation.
- The learner is seen as an active participant in listening.
- Listening strategies are taught.
- The role of background knowledge and schemas is emphasized.
- Learners listen to a variety of accents including native and non-native, as well as regional accents.
- Listening materials are often based on authentic speech and seek to capture features of authentic speech.

The goal of teaching listening is, of course, to prepare students to cope with real-life listening outside of the classroom. This involves understanding the demands real-life listening makes on second language learners, identifying the skills and strategies learners can use to cope with out-of-class listening, and choosing tasks and resources that can help learners become more confident and effective listeners.

Discussion questions

- 1 Examine a coursebook or a course teaching listening skills. What kinds of skills are taught? Does it also teach listening strategies?
- 2 Review the list of listening purposes and monitor your listening over a one-day time period. What kinds of listening did you take part in?
- 3 Examine a coursebook and describe the kinds of listening texts it contains. Are they examples of one-way or two-way listening? How many of them would you describe as 'authentic texts'?
- 4 Watch a short section of a TV news programme and identify what difficulties it might pose for second language learners. How could these difficulties be addressed if you wanted to use it for teaching purposes?
- 5 What kinds of opportunities does the internet provide for practising listening? Give examples of two things students could use the internet for to improve their listening.
- 6 Choose a listening text that could be used with a specific group of learners. If you were using it with a class of mixed ability levels, suggest two or more tasks of different difficulty levels that could be used with the text.
- 7 Buck (2001) and Lynch (2009) suggest that tasks tend to be more difficult when they require:
 - The processing of more details.
 - The integration of information from different parts of the text.
 - The recall for gist (for example, writing a summary), rather than exact content.
 - The separation of fact from opinion.
 - The recall of non-central or irrelevant details.
 - A delayed response, rather than an immediate one.

Choose a listening text, such as an information text or an expository text, and using the criteria above, suggest listening tasks of different difficulty levels that could be used with it.

- 8 What kinds of authentic materials could be used in your listening classes (or in a context you are familiar with)? What difficulties might be involved in using these materials?
- 9 DVDs are excellent tools as they allow teachers (and learners themselves) to use subtitles, either in the target language or in the student's native language, or turn them off entirely. What are the advantages and drawbacks of each of these approaches to using subtitles for listening practice?
- 10 Prepare a checklist that could be used to evaluate the listening content in a coursebook or other textbook. Then use it to evaluate a classroom book.

Appendix 1:

A taxonomy of listening strategies

Review the taxonomy of listening strategies below, presented by Vandergrift and Goh in their book *Teaching and Learning Second Language Listening: Metacognition in Action* (2012). Which of these have you encouraged your students to try? Are there others that you think might be useful? Make a list of five new strategies you might present to your students.

Cognitive strategies

- 1 Inferencing** (Filling in missing information)
Use contextual clues.
Use information from familiar content words.
Draw on knowledge of the world.
Apply knowledge about the target language.
Use visual clues.
- 2 Elaboration** (Embellishing an initial interpretation)
Draw on knowledge of the world.
Draw on knowledge about the target language.
- 3 Prediction** (Anticipating the contents of a text)
Anticipate general contents (global).
Anticipate details while listening (local).
- 4 Contextualization** (Relating new information to a wider context)
Place input in a meaningful context (e.g. social, linguistic).
Find related information on hearing a key word.
Relate one part of text to another.
- 5 Visualization** (Forming a mental picture of what is heard)
Imagine scenes, events, objects, etc. being described.
Mentally display the shape (spelling) of key words.

- 6 Reconstruction** (Using words heard to create meaning)
Reconstruct meaning from words heard.
Reconstruct meaning from notes taken.

Social-affective strategies

- 1 Cooperation** (Asking the speaker for help)
Ask for repetition.
Ask for explanation/clarification.
Use paraphrase to verify interpretation.
- 2 Confidence building** (Encouraging oneself)
Tell oneself to relax.
Use positive self-talk.

Metacognitive strategies

- 1 Pre-listening preparation** (Preparing mentally for a listening task)
Preview contents.
Rehearse sounds of potential content words.
- 2 Selective attention** (Noticing specific aspects of input)
Listen to words in groups.
Listen for gist.
Listen for familiar content words.
Notice how information is structured (e.g. discourse markers).
Pay attention to repetition.
Notice intonation features (e.g. fall and rise tones).
Listen to specific parts of the input.
Pay attention to visuals and body language.

<p>3 Directed attention (Avoiding distractions) Concentrate hard. Continue to listen, in spite of difficulty.</p> <p>4 Comprehension monitoring (Checking / confirming understanding <i>while</i> listening) Confirm that comprehension has taken place. Identify words or ideas that are not understood. Check current interpretation with context of the message. Check current interpretation with prior knowledge.</p> <p>5 Real-time assessment of input (Determining the value of specific parts of the input)</p>	<p>Assess the importance of problematic parts that are heard. Determine the potential value of subsequent parts of input.</p> <p>6 Comprehension evaluation (Checking interpretation for accuracy, completeness and acceptability after listening) Check interpretation against some external sources. Check interpretation by drawing on prior knowledge. Match interpretation with the context of the message.</p>
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Appendix 2:

There's so much to see!

Look at the lesson on the next two pages from the textbook *Cambridge English Skills Real Listening and Speaking* (Craven, 2008). Which listening skills are taught in this lesson? Would this lesson lend itself to the guided metacognitive sequency by Goh, presented in Appendix 1?

Unit 10

There's so much to see!

Get ready to listen and speak

1 Match the correct word or expression (a–f) to each picture (1–6).

a a museum 2 b a castle c a street market
 d a palace e a statue f a monument

2 Tick ✓ the places you like to visit when you go on a sightseeing holiday.

3 Match each verb (a–e) with a word (1–5).

a visit 1 guided tour
 b buy 2 a seat
 c go 3 souvenirs
 d go on a 4 sightseeing
 e book 5 a palace

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A Listening – At a Tourist Information Office

1 James is visiting Hong Kong. He is at a Tourist Information Office. Listen and complete the questions he asks. Then listen and repeat.

- a Are there any good markets here?
 b What do you recommend?
 c Where's the best place to ?
 d Are there any I can visit near here?
 e Is there a I can go on?

2 Now listen to the assistant in the Tourist Information Office and match each answer (1–5) with a question (a–e).

- 1 2 3 4 5

Focus on ...
there is/there are

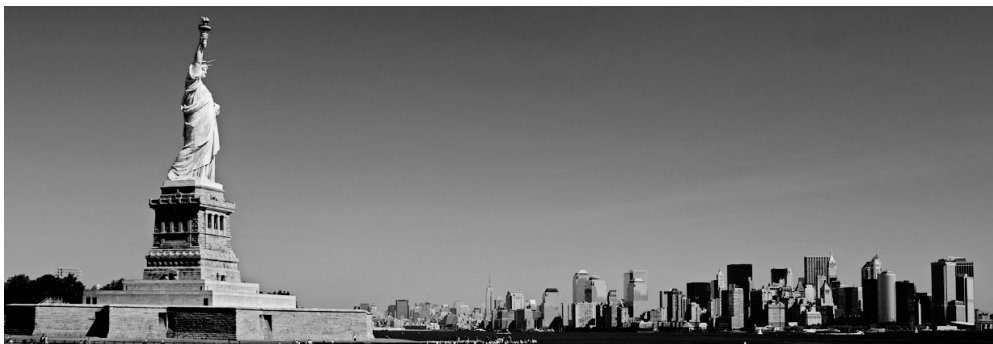


- Complete each sentence with *There's a*, *There are*, *Is there a...* or *Are there any...*
- a *Is there a* market near here?
 b large castle in the town.
 c good shops?
 d some large parks.
 e theatre?
 f two art galleries.
 g monuments worth seeing?
 h 12th Century bridge.

Class bonus

- 1 Make a list of interesting things to see in your home town.
 2 Work with a partner.
 Student A: Imagine you work in a Tourist Information Office. Answer your partner's questions.
 Student B: You are a tourist in your partner's home town. Find out what there is to do.
 When you have finished, swap roles.

B Listening – Planning your visit



- 1 Listen to Jim and Denise talk about what to do in New York. Tick ✓ the places that they mention.

the Statue of Liberty ☐ the Metropolitan Museum of Art ☒ Central Park ☐
the Guggenheim Museum ☐ the Empire State Building ☐ Times Square ☐

- 2 Listen again. Which three places do they decide to go to?
.....

Did you know ...?

People from New York are called *New Yorkers*. American jazz players in the 1930s called a city an *apple*. Of course, New York was *The Big Apple*. Many people still use this name today.

C Speaking – Deciding what to do

Speaking strategy: Making and responding to suggestions

- 1 Look at these extracts from Jim and Denise's conversation. Underline the expressions they use to make suggestions.

Why don't we go to the Statue of Liberty?
How about going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art?
What about going to Central Park?
Let's go there first.

- 2 You can use these expressions to respond to a suggestion. Match each group of expressions a–c to a meaning 1–3.

a That's a good idea. That sounds great. That's fine with me.
b It's up to you. I don't mind.
c I'd rather not do that today. I don't really want to do that.
I'd rather do something else.

1 I don't agree.
2 You can choose.
3 I agree.

- 3 Listen again to Jim and Denise's conversation. Tick ✓ the expressions from Exercise 2 that you hear.

Speak up!

- 4 Imagine you are visiting New York with a friend. Suggest visiting these places. Speak your answers.

Example: a

You say: How about going to the Statue of Liberty?

- a the Statue of Liberty
b the Guggenheim Museum
c the Empire State Building
d the Metropolitan Museum of Art
e Central Park
f Times Square

Further reading

- Field, J. (2008) *Listening in the Language Classroom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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13

Speaking

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What are some approaches to teaching speaking?
- What are the genres of spoken interaction?
 - Small talk.
 - Conversation.
 - Transactions.
 - Discussions.
 - Presentations.
- How can fluency and accuracy be addressed?
 - Fluency.
 - Accuracy.
- How should speaking be taught?
 - Determining the goals of the course.
 - Choosing classroom activities.
- How can speaking be assessed?

13.1 Introduction

The ability to use English for spoken communication is one of the main reasons many people study English, and learners often evaluate their success in language learning, as well as the effectiveness of their English course, on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken-language proficiency. The role of English as an international language means that more and more people today find that fluency in spoken English is a necessity for social purposes, for travel, for work, for business or for education. The way spoken English is used in these different situations is both varied and complex, and the ability to function well in one situation (for example, buying things in a store) does not necessarily transfer to other situations (for example, taking part in casual conversation). However, the teaching of speaking skills has often misrepresented the nature of spoken English and spoken interaction, and, as a result, speaking classes are sometimes little more than unfocused discussion sessions, with little real teaching of what oral proficiency in a second language entails. In this chapter, we will explore approaches to teaching speaking and examine approaches to the teaching of five genres of spoken English – small talk, conversation, transactions, discussions and presentations.



What goals do you think learners usually set for themselves when they take a class on speaking skills?

13.2 Approaches to teaching speaking

Since the late nineteenth century, oral skills have been an important goal in language programmes; however, both the nature of speaking skills as well as approaches to teaching them have undergone a major shift in thinking since that time. Speaking, rather than reading or writing, was central in the direct method and other oral approaches (see Chapter 3), although the nature of speaking was not well understood and was viewed as the oral performance of grammar. Under the influence of audiolingualism and similar grammar-based methods, by the 1960s, speaking usually meant 'repeating after the teacher, reciting a memorized dialogue, or responding to a mechanical drill' (Shrum and Glisan, 2000: 26). The emergence of communicative language teaching in the 1970s highlighted the importance of fluency as a goal in teaching spoken English, which was viewed as a by-product of the use of communicative activities in the classroom. However, the nature of fluent language use was not well understood, until research began to focus on the nature of authentic oral interaction. Discourse analysis, conversation analysis and corpus analysis (see Chapter 16) led to a new understanding of oral proficiency and, within language teaching, the need for teaching the specific features of spoken English and oral interaction was realized. This research, which recognized that approaches to teaching spoken English should be informed by the analysis of authentic spoken interaction, highlighted features such as the following:

- The clausal nature of spoken language, with clauses linked together through simple coordination (*and*, *but*, *because*), rather than the use of complex sentence constructions, as are common in written English.

- The use of incomplete sentences, such as *Saw a great movie last night*.
- The use of *chunks* or multi-word units, such as *it's almost as if* and *what I'm thinking is* (see Chapter 9).
- The use of fixed utterances or routines, such as *Nice to meet you*, *How have you been?* and *Talk to you later*.
- The use of idioms and colloquial expressions, such as *make a move*, *pig out*, and *send someone up*.
- The use of discourse markers, such as *the thing is*, *by the way* and *and another thing*.
- The interactive and negotiated nature of oral interaction, involving such processes as *turn-taking*, *feedback* and *topic management*.
- The differences between different genres of spoken English, such as *small talk*, *conversations* and *transactions*.
- The difference between formal and casual speech.
- The difference between written grammar and spoken grammar (see Chapter 9).

The recognition of the role of English as an international language has also raised issues concerning the target of learning. In situations where English functions as a *lingua franca*, as well as when second language learners use English with native speakers, learners may not always seek to master a native-speaker variety of spoken English. Their goal may be to develop effective communication skills that are characterized by fluency and intelligibility, but which have features that make them distinct from the spoken English of native speakers of British, American or other varieties of English (see Chapters 1 and 11).



To what extent do you think your learners seek to achieve a native-speaker level of oral proficiency in English and a native-like accent?

13.3 Genres of spoken interaction

What we understand by 'speaking skills' covers a wide range of different genres of discourse. *Genres* refers to knowledge of different types of spoken interaction, including the discourse conventions of each kind of interaction, as well as the sociocultural and pragmatic dimensions of different genres (see Chapter 16). Genres include small talk, casual conversations, telephone conversations, transactions, discussions, interviews, meetings, presentations and debates. Each genre has distinct features and characteristics, and each poses quite different issues for teaching and learning. Some genres may be more important for some learners than for others. Below, we will examine five of these genres – small talk, conversation, transactions, discussions and presentations – and consider issues involved in mastering the norms of each genre.

Small talk

Small talk refers to communication that primarily serves the purpose of social interaction (Wajasath, 2005). Small talk consists of short exchanges that usually begin with a greeting, move to back-and-forth exchanges on non-controversial topics, such as the weekend, the weather, work, school, etc. and then often conclude with a fixed expression, such as *See you later*. Such interactions are at times almost formulaic and often do not result in a real conversation. They serve to create a positive atmosphere and to create a comfort zone between people who might be total strangers. (Consider the kind of chit-chat you may take part in when taking your seat beside a stranger on a bus or plane, prior to opening your book or putting on your personal MP3 player.) Topics that are appropriate in small talk may differ across cultures, since topics that are considered private in some cultures (e.g. marital status or religion) can be considered as appropriate topics for small talk in other cultures (see Chapter 16). While seemingly a trivial aspect of speaking, small talk plays a very important role in social interaction. Learners who cannot manage small talk often find they come away from social encounters feeling awkward, or that they did not make a good impression, and, consequently, may avoid situations where small talk is required.



When did you last engage in small talk? Who did you use small talk with? Do you remember the topics you touched on?

Skills involved in mastering small talk include:

- Acquiring fixed expressions and routines used in small talk.
- Using formal or casual speech depending on the situation.
- Developing fluency in making small talk around predictable topics.
- Using opening and closing strategies.
- Using back-channelling.

Back-channelling involves the use of expressions such as *really*, *mm*, *Is that right?*, *yeah*, etc., nodding of the head, and, very commonly, short rhetorical questions, such as *Do you?* *Are you?* or *Did you?* Such actions and expressions reflect the role of an active, interested and supportive listener. The use of expressions that show exaggeration, such as *way out*, *awesome* or *fantastic*, is usually a sign that the two participants are friends, as in the following example:

- A:** Look at what my dad gave me for my birthday.
B: Fantastic.
A: He got it in Italy.
B: Awesome!

Echo responses are another type of back-channelling and involve echoing something the speaker said. For example:

- A:** So where are you from?
B: Chicago.
A: Chicago. That's interesting.

Teaching small talk

Ways of teaching small talk include:

- *Modelling and creating:* Students study examples of small-talk exchanges and create similar exchanges on the same topic.
- *Class mingles:* Each student has one or two topics on a card. The class mingles, students greet, introduce their topic, make small talk for one or two exchanges, close the conversation and move on to a different student.
- *Question sheets:* Students have a worksheet with ten different small-talk questions. They move around the class and take turns asking questions and responding to their exchanges in small-talk format.

For example, McAndrew (2007) shows how a lesson can start by giving students a model of a small-talk exchange, such as the following example of a conversation between two friends in Japan who meet in a shopping mall:

- A:** Hi.
B: Oh hi, how's it going?
A: Good, good, fine.
B: Are you, er, doing some shopping?
A: Yeah, just a few things really, you know.
B: Yeah.
A: Yeah ... actually, I've been looking for a present, for Hiroko, but it's difficult to ... you know ...
B: Yeah, umm, what kind of thing?
A: Oh, something like, umm, a present ... something like, it's her birthday tomorrow actually. [laughs]
B: Tomorrow?
A: Yeah, tomorrow. So I've looked in Hamaya, like at the make-up and stuff, but it's not very exciting.
B: Tomorrow? How about Amu Plaza ... they've got Tower Records and some kind of new shops.
A: Yeah. OK, great, Tower Records might be good. I might give that a go. I've got to go over to the station, anyway. So, anyway, good to see you, and thanks for the tip.
B: That's fine. Say 'happy birthday' to Hiroko from me.
A: OK, I will. Bye.
B: Yeah, bye.
A: Bye.

This exchange can be used to highlight some of the features of casual language, such as the use of ellipsis (e.g. *Doing some shopping?*), phrases such as *you know*, idioms (*give that a go*) and *Bye* as a closing routine. Like many interactions of this kind, the exchange opens with a friendly greeting, moves towards small talk and then closes with an exchange of greetings. McAndrew (2007) provides worksheets in which the students identify the different sections of the conversation and the discourse functions and practise writing their own dialogues, using the same discourse features. They later enact role plays to further practise the appropriate sequence in a small-talk exchange. A lesson plan for teaching small talk is given in Appendix 1.

Conversation

Conversation involves longer exchanges that may follow on from small talk and is the more meaningful type of interaction that results from small talk. The participants (Wajasath, 2005: 162):

. . . now feel ready to take their relationship to a more meaningful level and to proceed to exchange ideas and thoughts on various topics, depending on their individual preferences. At this stage, it becomes apparent that, in contrast to small talk, the topics . . . and the content [are] much deeper. [In contrast to small talk], conversation is a much more serious type of [exchange] in which partners have a set purpose in mind as to what they are going to talk about, or what conclusion they want to arrive at.

Targets for conversational proficiency in a foreign language are described in the Common European Framework of Reference (see Chapter 17), as follows:

Characteristics of conversation as described in the Common European Framework of Reference	
C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can converse comfortably and appropriately, unhampered by any linguistic limitations in conducting a full social and personal life.
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can use language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive and joking usage.
B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can engage in extended conversation on most general topics in a clearly participatory fashion, even in a noisy environment. Can sustain relationships with native speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with a native speaker. Can convey degrees of emotion and highlight the personal significance of events and experiences.

Characteristics of conversation as described in the Common European Framework of Reference	
B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics. • Can follow clearly articulated speech directed at him/her in everyday conversations, though will sometimes have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases. • Can maintain a conversation or discussion, but may sometimes be difficult to follow when trying to say exactly what he/she would like to. • Can express and respond to feelings such as surprise, happiness, sadness, interest and indifference.
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can establish social contact: greetings and farewells; introductions; giving thanks. • Can generally understand clear, standard speech on familiar matters directed at him/her, provided he/she can ask for repetition or reformulations from time to time. • Can participate in short conversations in routine contexts on topics of interest. • Can express how he/she feels in simple terms, and express thanks.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can handle very short social exchanges, but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord, though he/she can be made to understand if the speaker will take the trouble. • Can use simple everyday polite forms of greeting and address. • Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions and apologies and say what he/she likes and dislikes.
A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can make an introduction and use basic greeting and leave-taking expressions. • Can ask how people are and react to news. • Can understand everyday expressions aimed at the satisfaction of simple needs of a concrete type, delivered directly to him/her in clear, slow and repeated speech by a sympathetic speaker.

One of the most important aspects of conversation is managing the flow of conversation around topics. Whereas topics are only lightly touched on in small talk, as we noted above, conversation involves a joint interaction around topics and the introduction of new topics that are linked through each speaker's contributions. The skills involved include (adapted from Goh and Burns, 2012: 180):

- Initiating a topic in casual and formal conversation.
- Selecting vocabulary appropriate to the topic.
- Giving appropriate feedback responses.
- Providing relevant evaluative comments through back-channelling.

- Taking turns at appropriate points in the conversation.
- Asking for clarification and repetition.
- Using discourse strategies for repairing misunderstanding.
- Using discourse strategies to open and close conversations.
- Using appropriate intonation and stress patterns to express meaning intelligibly.

Learners need a wide range of topics at their disposal in order to manage the flow of conversation, and managing interaction and developing topic fluency is a priority in speaking classes. Initially, learners may depend on familiar topics to get by. However, they also need practice in introducing new topics into conversation to move beyond this stage.

Casual conversation between friends or people who know each other well has these characteristics (Pridham, 2001: 64):

- Topics switch freely.
- Topics are often provoked by what speakers are doing, by objects in their presence or by some association with what has just been said.
- There does not appear to be a clearly defined purpose for the conversation.
- All speakers can introduce topics, and no one speaker appears to dominate the conversation.
- Speakers comment on each other's statements.
- Topics are only elaborated on briefly, after follow-up questions or comments from listeners.
- Comments in response to a topic often include some evaluation.
- Responses can be very short.
- Ellipsis is common.
- The speaker's cooperation is often shown through speaker support and repetition of each other's vocabulary.
- Vocabulary typical of informal conversation will be present, such as clichés, vague language and taboo language.



Observe some of your friends engaging in conversation, and see if you can identify some of the features above in their discourse.

Developing topics in conversation is a subtle process that requires skills in topic management. For example, Wajasath (2005: 171–2) illustrates a number of ways in which a topic can develop from a question about where someone lives:

A: So where are you from, Mr. Dale?

B: I'm from Chicago.

From here, there are at least four or five paths that A can take, and, in each path, the partners use different strategies. The following two paths are given as examples:

Path 1:

- A:** Chicago! How interesting! Were you born there?
B: No, actually I was born in Tokyo, and I moved to Chicago when I was about ten. My father had to go back.
A: Really? Can you speak Japanese?
B: Very little. My mom didn't really teach me.

From the above example, A does the following things:

- Shows interest by echoing ('Chicago!').
- Asks a question about where B was born and listens intently to the response.
- Shows surprise [and interest] by saying, 'Really?'
- Asks another question, paying attention to the information regarding B's birthplace.

In the course of the conversation, there may be a few more questions about Tokyo or Japan, in general, before both move on to other territories.

Path 2:

- A:** Chicago. The windy city. Were you born in Chicago?
B: No, actually, I was born in Tokyo, and I moved to Chicago when I was about ten when my father was recalled to the States.
A: That's interesting. So your father used to work in Japan?
B: That's right. He was stationed in Okinawa when he was in the navy. Then he ventured into business in Tokyo – where he met my mother.

From the example above, A does the following:

- 1** Shows interest.
- 2** Communicates that he knows something about Chicago ('The windy city').
- 3** Shows interest again ('That's interesting').
- 4** Asks another question ('Were you born in Chicago?')
- 5** Shows interest and asks another question ('So your father used to work in Japan?'), apparently interested in what B's father used to do. Here, A may ask a few more questions. For example, he may pursue the same line of questioning before touching on something else.

Personal recounts are also very common in conversation and serve to retell an event that the speaker was personally involved in (see Chapters 15 and 16 for further discussion of recounts). They often involve one person sharing a recent experience, followed by the second speaker's sharing of a similar experience, as in this example:

A: Someone nearly ran into the back of my car on the freeway yesterday.

B: No way!

A: Yeah, I was going down Highway 2001 when . . .

B: That almost happened to me a couple of weeks ago. I was . . .

Students need practice in sharing personal experience and exchanging recounts, as in the example above. Technology provides new options for practising recounts and other aspects of speaking and is discussed in Chapter 17.

Agenda management and turn-taking are also important features of small talk and conversation. The former refers to ‘the participant’s right to choose the topic and the way the topics are developed, and to choose how long the conversation should continue’ (Bygate, 1987: 36). This includes strategies for opening, developing and closing conversations, and for introducing and changing topics (Pridham, 2001). This process is often jointly managed by the participants, depending on the social relationship between them (e.g. teacher–student, friend–friend, employed–employee). Turn-taking involves providing opportunities for another person to take a turn in speaking and recognizing when another speaker is seeking to take a turn. However cultural factors can also play a role in turn-taking, as this observation from a teacher in Japan illustrates:

The role of cultural factors

Teaching speaking in English also has its challenges, and Japanese culture plays an important role here, as well.

I often find that my university students look puzzled when I ask them ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions. For instance, if a student says, ‘I like this song’, and I ask them why, they will often reply, ‘I don’t know’ or ‘I’m not sure’.

A teacher new to Japan would think this answer is perhaps laziness on the student’s part or that the student just didn’t want to explain further. They would also wonder why he or she doesn’t know why they like or dislike something.

In Japanese culture, it is considered rude to query someone’s statement. The person’s statement is accepted at face value, and no further information is requested or expected. The questions ‘why’ or ‘how’ are usually not asked.

Hiroko Nishikage, teacher and materials writer, Tokyo, Japan

Teaching conversation

Ways of teaching conversation include:

- **Awareness-raising activities:** Students examine examples of conversation, either recorded (audio or video) or transcribed examples, and look for examples of how

openings, topic introductions, back-channelling, etc. are realized, and for indicators of casual or formal speech.

- *Dialogue completion:* Students are given transcripts of conversations with selected features removed (such as openings, closings, clarification requests) and asked to try to complete them. They then listen to or read the completed dialogues, compare and practise.
- *Planning tasks:* Students are given topics to include in a conversation and asked to write dialogues that include them and that also include personal recounts. They then compare and practise.
- *Improvisations:* Students are given skeleton dialogues or dialogue frames (e.g. containing a sequence of topics or functions they should use in a conversation) and use them to improvise conversations.

Both small talk and conversation have features in common (Wajasath, 2005):

- *They require being a good listener:* This can be indicated through the use of back-channel signals.
- *They involve asking questions:* Conversation develops through the participants asking questions and following through on the answers they get with further questions.
- *They involve sharing of information:* Participants are expected to share information they have that is relevant to the topic being discussed.



What other activities can you suggest for practising conversation?

A teacher comments on the process of teaching conversation to advanced students:



Developing a conversation course

Developing a conversation course for advanced learners can be challenging. Since they already have a good command of the major language structures and high-frequency vocabulary, what they need at this level is to increase their grammatical complexity and acquire low-frequency vocabulary, replacing low [frequency] and colourless words with more powerful vocabulary. They also need to develop their fluency and probably work with pronunciation, especially at the suprasegmental level. However, if not carefully developed, a conversation course might end up leading students to practise the language they already have, rather than improve their communicative competence. In other words, it can focus solely on fluency and not on acquisition. Also, the topics might not be of students' interest and thus [might] lower

their motivation. In our language programme, we have advanced-level conversation courses, and we've changed our curriculum many times to meet our students' needs. We now have a template on which the teachers base themselves to plan their lessons. They always start with authentic input, either through listening or reading. The themes are always current and based on needs analysis, conducted at the beginning of the course. The spoken or written input, or text, is followed by comprehension activities to gauge students' understanding and to engage them in controlled interaction. They also work with selected vocabulary, subsequently expanded by other lexically related words. For example, if the text is on law and some specific vocabulary is explored, other legal words directly related to the topic are also introduced. In addition, there's always work on pronunciation, either at the segmental or suprasegmental level. These activities are interspersed with short conversation ones in which discourse strategies are practised, such as agreeing, disagreeing, interrupting politely, etc. Finally, students engage in a discussion or task in which they will have the chance to use what they learned that day, inspired by the theme explored. It's a lot of work for the teacher, for the topics are always updated, but it's very rewarding to see students not just talking, but also acquiring more language.

Isabela Villas Boas, teacher and teacher educator, Brasilia, Brazil



How does the teacher in the vignette above prepare students for conversation practice and provide feedback?

Transactions

Another important communication skill is the ability to use English to accomplish different kinds of transactions. A transaction is an interaction that focuses on getting something done, rather than maintaining social interaction. (In communicative language teaching, transactions are generally referred to as *functions*, and include such areas as requests, orders, offers, suggestions, etc.) A transaction may consist of a sequence of different functions. Burns (1998) distinguishes between two different kinds of transactions. One type refers to transactions that occur in situations where the focus is on giving and receiving information, and where the participants focus primarily on what is said or achieved (e.g. asking someone for directions or bargaining at a garage sale). The second type refers to transactions that involve obtaining goods or services, such as checking into a hotel or ordering food in a restaurant. Talk in these situations is often information-focused, is associated with specific activities and often occurs in specific situations. The following are examples of communication of this kind:

- Ordering food in a restaurant.
- Ordering a taxi.
- Checking into a hotel.

- Changing money at a bank.
- Getting a haircut.
- Buying something in a store.
- Borrowing a book from the library.



What are three transactions that you think your learners need to master? What difficulties do these transactions pose for learners?

Transactional activities can be thought of as consisting of a sequence of individual moves or functions which, together, constitute a 'script'. For example, when people order food in a restaurant, they usually look at the menu, ask any necessary questions and then tell the waitperson what they want. The waitperson may ask additional questions and then repeat their order to check. When people check into a hotel, the transaction usually starts with a greeting, the clerk enquires if the person has a reservation, the client confirms and provides his or her name and so on.



What sequence of moves typically occurs in these situations?

- Ordering a pizza over the phone for home delivery.
- Dropping off clothing items at the cleaners for dry cleaning.

In using language in this way, the goal is to carry out a task. Communicating information is the central focus, and making oneself understood, unlike small talk or conversation, where social interaction is often as important as what the participants actually say. In addition, the language used in carrying out transactions is often predictable, contains many fixed expressions and routines, and, as we noted in the earlier example, may contain elliptical or short forms instead of fully-formed sentences. For example, the following exchange was observed between a customer and an assistant in a coffee shop (author data):

- A:** Hi, what'll it be today?
B: Uhm, cappuccino, skinny, please.
A: Large or small?
B: Large.
A: For here or take out?
B: Here.
A: Anything to go with it?
B: No thanks.
A: Not a problem. That's three-fifty, please.

However, when second language learners' communicative needs in English are largely limited to carrying out transactions, they may develop fluency at the expense of accuracy,

since transactions can often be performed using key words and communication strategies, but not necessarily employing grammatically appropriate language. Communication strategies are tactics learners use to compensate for limitations in their linguistic skills and that enable them to clarify their intentions, despite limitations in grammar, vocabulary or discourse skills.

The skills involved in using English for transactions thus include:

- Selecting vocabulary related to particular transactions and functions.
- Using fixed expressions and routines.
- Expressing functions.
- Using scripts for specific transactions and situations.
- Asking and answering questions.
- Clarifying meanings and intentions.
- Confirming and repeating information.
- Using communication strategies.

Teaching transactions

Approaches to teaching transactions include:

- *Awareness raising*: Studying examples of how typical transactions occur (e.g. buying a cinema ticket) and what moves are involved. (Comparison with how similar transactions occur in the learner's culture may be important for some transactions.)
- *Learning expressions and routines*: Modelling the language needed for different transactions and comparing different linguistic options (e.g. comparing different ways of performing requests in formal and informal situations).
- *Modelling*: The teacher demonstrates different ways of completing transactions.
- *Planning*: Students plan how they would carry out specific transactions and what language they would use and might need to anticipate.
- *Practice*: Students practise transactions in both controlled and freer formats (e.g. using model dialogues and role plays).

This was the approach I used in developing a course for international students attending a summer programme in the United States. The course included speaking activities for practising different transactions and listening activities that made use of recordings of native speakers (other teachers in the programme) performing the same transaction the students had practised. The syllabus focused on transactions such as:

- Giving and receiving directions.
- Arranging to meet someone.
- Renting a car.

- Visiting a medical centre.
- Ordering food in a restaurant.
- Checking into a hotel.
- Buying items in a store.
- Renting an apartment.

Each unit of the course focused on two transactions, which were taught through this sequence:

- 1 Vocabulary and language development (vocabulary and expressions).
- 2 Dialogue study and practice (to model the transactions).
- 3 Role play (using cue cards that listed the moves used for each transaction).
- 4 Listening follow-up activities, using the native-speaker performances.
- 5 Follow-up language study and practice, based on some of the language used by the native speakers.

Discussions

Some learners may need English for the purposes of discussions. This is an important skill for students using English in school and academic settings, as well as for those using English for business communications. House (2012) points out that ‘discussions’ have often been a substitute for a serious approach to the teaching of spoken English. An example of this is seen in the ‘so-called conversation’ classes that are often a feature of English programmes at both secondary and tertiary level in many countries. These are typically unfocused sessions organized around the topics of the day drawn from the media and other sources. While the goal is to find engaging content that will generate discussion, House (2012) argues that such activities have little impact on the development of students’ oral skills.

House points out that poorly planned discussion activities allow stronger students to dominate, are unfocused and do not provide for systematic feedback. If discussion skills are to be taken seriously as an important component of a spoken English course, rather than as a filler-activity, their nature and features need to be addressed systematically. The comments of this teacher educator support this view:

Making discussions successful

One of the aims of using less formal discussions in class is often to give the students an opportunity to practise new language in a ‘safe’ environment, where they can

experiment and take risks. However, one problem my trainee teachers encounter is that the learners revert to the language with which they feel comfortable, when it comes to activities to practise fluency.

To encourage students to push themselves more, they need to have time to prepare their ideas and consider how they can incorporate some of the new grammar, vocabulary or expressions learned. They also need motivation to try to use some of this new language more actively during the discussion. One way of doing this is to introduce a competitive element – perhaps awarding points every time the target language is used. The students can listen for examples of the language item and score for each other. More points can be given for more complex language. Giving students slips of paper with phrases which they have to incorporate into the discussion can also work well. The first to use all their phrases as naturally as possible is the winner.

Although this means the discussion is not entirely a fluency activity, it can mean that students feel a greater sense of achievement, as they have stretched themselves to generate the language. Another benefit is that the teachers can see whether the point has been understood and if it is used appropriately.

Tina Appleton, teacher and teacher educator, Bath, UK

A discussion is an interaction focusing on exchanging ideas about a topic and presenting points of view and opinions. Of course, people often ‘discuss’ topics in casual conversation, such as the weather or recent experiences, but discussions of that kind are often merely ‘chit-chat’ – a form of politeness and social interaction. They do not usually lead to ‘real’ discussions where more serious topics of interest and importance are talked about for an extended period of time, in order to arrive at a consensus about something, solve a problem or explore different sides of an issue. It is discussions of this kind that are the focus here, particularly those that take place in an educational or professional setting.

The Common European Framework of Reference identifies several areas speakers need to master to take part in formal discussions. Here are the descriptors for levels B2, C1 and C2:

	Formal discussions and meetings
C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can hold his/her own in formal discussion of complex issues, putting forth an articulate and persuasive argument, at no disadvantage to native speakers
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can easily keep up with the debate, even on abstract, complex, unfamiliar topics. Can argue a formal position convincingly, responding to questions and comments and answering complex lines of argument fluently, spontaneously and appropriately.

	Formal discussions and meetings
B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can keep up with animated discussion, identifying accurately arguments supporting and opposing points of view. • Can express his or her ideas and opinions with precision [and] present and respond to complex lines of argument convincingly.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can participate actively in routine and non-routine formal discussions. • Can follow the discussion on matters related to his/her field, understanding in detail the points given prominence by the speaker. • Can contribute, account for and sustain his/her opinion, evaluate alternative proposals and make and respond to hypotheses.

Skills involved in taking part in discussions include:

- Giving opinions.
- Presenting a point of view.
- Supporting a point of view.
- Taking a turn.
- Sustaining a turn.
- Listening to others' opinions.
- Agreeing and disagreeing with opinions.
- Summarizing a position.

Teaching discussions

Approaches to teaching discussion skills centre on addressing the following issues (see also Green et al., 2002):

- *Choosing topics:* Topics may be chosen by students or assigned by the teacher. Both options offer different possibilities for student involvement.
- *Forming groups:* Small groups of four to five allow for more active participation, and care is needed to establish groups of compatible participants. For some tasks, roles may be assigned (e.g. group leader, note-taker, observer).
- *Preparing for discussions:* Before groups are assigned a task, it may be necessary to review background knowledge, assign information-gathering tasks (e.g. watching a video) and teach some of the specific ways students can present a viewpoint, interrupt, disagree politely, etc.
- *Giving guidelines:* The parameters for the discussion should be clear so that students are clear how long the discussion will last, what the expected outcomes

are, roles of participants, expectations for student input and acceptable styles of interaction.

- *Evaluating discussions:* Both the teacher and the students can be involved in reflection on discussions. The teacher may want to focus on the amount and quality of input from participants and give suggestions for improvement. Some review of language used may be useful at this point. Students may comment on their own performance and difficulties they experienced and give suggestions for future discussions.

However, mastering discussion skills can be a challenge, particularly with more advanced-level learners. They can deal with the topic (they have something to say about it), they have an 'opinion' and they can deal with the target language (they take pains to use appropriate lexical and syntactic rules), but when it comes to the interactional dimension of discussion, that is, the ways by which speakers take note of and act upon their partner's discourse, they show a rather limited range of resources. To remedy this problem, Tabensky (2000: 59) suggests:

The concept of discussion as an academic task needs to be enlarged so as to embrace both participants in their alternative roles of speakers *and* listeners. Students' perception of discussion is mainly considered as a production task centred on what they will be able to say ... Instead of preparing learners only for the expression of personal ideas, it might be wiser to include some strategies for the understanding of the interlocutors' discourse.

In the following vignette, a teacher comments on how he prepares students to listen, as well as to express their own ideas:

The two sides of a discussion

One thing I've found useful in teaching discussion in my particular programme is to begin by having a meta-conversation about the different roles and functions of a discussion group. Working with advanced level learners of English in a university setting, where most students encounter small-group discussions regularly in their content courses, students have experienced a lot of the situations that typically cause a discussion to break down. Getting students to identify good qualities and bad qualities of discussions, as well as different discussion personality types, is a starting point from which they can begin to identify their own styles and areas for improvement. As a follow-up, I also emphasize the listening aspects of discussion, through activities like role reversal and shadowing. For role reversals, learners first identify themselves as either more talkative participants or quiet participants. Whichever group they belong to, first we identify the strengths and weaknesses of both types [and] then break into dyads or smaller groups with a mix of each type. The talkative students are tasked with taking notes or staying quiet until a certain amount of time has passed, while the quieter students lead the discussion, ask questions and give opinions. This puts students into a new role, and ideally helps them appreciate the different expectations

of leading and listening in a discussion. Additionally, shadowing can be a fun activity, where one speaker talks about their opinion or any other topic, and the other person repeats the content of what they hear and adds comments, requiring them to both listen and respond to what they hear. Taken together, these ideas have been beneficial for students in promoting more balanced discussions in my classrooms.

Jonathan Trace, teacher and teacher educator, Honolulu, HI, US



What criteria do you think can be used to evaluate the success or effectiveness of a discussion activity?

Presentations

Presentations are another type of spoken discourse that may be important for some groups of learners. This refers to public talk; that is, talk which transmits information before an audience, such as public announcements and speeches. These uses of spoken language are often thought of as ‘performances’. Spoken texts of this kind, according to Jones (1996: 14):

... often have identifiable generic structures, and the language used is more predictable. ... Because of less contextual support, the speaker must include all necessary information in the text – hence the importance of topic as well as textual knowledge. And while meaning is still important, there will be more emphasis on form and accuracy.

Presentations tend to be in the form of monologues, rather than dialogues, often follow a recognizable format (e.g. a welcome speech) and are closer to written language than conversational language. Similarly, they are often evaluated according to their effectiveness or impact on the listeners or audience. Examples of presentations are:

- Giving a class report about a school trip.
- Giving a welcome speech.
- Making a sales presentation.
- Making a poster presentation about a chosen topic.
- Thanking a speaker who visited the class.

Not all learners will have the need for skills of this kind, of course, although, for some students (e.g. students at college or university, or students learning English for professional purposes), it may be important. Skills involved in making presentations thus include:

- Using an appropriate script (e.g. a welcome script, a thank-you script).
- Using language of an appropriate register (e.g. a more formal public style of speaking).

- Presenting information or the message coherently.
- Using accurate grammar and pronunciation.
- Presenting in a manner appropriate to the audience.
- Maintaining audience interest.

Teachers sometimes describe interesting differences between how learners manage presentations and other kinds of spoken discourse, as the following anecdotes illustrate (author data):

I sometimes find with my students at a university in Hong Kong that they are good at using English for transactions and presentations, but not with small talk and conversation. For example, the other day, one of my students did an excellent class presentation in a course for computer-science majors and described very effectively a new piece of computer software. However, a few days later, when I met the same student going home on the subway and tried to engage her in social chat, she was at a complete loss for words.

Another teacher describes a second language user with just the opposite difficulties. He is more comfortable with talk as interaction than as performance:

One of my colleagues in my university in China is quite comfortable using talk socially. If we have lunch together with other native speakers, he is quite comfortable joking and chatting in English. However, recently, we did a presentation together at a conference, and his performance was very different. His pronunciation became much more 'Chinese', and he made quite a few grammatical and other errors that I hadn't heard him make before.

Teaching presentations

Teaching students how to make presentations often reflects the principles of text-based teaching (see Chapter 3), in which a five-part sequence of activities is used: 1 – building the context (students examine the context in which a text occurs and consider its purposes and the expectations of the participants); 2 – modelling and deconstructing the text (the text is examined in terms of its language and discourse features); 3 – joint construction (the teacher guides the students through the development of a new presentation text, during which they focus on an effective opening, transitions between points and other features); 4 – independent construction of a presentation text (students work on a new presentation, either individually or in small groups [checklist routines may be used at this stage]); 5 – presentation (students now make their presentations and receive feedback from peers and the teacher).

13.4 Addressing fluency and accuracy

Two dimensions of spoken English are often referred to when describing a speaker's oral language ability: fluency and accuracy.

Fluency

Fluency involves maintaining the flow of speech without disruptive pauses, restarts and breakdowns. It usually develops when students have a good grasp of grammar, vocabulary and fixed expressions, and can access them automatically and can focus on the meanings they wish to express without being distracted by a search for grammar or vocabulary or the correct expression. Wood (2009: 324) comments:

Fluency is largely a function of temporal variables in speech, which are speech rate, repairs, amount and frequency of hesitation, location of pauses, and length of runs of fluent speech between pauses. Research also shows that the ability to speak fluently involves facility in producing a repertoire of formulaic speech units, multiword strings, or frames which are retrieved from long-term memory as if they were single words. These formulaic sequences include, among others, two-word collocations, such as *good time* or *first step*; phrasal verbs, such as *run into* or *come across*; idioms; routine expressions with social pragmatic functions, such as *have a good day* or *how are you*; whole clauses; discourse markers, such as *on the other hand* or *in summary*; and frames with fillable lexical slots, such as *a (year/day/week ...) ago* or *a (one/two/three ...)-step process*.

Bygate (2005: 79) suggests that repeating an activity can help develop fluency. For example, a student might share a personal recount in a group and then retell the same recount with other groups or repeat it on a different occasion. He describes how, in a picture description task, when students repeated the activity in a subsequent lesson, there were significant improvements in accuracy and fluency:

Comparing the two versions, there are some striking differences. On the second occasion, she used more accurate vocabulary, more accurate grammar, more native-like collocations, and more self-correction ... We concluded that most of these differences reflected changes in her processing capacity of the second occasion. That is, it seemed that repetition may have the effect of enabling the learner to shift their attention from a focus on content to a focus on various aspects of form.

Nation (1989) reports improvements in fluency, control of content and, to a lesser extent, accuracy when learners repeat an oral task under time constraints, and argues that this is a way of bringing about long-term improvement in both fluency and, to some degree, accuracy. A teacher educator discusses the value of task repetition as a way of increasing fluency:

The challenge level of tasks

I have found that my students enhance their fluency through the repeating of tasks, even within a lesson. One reason that students may struggle with the skill of speaking is because it's unpredictable. By repeating a task, the expectation becomes more predictable, allowing the learner to practise and improve. However, I found that students soon tire of repeating the same information unless there is some change. Teachers can reduce the time allowed for a repeated task. They can require a student to speak to a new partner or group. They can change the task so it's similar, but not exactly the same. For example, if we practise ordering food from a menu, I later simply provide a new menu. But what I have found the most effective is adding complexity and challenge to a task. For example, in a problem-solving task, after a group has found a solution, I will add a new factor to consider. This also allows me, as a teacher, to individualize the learning in the groups and control the ending time of a task.

David Bohlke, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Singapore

Accuracy

Accuracy can refer to a number of different aspects of a person's spoken English. It conventionally refers to features of grammar, pronunciation and word choice, but, as we have seen from the discussion above, there are many other aspects of spoken language that are involved in oral communication, including choosing appropriate topics, using language that matches the formality or informality of the occasion and using conventions associated with different genres – such as conventional ways of opening and closing small talk and conversations.

The notion of accuracy, however, is somewhat more problematic due to the status of English as an international language. Conventional approaches to teaching speaking compare the learner's oral ability with that of a native speaker, but when English is being used as an international language, and both interlocutors are second language speakers of English, the question arises as to whose norms are considered appropriate. Describing research on this issue by Firth and Wagner (1977), House (2012) observes the apparent instability and dynamic nature of much EFL talk. The participants appear to make every effort to make themselves understood and to avoid difficulties. There is little evidence of such strategies as conversational repair, rephrasing, clarification requests and other examples of negotiation of meaning. The goal seems to be to achieve comprehension, and if difficulties arise participants seem to adopt a strategy of 'let it pass for now'. They hence often achieve a successful outcome despite the passage of what might appear to be relatively unusual language use.

Researchers, such as House, advocate that different norms for communicative interaction will be an inevitable consequence of the use of English as an international language, and that native-speaker teachers will need to make decisions as to how ‘native speaker-like’ their learners wish to sound when they speak English. Some may aim for grammatical accuracy, but be less concerned about differences in how they manage interactions in English, as long as they achieve intelligibility. These issues are discussed more fully in relation to discourse analysis and pragmatics in Chapter 16.



How much of an emphasis do you place on accuracy in your students’ spoken English classes?

In language classrooms and in teaching materials, accurate speech is generally the focus, and teachers typically provide feedback that is designed to help learners improve their accuracy, particularly in relation to grammatical accuracy. Strategies that teachers use include:

- Asking the student to repeat what he or she said to see if the student notices the error.
- Repeating the student’s discourse, but correcting the error.
- Asking other students to correct the error.
- Suggesting that the sentence contains an error.
- Indicating the error the student made.
- Pointing to the board where an example of the needed language is provided.

A teacher discusses achieving the right balance between fluency and accuracy:



Giving feedback on performance

In a conversation lesson, the teacher faces a major dilemma: if, how and when to correct the students. Too much corrective feedback can inhibit the students and also prevent them from acquiring automaticity in the language. Conversely, the absence of corrective feedback will result in fluent, but inaccurate speakers. An effective strategy that meets these two scenarios halfway is to walk around and listen to the students as they interact, taking notes of commonly occurring mistakes, or mistakes in areas that have been recently addressed in the course. After the activity, the teacher can then point out the mistakes and elicit the correction from the students themselves. This can even become a fun activity or game, such as an auction game, with the groups ‘buying’ the sentences whose errors they know how to correct. For uptake to occur, students can be asked to repeat the activity, this time making sure they use correctly whatever was pointed out by the teacher. This way, students are not interrupted, but corrective feedback is provided. They truly appreciate the feeling of having gained something concrete from the lesson.

Isabela Villas Boas, teacher and teacher educator, Brasília, Brazil

Feedback on learner errors, however, may also be prompted by its role in facilitating second language development. Swain (2000) proposed that when learners have to make efforts to ensure that their messages are communicated (stretched output – see Chapter 9), this puts them in a better position to notice the gap between the language they produce and that of proficient speakers, thus fostering second language development. This process can help students develop the use of more complex language.

However, if these processes, in themselves, were sufficient to enable learners to develop effective speaking skills, there would be little further to say regarding the teaching of spoken English, other than to emphasize the importance of giving students plenty of opportunities to speak. But as Goh and Burns (2012: 2) observe:

Although speaking activities occur frequently in [ESL] classrooms, learners seldom have the opportunity to learn the skills and strategies and the language to improve their speaking.

In other words, practice does *not* make perfect. While the learners may become more skilled in accomplishing the tasks the teacher assigns them, a more strategic approach is required if learners are to develop the skills needed to use English beyond the classroom and to participate effectively in spoken interactions, the point made earlier by House in relation to teaching discussion. While we have addressed ways to balance, in speaking courses, the two complementary goals of fluency and accuracy, it is worth keeping in mind that, outside of the classroom, accuracy may be most important when it interferes with appropriate delivery of the message and for the pragmatic meanings conveyed (see Chapter 16). A teacher educator captures this point:

The importance of intonation

Living in the UK, it is often clear that intelligibility is not the only factor which causes communication problems. I have witnessed foreign language speakers asking for something in a shop, only to be greeted with a gruff response because of their intonation. They may pronounce all the sounds correctly and stress the words accurately, but because they use a flat intonation, they appear abrupt or even rude. Just saying 'please' isn't enough.

Doing activities where students have to exaggerate the intonation sometimes helps them come closer to a native speaker's pattern. One of my Chinese students has been working independently to improve his pronunciation. He says that he found it embarrassing, at first, to try to emulate English sounds and intonation. However, he now feels more confident of doing so, especially when practising on his own. I hope that he will gradually gain the confidence to be bolder when speaking to others. He will then see the benefit when people respond to him in a more positive way.

Tina Appleton, teacher and teacher educator, Bath, UK

13.5 Teaching speaking

Developing a course in speaking skills involves providing structure in teaching a skill that, by its nature, may appear open-ended. This includes determining the course goals, selecting from the genres described above and choosing activities. A teacher educator describes the teacher's role in a conversation class:

The conversation class

At some stage, most teachers have to teach a 'conversation class'. A typical class profile is a group of learners who want to 'improve their speaking'. This is an incredibly vague concept and usually equals wanting to chat to their teacher or to each other, without much effort involved. They don't have to do any prep before or homework afterwards, so it's a low stress, easy option.

For the teacher, however, it can present problems. What are we going to talk about? Shouldn't I also be teaching some language and some strategies? Will my boss think I'm skiving if I just chat for an hour? In my experience, the learners taking these classes are often in the intermediate / upper-intermediate range and have hit the plateau, where learning has suddenly levelled off, and the rapid progress they were making earlier has slowed, and they feel that no matter what they do, their language doesn't seem to be improving. This is all very demotivating.

Therefore, a large part of the teacher's role is to re-enthuse them. Try to strike the right balance between low-stress chatting and some useful teacher input. Get the learners to negotiate the topics, first in groups of three [and] then as a whole class. Think of fairly specific, but open, questions that draw on as much of the learners' personal experiences as possible, e.g. topic: relationships; discussion tasks: 'Who do you know who has a good relationship? Tell your partners about them; Why is it good? What makes a good relationship?' / topic: work; discussion tasks: 'What do you like/hate about your job? What's your ideal job? Why?'

As the learners talk, monitor carefully, and respond to what they need. If their delivery is inappropriate, i.e. too aggressive, too dismissive of others opinions, etc., focus on that. Note down errors and do a class error correction at the end. Also, try to build a class culture where learners are always looking for new ways to tell their stories and express their opinions. After each discussion, ask if there were any ideas they had, but weren't sure how to put them into words in English. Get them to explain the ideas, as well as they can, and then provide the language you would use to express those ideas.

The most important thing is to get the balance right between their output and your input. Make sure there's plenty of both. Also, don't worry too much about having to 'teach them' with a capital 'T'. Often leaving them to do the work themselves is the best teaching you can give.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

Determining the goals of the course

The discussion above has tried to give a clearer impression of what proficiency in spoken English can include. The first issue involved in planning a course in speaking skills or in choosing materials for a course is to determine exactly what *kind* of speaking skills the course should focus on. Does the course have very vague and indeterminate aims (e.g. 'to improve the students' spoken English'), or is a more focused approach needed? Should the course focus on small talk and conversation, or are other skills more important? Do the learners need to develop fluency in particular transactional uses of language for work-related purposes, in areas such as customer service, sales and marketing? Are they working in travel and tourism and need presentation skills for tour guiding? What other kinds of speaking skills might they need to master, such as interviews, debates or negotiations and in what context, such as in a pre-university course or a business English course? Needs analysis is often needed to help determine the range of skills the course might address (see Chapter 17). Needs analysis procedures could include:

- Interviews with learners about their current and future needs for spoken English.
- Administration of a questionnaire to find out in what situations the students use English, and some of the difficulties they experience.
- Information from tests and other forms of assessment (e.g. interviews, observations or role plays).
- Conversations about learners' needs (e.g. with other teachers, employers or advanced learners).

Once information has been obtained on the kinds of speaking skills the learners need, the learning outcomes of the course can be developed. Depending on the information obtained, these might be fairly general, as in Example A (adapted from Goh and Burns, 2012: 151–2), or more specific, as in Example B:

Example A: The speaking course should aim to develop speaking skills for use in contexts relevant to the learners' needs and enable learners to:

- Use a wide range of core speaking skills.
- Develop fluency in expression of meaning.
- Learn to initiate and respond to talk on a broad range of topics.
- Use appropriate vocabulary and grammar in spoken communication.
- Understand and use social and linguistic conventions of speech for various contexts.
- Employ appropriate strategies to manage the process of spoken interaction.
- Use spoken discourse, according to the conventions of different speech activities and genres.

- Increase their awareness of the features of effective and appropriate second language speaking skills.
- Manage and self-regulate their own speaking development.

Example B: The speaking course should address level 2 on the Common European Framework and develop the learners' ability to:

- Participate effectively in short social exchanges using small talk.
- Participate effectively in short conversations of general interest.
- Participate in functional exchanges using appropriate strategies and expressions.
- Carry out basic transactional exchanges in English related to daily life.
- Ask and answer questions on a range of common topics.
- Use communication strategies to deal with communication difficulties.
- Make short class presentations.
- Participate in small group discussions.

Or course goals may be even more specific, focusing on just one spoken genre, such as telephone conversations:

The learner will learn the following telephone skills in English:

- To participate effectively in telephone conversation.
- To initiate a call, identify self and state business clearly and appropriately.
- To use appropriate moves for telephone exchanges, e.g. greeting, body for the call, pre-closing and closing.
- To ask for information / offer a service.
- To make statements, ask and answer questions and give feedback.
- To sustain conversation, e.g. take turns, confirm, clarify, repair and identify topic shifts.
- To use accurate vocabulary and grammatical structures.
- To use intelligible pronunciation so that comprehension is not impeded.

Choosing classroom activities

There are a great variety of activities that can be used in a spoken English class, many of which have been discussed above; however, in selecting activities and classroom materials, it is important to have a clear purpose of what the activity is good for. For example:

Activity	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogue work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach fixed expressions and routines. Provide example of transactions. Provide examples of moves (e.g. openings and closings).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study transcriptions of spoken exchanges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop awareness of nature of authentic interactions. Develop awareness of spoken grammar. Develop awareness of differences between casual and formal interactions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information-gap activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop communication strategies. Practise conversational repairs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys and questionnaires. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop questioning strategies. Use follow-up questions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ranking activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express opinions. Justify choices.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role plays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop routines for handling transactions. Practise turn-taking. Learn fixed expressions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jigsaw activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give accurate descriptions. Practise clarifying meaning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picture description. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practise recounts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeating an activity several times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop fluency. Use more complex language.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record their own performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify errors. Recognize need for more complex language.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasks, such as explain how to prepare a dish. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present information clearly. Practise comprehension checks.



Can you suggest other skills that the activities above practise? Can you suggest one or more other activities that can be used in teaching speaking and what their purpose is?

In addition, a number of other issues have to be considered when selecting and designing speaking activities for teaching:

- What will the focus of the activity be, e.g. will it practise (an aspect of) small talk, conversation or discussion skills?
- What are the language and other demands of the activity?
- How will the activity be modelled?
- What stages will the activity be divided into?
- What language or support will be needed?
- What resources will be needed, e.g. pictures or cards?
- What learning arrangement will be needed?
- What level of performance is expected?
- How and when will feedback be given?

An activity can also be assessed according to these criteria:

- How much practice and production it generates.
- How much authentic language and interaction it provides.
- How transparent its purposes and procedures are.
- How relevant it is to the learners.
- How challenging it is.
- How motivating it is.

Goh and Burns recommend a seven-stage cycle of activities in a speaking lesson or series of lessons (adapted from Goh and Burns, 2012: 152–65):

- 1 *Focus learners' attention on speaking:* Students think about a speaking activity, what it involves and what they can anticipate.
- 2 *Provide input and/or guide planning:* This may involve pre-teaching vocabulary, expressions or discourse features and planning for an activity they will carry out in class (e.g. a presentation or a transaction).

- 3 *Conduct speaking task*: Students practise a communicative speaking task with a focus on fluency.
- 4 *Focus on language/skills/strategies*: Students examine their performance or look at other performances of the task, as well as transcripts of how the task can be carried out, and review different features of the task.
- 5 *Repeat speaking task*: The activity is performed a second time.
- 6 *Direct learners' reflection on learning*: Students review and reflect on what they have learned and difficulties they encountered.
- 7 *Facilitate feedback on learning*: Teacher provides feedback on their performance.

13.6 Assessing speaking skills

Assessment plays an increasingly important role in the teaching of speaking skills. Curriculum planners want to see evidence that school programmes are effective, course designers want to know if their courses and materials are successful, and students in private institutions paying to improve their English want to know that their money has been well spent. In addition, employers want to know what level of oral proficiency in English a prospective employee has attained. A number of standardized tests, such as TOEFL and IELTS, as well as the Cambridge English Language Assessment exams (see Chapter 1), include a test of speaking proficiency, sometimes linked to the levels on the Common European Framework of Reference, such as the Cambridge Certificates in English Language Skills (CELS). The speaking-assessment component of many standardized tests is often based on an interview – a specific type of speech genre – however, performance in an interview does not enable generalizations to be made about the test-taker's ability in small talk, conversation, transactions, etc. and the other kinds of genres discussed in this chapter. In order to assess learners' mastery of these aspects of speaking, the following issues need to be considered:

- 1 What aspects of speaking will be assessed?
- 2 At what stage in a course will it be assessed?
- 3 What language and discourse features will be assessed?
- 4 What tasks will be used to demonstrate the learners' speaking ability?
- 5 How will the learners' performance on the tasks be scored?

Answering the first question means selecting the types of speaking to be assessed (e.g. small talk, conversation, transactions) and identifying the skills, as well as the language, that each kind of speaking involves.

In the case of 'making small talk', the following skills are involved:

Type of speaking to be assessed	Skills involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making small talk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using a suitable opener. Introducing a suitable topic. Exchanging information about the topic. Asking suitable questions. Using language appropriate to the situation. Using a suitable strategy for ending the exchange.

Oral tasks then need to be chosen that can be used to assess the learners' performance on specific speaking activities. In the case of small talk, these could be similar talks to the ones that have been used to practise small talk, such as skeleton dialogues, role plays, example dialogues showing inappropriate small talk or situations to elicit written or spoken small-talk dialogues. In order to assess other speaking skills, different tasks will be needed. For example:

- *Conversation skills:* Students can be given 'frames' or guides to work from and asked to act out a conversation in pairs or groups. For example: 'Greet your partner and make small talk; introduce a topic related to a weekend activity; continue the conversation for a short time, and then introduce a topic about something that you will be doing tonight; then close the conversation.'
- *Discussion skills:* Students might discuss and resolve a problem.
- *Transaction skills:* Role plays need to be carefully constructed to ensure that they elicit natural language, particularly language that has been taught during the speaking course.
- *Interviews:* Although these are a common procedure used in oral assessment, in view of the points as noted above, unless interview skills are a significant component of a speaking course, they should only be used to give a general impression of a student's speaking skills – particularly the ability to respond to and answer questions.
- *Engaging the audience:* More advanced students may be assessed based on a presentation to the class. A successful performance involves more than language skills, as this teacher educator explains:

Delivering effective presentations

My EAP students have to do an assessed presentation as part of their course. With preparation on the structure of presentations, useful expressions and work on presentation techniques, most of them usually perform fairly well. The main problem they have, though, is with engaging the audience.

The biggest issue is that many of the students learn their scripts by heart, and their speeches become boring and monotonous. The most interesting and lively talks are the ones where the speakers are brave enough to ad-lib and ask the audience questions, or engage them in other ways. I try to train students to speak using bullet-point prompts, and practising giving mini-presentations to smaller groups of people is a helpful way to give them more confidence. I have also found that they respond very well to peer feedback. Asking students to write just a couple of sentences – one giving some ideas for further practice and one positive comment – can be as effective as teacher feedback.

I have now begun to focus on training learners to be good members of the audience and attentive listeners. Giving them a task to do while listening helps with this, for example, preparing an appropriate question for the end of the talk. I find that if the audience are engaged, the speaker often becomes more relaxed and gives a better presentation as a result.

Tina Appleton, teacher and teacher educator, Bath, UK



Students often don't perform as well on an assessment task as they do when carrying out a similar task as a classroom activity. How can this issue be addressed when assessing students' oral proficiency?

Regardless of the type of assessment chosen, a rating scale will then need to be developed to allow the learners' performance to be assessed. In the case of small talk, the different component skills involved, such as openers and topic choice, can then be scored. In designing placement tests for courses in spoken English for the workplace, Wood (2009: 327) used a set of simulations reflecting activities learners might encounter in job situations. The learners were required to carry out several oral tasks, including describing their interests in their field of study and talking about the contributions they could make in a work-placement experience. Their performance was scored using the following rubric:

	LowHigh				
Clarity of expression					
Pronunciation	1	2	3	4	5
Comprehensibility	1	2	3	4	5
Speed	1	2	3	4	5
Hesitations	1	2	3	4	5
Intonation, rhythm	1	2	3	4	5
Facial expression	1	2	3	4	5
Eye contact	1	2	3	4	5

	LowHigh				
Clarity of meaning					
Vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
Phrases	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar	1	2	3	4	5
Overall evaluation	1	2	3	4	5

Self-assessment

Self-assessment can also be used for assessing progress in speaking skills, particularly for older learners. Typically learners rate their ability to perform speaking tasks which have been selected from their course. For example:

	Very well	OK	A little
I can describe features of my home town.			
I can give suggestions about places to visit.			
I can give advice for visitors.			

Self-assessments can help students monitor their progress and help them identify targets for improvement.

13.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined a number of areas related to the teaching of speaking, including approaches to speaking; the genres of spoken interaction; balancing fluency and accuracy; teaching speaking, including planning a speaking course and choosing activities; and assessing speaking at both the institution and classroom level. An approach to the teaching of speaking skills needs to reflect a good understanding of the nature of spoken interaction and the kinds of skills involved in participating effectively in different kinds of speech events. A spoken-English course should prepare students to participate in the kinds of genres he or she encounters outside the classroom and should match their specific needs.

Different types of spoken interactions, such as small talk, conversation and transactions, make quite different demands on speakers, and the mere participation in speaking activities will not guarantee that students will learn the skills specific to particular speech genres. A more strategic and focused approach to the teaching of speaking is needed which targets the range of skills needed to perform effectively within a particular

speech genre or genres, one in which clear and relevant goals have been developed, in which activities and materials are chosen that develop students' abilities to carry out specific types of spoken interaction and in which assessment measures the type of skills students have practised.

Discussion questions

- 1** Choose a student textbook that teaches conversation skills. Review the contents of the book. What aspects of small talk and conversation as described in this chapter does it include?
- 2** Try to observe two people engaged in casual conversation. What kind of back-channelling expressions do you observe?
- 3** Design a question sheet on different topics that students could use to practise interacting with people in English outside of the classroom. After they have tried it, get their feedback on how well it went.
- 4** Choose two transactions and consider the moves and language that it requires. What other kind of knowledge (e.g. background knowledge) does it assume?
- 5** Speaking courses often focus on functions, such as inviting, requesting or apologizing. Examine the table of contents of a coursebook. What functions does it include a) at the elementary level, and b) at the upper intermediate level?
- 6** Try your hand at writing some dialogues to practise small talk, conversation or transactions and try to include some of the features of these genres as described in this chapter. Then compare your efforts with those of others.
- 7** Choose an example of a transaction your students need to master and design a role play activity to practise this transaction. As you plan the role play, note the different decisions you had to make as you planned it.
- 8** How would a discussion activity in a general English class differ from a more academic discussion on, say, a university pre-session course? What kinds of skills would each type of discussion require?
- 9** Prepare a rating scale that could be used to evaluate performance on any of the speech genres described in this chapter.
- 10** Prepare a check-list that could be used to evaluate a coursebook that teaches speaking skills.

Appendix:

Teaching small talk

Look at the lesson plan for teaching small talk that I've used with my classes. Write several sample dialogues for it (Step 13 of the lesson plan). Then evaluate your dialogues, according to the other steps in the lesson plan. Do they contain enough questions and an effective ending? Revise them as needed, and then use them in class as your models for Step 3 of the lesson plan.

- 1 Teacher introduces notion of small talk and gives examples.
- 2 Students discuss questions about small talk, for example:
 - How can you start a conversation with someone?
 - What can you say in this situation?
 - Who uses small talk and when?
 - In what situations do we use it?
 - What are some suitable topics for small talk?
- 3 Teacher presents model conversation showing examples of small talk. Students practise and discuss.
- 4 Students examine dialogues with examples of inappropriate small talk in English and discuss.
- 5 Students work in groups and prepare list of topics for small talk.
- 6 Teacher creates sample dialogues, using some of the students' topics.
- 7 Students work in pairs to create dialogues from their topics.
- 8 Teacher introduces importance of asking questions in small talk. Students look at their dialogues to see what kinds of questions they contain.
- 9 Teacher models different ways of asking questions.
- 10 Students write new dialogues, with a focus on asking questions.
- 11 Teacher provides skeleton dialogues (dialogues with every second line removed), and students guess the missing lines.
- 12 Teacher models ways of ending a small-talk exchange.
- 13 Teacher gives students situations, and students create dialogues for each situation, for example:
 - In line at the supermarket checkout: the line is moving slowly.
 - In line for an outdoor concert: it is starting to rain.
- 14 Students present their dialogues. Others evaluate them using a checklist:
 - Did the conversations open appropriately?
 - Was the conversation at the right level of formality/informality?
 - Were the topics appropriate?
 - Did the conversation sound natural?
 - Was the small talk successful?

Further reading

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14

Reading

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What are some approaches to teaching reading?
- What is the nature of second language reading?
 - Types of knowledge.
 - Reading processes.
- What reading skills and strategies are important?
 - Reading skills.
 - Reading strategies.
- How should reading be taught?
 - Determining goals.
 - Choosing materials.
 - Conducting a reading lesson.
 - Beyond the structured lesson.
- How can reading be assessed?

14.1 Introduction

Many second language learners need good reading skills in English, and reading has always been an important focus of English language teaching programmes. Despite advances that have been made in our understanding of the nature of second language reading, many students still read in English with difficulty – and may also experience difficulty in reading in their mother tongue – due to an inadequate reading curriculum and/or inadequate instruction in state schools. In a recent study of reading in 57 countries which assessed students on a five-point scale (5 = fluent reading ability), over 50% of students in Indonesia performed at level 1 (the lowest level) or lower, indicating that they had serious difficulties in using reading as a means of extending knowledge (Rohim, 2009). Results were similar for students from many other countries. Students with poor reading skills in their first language are likely to have similar difficulties when it comes to reading in a second language.

Current approaches to the teaching of second language reading are very different from earlier approaches. In the past, reading was usually taught by providing texts that students read (usually contrived texts written to word lists), followed by comprehension questions. There was little difference in approach between teaching reading and testing reading. And advanced reading served as a form of cultural enrichment, rather than offering any real-world goals. Today, the role English plays in the information and communication age has prompted a rethinking of approaches to the teaching of reading. Many learners need to develop effective analytical processing skills, problem-solving ability and critical thinking skills through reading, and need to develop technical reading skills, rather than those used for literary reading. They need to access, analyze, authenticate and apply information acquired from different sources and turn it into useful personal knowledge. And much of their reading may not be based on printed sources, but on online reading. In addition, the growing use of English as a medium to teach content subjects in schools, as well as the role of English as an international language, highlight the need for effective approaches to second language reading instruction.



How well do you read in another language? What difficulties do you encounter when you read something in another language?

Why we read

Literacy skills play a vital role in people's everyday lives at home, at work, at school and in their communities. In a single day, an adult may use reading for many different purposes. For example:

Reasons for reading	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For everyday activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading a bus timetable. Reading instructions on a food package. Reading a sign in an elevator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For learning about things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going online to get information about someone. Getting a recipe off the internet. Reading about a travel destination.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For life purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading hobby magazines. Studying a driving manual before taking a driving test. Reading an advice column in a magazine. Reading the newspaper to find out about tickets to a concert. Reading membership requirements of a gym.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For leisure and pleasure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading a romance novel. Reading a religious text.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For study purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading an article. Reading a textbook. Searching the internet.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For work purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading a report. Reading emails. Reading instructions.



Monitor your own reading for one day. What were your reasons for reading? What kinds of things did you read?

Second language learners may need reading skills in English for similar purposes, i.e. to enable them to participate in activities related to work, the community, daily life and, particularly, education. Today's learners are also 'multi-literate' (Jones and Hafner, 2012). Kajder (2007) explores this term:

Twenty-first century literacy has expanded beyond learning to read a print text format and moved to encompass multiple literacies in multiple modes. These multimodal practices are 'blurring the distinction between writer and reader, producer and consumer, and require a complex range of skills, knowledge and understanding' (Carrington and Marsh, 2005) ... When we 'multimediate', we use media, produce media and engage in literate practices as a way of engaging in the world (Lankshear and Knobel, 2003). New digital tools require, and make possible, new ways of constructing and communicating meaning, leading multiple forms of media (not just print text) to have authority for representation.

Academic reading skills

The ability to read effectively for academic purposes is crucial for many readers, particularly for the millions of international students enrolled worldwide in colleges and universities where English is the medium of instruction. Reading is a vital component of university study, and as Moore, Morton and Price observe (2007: 3):

Nowadays, many recognize that it is the intelligent engagement with one's sources that more than anything else defines the quality of being academically literate... In the domain of language testing, the manifest importance of reading in university study is reflected in the prominence given to this skill area in the various language tests used by universities for selection of students. Thus, in all the varieties of format in the more widely-used language tests over the last 30 years (ELTS, IELTS, TOEFL), one single common element has been the use of a dedicated reading component.

Academic reading focuses on the role of texts as vehicles of information and depends upon both good linguistic knowledge and reading skills. These include:

- Knowledge of both academic and technical vocabulary specific to the reader's fields of study.
- Familiarity with the organizational structure of academic texts.
- Ability to use abstracts, headings, subheadings and layout to guide comprehension.
- Ability to select relevant information and retain for later use.
- Ability to analyze and synthesize information.
- Ability to apply reading skills learned in the classroom to out-of-class reading.

The ability to read critically is also particularly important for students who need reading skills for academic purposes. Critical reading involves reacting to what one reads, relating the content of reading materials and evaluating this content against personal standards and beliefs. This means going beyond what is given in the text and recognizing underlying ideologies, as well as critically evaluating the relevance and value of what is read. Reading in the digital age also requires new kinds of academic reading skills. Jones and Hafner (2012: 1) suggest these include:

- The ability to quickly search through and evaluate great amounts of information.
- The ability to create coherent reading pathways through complex collections of linked texts.

- The ability to quickly make connections between widely disparate ideas and domains of experience.
- The ability to read multimodal documents that combine words, graphics, video and audio.

The purpose for reading also affects the way a person reads. When reading a newspaper, the reader usually reads the front page first, skimming for headlines and then deciding what to read further. Some sections of the paper might be read quite closely, while others may be skimmed for specific information. In reading for academic or professional purposes, the reader may need to synthesize information from different sources, remembering points of similarity and difference and finding a way to organize the information for later use. At other times, readers may read to be entertained (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

A teacher describes how he uses the internet as a teaching resource:

Reading and the internet

My students do most of their reading on the internet, and I think it is important to help develop their confidence in reading English online. To give lower-level students practice in skimming and scanning for required sites on the internet, we do some search activities together in class. Using their smartphones or laptops, I ask them to search for a topic they may be interested in, e.g. a famous pop singer, such as Lady Gaga, and then, using the same search engine, e.g. Google, we type in the pop singer's name and, concentrating on the first two pages of search results, and, without accessing any of the sites listed, we try to decide which sites would be best for a) current news about her, b) images of her, c) her biography, d) her videos, etc., and, having made some guesses, the chosen sites are opened, and the students confirm if their guesses were correct.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

14.2 Approaches to teaching reading

The teaching of reading has been addressed in different ways in language teaching. We saw in Chapter 3 that contemporary approaches to teaching English as a second language have their origins in the direct method – a method that gave priority to spoken, rather than written, language. After the 1920s, difficulties in implementing the direct method to teach the spoken language led to a scaling back of the goals of language teaching to something that was more attainable: reading comprehension – a skill that could be more readily taught in large classes by teachers who did not necessarily speak English fluently. This resulted in a reading approach that was widely adopted in language teaching in Africa, India and other areas of British ESL/ELT influence, prior to the Second World War, and which made use of graded reading materials, written with a limited, level-appropriate range of vocabulary. Similarly in the United States, during this time, language teaching was also based on this reading method. Stern (1983) notes that the language courses

that were developed throughout this period made use of a systematic approach to the teaching of reading based on specially prepared graded reading materials. It was not as if the spoken language was totally ignored, but the priority was the development of reading skills. Both intensive reading for detailed comprehension as well as extensive reading skills for general comprehension were practiced, the latter based on the use of specially prepared graded readers that were written to controlled vocabularies.

Following the Second World War, as we saw in Chapter 3, the need for a focus on spoken language assumed priority in language teaching, and the audiolingual method was developed for this purpose. In the audiolingual method, reading was viewed as the ability to read sentence patterns that had first been established orally. Rivers (1968), who documented the development of audiolingualism, described typical classroom practices as consisting mainly of aural-oral practice. At the initial stages, students would be given a script of the spoken dialogues which they would practice reading without the help of translation. These printed texts would always be based on material that had first been practiced aurally.

The gradual decline of the audiolingual method, from the 1960s onward, was followed by a reassessment of the goals of language teaching. At the same time, the emergence of the discipline of applied linguistics, as well as developments in linguistics, psychology, second language acquisition, education and other disciplines, offered different accounts of the nature of reading in a second language. Second language reading research began to conceptualize reading from a number of new perspectives: as a component of a person's literacy practices, as knowledge of the nature of texts and their functions and organization, and as the use of cognitively driven processes that readers bring to texts. Second language reading was seen to involve far more than the mastery of reading skills. Cognitive views of reading are currently prominent in L2 reading theory, as pointed out by Grabe, reflecting a process that moves from controlled to automatic processing (see Chapter 2) (2009: 17):

Identifying such a cognitive learning theory as grounding for a description of reading and reading development highlights the incremental nature of skill-learning, the need for extended practice, the importance of time on task, the integration of sub-skills and sub-routines as procedurization, the introduction of new information as just the beginning phase of learning and the central role of automaticity for fluent and skilled reading ability.

It is these newer perspectives on reading that are reflected in current approaches to the teaching of second language reading.

14.3 The nature of second language reading

Types of knowledge

It is easy to say what reading is – the process of making meaning from a text – but it is not so easy to describe what comprehension of a text entails and how comprehension

is achieved. Several different types of knowledge – grammatical knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and prior knowledge – are involved in understanding a text.

Grammatical knowledge

A reader must have a good knowledge of syntax, since this forms the basis of sentence organization within texts. Successful readers make use of syntactic knowledge to determine the overall meaning of sentences. The syntactic complexity of a sentence will influence how easy it is to read, and the kinds of syntax the reader encounters will depend on the type of texts they read. Aebbersold and Field (1997: 12) give the following examples of sentences from different kinds of texts:

- 1 He said the concentrated steams, releasing not only moisture, but latent heat in the higher latitudes, may turn out to be the main source of the hurricanes.
- 2 Thus, what students are taught about any subject necessarily values certain aspects of that subject over others.
- 3 I want my own copy – next time we go to Borders.
- 4 On the broad, level land floor for the gang plows bit deep and left the black earth shining like metal where the shares had cut.

The sentences from the newspaper [1], the academic textbook [2] and the short story [4] are longer than those from the personal note [3]. The newspaper and academic sentences are also more complex grammatically.

Sentences are longer in written texts than in spoken language, and often contain embedded and subordinated clauses, since such texts can be processed visually, unlike spoken texts which must be produced and processed in real time and where, consequently, sentences are shorter and contain mainly coordinated clauses. Written texts are planned and reflect the process of planning, such as editing, attention to word choice and linguistic accuracy.



Re-read the first sentence in the paragraph above. How do you think this information would be expressed in a spoken text?

Linguistic differences between the students' first language and English may also affect reading. Grabe and Stoller (2002), for example, have pointed out that ESL/ELT students from places where their first language is a Romance language (such as Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese) tend to focus greater amounts of attention on 'the ends of the words, because there is more grammatical information there than in English', while readers whose first language is Chinese, Japanese and Korean will make greater use of visual processing than readers of English, because of the different orthographic conventions employed in their first language writing system.

Vocabulary knowledge

Good readers have a large vocabulary and continue to add to their vocabulary throughout their lives, mainly through reading. It is obviously not possible to teach students all of the words that they might encounter in their reading. Although a vocabulary of 3,000 words may be sufficient for reading materials of average difficulty, as we saw in Chapter 10, far more words are needed to read more difficult texts, such as academic books and articles. Researchers suggest that between 6,000 and 10,000 words are needed to give an L2 reader 'a reasonable chance at understanding an academic text, though not reading the text fluently' (Grabe, 2009: 271). Readers with smaller vocabularies will require a lot more instructional support. If there are too many unknown words in a text, comprehension may be virtually impossible. However, if the reader is making some sense of a text and encounters an unknown word, he or she can either ignore it, assuming that the meaning may become clearer later on, or try to guess its meaning from context (Laufer and Yano, 2001). The ability to guess word meanings from context is also dependent upon vocabulary knowledge, since a large vocabulary is needed to enable the reader to make suitable guesses (Paribakht, 2005). Online dictionaries can help learners in their reading, especially those that allow words to be clicked for an immediate definition or translation so that reading is not too much interrupted.



How often do you come across an unknown word when you read? Do you sometimes use an online dictionary when you do so?

Readers with limited language proficiency and unfamiliarity with effective reading strategies may rely too heavily on vocabulary knowledge. L2 readers often adopt a surface-level approach to reading; that is, they read at the word level, rather than with a focus on main ideas and general comprehension – in other words, they are 'word-bound' (Carrell, 1988). They fail to connect the immediate content of reading with their overall reading goal and become readily distracted by failure to understand meanings at the word level. This may result in overuse of underlining and of the dictionary.

A teacher comments on making the process of reading more enjoyable for students:



Teachers are readers, too

If we expect our students to develop a love of reading in English, we have to practise what we preach. We need to show that we are committed to improving our own English through reading and that reading in English can be enjoyable, too. I try to set myself a target of reading something in English every day and to read one book of any kind a month. For teachers, it's important to have a nice environment in the school where we can read and where we can put together a professional library and a collection of books that anyone can borrow to read. In one of the schools where I teach, some of

us have formed a reading club where we choose books to read and meet to share our reactions to them. Once we develop a commitment and enthusiasm for reading, we can begin to pass this on to our students.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

Prior knowledge

Readers bring many different kinds of prior knowledge to reading, including knowledge about the topic of a text and the events featured in them. They recognize familiar text types (e.g. expository texts, information texts, narrative texts). They also make use of their understanding of how such texts are usually organized, the kinds of information they contain and the contexts in which they typically appear. In processing texts, readers utilize different kinds of schema which serve to guide the reader through the processing of information related to a topic. If the reader cannot activate a schema for a text, it may be impossible to understand (see Chapters 2 and 12). Readers also access sociocultural knowledge when they read. For instance, a text about Australian social customs may assume that the reader is familiar with practices associated with greetings, leisure activities, weddings, meals, gift-giving, dress and other references in the text. Without such prior knowledge, comprehension may be only partial.



The following sentences activate different types of schema and lead the reader to expect a particular type of text. What type of text do you expect to read?

- 1 Let me tell you what happened.
- 2 First you will need to buy some fresh prawns and two small onions.
- 3 This is a book that will appeal to all parents with young children.
- 4 Have you always wanted to be able to remember people's names?
- 5 I found David Green's article on teenagers in the November issue very interesting.

The reading process

Bottom-up and top-down processing

Fluent reading is said to involve an interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing (see Chapter 12). Bottom-up processing suggests that when a reader processes a text they do so in a certain order, i.e. from words to phrases to sentences and so on, until the meaning of the text is arrived at. Top-down processing, in both listening and reading, suggests that the reader makes use of background knowledge together with conceptual knowledge and processing strategies, in order to arrive at understanding of texts. In reading, top-down processing is based on the view that the reader actively controls the comprehension process, directed by reader goals, expectations and strategic processing.

Interactive processing, on the other hand, combines both forms of processing (top-down and bottom-up) and suggests that they function together. Reading is seen as an active process, involving the reader in ongoing interaction with texts as they read. An interactive view of reading is based on the idea that successful reading is an act of creation. Meaning is created through the interaction between a reader and a text. The meaning of a text does not consist of a fixed, static form tied to the words on the page. It emerges anew each time the reader encounters a text (Carrell et al., 1988).



In your experience, is reading generally taught with a focus on top-down or bottom-up approaches?

A teacher educator comments on how students at different levels use top-down and bottom-up processing:



Interaction of top-down and bottom-up skills

Obviously, proficient users of a language use a carefully balanced combination of top-down and bottom-up processing. I've found that learners need explicit help to achieve this balance in a second or other language. At lower levels, the natural thing to do when reading is to look at every word and make sure you know what it means before moving on to the next one. Unfortunately, what happens is you either get to a word you have no idea about and get stuck, or you take so long to get to the end of the sentence you can't remember what the words at the beginning were.

At higher levels, the opposite occurs. The learners have become so good at skimming that that's all they do. They often need to slow down and do a bit more bottom-up processing to understand the details and the nuances of the text. Therefore, as teachers, we have to encourage learners to use both processes. More top-down at lower levels and more bottom-up at higher levels. It is important to be explicit. Demonstrate how the processes are different and why we use both. This can easily be included in reading lessons, as often as necessary, until the learners have got the idea.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

Levels of comprehension

As well as top-down and bottom-up approaches to reading, reading comprehension can also be described in terms of different levels of comprehension associated with reading, since comprehension can refer to understanding of details in a text, understanding of main ideas, understanding of implied meanings and so on as we see in the vignette above. A widely cited taxonomy of levels of understanding is known as Barrett's taxonomy (Hudson 2007: 85) and identifies five different levels of understanding. These are referred to as *literal comprehension* (concern with information stated explicitly in the

text), *reorganization* (analyzing, synthesizing and organizing information that has been stated explicitly), *inferential comprehension* (using information explicitly stated, along with one's own personal experience, as a basis for conjecture and hypothesis), *evaluation* (judgements and decisions concerning value and worth) and *appreciation* (psychological and aesthetic impact of the text on the reader). This taxonomy is useful because it reminds us that not all texts require the same level of understanding or are read in the same way. It also influences the design of reading instruction, since tasks that seek to teach or assess literal comprehension may be different from those that are used to teach or assess appreciation.



For each of the levels on Barrett's taxonomy, can you suggest examples of text types that would normally be read with that level of comprehension?

Inferencing

This refers to arriving at a meaning which has not been explicitly stated in a text by making links between information in the text and our knowledge of the world. As a text is being read, the reader makes different kinds of inferences that enable him or her to process the text, and these are often incorporated in the reader's understanding of the text. Often, after reading a text, readers cannot distinguish between ideas that the text contained and inferences they made while reading it (Buck, 2001: 19). This can sometimes be a problem when reading comprehension is being tested – the readers' answers may be based on their guesses rather than information in the text itself.

Fluency in reading

Grabe (2009: 14–15) argues that in order to understand the complexity of reading, it is necessary to focus on the processes made use of by fluent readers and to ask questions about what they do when they read, and how the processes they use work together to contribute to a general notion of reading. Fluent readers are able to read accurately, quickly, effortlessly, and generally with at least 70 per cent comprehension (Anderson, 2003). They are able to perform multiple tasks at the same time; for example, they can recognize words while also comprehending their meaning. This can be seen when we read the following text:

The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid: Aoccdmrig to rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mtaetr in what oerdr the ltteres in a word are. The olny iproamtnt tihng is that the frsit and last ltteer is in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses, and you can still raed it whotuit a pboerlm. This is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the word as a wlohe.

We can understand the text without difficulty, because we understand what we *expect* to encounter. We are driven by the need to understand, so we read for meaning and do not need to consciously process the meaning of each and every word in the text.

14.4 Reading skills and strategies

The distinction between skills and strategies has generated a great deal of discussion in the literature on first and second language reading. They are generally understood to be related to each other, with 'skills' being the non-conscious habits that have been established through practice and repetition, whereas 'strategies' are deliberate and goal-directed responses to a reading task. Afflerback et al. (2008) suggest that strategies are 'what we turn to when we lack the skills to accomplish something and that even basic skills benefit from being taught as strategies initially because strategies are how we manage difficult tasks'. Strategy instruction is seen as a means to skilful performance (<http://borderland.northernattitude.org/2008/02/09/on-reading-skills-and-strategies>).

Reading skills

Many ESL/ELT reading courses focus on the development of both general and specific reading skills. For example, most reading coursebooks will include activities devoted to skimming, scanning, reading for main ideas and reading and making inferences – skills which are involved in many different kinds of reading. Sometimes skills may be selected for a particular kind of reading, or which are important for reading particular kinds of texts. For example, the following are sometimes described as skills needed for 'reading to learn'.

- Reading to find facts and details.
- Skimming a text quickly for gist.
- Reading to obtain new ideas and information.
- Reading to connect information from different sources.
- Reading as a preparation for writing, or discussing a topic.
- Responding critically to things one reads.
- Reading for main ideas.

A more detailed list is contained in Munby (1978) and includes the following:

- Recognizing the script of a language.
- Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items.
- Understanding explicitly stated information.
- Understanding information when not explicitly stated.
- Understanding conceptual meaning.
- Understanding the communicative value of sentences.
- Understanding relations within the sentence.
- Understanding relations between parts of a text, through grammatical cohesion devices.

- Interpreting a text by going outside it.
- Recognizing indicators in discourse.
- Identifying the main point or important information in discourse.
- Distinguishing the main ideas from supporting details.
- Extracting salient details to summarize a text.
- Extracting relevant points from a text selectively.
- Skimming.
- Scanning to locate specifically required information.
- Transcoding information to diagrammatic display.

The Barrett taxonomy, referred to earlier, is yet another breakdown of reading skills – one which links skills to different kinds of comprehension. ‘Skills’, as defined by Barrett, are really a sampling of different behaviours that characterize the different kinds of reading processes discussed earlier in this chapter. Reading specialists are sceptical of the validity of the concept of skills, since there is no consensus as to the nature of skills, and there are many different lists of skills to choose from. Perhaps this reflects the fact that, unlike productive skills, receptive skills are not directly observable. However, many teachers and materials’ developers find them a convenient pedagogic device for the design of reading materials and activities, and they continue to provide a strand of many reading courses.

Reading strategies

Readers use different strategies depending on the kind of text they are reading, their familiarity with the topic of the text, the difficulty level of the text, their purpose in reading it and so on. (See Chapter 2 for a discussion of learner strategies.) They think about the process of reading and monitor their reading, based on what and why they are reading. A strategic reader adjusts his or her approach to a text by considering questions such as the following:

- What is my purpose in reading this text? Am I reading it for pleasure? Am I reading it to keep up to date on current events? Will I need this information later (e.g. for a test)?
- What kind of text is this? Is it an advertisement, a report, a news article or some other kind of text?
- What is the writer’s purpose? Is it to persuade, to entertain or to inform the reader?
- What kind of information do I expect to find in the text?
- What do I already know about texts of this kind? How are they usually organized?
- How should I read this text? Should I read it to find specific information, or should I read it for main ideas? Should I read it again carefully to focus on the details?

- What linguistic difficulties does the text pose? How can I deal with unfamiliar vocabulary, complex sentences and lengthy sentences and paragraphs?
- What is my opinion about the content of the text?

Appropriate reading strategies are selected in response to questions like these. They may prompt the reader to make predictions about the content and organization of a text based on background knowledge of the topic, as well as familiarity with the text type. They may help the reader to decide the rate at which to read the text – a quick skim for main ideas, quickly to scan for specific information, a slower, closer reading for more detailed comprehension or a rapid reading to build fluency. Other reading strategies help the reader make sense of the relationship between ideas, such as cause and effect, comparison–contrast and so on. In addition, the strategy of reading a text critically – reacting to it and formulating opinions about the content – is a crucial part of being a successful reader. (See Grabe and Stoller 2002).

Whereas fluent readers are familiar with a range of reading strategies and adjust their use of strategies based on their reading purposes, poor readers make use of fewer strategies and may not use strategies appropriately. They may adopt a word-by-word approach to reading, assuming that every word in a text is equally important and read all texts in the same way. Grabe and Stoller (2002: 210) suggest that teachers can make a wall poster listing reading strategies, which can serve as a reference point during reading activities.



Are there any strategies you can think of which are specific to reading texts online?

In order to help learners use effective reading strategies, the teacher may model the strategy directly. This involves the teacher thinking aloud as he or she reads a text (Duffy, 2002), showing students how particular aspects of the text were approached and how difficulties encountered were resolved. Through talking about the strategy he or she uses as the text is read, the teacher demonstrates the kind of thinking and decision-making that can be used while reading. This applies both to print and online texts, which may require additional strategies. Rohim (2009: 7) gives the following example of how a think-aloud procedure is used:

- 1 The teacher selects a passage to read aloud that poses comprehension problems for readers, for example, complex or difficult concepts, contradictions, ambiguities or unknown words. The teacher is careful the passage includes specific sections where comprehension breaks down, in order to model with students ways to deal with each.
- 2 The teacher reads the passage aloud and thinks out loud about the problems encountered, reflecting how he or she monitors understanding of the text and makes decisions to remedy comprehension problems. The students observe the teacher's modelling silently, noting the monitoring of comprehension. The teacher should include the following considerations during think-aloud:

- *Make predictions (develop hypotheses):* For example, 'From the title, I predict that this section will tell how fishermen used to catch whales ... In this next part, I think we'll find out why the man flew into the hurricane ... I think this is a description of a computer game.'
 - *Describe the pictures imagined from the information given:* For example, 'As I read, I see this scene in my mind: The car is on a dark, probably narrow, road; there are no other cars around ...'
 - *Make analogies (linking prior knowledge to new information in the text):* For example, 'This is like a time we had a flat tire while driving to Boston. We were worried and had to walk three miles for help ...'
 - *Verbalize confusing points (monitoring ongoing comprehension):* For example, 'This just doesn't make sense ... This is different from what I had expected.'
 - *Demonstrate 'fix-up' strategies (correcting lagging comprehension):* For example, 'That is not clear; I'd better reread ... Maybe I'll read ahead to see if it gets clearer ... I'd better change my picture of the story ... This is a new word to me, and it seems crucial to the meaning of the essay; I'd better try to figure out what it means here ...'
- 3 The teacher leads a debriefing discussion in which students summarize what the teacher did and why. They focus on the choices made by the teacher and the reasons and outcomes of those choices.
 - 4 The teacher helps the students generate a list of steps, or strategies, readers may use to monitor comprehension and repair it. The class adds to this list throughout the year, as new strategies emerge.
 - 5 The teacher structures a small-group or paired activity in which students take turns practising think-aloud techniques with difficult reading materials.
 - 6 The teacher uses the think-aloud technique frequently with various materials to reinforce during-reading strategies, encouraging students to use it, when reading independently, to enhance their own comprehension.

A teacher comments on helping students to choose the most appropriate reading strategy for the text and their reading purposes:



Helping learners to choose the best reading strategy

With my college reading class, I use the SRA kit [a set of cards with texts graded in difficulty] to practise strategies. Although these materials were not designed for ESL students, they work well with my students and prepare them to cope with authentic texts. Students choose a card that contains a text of two to three pages, followed by detailed comprehension questions. Students are given a choice of four strategies to use in reading the passage:

Strategy A: Read the text, read the comprehension questions, and then go back and skim for answers. This is the most detailed way of reading the text.

Strategy B: Read the questions, read the text carefully to find the answers, and then go back and check the answers against the questions.

Strategy C: Skim the text, read the questions, and then scan for the answer.

Strategy D: Read the questions, and then skim for the answers. This is the fastest strategy.

The students go to the reading kit and select a card to work with. I go round first and ask what texts they have chosen and which strategy they will use. Generally, the students will choose a slower strategy if they are unfamiliar with the topic. I am trying to sensitize them to the fact that they should choose strategies appropriate to the kind of material they are reading and their reason for reading it.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

14.5 Teaching reading

Determining goals

Reading courses are of many different kinds, depending on whether reading is taught as a separate skill or linked to other skills, such as writing; whether the focus is on general reading improvement or reading for specific purposes, such as academic reading or business English; or whether the course is aimed to prepare students for the reading component of a test, such as IELTS or TOEFL. In order to develop goals for a reading course, it is necessary to start with needs analysis, in order to determine the kinds of texts students need to read, the reading demands of the texts they will read (i.e. in terms of vocabulary, text length, text features, topic, etc.) and the students' current level of reading ability. No matter the type of reading course, it will generally seek to expand students' knowledge of vocabulary, text structure and organization, to develop students' understanding and use of strategies, to provide large amounts of reading practice and to increase learners' motivation to read by providing opportunities for success in reading, as well as feedback and support for learners. Course planning is examined in depth in Chapter 17.

Choosing materials

Authentic or adapted materials

An issue that often arises in a reading course is the extent to which students should read authentic or composed texts. Both published materials and teacher-designed materials are often used in reading courses. Published materials may be composed of specially written texts, authentic texts containing little adaptation or texts that have been adapted

to remove difficult vocabulary, syntax and other features. Some reading specialists caution against the use of specially written texts in reading courses, arguing that specially written texts do not expose learners to examples of authentic language usage. In addition, they feel these texts oversimplify the lexical, grammatical and discoursal structure, and so do not prepare students for real-world reading. Because such texts are often very short, they can also encourage a bottom-up approach to reading. Authentic texts, on the other hand, are said to be intrinsically more motivating than created texts because they often relate more closely to learners' needs, and they can support a more creative approach to teaching. For teachers who wish to assess the difficulty of authentic texts, the free Lextutor concordancer (www.lex tutor.ca/concordancers/text_concord/) lets teachers and their learners paste a text into a webpage which will show them the frequency of each of the words in the text, with the most frequent ones shown first. This can be useful in order to get an idea of the difficulty of the text. Another way to do this is to look at a text's Flesch-Kincaid grade score or the Flesch readability score (www.standards-schmandards.com/exhibits/rix/). Both tests look at average sentence and word length to estimate the relative difficulty of a text.

However, it can also be argued that what is important is not so much the authenticity of the text, but the authenticity of the processes the students are engaged in when they read the text (Thornbury, 2005c: 110). A well-written text for classroom use can provide the same opportunities for reading development as an authentic text if it reflects the same features as authentic texts.

The difficulty level of using authentic texts can also be addressed in other ways. For example:

- By choosing shorter texts.
- By choosing texts that include visual support (e.g. in the form of pictures or diagrams).
- By using simpler tasks, such as those that require scanning or identifying meanings stated explicitly in the text (e.g. Levels 1 and 2 on Barrett's taxonomy referred to above).



What kinds of authentic texts could be used with your students? What advantages and difficulties might the use of these texts involve?

A teacher explains how he helps students make the transition between coursebook reading and out-of-class reading in an EAP course:



Using authentic texts in an EAP course

I teach a reading class that seeks to help first-year university students deal with reading the books and articles they have to read in their academic courses. There are two strands to the course. One focuses on developing reading skills and strategies. This makes use of a textbook that practises a variety of reading skills and strategies. The texts in the book are fairly short and are mainly adapted from real-world texts. The other

strand of the course is built around the texts students bring to class from things they are reading in their content classes. These are all authentic texts. I assign reading tasks (both individual and group tasks) to be used with these texts, which require students to apply the skills and strategies they have practised. Gradually, throughout the duration of the course, we make greater use of the texts students bring to class.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

Another way of addressing the difficulty level of authentic texts is through the use of graded readers. These are reading series graded across different levels, containing texts that have been controlled for difficulty, in terms of vocabulary, sentence length, grammar and discourse features. The texts may be simplified versions of novels, adapted from other sources, or be specially written texts, including original fiction. Graded readers help students develop fluency and confidence in reading and often form a component of an extensive reading programme (see below).

Conducting a reading lesson

Like listening lessons, reading lessons often focus on three stages of the reading process: *pre-reading* (planning to read), *while-reading* (understanding and monitoring) and *post-reading* (evaluation).

Pre-reading

Pre-reading activities provide background knowledge, activate schemas and help give a purpose for reading. For example, there may be an initial questionnaire or survey, followed by a reading, in which students compare their responses on the survey to information in the text. There might be a quiz to find out how much students know about a topic they are going to read about, or students might predict the content of the passage from the title, paragraph headings, words or illustrations. They might also be asked to predict which aspects of a topic they think a passage will deal with, after which they read and compare.

A common pre-reading activity involves pre-teaching key vocabulary from a text, in order to reduce the difficulty level of the text so that readers can apply reading skills and strategies while reading. Crandall (1995) suggests the following kinds of pre-reading activities:

Activity	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion questions. • Pre-writing activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorming. • Semantic mapping. • Free writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to relate the reading to a student's prior experience, activating and expanding the student's content and formal schema, building vocabulary and helping to identify cultural influences that may affect reading comprehension or interpretation.

Activity	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prediction activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw attention to the organization of the text and to identification of potential themes and directions the author may take.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skimming activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide students with a general idea of the text themes and the organization and development of ideas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions and other activities that focus on graphic cues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Titles. Chapter headings. Indentations and white space. Any visuals and other text displays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight the organization and relative importance of various themes in the text.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scanning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight key (including technical) vocabulary, as well as names, dates, places and other important facts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus students' attention during reading, as well as motivate them to do the reading.



What kind of pre-reading activities could be used with the following texts?

- **A recipe.**
- **A letter to the editor about parking problems in a city.**
- **An advice column in a magazine about losing weight.**

A teacher comments on the value of pre-reading activities:



Importance of pre-reading activities

For my students, reading in English is key to improving their language awareness (vocabulary and syntax), as well as providing information that can expand their world knowledge and provide a change in pace from other activities. Although my reading lessons usually follow the format of pre-reading session, while-reading [session] and post-reading and feedback session, the pre-reading phase is likely to be the most important step for my students. It helps trigger students' motivation [and] helps them to prepare for the kinds of texts they are going to read [and] to choose appropriate reading strategies, as well as familiarize themselves with some key vocabulary in a

text. I often use pictures [and] vocabulary cards, as well as some key sentences from the text, to prepare students for what they will read and to trigger their prior knowledge. The choice of text is very important since the right kind of text can motivate students to read, so it's crucial to ask students what kinds of things they want to read about. The reading material might sometimes be very simple, such as songs, anecdotes, short stories or selections from newspapers and magazines.

Anuwat Kaewma, teacher and teacher educator, Sakon Nakhon province, Thailand

While-reading

While-reading activities encourage readers to react to what they read while reading. They may require readers to revise their understanding and adjust their reading as they read, based on difficulties they encounter. Or they may prompt the reader to keep the overall purpose of reading in mind. Contemporary reading materials often contain while-reading tasks that may occur alongside the text to guide the reader through the text and through the reading process. The type of while-reading activity will depend upon the type of text. For example, if the text is a narrative, students might number the sequence of events in the narrative on a list or chart. If the text presents information non-sequentially, however, as in an encyclopedia or information-based text, students may complete an information-transfer task, such as completing information in a grid or chart. Thornbury (2005c: 119) points out an important feature of tasks of this kind:

It's important to note that grid-filling, or sequencing tasks, are not intended as a test of the reader's comprehension, so much as a framework to help them organize their developing understanding of a text. In this sense, such tasks are not so much *comprehension* tasks as *comprehending* tasks.

Questioning is another useful while-reading activity. It can involve the teacher posing questions as the students read the text, or, in print materials, the questions may occur alongside the text to guide the students' reading. Students may also pose questions as they read. Crandall (1995) gives the following examples of other while-reading activities:

Activity	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete graph. Venn diagram. Flow chart or table. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help understand the logical relations between ideas in the text, and highlight for the student what is important enough to be noted and remembered.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided or controlled writing. Discussion question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to react and reflect upon what they are reading at key stages in the process, and to note confusion or questions they hope to have answered at the end of the reading.

Activity	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underlining. Highlighting. Note-taking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students develop more effective study skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary-building activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students find clues for meaning within the text.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paraphrasing and summarizing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to see how an idea is developed and a text is structured, to draw inferences and to effectively tie new ideas to prior topics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timed activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage rapid reading, perhaps combined with questions that require skimming for general answers or scanning for key information.

A variety of software is also available to support while- reading. Electronic 'talking books' are a good example and enable students to choose digitized pronunciation of individual words or to listen to the whole text. Text-to-speech software can read any text aloud, and encouraging learners to read along while listening can be helpful for them. In this way, learners can also improve their extensive listening skills, as listening forces them not to read word for word.

Post-reading

Post-reading activities may focus on the text itself, i.e. its vocabulary, grammar or discourse organization, or elicit the student's reaction to the content of the text. They may also provide a review of the strategies the student has used in reading the text, and develop strategies for remembering what was read, if necessary. A speaking activity is the most common post-reading activity and is often a reaction to the specific content, or broad theme, of the text. Other suggestions summarized from Crandall (1995) are:

Activity	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students to expand their vocabulary by applying affixes and roots, drawn from the key vocabulary in the reading, using charts and tables to illustrate the relationships between the words.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage critical analysis and evaluation of the reading.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete notes. Partial summaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students to summarize the text.

Activity	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloze activities. • Sentence strip activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop vocabulary, grammar and discourse knowledge.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to reflect on, synthesize or evaluate what they have read.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to apply what they have read to some task or activity.



Post-reading activities often serve to make links to other skills, such as writing and speaking. Can you suggest activities of this kind after students have read a text on changes in teenagers' fashions?

See Appendix 2 for a sample reading lesson provided by a teacher, and Appendix 3 for a sample reading lesson from a textbook.

A teacher educator demonstrates a reading activity that involves comparing two points of view:



Recognizing the writer's point of view

I think it is important for my students to be aware of the writer behind the text: what point of view is she or he expressing in the text? Is this point of view clearly stated or buried in the text? To help develop this awareness, I ask my higher-level students to read two film reviews about the same film, taken from different newspapers and journals. Film reviewers often use a five-star award system, giving five stars to a film they rate very positively and one star to a film they rate very negatively. I mask the star rating, and then ask the students to read the reviews and guess how many stars the film was awarded. After that, I reveal the actual number of stars awarded, and we then explore ways in which a negative or positive view was expressed in the texts.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

Beyond the structured lesson

Reading courses, in addition to teaching skills and strategies, may wish to focus on developing fluency and/or enjoyment in reading, moving beyond the structured lesson of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities. Two ways to encourage students to become fluent readers are through speed reading and extensive reading.

Developing fluency

Fluency can be developed by giving students frequent opportunities to practise reading for general comprehension, using short passages of 100 to 200 words in length. Their rate of reading may be timed so that, over the duration of a course, they work to improve their reading speed. They may read the same passage several times during a practice period and should monitor their progress throughout the course. An important aspect of fluency in reading is the ability to read quickly – speed reading. Students who adopt a word-by-word surface approach to reading are slow readers and often cannot cope with the large amounts of reading they need to do in their school courses. Speed-reading techniques aim to help students process texts more rapidly, to achieve a greater level of understanding of what they read, to use more effective eye movements when reading and to use better ways of understanding words and meaning in texts. There are a number of websites that help students to measure their reading speed (e.g. www.readingsoft.com/).

Extensive reading

The reading activities described above generally involve reading of shorter texts, accompanied by reading tasks which are completed during a single class period, usually under teacher supervision (Nuttall, 1996). Much of the emphasis is on developing reading skills and strategies, as well as in processing different text types for different reading purposes. This approach to reading is often referred to as *intensive reading*. This can be compared to *extensive reading*, which refers to reading in quantity and for pleasure, and is usually done outside of class time, using graded readers or other materials. Extensive reading is intended to improve students' overall reading performance (especially that of beginning students) by enhancing incidental language learning in such areas as spelling, vocabulary, grammar and text structure. When extensive reading is used to build fluency, most of the words in the text the students are reading should be known to them. When the purpose of extensive reading is for language development, more difficult texts can be used. However, the main purpose of extensive reading is to encourage students to develop an interest and a habit in reading on their own so that they can move from learning to read to reading to learn.

Day and Bamford (2004: 2–3) list the following characteristics of a successful extensive reading programme:

- Students read large amounts of printed material.
- Students read a variety of materials in terms of topic and genre.
- The material students read is within their level of comprehension.
- Students choose what they want to read.
- Reading is its own reward.
- Students read for pleasure, information and general understanding.
- Students read their selection at a faster rate.

- Reading is individual (students read on their own). Teachers read with their students, thus serving as role models of good readers.
- Teachers guide and keep track of student progress.

Hedge (2000: 202) suggests that an extensive-reading component to a reading course could include:

- Reading large quantities of materials, whether short stories and novels, newspaper and magazine articles, or professional reading.
- Reading consistently, over time, on a frequent and regular basis.
- Reading longer texts (more than a few paragraphs in length) of the types listed in the first point above.
- Reading for general meaning, primarily for pleasure, curiosity or professional interest.
- Reading longer texts during class time, but also engaging in individual, independent reading at home, ideally of self-selected material.

Extensive reading often depends upon building up a class library of books or readers of different levels, setting students' targets for reading and having students keep a reading journal in which they set reading goals, write book reports and assess their own reading development. However, students can also choose their own texts for extensive-reading practice, and choice of reading materials can play an important role in maintaining motivation. Students can choose materials they wish to read (e.g. from the internet), share their reading interests and experiences in groups and read things that are related to their out-of-class interests and needs. Many online reading materials are of interest to students, and although posts on social-networking sites are usually short and may not offer a great deal of reading practice, teachers can recommend authors known for the quality of their writing, either on their own blogs or their social networking pages.



What kinds of extensive reading to do you think your students do?

An extensive-reading lesson plan can be found in Appendix 1.

Developing independent readers

One of the goals of a reading course is to enable learners to take responsibility for their own learning. This means they need to be able to monitor their own progress and identify ways of setting personal goals for reading improvement. To do so, they need to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses as readers and to know how to use reference works designed to assist them in independent learning (e.g. dictionaries or computer-based programs that can be used to improve reading speed). One way to achieve these goals is through the use of a reading response journal. Rohim (2009: 11) comments:

Response journals are places where students reflect on their readings independently, with the teacher or with other students. Journals allow students to take control of their own learning. In journals, students respond to what they have experienced and learned, how it relates to them personally, how they learned it, how they used it, what still needs to be learned and clarified, as well as other things. Once students are aware of their own learning, they become able to select, implement and evaluate strategies that are effective for them. Reading journals, in particular, enable students to see what sorts of responses they make (that is, to inspect the stances from which they respond), to reflect on their own reading and on literature, and to set goals for their own reading growth.

In journals, students can address questions such as these:

- 1** What do I notice about my reading?
- 2** Is this reading easy for me? Why?
- 3** Is this reading hard for me? Why?
- 4** Next time I read, I will try to ...
- 5** Something I do better now than before is ...
- 6** A reading strategy I used is ...
- 7** I used this reading strategy because ...
- 8** A reading problem I have is ...
- 9** What do I want to be able to do as a reader?

14.6 Assessing reading

Reading assessment serves a number of purposes. It may be part of a standardized test of a learner's overall reading proficiency; it may be an assessment of classroom learning; it may be designed to improve learning and teaching; and it may also be used to assess the effectiveness of teaching materials or a reading programme (curricular effectiveness) (Grabe, 2009). As with other kinds of tests, validity is an important consideration in designing reading tests (see Chapter 20). Does the test really measure what it is supposed to measure? Does the correct answer on a test mean that the student is using the reading skill the teacher wanted to measure?

Tests of reading proficiency may assess a number of different aspects of reading, such as comprehension of main ideas, recall of relevant details, inferencing skills, vocabulary knowledge, awareness of text structure and organization, fluency and reading speed and critical reading skills. In assessing reading, the goal is to find out in what ways students' reading has improved as a result of reading instruction. Typical item-types in tests of this kind include:

- *Multiple choice*: Students choose one answer from among a range of alternatives.
- *True-false questions*: Students indicate if a statement is true or false, based on information in the passage.
- *Short answers*: Students answer questions for which there is only one possible short answer that will provide information about the passage. This type of item can be used to test students' ability to make inferences. For example, students might read a passage and then provide short answers to questions about content that is either stated or must be inferred.
- *Fill-in tasks*: Students are given statements and choose a suitable word, from among those provided, to fill in a missing word in the statement.
- *Labelling*: Students read a text and label or complete a diagram.
- *Cloze tasks*: Students complete missing words in a passage.

Test items, such as those above, are commonly used to measure comprehension of texts, but may also be used to assess students' abilities to choose suitable strategies when they read. For example, students might be given a text to read, with the purpose for reading specified. They might then check, from a list, the strategy they would use to read the text.

Reading tests designed to assess classroom learning may seek to answer questions such as the following:

- Has the students' reading speed increased?
- Can they now better identify main ideas in a reading passage?
- Have they moved beyond a surface-level approach to reading?
- Can they read and make inferences?
- Can they read a wider range of text types?
- Can they read more difficult texts?
- How do they now cope with difficult vocabulary?
- Are they now more strategic readers?

Similar item types to those used in proficiency tests may also be used in more informal forms of assessment, such as observations, self-reporting measures, response journals, progress charts and portfolios.

When the role of assessment is not to measure progress, but to improve teaching and learning (see Chapters 17 and 20), the goal is to help students deal with reading difficulties, to develop effective learning strategies, to develop self-directed learning and to improve motivation. Grabe (2009: 364) summarizes this as follows:

In its simplest form, the teacher gathers feedback on student performance (e.g. on reading-related activities) on a continual basis and engages students in improving their learning, based

on teacher responses. Teachers learn to respond to student signals of non-comprehension through teacher observations, outcomes of students' weak performance or specific feedback mechanisms that students use.

Finally, assessment of teaching materials and the curriculum involves an analysis of both, to determine if the content and teaching methods are in alignment with the programme's goals. This may be accomplished by collecting feedback from students and teachers on the effectiveness of the materials and reviewing students' performance in tests and other forms of assessment (see Chapter 20).

14.7 Conclusion

Second language reading research has considerably enriched our understanding of second language reading processes, clarifying such areas as the nature of bottom-up and top-down processing, the role of prior knowledge and schemas in comprehension and the role of strategies in developing fluency in reading. It is now accepted that the meaning the reader takes from the text is based on many different kinds of knowledge and skills. These include the reader's knowledge of the topic of the text, familiarity with the information given in the text, the ability to process the language of the text, familiarity with the type of text and the context in which the text occurs. The ease with which a person reads will also reflect his or her language proficiency, how he or she approaches the text and the purposes the reader has in reading.

This chapter has demonstrated that an approach to the teaching of second language reading needs to be firmly grounded in an adequate understanding of the nature of reading and the processes fluent readers makes use of, an awareness of the difficulties second language readers face and sound principles for the design of reading courses and materials. The choice of reading materials, modelling of reading strategies, development of fluency in reading and creating motivation to read, through both intensive and extensive reading, are all key factors in an effective reading programme for second language learners.

Discussion questions

- 1 Interview one or more learners. What kinds of reading in English do they do outside of class? How much of their reading makes use of the internet?
- 2 Look at several pages from a daily newspaper. What kinds of texts does it contain? What kinds of reading skills are needed to read them?
- 3 Examine a textbook for teaching reading. What kinds of reading skills does it practise? Does it also practise reading strategies?
- 4 Choose an authentic text that could be used with a reading class. What kinds of difficulties does the text contain? How could these be dealt with in teaching?

- 5 Examine an academic textbook used in a content class. What kinds of texts does it contain? What kinds of reading skills does it assume?
- 6 Choose a reading strategy that is discussed in this chapter. Suggest how a teacher could model or demonstrate the use of this strategy.
- 7 Choose an article from a magazine or newspaper and develop questions or activities based on the text that require a) reading and making inferences, and b) critical reading.
- 8 Choose an article from a popular magazine and read it carefully. What kind of reader is it intended for? What kind of prior knowledge does it assume?
- 9 Examine three chapters from reading textbooks for ESL/ELT learners and review the exercise types they make use of. What kinds of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities do they make use of?

Appendix 1:

Extensive-reading lesson plan

Look at the lesson plan for an extensive-reading activity, provided by Peter Nicoll, a teacher and teacher educator in Auckland, New Zealand. Which part of the lesson would you do in class? Which part might you assign for homework?

- Aims:** To develop extensive reading skills.
To encourage learners to read for pleasure.
- Materials:** A short story that the teacher likes a lot and thinks the learners will also enjoy.
- Level:** All levels, but make sure the language in the short story matches the level. Graded readers are helpful with this.
- Time:** About one to one-and-a-half hours.
- Preparation:** Find a suitable short story. Divide into about four sections. Prepare appropriate discussion / comprehension check questions.

Procedure:

- 1 Elicit and concept-check four reading sub-skills (skimming, scanning, intensive, extensive).
 - Which one is focused on least in most ESL/ELT classrooms? (Extensive.)
 - When do most people use the extensive reading sub-skill? (When reading for pleasure, e.g. a novel or a short story.)
 - Elicit and concept-check 'short story'.
 - Tell learners that they are going to read a short story.
- 2 Pose a discussion question that is appropriate to the story, e.g. if the story is about a relationship between a woman and her mother, ask students to describe their relationship with their mother. Students discuss in pairs or threes.
 - Get very brief feedback from one or two pairs/groups.
- 3 Students read the first section of the story. Try to make sure they don't read further. It's important to keep them as close together as possible. While they are reading, write up discussion questions on the [white]board. These questions should be aimed at clearing up any potential misunderstandings about the plot, e.g. 'Describe the two main characters; age, gender, relationship. When X said Y, what did she mean?', etc. If appropriate, you can also include some prediction questions, e.g. 'What happens next?' Three or four questions should be enough; you don't want to get bogged down here. When students have finished the first section, they discuss the questions in pairs or threes. Feed back, and ask if there's any vocabulary they don't know. Clarify as necessary.

- 4 Repeat Stage 3 with the remaining sections of the story.
- 5 At the end, include a question about the students' reaction to the story, e.g. 'Which characters did you like/dislike? Why? Did you like the story? Why? Why not?'
- 6 Encourage students to read more short stories. If they liked this one, encourage them to find more by the same author. If your school has a learning centre / library, make the connection for them. Encourage them to use the learning centre / library outside class time.

Appendix 2:

Students in the news

Sometimes the teaching of reading is combined with other skills, in this case, speaking. Look at the reading/discussion activity below, submitted by Brandon Narasaki, a teacher in Tokyo, Japan. Which of the concepts described in the section 'Conducting a reading lesson' do you see reflected in this activity?

ACTIVITY PURPOSE

- To give students the opportunity to select their own readings related to class topics, or a topic of personal interest to each student, and gain experience in making their own materials for a discussion.
- To give students practice in leading group discussions.

WHAT IS A READING CIRCLE?*

Each group is made up of a group of three to four students who bring readings to class to discuss that relate to class topics. This activity provides a chance to find outside articles that students are interested in discussing with peers. Students will gather with a group of classmates to critically read and discuss a one- to two-page article in class that the group leader has prepared.

* This concept has been adapted from the work of Harvey Daniels on literature circles: (www.harveydaniels.com).

THE GROUP LEADER'S RESPONSIBILITY

- Each student signs up for *one* week to be the leader for their group.
- A different leader will be decided upon for each session. Groups may be changed each session or kept the same for all reading circles, depending on the instructor's preference.

- The group leader for the week is responsible for:
 - Selecting the one- to two-page reading.
 - Preparing a vocabulary list of five to ten difficult words/phrases, underlining the words in the article, and providing a definition and part of speech.
 - Creating eight questions (four comprehension and four discussion questions) to facilitate the reading circle in-class discussion.
 - Providing copies of all materials for each member in the leader's reading circle (and to the instructor).
 - Leading and monitoring the discussion of the article among the group members. Group members are encouraged to ask questions throughout the activity, and leaders should be ready to answer questions related to article.
 - Making sure time is used effectively. The leader should be able to finish the entire handout (including all eight questions) and if finished before the allotted time, be able to continue the conversation topic with additional questions, or [by] answering any group questions that come about during the reading circle.

CHOOSING THE READING

Article topics: The instructor may want to assign certain topics for each round of group readings or simply allow students to pick any article of interest. It is also useful to create a sign-up sheet so that each student chooses one session to be the group leader (and is responsible for having their handout ready on time). Example: Article topics could be fashion, pop culture, gender roles in society, diet, etc.

- The leader should consider the reading ability of his [or her] group when selecting articles. The article should be challenging, but not so difficult that the group members will struggle to understand the content.
- Some examples of resources where you can find readings – the internet, newspapers, magazines, textbooks, etc.

DAY OF ACTIVITY: IN-CLASS READING AND DISCUSSION

*** The leader is completely responsible for facilitating his/her own group. (The instructor should participate as little as possible, but is encouraged to monitor each group to make sure they are on task.)

- 1 On the day of the activity, the group leader passes out his/her article and questions. Then he/she gives the group a brief explanation of the article and why he/she selected it.
Note: The instructor may wish to have their group leaders assign reading the chosen article as homework, instead of reading the article in class. This option saves class time for either longer group discussions or moving on to the next class activity.

- 2 All members then read the article (if not already assigned as homework). While reading, be sure to mark difficult vocabulary and areas of the text that are difficult to understand. Individually, members should write down answers to all four comprehension questions provided by the leader.
- 3 The leader goes over the vocabulary list, and members raise questions they may have concerning the text or unknown vocabulary.
- 4 The leader checks answers to the comprehension questions.
- 5 Finally, the group answers and discusses the four discussion questions provided by the leader.
- 6 The leader makes sure each person in the group gives their opinion and that the group is not dominated by one person.

TEACHER NOTES

- 1 It is best to set a predetermined time limit when assigning the reading circles so that the students can manage their time. It is also helpful if the instructor gives reminders of remaining time, in case some groups are working too fast or too slow. (I usually do a 15-minute, 5-minute and 1-minute warning.) The students should make use of all 30 minutes allotted and should not aim at finishing as fast as possible.
- 2 It is also good practice to elicit feedback from group members and group leaders about the usefulness of the reading-circle activity. I have found that every time I use this activity, more than 95% of my students find the activity useful and enjoyable. To elicit feedback about the activity, the instructor may choose to do a written form with preset questions or simply create a class discussion.
- 3 If time permits, it would be helpful to establish a series of deadlines for this assignment, including choosing a date to lead, choosing an article and completing the handout. The teacher may want to approve each article (for length, difficulty, appropriateness, etc.) before having the students start their handout. Students may also benefit from submitting at least one draft of their handout to the instructor ahead of time to ensure the questions make sense and are appropriate for the assignment.
- 4 Reading-circle leaders are highly encouraged to read their chosen article several times to make sure they understand the content. Their group members are obliged to ask questions about the article their leader has chosen, so the leader should be ready to answer.

Appendix 3:

Envy: is it hurting or helping you?

Look at the lesson from the textbook *Strategic Reading*, 2nd edition (Richards and Eckstut-Didier, 2012). What do you think is the rationale for the sequence in which the exercises in the lesson occur?



Reading 2

Envy: Is It Hurting or Helping You?

Predicting

Look at the picture and the title of the reading. Then check (✓) the information that you think you will read about. Compare your answers with a partner.

- ___ 1. a definition of envy
- ___ 2. stories about people who have felt envy
- ___ 3. stories about people who have never felt envy
- ___ 4. reasons people feel envy
- ___ 5. advice on how to deal with envy
- ___ 6. results of a survey that asked people about envy

Skimming

Skim the reading to find which topics are and are not in the reading. Then read the whole text.

“Sometimes I’m so envious of my friends, I hate them,” says Kimberly. “I was at dinner a month ago, celebrating a friend’s engagement. Suddenly I blurted out that 50 percent of marriages end in divorce. I was frustrated about not having a serious relationship myself. My envy took over, and I became a different person.”

- 2 Envy is the desire for what someone else has and resentment of that person for having it. Kimberly was envious, but that doesn't mean she is a bad person. "Everyone experiences envy – it's a normal human emotion," explains psychologist Karen Peterson.
- 3 Envy doesn't have to make us feel powerless and sorry for ourselves. Instead, it can motivate us to try to achieve what we want. There are effective ways for dealing with envy and turning it into something useful.
- 4 Kimberly's envy caused her to make the unkind remark about divorce. If you have a similar desire to express your envy in a negative way, stop yourself. Instead, think about what it is you're envious of. Kimberly admitted that when her friend announced her engagement, "it made me feel lonely and insecure." Once you figure out why you're envious, it's much easier to eventually grow from the experience. "Envy can be an excellent teacher," states Peterson, "as long as you are open to learning its lessons."
- 5 Lucy and her friend were both trying to get a better job at their company. Lucy thought that she would get the promotion, but things didn't work out that way. Instead, her friend got the job, and Lucy became upset and jealous. Full of envy, she started saying hurtful things about her friend. "That wasn't like me, but I couldn't think straight," she explains. Lucy said unkind things because not getting the job made her feel bad about herself, explains Peterson. Her reaction didn't make her feel better, though. It just strengthened her negative feelings. If something similar happens to you, Peterson says that you should try to understand why your friend got the promotion. That way you can learn from the experience instead of reacting in a negative way.
- 6 If you feel that getting what you want – marriage, a better job, lots of money – is impossible, remember that every big goal is made up of thousands of tiny steps. "Think of one or two small things that you could do each week to help you come closer to your ultimate goal. Then do them," advises Doreen Virtue, author of the book *I'd Change My Life If I Had More Time*.
- 7 Kimberly left her friend's party feeling guilty. She knew her behavior was wrong. But shortly after, she decided to make some changes that would improve her social life. That decision was the first step in developing a positive attitude and getting rid of her envy.

Adapted from *Cosmopolitan*

A Comprehension Check

These statements are false. Change one word in each statement to make it true.

1. The emotion of envy is ^{normal}unusual in humans.
2. Envy is something that some people feel.
3. Envy can teach you a lot about others.
4. Envy makes you feel good about yourself.
5. When you feel envy, try asking yourself where you are feeling it.
6. If you want to avoid feeling envy, set goals that seem impossible to achieve.

B Vocabulary Study

Find the words and phrases in *italics* in the reading. Are the meanings of the words and phrases in each pair similar or different? Write *S* (similar) or *D* (different).

- ___ 1. *envious* (par. 1) / *jealous* (par. 5)
- ___ 2. *blurted out* (par. 1) / *said* (par. 5)
- ___ 3. *engagement* (par. 1) / *divorce* (par. 1)
- ___ 4. *resentment* (par. 2) / *reaction* (par. 5)
- ___ 5. *figure out* (par. 4) / *understand* (par. 5)
- ___ 6. *insecure* (par. 4) / *upset* (par. 5)
- ___ 7. *think straight* (par. 5) / *remember* (par. 6)
- ___ 8. *lonely* (par. 4) / *guilty* (par. 7)

C Making Inferences

Sometimes the reader must infer, or figure out, what the writer did not explain or state directly in a text.

Which person in the reading could have said each of the following statements? Write *Kimberly, Lucy, Doreen, or Karen*.

I expected to get the better job.

1. _____

I wish I were engaged.

2. _____

My friend isn't a better worker than I am.

3. _____

If you envy someone, make some changes in your life.

4. _____

I get envious at times, just like everyone else.

5. _____

My friends have a better social life than I do.

6. _____

D Relating Reading to Personal Experience

Discuss these questions with your classmates.

1. What advice would you give to someone who is envious of a friend who: a. gets a promotion at work? b. always looks good? c. gets invited to a lot of parties?
2. Have you ever had an experience that showed you how envy could be "an excellent teacher"? Explain your answer.
3. Do you think that this statement from the reading is true: "Everyone experiences envy – it's a normal human emotion."? Why or why not?

Further reading

- Aebbersold, J. A. and Field, M. (1997) *From Reader to Reading Teacher*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Grabe, W. (2009) *Reading in a Second Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson, T. (2007) *Teaching Second Language Reading*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jones, R. H. and Hafner, C. A. (2012) *Understanding Digital Literacies*, London: Routledge.
- Koda, K. (2004) *Insights into Second Language Reading*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nuttall, C. (1996) *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*, 2nd edition, London: Heinemann.
- Thornbury, S. (2005c) *Beyond The Sentence: Introducing Discourse Analysis*, Oxford: Macmillan.

15

Writing

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What are some approaches to teaching writing?
- What are the main types of writing: genres and texts?
- What is the nature of proficiency in second language writing?
 - Types of background knowledge.
 - Preparing to write.
- How should second language writing be taught?
 - Determining goals.
 - The components of a writing course.
 - The writing lesson.
 - Feedback on learners' writing.
 - The role of technology.
- How can writing be assessed?

15.1 Introduction

While some second language learners may have restricted needs for writing skills in English, others need to be able to write a variety of different kinds of texts for academic as well as professional purposes. Many students worldwide study through the medium of English or plan to study abroad in English-medium tertiary institutions and universities and need to develop effective writing skills for academic purposes. With the emergence of a global economy, written texts also play an increasingly important role in many businesses and organizations. Effective communication within organizations involves paper and electronic memos, reports and other written texts, while communication with customers and clients depends on letters, brochures, sales materials and other documents. In addition, the growth of social-media communications tools has also influenced greatly the amount of written communication people make use of, as well as the form of their written communication.

Consequently, writing instruction is an increasingly important focus in many language programmes today. However, good writing skills, in either one's first or second language, are difficult to acquire. Whereas the ability to understand and speak one's mother tongue emerges 'naturally' through exposure and experience, and generally does so before a child's formal education commences, writing and reading are both dependent upon school-based instruction. Written English also differs in many ways from spoken English, and fluency in spoken English is not an indicator of how well someone can write. Despite the instruction people receive in school, however, many native-speakers of English never develop good writing skills. It is not surprising, then, that second language learners face many difficulties in mastering writing skills in English. In this chapter, we will examine the nature of writing in a second language and approaches to the teaching of writing.



What problems do you feel you had learning to write, either in your first or second language?

15.2 Approaches to teaching writing

Current approaches to teaching second language writing are informed by a considerable tradition of theory, research and practice, and offer a marked contrast to earlier approaches (Kroll, 1990; Hyland, 2003, 2010). The audiolingual method informed the teaching of writing, as it did other skills (see Chapter 3). Through much of the first half of the twentieth century, learners developed control of sentence patterns and grammar through oral practice and drills, and then used these same patterns in writing. Writing ability was mainly seen to involve developing linguistic and lexical knowledge, as well as familiarity with the syntactic patterns and cohesive devices that allow for sentence combining and form the building blocks of texts. This is an approach that still characterizes second language writing instruction in some countries today, including some programmes in the US (Reichelt, 2009). Before the 1980s, writing skills were perceived as dependent on imitating model compositions provided by the teacher. Teachers also employed dicto-comp (activities where the teacher reads a passage

several times and students try to reconstruct it from memory) and sentence combining (activities in which students try to combine two or more sentences into a more complex single sentence, as a way of developing a better grasp of sentence grammar). Controlled or guided writing exercises were also employed. These involved students manipulating model texts by making various kinds of changes to them. Such activities were designed to minimize the chance of making errors and also freed teachers from having to correct large numbers of compositions. They are still often seen today in some coursebooks.

In the 1980s, the *paragraph pattern approach* was developed with a focus on different functional or organizational patterns, such as narration, description, comparison/contrast and exposition. Reid (1993: 30) describes the features of this approach:

Using pattern-product techniques, teachers focused on the concepts of the thesis statement and the topic sentence, paragraph unity, organizational strategies and development of paragraphs by 'patterns' or modes: process, comparison/contrast, cause-effect, classification/partition, definition, etc. Exercises to teach the logic of English organizational patterns included reordering deliberately 'scrambled' paragraphs, identifying 'irrelevant sentences' deliberately placed in paragraphs, identifying 'suitable' topic sentences for specific paragraphs and writing topic sentences for paragraphs from which the topic sentences had been removed.

Different organizational patterns were said to reflect different types of academic writing, and a set of core functional writing categories were identified as the focus for academic-writing courses: classification, comparison/contrast, cause and effect, definition, description, narrative, processes and reports. Students were taught the organization patterns that characterize each type of writing, focusing particularly on the role of thesis statements, topic sentences, supporting sentences and transitions and other features of effective paragraphs and compositions. Grammar was also taught in relation to different types of writing. Instruction made use of model compositions, illustrating each functional type. Students then practised writing their own compositions, reflecting the organizational pattern of the model. Approaches such as these that focus on different types of written 'products' are referred to as 'product-based'.

A teacher in China comments on preparing students for a writing test that focuses on organizational patterns:

Application of organization patterns

In the Chinese EFL context, second-year college students need to take the College English Test Band 4 (also known as CET-4). Usually, the most difficult part of this test is the writing section, in which students are given 30 minutes to write a short essay on a given topic in three paragraphs which include a thesis statement, analysis and conclusion.

In preparing students for the CET-4 writing, we find the following tips quite helpful:

- It's important that students' focuses are directed towards, and sufficient time is spent, practising a list of functional categories, such as comparison and contrast,

cause and effect, problem and solution, views on hot topics, new policies, reports, letters, advertisements, etc.

- For each of these categories, students are provided with two or three sample frames (that contain organization patterns) which show students how to give the thesis statement, how to form topic sentences, how to string together supporting sentences and how to draw conclusions.

Obviously, most EFL students can improve their writing scores, in most kinds of tests, more efficiently and quickly if they have been introduced to the organization patterns of the essay.

Qin Bangjin, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China

In the 1990s, *process writing* introduced a new dimension into the teaching of writing, with an emphasis on the writer and the strategies used to produce a piece of writing. This was contrasted with product-based approaches that focused on the end results of writing rather than the processes writers made use of when they write. In the *process approach*, writing is viewed as 'a complex, recursive and creative process that is very similar in its general outlines for first and second language writers: learning to write requires the development of an efficient and effective composing process' (Silva and Matsuda, 2002: 261). The composing processes employed by writers were explored, as well as the different strategies employed by proficient and less proficient writers. Process writing, particularly in the US, soon became a movement, with its proponents arguing that product-based approaches failed to teach learners *how* to write, addressing the ends but not the means. Drawing from the work of first language composition theory and practice, ESL students were soon being taught such processes as planning, drafting, revising and editing and how to give peer feedback. However, others argued that it was more suited to intermediate and advanced-level writers than beginners, for whom models of good writing were often needed.

Both product and process-based approaches are still commonly used in coursebooks, though often features of the two approaches are used together.



When you have a writing assignment to complete, how much time do you normally spend on planning and drafting processes?

More recently, second language writing instruction has been influenced by a *discourse and genre approach* (Wennerstrom, 2003). This approach looks at the ways in which language is used for particular purposes, in particular contexts. *Genres*, discussed in more depth below, are the accepted conventions behind writing which is done for each of these purposes. Writing is seen as involving a complex web of relations between writer, reader and text. The discourse and genre approach looks at the social context for writing (e.g. work, school, personal writing), the participants and communities that exist in each context and the purposes for which people write in different situations. In each context, social conventions determine what and how people write; the participants are said to constitute a discourse

community; and the discourse that occurs in that community constitutes a particular genre, with its related use of texts and other forms of discourse. Drawing on the work of Halliday, Martin, Swales and others, the genre approach seeks to address not only the needs of ESL writers to compose texts for particular readers but also examines how texts actually work to achieve their intended purposes (Paltridge, 2006). It is commonly used in teaching writing for academic and professional purposes and can also be used together with features of a process approach. (Written discourse will be explored in more depth in Chapter 16.)

Appendix 3 shows the integration of these ideas in part of a sample lesson from a current textbook that teaches writing.

15.3 Types of writing: genres and texts

For many people, writing needs are both institutional and personal. Institutional writing is produced in a professional or institutional role, such as that of businessperson, teacher or student, and conforms to the conventions of these contexts. Personal writing includes emails, text messages, blogs and creative writing. In an ESL writing programme, the available purposes for writing are generally somewhat restricted. Most school-related writing is destined either for the teacher (e.g. essays, assignments) or for the learners themselves (e.g. notes, summaries). Writing is used either as evidence of successful learning or as a means of learning. Because much writing leads to a product that can be examined and reviewed, it provides feedback to the teacher and learner on what has been understood. It can also guide the process of understanding and organizing ideas during reading and listening.

There are many different ways of describing the kinds of writing people do, and writing can be classified in different ways. For example:

Type of classification	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By genre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detective story, mystery, advertisement, editorial, menu, essay, biography, song.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By text type.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letters, reports, memos, text messages, forms, labels, signs, instructions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By type of paragraph development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narration, exposition, definition, classification, description, process analysis, persuasion, comparison.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School, work, home.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self, friends, teacher, client.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To warn, inform, entertain, persuade, request.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By writer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employer, employee, colleague, friend.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By medium.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Print, electronic.



Monitor your uses of writing over a one- or two-day period. What kinds of writing did you do?

The concept of *genre* is important in considering the nature and role of written texts. Hyland (2003: 18) defines genres as 'abstract, socially recognized ways of using language for particular purposes' and goes on to say:

In the classroom, genre teachers focus on texts, but this is not the narrow focus of a disembodied grammar. Instead, linguistic patterns are seen as pointing to contexts beyond the page, implying a range of social constraints and choices that operate on writers in a particular context. The writer is seen as having certain goals and intentions, certain relationships to his or her readers and certain information to convey, and the forms of a text are the resources used to accomplish these.

In constructing texts, the writer must employ certain features conventionally associated with the genre in which he or she is writing. In reading a text, the reader similarly anticipates certain features of the text, based on genre expectations. Thus, any piece of writing needs to reflect the conventions of a particular type of text. This means that the information in it should be organized according to the appropriate paragraph format, and it should reflect the norms of the context in which it is used, the audience it is intended for and the purpose the writer seeks to achieve. Paltridge (2006: 87) gives the following example of how these, as well as other choices the writer makes, are realized in a letter to the editor of a newspaper:

author	member of the public
audience	editor of the newspaper; the wider public
purpose	to argue a point
situation	a local newspaper
physical form	written on a sheet of paper
pre-sequence	'Dear Sir/Madam'
internal structure	sender's address + date + editor's address + salutation + body of the letter + sign off + signature + sender's name
content	topic of relevance to the readership of the newspaper
level of formality	medium level of formality
style	typed; use of the first person
written language	mostly complete sentences
requirements	letter must be signed; contact details must be given



The following e-mail message from two students asks for clarification about an article of mine the students were assigned to read. To what extent does it reflect the genre conventions expected for a letter of this kind?

hello sir JACK RICHARDS!

We are very happy to find the possibility to contact you. We are students from the university of [] in English department 3rd year studying the didactic. We are therefore assigned to give more and easy explanation of 'Teachers' Maxims in Language Teaching' as a presentation.

Dear Sir we will be very glad have a reply of your.

[names included]

15.4 The nature of proficiency in second language writing

Types of background knowledge

Knowledge of text types

Good writers are not only aware of the nature of different text types but are also aware of the situations where texts are used, the expectations of readers and the cultural and rhetorical conventions that different texts may reflect. For example, students writing essays in a western academic context are expected to use thesis statements and topic sentences and are expected to express an individual stance in discursive writing – features that may not necessarily be found in the writing conventions of other cultures (see below).

When writers create a text, it also needs to conform to recognizable patterns of organization. For longer texts, we expect to see the text organized into paragraphs and, within paragraphs, to find main ideas and supporting details – features that contribute to the coherence of a text. However, at the same time, a writer's use of the accepted organizational patterns of a text may vary, according to the intended audience. Hedge (2000: 323) points out that although a text describing a medical problem and how it can be treated might generally follow the pattern: *situation – problem – solution – conclusion*, a writer may vary this sequence of information for effect:

The sequence of elements above would probably be considered normal, with conclusions coming last. However, a newspaper article on the topic might report on the treatment first, in order to raise curiosity, and then move on to explain the problem. In fact, there could be several possible sequences for the information.

Bhatia (1998) likens mastering the conventions of a genre to playing a game. Skilled writers and readers are the players, who have to learn the rules and conventions of the game. However, skilled genre users also adapt and personalize the rules of the genres they

encounter by creating texts that are appropriate to different disciplines and professional contexts. They do not apply the rules strictly but can use them creatively within the boundaries of the new genre they encounter.

Knowledge of cultural assumptions underlying texts

The conventions accounting for the organization of these text types in English may differ from those used in a student's native language, and students sometimes transfer discourse features from their native language into their written texts in English. Kaplan (1966), for example, suggested that non-native writers with different language backgrounds used different organizational structures for essays from those used by writers with an English-first language background. Composition teachers in North America emphasize that every essay should have a thesis statement that tells the reader the stance the writer will take on the topic, and that it will usually occur near the beginning of the introductory paragraph. However, writers in some cultures do not usually use thesis statements in this way; they leave the writer to infer the writer's stance or they present the writer's point of view at the end of the text.

Similarly, students in the West are taught that not only does the essay, as a whole, need a thesis statement, but that paragraphs should also have topic sentences, and that the topic sentence usually occurs near the beginning of a paragraph. However, students may come from a writing tradition where the topic sentence does not occur in this position. Raimes observes (2002: 308):

What are text models used for? Are they to be examined critically, analyzed and compared? [A Chinese writer] has written about his experience learning English in the United States. He says that in Chinese, writers try to 'reach a topic gradually and systematically'. To him, the concept of a topic sentence stating the main idea of a paragraph right up front is 'symbolic of the values of a busy people in an industrialized society'. As teachers, we have the choice of presenting a text structure as a given, as some kind of 'standard', as a form to be learned and imitated, or going beyond that and exploring, in our classes, the notion that what writers do reflects an entire system of values and beliefs, with strong connections between the writing process and the beliefs of a culture.

Students in North America and the UK are also taught to use their own ideas and their own language in writing. To incorporate the writing of others without identifying that the ideas are not the student's own is referred to as plagiarism. However, student writers from different cultures may feel that to use another writer's words or language is to honour that writer for the quality of his or her writing. Programmes like Turnitin (www.turnitin.com) are increasingly used not only to detect plagiarism but to encourage students to check their own work before submitting it. Many academics require students to attach a note to essay assignments stating that nothing in their essay has been taken, without acknowledgment, from another source.

Students in writing classes may come from cultures where writing plays a very different role from its role in the US, Canada or Great Britain. There may have been little emphasis on creative and personal writing in their school experience, and they may be unfamiliar

with some of the conventions underlying the kinds of writing they are expected to do in their academic programme. For example, students in college programmes in Canada and the US are generally taught that good writing expresses a point of view and reflects the writer's individuality. They are taught to engage in presenting and defending a point of view, as well as contesting other people's opinions. But this may be an unfamiliar, and even an uncomfortable, stance for students from more authoritarian cultures, where conformity, rather than individuality, is valued. For example, a writing manual for tutors in an American university writing program emphasizes a number of features of good student writing such as: purpose for writing: to find a topic or issues that will engage and connect with the writer; stance: to express the writer's own view and ideas regarding the topic; audience: to consider who the writer is writing for; norms: to consider how the topic or issue has been traditionally understood or positioned in the US (or within the context/for the intended audience/etc.), the values that are typically associated with it by the audience, and consider how the writer's stance will reflect an understanding of previous writing about the topic (www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/tutor/problems/esl.shtml).



Look at the writing manual excerpt above. How does it compare with the way you were taught to write, and/or the way you teach writing yourself in your current context?

A teacher comments on the process that Japanese students go through to learn cultural conventions of English texts:



Cultural conventions and texts

Japanese students studying English writing will first create a document based on what they know and have been taught. The manner of writing in Japanese is considerably different than in English. A well-organized piece of Japanese writing would be structured with an introduction, development, denouement and conclusion. In an English document, this Japanese style, with stress on the denouement, tends to distract from the writing, making it less coherent.

In addition to teaching writing in English, western writing styles are taught. It is important to teach the students the role of thesis statements, topic sentences, supporting sentences and transitions, making use of good models.

Hiroko Nishikage, teacher and materials writer, Tokyo, Japan

Use of grammar at the level of sentence and text

Writing calls upon the learner's grammatical knowledge and the ability to use grammar appropriate to different kinds of texts. Feez and Joyce (1998) discuss some of the distinctive grammatical features of a number of common genres and text types. For example *information texts* (such as a brochure describing features of an apartment for sale) belong to the text type of descriptions. Their purpose is to describe things, places or persons and grammatical features typically seen in descriptions include simple clauses (often linked with conjunctions such as *and* or *but*); simple noun groups are common and verb tenses are typically be and have. Personal pronouns and prepositions of place may also occur, depending on the topic of the description.

The genre of stories includes different kinds of *recount texts* (e.g. personal and factual recounts). These have the purpose of retelling events, either to inform or perhaps to entertain the reader. Grammatical features found in recounts include simple clauses, often co-ordinated clauses linked with *and then*, simple noun groups, verbs in the past tense such as action verbs, personal pronouns, and adverbs and phrases indicating time and location.

A different category of text are known as *persuasive texts*, such as short opinion texts. These have the purpose of expressing or arguing a point of view. Grammatical features found in persuasive texts include clauses expressing opinions with evidence to support an opinion; conjunctions such as *because*, *so*, *if*, *then*, signalling links between ideas, as well as sentences containing two clauses.

In texts, some grammatical items link ideas and sentences together in order to contribute to the text's sense of unity. This is known as cohesion. Cohesion refers to the linking relationships that are expressed explicitly in a text. These linking relationships are part of what makes a set of sentences hold together and form a text. A variety of grammatical as well as lexical means are used by writers to create cohesion in a text (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). These cohesive devices are classified as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical:

- *Reference*: The children did not come because *they* wanted to stay inside.
- *Substitution*: We wanted to buy some glasses and finally bought some French *ones*.
- *Ellipsis*: They wanted to hear me sing another verse of the song, so I told them I knew two (*verses*) more.
- *Conjunction*: I did not know she was in hospital. *Otherwise*, I would have sent some flowers.

- *Lexical*: Henry presented her with his own *photo*. As it happened, she had always wanted a *photo* of Henry.

A teacher in China describes the challenges students face in learning to connect sentences appropriately in English:

Connecting sentences

For more than a decade, I have been teaching basic English writing to the second-year English majors in China, an EFL country. My students usually have learned English for at least six years in high schools before they enrol in the university. I find my students are quite good in terms of grammatical knowledge, e.g. they are good at doing grammatical multiple-choice questions. However, they often find it difficult to produce sentences that are grammatically appropriate in their writings. For example, they often have problems joining two complete sentences. The cause of the problem is that they are unaware of the fact that it may be possible to join two or more complete sentences with just a comma in the Chinese language, but not possible in English, without the use of certain connectives. Therefore, sentences such as, 'The student left home, she came to the university.' are not uncommon in their English writings.

EFL students, such as those from the Chinese context, should be made to realize that a complete declarative sentence always ends with a full stop. To solve my students' problem, I use some readings in my teaching to help raise their awareness of the following essentials:

- If and when students are unsure, use a period and break them into two sentences.
- Use a semicolon to connect two complete sentences.
- Use a comma plus a coordinating conjunction.
- Use a semicolon plus a sentence connector.
- Add a subordinate conjunction. (If the subordinate clause is put before the main clause, there is a comma between them; if the subordinate clause is put after the main clause, there is no comma between them.)

Qin Bangjin, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China

Knowledge employed as students prepare to write

Organizing the content of writing: coherence

We mentioned that knowledge of text types involves organizing texts into paragraphs, which gives the text a sense of unity. The ideas and information in a well-written text need to have an overall sense of unity and structure. This is referred to as *coherence*. Coherence reflects the following features of a text:

- *Development*: Presentation of information should be orderly and convey a sense of direction.
- *Continuity*: There should be a consistency of facts, opinions and writer perspective, as well as reference to previously mentioned ideas. Newly introduced information should be relevant.
- *Balance*: There should be a relative emphasis (main idea or supportive information) for each idea or topic.
- *Completeness*: The ideas presented should provide sufficient coverage of the idea or topic.



Which of the ‘rules’ of coherence are not followed in the following text (taken from Grellet, 1983)?

In 1816, when she was 19, Mary Wollstonecraft was staying in Switzerland with her future husband – Shelley – and Lord Byron. They had read German short stories and decided to try to write their own. The result was a tale written by Mary and called ‘Frankenstein’. It is the story of a scientist who creates a monster which will eventually destroy its creator. It was probably one of the first works of science fiction. Mary’s mother, Mary Godwin, had been one of the first feminists.

Using appropriate styles of writing

Good writers also use a style of writing that is appropriate to the kind of writing they are engaged in, whether this is institutional writing or personal writing. Written language has a different style from spoken language, even though new forms of writing that have emerged are closer to spoken language, such as emails and the language used in chat rooms (Jones and Hafner, 2012). However, the style of writing students are expected to use in academic writing in English may be unfamiliar to them, and they are not expected to use a personal informal style of writing in essays and other school assignments. Students will need to learn that much academic writing in English is written in a concise style, and writing that appears to be too formal and elaborate, and which involves digressions around the main idea, is not highly valued.

Ability to use writing strategies

Many of the features we have covered so far refer to *product* dimensions of writing, since they offer commentary on the finished form of a piece of writing. But students also need to develop strategies for the *process* of writing itself – a feature of the process approach. Writers differ in the way they approach a writing task, and some ways of completing a piece of writing may be more effective than others. Any written task is normally carried out in a number of steps: depending on the nature of the piece of writing, the writer does not normally sit down and compose the finished product in a single step, and some of these

steps will be more productive than others. These can be considered writing strategies. Strategies will differ according to the task the writer is undertaking. The following are strategies a writer might use in writing an essay:

Before writing:

- Think about the task and how to approach it.
- Use different ways of collecting necessary information, such as reading, the internet or taking notes.

During writing:

- Map out main points quickly.
- Review and elaborate the points.
- Take time to let ideas develop.
- Write and rewrite several times, reviewing to make sure the main points are covered.
- Leave editing until later and concentrate on content.

After writing:

- Check to make sure the essay is coherent.
- Revise content if necessary.
- Check that a suitable style of language has been used.
- Make any necessary corrections.

Here a teacher discusses how he teaches his students to use writing strategies:

Changing student needs

In the last six or seven years, we have had more and more Saudi Arabian learners arriving at our school. As with every culture that is new to us, we have had to adapt our teaching methods to the new group. For a number of reasons, many Saudi learners present with much higher speaking and listening levels than reading and writing. As a major motivation for studying English is to gain entry into an English speaking university, this poses specific problems.

As well as all the usual problems of vocabulary, grammar and discourse, there is often great difficulty in written fluency. A Saudi learner may be more likely to spend longer 'looking at the page' before they start to write, and then to constantly go back and correct more often than necessary, which means that it is unusual for them to reach the required word count in the time given.

One way of addressing this problem (taking a more process approach) is group writing, with a strong emphasis on brainstorming ideas first and then organizing them into an appropriately coherent shape before writing the first draft.

Another useful tactic addresses the lack of fluency directly. At the beginning of each class, the learners have five minutes to write as much as they can, without giving any thought to review or correction. The topics can be totally random, e.g. 'Today I want you to write about your family / your journey to school / your shoes', etc. Be very accurate with the five minutes; make sure your timing is exact. When five minutes are up, the learners count the words they've written and try to do more the next day. It's good for them to keep a record so they can monitor their own progress. It's also fun with some (but not all) classes to introduce an element of competition, which can help motivation.

I have focused on Saudi learners here because they make up a significant group of learners with specific needs in my teaching context, but these methods have also worked very well with learners from lots of other cultures with the same issues.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand



The description above talks about the challenges in teaching writing to students from one particular culture. What are some of the challenges specific to teaching the students in your classes? Are their issues the same as those discussed above, or are they different?

15.5 Developing a writing course

Determining goals

Students on a writing course may have very specific needs or the course may simply aim to improve their general writing proficiency. In the former case, needs analysis (see Chapter 17) can provide information on the kinds of writing skills the learners need, the kinds of texts they need to be able to produce and what their current writing difficulties are. In the latter case, students may have specific goals, as in the following example for an academic writing course (Holst, 1993, cited in Hyland, 2003: 68):

By the end of the course, a student will be able to:

- Specify a purpose, audience and format for a given writing task.
- Generate questions and ideas, using a variety of brainstorming, free writing and analytical techniques.
- Draft a paper rapidly.
- Edit a draft for sense, organization, audience and style.

- Evaluate and edit others' writing.
- Analyze a specialist text for its structure and characteristic stylistic features.
- Write an essay with a thesis, supporting argument, introduction and conclusion.
- Write an essay, using multiple sources and appropriate citation techniques.
- In the case of learners who have no immediate needs for specific writing skills, a writing course may set out to teach general writing skills relevant to the learners' proficiency level, interests and the constraints of the course.

A writing course should also reflect core principles that underpin teaching practices, principles that are based on an informed understanding of the nature of second language writing.

Determining goals may involve creative thinking on the part of the teacher. Here, a teacher describes how writing about a community-service project served to prepare students for the ultimate goal of passing a timed-writing exam. Such students often identify as Americans, but are native to another country and thus may have writing problems consistent with those of second language learners.

Service learning and developmental college writers

One of the most successful projects I had my college developmental writing students do was a semester-long service-learning experience. My students at an urban state university were mostly local generation 1.5* and long-term English language learners who had been decent students in high school, but whose placement test scores indicated that they were not ready for first-year composition classes. My mandate from the university was to prepare them, [whether] necessary [or not], to pass a timed writing exam that would demonstrate their ability to read, write and think critically. The texts chosen for the exam prompts usually discussed a generic hot topic with which students were presumed to have already had some experience, such as advertisements in schools or minimum grade requirements for participation on school sports teams. The problem with these prompts was that my students had not actually spent much, if any, time thinking about these issues in their previous academic experience and, as a result, had little background knowledge and no opinions about the topics. In short, they did not care and did not invest their mental energy into making connections that would allow them to take a stand and support an argument.

After a year of trying to find prompts that students might care about, a colleague and I attended a conference presentation about service learning. We realized that we could connect the writing requirements of our course to participation in local community-service projects, thus enhancing the students' awareness of the world beyond their immediate experiences and giving them concrete material for their writing. We arranged for representatives from four local service agencies – a food bank, a tutoring centre, an

urban tree-planting organization and the university health education programme – to visit our classes, giving students information about how to volunteer at their agencies.

The unit, as we designed it, overlays the entire semester. All course activities, readings and writing prompts are related to the theme of community issues, supporting students' development of critical thinking about social problems in the local area and reflection on their experiences at the community-service agency. Students kept a reflective journal, where prompts focused their thoughts on their expectations and experiences doing service and [on] reading about an issue connected to their service agency, such as homelessness or urban environmental damage. They selected magazine and journal articles related to their chosen issue, summarized individual articles and then pulled the summaries together into a synthesis paper explaining how others have addressed the issue. A final term paper, built on their journal reflections and readings, asked the students to take a stand on the issue they had chosen, illustrate their arguments with examples from their experience at the community-service agency and propose a solution to the problem.

Service learning gave my students a chance to see the world from someone else's perspective. I saw, through their reflective writings, their dawning awareness of how other people in our city lived. They wrote about customers they have talked with at a food bank and how they learned about a family's need for food aid, because they are living on one parent's small salary in a small apartment with many children. They wrote about getting to know a child they tutored who talked about his family's immigration experiences from Mexico and how he, with limited English skills, served as the family translator. They wrote about seeing neighbourhoods around the city with much more dilapidated houses than around where they lived, and how the trees they planted added the only touch of nature in the area.

The best essays my students produced related their research findings on government policy to their service experiences and then connected both of these abstract concepts to their own immediate lives. They reflected on how they had never realized how much their parents had to work to buy their homes and put food on the table. They reflected on the joys they felt being able to alleviate a bit of the pain others felt. Many wrote about bringing friends and family members to the service organization, to donate food or to lend a few hours labour to the agency.

From these glimpses into other city residents' experiences, the students realized that they were not exactly like everyone else in the city. Their personal concerns, as big as they seemed at the moment, were much less dire than those faced by other people they met. They also saw that, as small as their contributions were to the agencies where they were working, they made a difference in the life of a few people who needed help.

Betsy Gilliland, teacher and teacher educator, Honolulu, HI, US

* The term 'generation 1.5' generally refers to immigrant students who move to the United States at the age of 12 or older and enrol in middle school or high school in the US (Oudenhoven, 2006, cited in Masterson, 2007).

The components of a writing course

The different kinds of knowledge and skills learners need to acquire to become effective writers are summarised by Hyland (2003) as follows:

- *Content knowledge*: How can topics for writing activities be chosen? Can students be involved in selecting topics to write about? And do students have the necessary background knowledge to write about topics they may choose or be asked to write about?
- *System knowledge*: How will grammar be used to support their writing needs? What areas of grammar will be most useful to them?
- *Process knowledge*: How will students get ideas and information to use in writing? Will they make use of the internet, group discussion, library research, etc.?
- *Genre and text knowledge*: What kinds of texts will students learn to write? Do they need to improve their skill in composing particular kinds of texts, such as essays, business letters or reports? How will students become aware of the principle of organization underlying different types of writing, such as recounts, descriptions or business letters?
- *Context knowledge*: How will students develop awareness of the influences on the writing context for the type of writing they engage in, as well as awareness of cultural factors that affect expectations about the nature of appropriate written texts?



In your experience, which of the dimensions above usually receives greatest attention when teaching writing?

Content knowledge

Content for writing activities will depend on the type of writing students are learning. Content can either provide the basis for organizing the course, as in CLIL (see Chapter 3), or it may be chosen after other syllabus decisions have been made. For example, with a text-based approach, text-types will be chosen first and content decisions made subsequently. With personal writing, choice of content is often made by the students themselves. With a process approach, a variety of techniques are used at the planning stage to develop possible content for a piece of writing, such as internet searches, reading, interviews and opinion surveys. Clustering, or word mapping, may also be used. The student writes about a topic on a page or computer screen and organizes words and concepts around the central concept. Students may be unfamiliar with procedures used for researching or developing content for writing and may need direction and support in this process.

System knowledge

Focus on grammar and sentence organization is usually addressed after issues of content and organization have been initiated. However, basic-level writing courses and materials

for grammar and writing are often closely integrated, so that grammar-based activities are linked to simple paragraph writing. Activities that address grammatical knowledge in the context of writing include:

Activity type	Procedure
• Sentence combining.	• Students combine two or more basic sentences to produce longer and more complex sentences.
• Expanding.	• Students rewrite a paragraph to make it longer, and, in the process, try out new items of grammar.
• Combining.	• Students combine jigsaw segments of a text.
• Extending.	• Students add a paragraph to a text to complete it.
• Completing.	• Students complete the missing sections of a text, using target structures.
• Paralleling.	• Students create a text that follows a given model and uses target structures.
• Rewriting.	• Students rewrite a text to turn it from present to past.
• Converting.	• Students turn an oral text into a written text, such as a recount.
• Correcting.	• Students rewrite a text, correcting errors of grammar and syntax.



How would you rate the exercises above? What other activities do you think can be used to develop grammatical accuracy in writing?

A teacher offers suggestions on grammar focus (and organization) for students preparing for the IELTS exam:



Grammar and the advanced-level student

We get a lot of students needing to achieve a 6 or a 7 score on the IELTS academic test. Often, the most difficult parts of the exam are the writing, especially Part 2, the 'academic' essay.

It seems to take a very long time (maybe five to six months of full-time study) for learners to significantly improve their grammar. When one does focus on grammar, especially at the IELTS 4 to 6 levels, it's important to expose learners to a more focused range of grammatical structures than is common in most general English coursebooks, where the verb phrase is king. I spend much more time these days on noun groups,

because they are so important in academic writing. Most learners have, at some time, received a red line under what they thought was a sentence, but was, in fact, only a very long noun. Identifying the 'head' and breaking up the modifier and qualifier into their various constituents is really useful.

Corpus linguistics has shown us how important the preposition phrase is in noun-group qualifiers. Rather than spending hours going over yet more relative clauses, vary the options with a few preposition phrases and the odd *that* clause.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

Process knowledge

Activities that focus on the writing process and the use of strategies are often associated with the methodology known as the *process approach*, as we saw earlier. However, they can also be used in conjunction with other teaching methods. Three stages are often distinguished in the writing process, as we mentioned: *rehearsing*, *drafting*, and *revising*. Rehearsing, or pre-writing, involves finding a topic; finding ideas about the topic; letting ideas interact, develop and organize themselves; and thinking about the audience and the purpose of the writing task. At this stage, the writer may not know how many of the ideas or how much of the information will be used. Drafting involves turning ideas into words, in rough form. The writer sketches out an idea, examines it and follows it through for a while – perhaps letting the idea follow its own course. What has been written serves to generate further ideas, plans and goals. Thus, the process of writing creates its own meaning. The writer may also go back to the rehearsing stage and alternates between the rehearsing and drafting phases. Revising involves evaluating what has been written and making deletions and additions, as necessary. The following are examples of activities that address writing processes and strategies.

Activities related to the rehearsing phase:

- *Journals*: Students explore ideas and record thoughts in a journal.
- *Brainstorming*: Students rapidly exchange information about a topic or about something they have selected to read.
- *Free association*: Students react to a topic on the board and say or write whatever words come to mind when they see the topic word.
- *Values clarification*: Students compare attitudes toward a variety of specific problems and situations.
- *Clustering or word mapping*: The writer writes a topic in the middle of the page and organizes related words and concepts in clusters around a central topic.
- *Ranking activities*: Students rank a set of features according to priorities.
- *Quickwriting*: Students write as much as they can in a given time (e.g. five minutes) on a topic, without worrying about the form of what they write.

- *Information-gathering activities:* Students are given assignments related to a theme or topic and resources where related information can be found.

Activities related to the drafting/revising phase:

- *Strategic questioning:* Students examine a set of questions to help them focus, prioritize and select ideas for writing.
- *Timed-focused writing:* Students write quickly within a specified time period on a topic they have selected during pre-writing.
- *Elaboration exercise:* Students are given a sentence and collectively elaborate and develop it.
- *Reduction exercise:* Students are given a wordy and complex paragraph and break it down into simpler sentences.
- *Jumbled paragraph:* Students are given a jumbled paragraph and reorder the sentences.
- *Jumbled essay:* Students are given jumbled paragraphs and reorder them to make an essay.
- *Writing thesis statements and topic sentences:* Students are given a statement from which to develop a thesis statement and topic sentences.
- *Quickwriting:* Students quickly write various sections of their composition: beginnings, central sections and conclusions.
- *Mindmapping:* Students create a diagram showing how words and ideas can be organized around a central theme or idea, producing what is sometimes called a 'spidergram'.
- *Group drafting:* Students work jointly on drafting different sections of a composition.

Activities related to the revising phase:

- *Peer feedback:* Students work in groups and read, criticize and proofread their own writing.
- *Group-correction activities:* Students are given essays containing certain focused deletions (e.g. topic sentences, thesis statements, cohesive markers) and must supply the missing elements.
- *Rewriting exercises:* Awkward sentences or confusing paragraphs from student essays are distributed and rewritten by students.
- *Revising heuristics:* Students examine a set of questions that prepare them for revision activities.
- *Teacher feedback:* This may take place at several stages during the writing process, rather than at the end of the process, where it no longer serves any useful purpose. The teacher may comment on quickwrites, rough drafts and peer feedback, for example.
- *Checklists:* Students may have a short check-list, drawing their attention to specific features of sentence, paragraph or text organization that they should attend to in writing.

Summarizing classroom procedures in the process approach, Silva comments (Silva 1990: 15):

Translated into the classroom context, this approach calls for providing a positive, encouraging and collaborative workshop environment within which students, with ample time and minimal interference, can work through the composing processes. The teacher's role is to help students develop viable strategies for getting started (finding topics, generating ideas and information, focusing, and planning structure and procedure), for drafting (encouraging multiple drafts), for revising (adding, deleting, modifying and rearranging ideas) and for editing (attending to vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics).

Genre and text knowledge

In teaching writing skills, the focus is on teaching students how to create different kinds of texts, based on their educational, professional or personal needs. In a genre or text-based approach, students are often taught through a process of explicit modelling and practice of text features (Burns, 2010; Feez and Joyce, 1998). This addresses three stages in the creating of written texts:

- *Modelling*: Teacher and students discuss and analyze a text in terms of its purpose, organization and language features.
- *Joint construction*: Teachers and students construct a new text, following the features seen in the model.
- *Independent construction*: Students create their own texts, using techniques of drafting, revising and reviewing.

Green (2004: 47) gives more details on how this approach can be used:

Writing sequence	Teacher's role
1. Establish clear aims.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarify writing objectives.
2. Provide example(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce writing models.
3. Explore the features of the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look into generic features of models.
4. Define the conventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain typical language/content conventions of the genre.
5. Demonstrate how it is written.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher writes, employing generic features and conventions explored above.
6. Compose together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shared writing.
7. Scaffold the first attempts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provision of differentiated writing frames or other writing support.
8. Independent writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Independent application of writerly tools and generic conventions learned.
9. Review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formative evaluation of uses of learning.

Activities that address the nature and organization of texts include:

Activity	Procedure
• Labelling.	• Students match sections of a text to labels that identify its organizational pattern.
• Reordering.	• Students reorder sections of a text.
• Comparing.	• Students compare different text types to identify their patterns of organization.
• Analyzing.	• Students examine authentic texts to identify their patterns of organization.
• Correcting.	• Students examine texts containing information in an inappropriate sequence and correct the sequence.
• Identifying.	• Students read texts and identify the kind of audience they are intended for.
• Rewriting.	• Students rewrite a text for a different audience.
• Completing.	• Students complete an unfinished text (e.g. adding a conclusion).
• Paralleling.	• Students write a text that parallels a model text.
• Practising.	• Students practise different rhetorical patterns (e.g. defining, comparing, explaining).



What kinds of texts do your students most often need to master?

Context knowledge

Developing context knowledge in students involves raising awareness of how cultural factors influence the nature of written texts. Hyland (2003: 46) comments that essays in English and the students' own culture may differ in some of the following ways:

- Different organizational preferences.
- Different approaches to argument (justification, persuasive appeals, credibility).
- Different ways of incorporating materials (use of quotes, paraphrase, allusion).
- Different ways and extent of getting readers' attention and orienting them to topic.
- Different estimates of reader knowledge.
- Different uses of cohesion and metadiscourse markers.
- Differences in how overt linguistic features are used (generally less subordination, fewer passives, fewer modifiers, less lexical variety and specificity in L2 writing).
- Differences in complexity of style.

Other text types may also take a different form in one culture from another, such as letters to a newspaper, editorials, narratives and so on. Addressing issues of this kind in a writing course involves addressing questions such as the following, in relation to sample texts that the students may use for reference or as models:

- In what situation are texts like these used?
- Who usually writes these kinds of texts?
- Why do they write them?
- Who is the text intended for?
- Do you use similar kinds of texts in your own culture?
- How similar or different are they?

Students may then compare examples of texts, both from within the same genre as well as across different genres, in order to get a sense of how texts reflect the specific contexts and cultures in which they are used.

The writing lesson

The teacher's role in the lesson

Teachers have many different roles in a writing class, depending on the level of the class, the type of writing the students are learning and the stage in the writing process the students are engaged in. These roles may include:

- *Facilitator*: The teacher helps the students find the resources they need to complete writing assignments.
- *Expert writer*: If students are learning an unfamiliar genre or text type, the teacher provides advice on how the text is organized and what its features are.
- *Cultural informant*: At times, the teacher will help students understand the social and cultural context for a text and any expectations readers of the text may have.
- *Collaborator*: Sometimes the teacher and students will work through a writing task together, jointly sharing ideas and solving issues as they arise. The teacher provides 'scaffolding' as the students develop a text (see Chapter 2).
- *Audience*: Sometimes the teacher will be the person students write for.
- *Investigator*: The teacher observes students learning to write and through observation and discussion can investigate what problems students encounter and how they try to resolve them.
- *Problem solver*: As issues arise related to content, form, organization, etc., the teacher will seek to help students work their way through them.
- *Evaluator*: The teacher reviews students' writing and gives suggestions for improvement.

For example, Wennerstrom (2003: 44) describes, in these terms, the role of the teacher in a discourse-based (or text-based) approach to teaching writing:

Given the complexity of language in action, the less instructors attempt to provide pat answers, the more students can be encouraged to discover a range of answers for themselves. The instructor's role is one of organizer, coach, cultural resource and provider of feedback. As organizers, instructors can provide adequate time and space for students to carry out assignments and activities. They can also serve as linguistic and cultural resources in the students' research and discovery process.

Here, a teacher comments on his role during the writing lesson:

My role in a writing class

In my intermediate-level writing class, I see myself as a facilitator. I try to avoid direct teaching, where possible. I let the students choose the kinds of things they want to write, and I help them find the resources that can help them. I try to help students understand a context for a writing task, through conversation, discussion and reading. They can decide if they want to work on their own or with a classmate. I try to establish the sense of a community of writers in the classroom. This helps them to develop confidence and to take more risks.

Dino Mahoney, teacher, teacher educator and writer, London, UK

The learner's role in the lesson

In a process-based approach, students might work independently on some tasks, but in pairs or groups for other activities. Willingness to work collaboratively with other students will be important, and students may take part both in peer writing, as well as peer feedback. In a genre-based or text-based approach, the student may sometimes take on the role of researcher (Wennerstrom, 2003: 44):

The process of research and discovery can often be enhanced by the inclusion of several perspectives. Different students have different avenues of access to documents and the culture being studied, and can contribute to the discussion and analysis [of texts] from different points of view. By conducting research and data analysis in teams, students can increase their repertoire of genre samples, and gain a broader understanding of how discourse functions in social contexts.

Stages of the lesson

Different lesson formats will depend on what aspect of writing the lesson addresses. Some lessons might start with gathering ideas to write about; some might start with examining an example of a good piece of writing; others might start with a review of some of the features of a particular kind of text.

Writing tasks

The kinds of tasks the teacher uses will depend on which type of knowledge the teacher wants to develop. Hyland (2003: 114–5) gives extensive examples, including the following:

Task type	Content	System	Process	Genre	Context
• Generate word lists for writing.	X		x		
• Combine sentences provided in materials.		x	x		
• Identify purpose and use of a text.				x	x
• Complete unfinished texts.		x		x	
• Create a parallel text, following a model.		x		x	
• Practise specific rhetorical patterns.			x	x	
• Revise a draft in response to others' comments.	X	x	x	x	X
• Practise various text types.			x	x	
• Read and respond to another's draft.	X	x	x	x	x

Feedback on learners' writing

An important issue in the teaching of writing is how to give students feedback on their written work, when to give it and by whom and how. Nothing is more discouraging for a teacher than to have the daunting task, as a weekend chore, of reading and commenting on 40 or 50 student essays. Some help is offered by word-processing programs if students prepare their writing on a computer, since software is available to identify spelling and simple grammatical problems. However, intervention by the teacher cannot easily be avoided. Such feedback may include comments on any aspects of a piece of written work,

including spelling, grammar, style and organization. However, the effect of such feedback is not always easy to determine. Do students learn from it, or do they simply pay minimum attention to it and move on to their next assignment?

Some teachers use checklists in which a score is given for each different aspect of a composition, such as content, organization, vocabulary, language and mechanics (spelling, punctuation, paragraphing).

The kind of feedback the teacher gives may depend on what stage in the writing process the writing represents (e.g. drafting, composing, editing), and feedback should both encourage students (through praise for ideas, originality, etc.) as well as guide them towards needed improvements.

Peer feedback is sometimes an alternative to teacher feedback and is an important feature of a process approach to writing instruction. With this approach, students read drafts of each other's compositions, and may use checklists or question sets to help them read and respond to their partner's writing. Not all teachers and students appreciate the value of peer feedback, however. Teachers may feel that students comment on the wrong things or give incorrect feedback. Students may not value their partner's views or comments. However, peer feedback does offer a more comfortable feedback process and is usually supplemented by teacher feedback, as well.

Gilmore (2009: 364) provides a useful summary of the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to feedback on students' sentence-level errors in their writing:

Feedback method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete reformulation of errors by teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students receive accurate and comprehensive feedback, which specifically addresses their language needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time consuming for teacher. Does not encourage cognitive processing of errors by students, so there may be no long-term benefits. The quantity of corrections may discourage students.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-class peer feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces teacher's workload. Provides a wider audience for students' work, which can have a motivating effect. Encourages greater cognitive processing of errors by students and promotes learner independence. Encourages collaboration and negotiation of meaning in the classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students require training in how to give constructive feedback, which takes time away from actual writing practice. May be perceived as less valuable feedback by students themselves. Time-consuming in-class activity. Feedback can be (a) wrong or (b) less helpful than teacher's comments.

Feedback method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective feedback by the teacher on specific issues, or target language, or current concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces teacher's workload. Feedback can be tailored to ongoing themes in the class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less comprehensive feedback provided, which may not address students' particular concerns.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal marking (marking codes, underlining problem areas, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces teacher's workload. Encourages greater cognitive processing by students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not provide sufficient support for less proficient students to correct errors by themselves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No feedback on errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces teacher's workload. Increases the amount of time for actual writing practice, which should benefit students' writing fluency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides no support or encouragement for students to correct errors. Goes against students' desire for feedback and may cause frustration.

The role of technology

Technology offers support for both the teacher and students in a writing course (see Chapter 19). It impacts the teaching of writing in two ways: by facilitating the development of new types of writing, and by helping in the writing process. Most readers will be familiar with blogs, wikis and social networks. The question is to what extent the skills necessary for being a successful writer of these genres differ from those of traditional writing. Although, at the linguistic level, the differences may not be so great (but compare the language of texting with that of microblogging, or emails with that of letters), one of the characteristics of many forms of online writing is their social and collaborative nature. Many of the writing forms mentioned above are (semi-)public, and shared directly between readers and authors. The conventions of such writing are different in a number of ways. Whether it is the language teacher's job to teach these conventions is a choice to be made, but many teachers report success in motivating students when using such texts in class. They have a number of advantages for teaching writing in that, for example, lower-level learners can work on a text together (such as a Wikipedia entry) or start by writing shorter texts (for example, on microblogs). Blogs are useful for encouraging responses and

ongoing dialogue about a topic, and social networks can help to encourage writing outside of the classroom.

Many new technological tools and online resources are available to support student writing, both at the levels of language and content (Stapleton and Radia, 2009). One of the earliest uses of technology in both L1 and L2 writing was through word processors (Pennington, 1993). Red and green underlines with word-processing software, alerting the writer to spelling and grammar errors, together with the aid of a pocket electronic translator and electronic thesaurus, have greatly reduced the frequency of common errors such as subject–verb agreement in student writing. Concordances provide examples of grammatically correct usage of words and expressions, as an alternative to using a grammar reference book. Some are specially designed for language learners, such as www.lectutor.ca/concordancers/ (see Chapter 10). Search engines similarly enable students to check the appropriateness of collocations, avoiding errors such as *heavy illness*. The internet also serves as a resource to support the content or ideas students write about, and search engines, such as Web of Science and Google, in addition to the frequently used Wikipedia, can be used – although teachers often discourage use of the latter since its sources can not always be trusted. Scholar can be used to locate information in areas of academic writing, although as Stapleton and Radia emphasize, students need training in how to access and use information from these and similar sites. Despite some teachers' scepticism concerning social networking sites and on-line encyclopedias, they can be useful resources for student writers. Stapleton and Radia (2009: 180) observe:

With the impact that new technology is providing now, an argument can be made that, in fact, we have now entered the realm of a new 'Tech-assisted era of L2 writing'. The present 'process approach' to writing encourages activities, such as brainstorming, portfolios, multiple drafts and peer review, all of which make sense. However, collectively, the impact of the multiple tools and resources [available to students] suggest that in parallel with these traditional elements of the process approach, another kind of process is emerging.

Online corpora, which contain large collections of texts from different genres, such as the British National Corpus (www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk); can also be useful. The teacher can highlight a problem area in a student's writing, and the student can go online to compare how a word or expression is used in native-speaker writing, allowing the student to correct errors in his or her writing (Gilmore, 2009). Online mindmapping tools are useful at the preparation stage, and have the added advantage that they can be shared easily between learners and with the teacher, as well as worked on collaboratively.



In what ways do you feel technological tools, such as the above, change the nature of the writing process (if you feel they do)? And what impact does this have on your teaching of writing skills?

Even when technology is not used directly, familiar features of the students' online world may be incorporated into the writing process. A teacher describes how he has used aspects of computer-game design to motivate younger learners:



'Gamification' and the writing process

Recently, I've been trying out ideas to encourage writing with a class of 13 to 14 year-olds. It became clear to me, at the beginning of term, that the learners did not like writing, and yet this was something they clearly needed help with. In particular, they seemed to write very slowly and lacked focus and motivation. Because of this, I decided to ask them to do some speed writing in every lesson and started to use 'gamification' to see if this could motivate them. 'Gamification' means using elements of game design (particularly computer games) in non-game contexts.

Based on ideas in Lee Sheldon's *The Multiplayer Classroom: Designing Coursework as a Game* (Cengage Learning, 2012), I have been rewarding the learners with points, levels and badges, depending on how many correct words they have been able to write. The learners write for five minutes every class, and then they finish by counting the number of words they write, which become their points. Later, I mark them and deduct a point from the total for each mistake.

Depending on their score, the learners reach a certain 'level' and are awarded a badge in their writing notebooks. For instance, if they have 50 points, they have reached Level 1, 100 points gets them to Level 2, 150 points to Level 3, etc. After a term of doing this, I'm happy to say that the speed-writing activity is the favourite thing they do in class, and they arrive anxious to see how many points they have been awarded. I can also tell that they have become much more fluent writers and are starting to self-correct their errors as they are writing, too.

Graham Stanley, teacher and materials writer, Barcelona, Spain

15.6 Assessing writing

Hughes (2003: 83) suggests that assessing writing involves three issues:

- 1 Writing tasks should be set that are properly representative of the range of tasks we would expect students to be able to perform.
- 2 The tasks should elicit writing that is truly representative of the students' writing ability.
- 3 The samples of writing can be appropriately scored.

It is also important to consider the kinds of decisions that test-scores on a writing test will be used to make. Is the student's writing skill sufficient to enable him or her to enter an academic programme, to pass a particular test, or to perform well in a particular work situation? Or is the purpose of the test to find out if the attention to particular aspects of writing in a writing course has been sufficient?

Many different writing tasks can be used to elicit examples of students' writing ability. For example:

- Writing a letter.
- Writing a description of something from a diagram or picture.
- Writing a summary of text.
- Writing on a topic to a specified length in words or paragraphs.
- Completing a partially written text.
- Writing a paragraph using a given topic sentence.
- Completing a paragraph.
- Writing a criticism or a response to a piece of writing.
- Writing a story, based on an outline provided.

Different tasks make different demands of writers, since they may differ in terms of the amount of writing they elicit, the background or previous knowledge the learner brings to the task, and the intrinsic difficulty of the task itself. Hughes emphasizes that a valid writing test should test only writing ability and not other skills, such as reading skills or creative ability. A test that contains a variety of writing tasks gives a more representative picture of a student's writing ability than one that contains only one writing task. The most difficult part of producing a writing test, however, is developing the scoring procedures that will be used with the test. Many tests make use of an analytic scoring procedure; that is, a score is given for different aspects of a piece of writing, such as grammar, content and organization. Other tests make use of a holistic scoring method, where a single score is assigned to writing samples, based on an overall impressionistic assessment of the student's performance on the test (see Chapter 20). Electronic support for scoring is also available with automated essay scoring (see <https://criterion.ets.org> and <http://myaccess.com>).

Portfolio assessment

Many writing teachers make use of portfolios for the assessment of student writing. A portfolio is a collection of students' writing, assembled over time. It usually contains examples of the students' best work and provides a collection of writing samples, rather than a single piece of work. It may also include a written reflection by the student on his or her progress in writing, as well as a self-assessment of his or her strengths and weaknesses in writing. The portfolio is used as the basis for a final grade.



What do you think are some of the advantages and limitations of portfolio assessment?

15.7 Conclusion

The goal of writing instruction is to provide opportunities for learners to develop awareness of the conventions of written English and the nature of written texts, as well as the knowledge and skills needed to produce texts that are appropriate for their

purposes. Writing is a complex form of communication, and writing skills take a long time to develop. Throughout the process of learning to write, teachers have a crucial role to play in guiding students through the processes of planning and creating written texts and in creating a supportive environment for learning – one in which novice writers can explore the nature of written texts and the knowledge and processes involved in creating them. As students evolve in their writing, the roles of teachers and learners, and patterns of interaction between them, will change as both collaborate in the different stages of the writing process.

Providing opportunities for novice writers to master the different dimensions of writing – including content, system, process, genre and context knowledge – is a continuous challenge in the teaching of writing – and one which cannot be easily reduced to lists of rules and formulae. Teaching writing not only involves providing guidance and support for learners as they address these different dimensions of writing but also involves helping sustain learners' motivation to improve their mastery of writing skills and conventions. An understanding of the nature of the issues learners face in mastering writing as well as the ability to choose appropriate writing tasks and activities are essential to success in the teaching of second language writing.

Discussion questions

- 1 Examine a writing coursebook. What aspects of writing does it include?
- 2 What kind of writing skills do your learners need to master? For what kinds of purposes do they use writing in English?
- 3 Examine some of your recent uses of writing on the internet (e.g. on social media sites or in emails). How does this kind of writing differ from the kind of writing your students need to master?
- 4 Review the range of course offerings in a language institute and the kinds of writing courses they offer. What needs do these courses address and what kind of approach to the teaching of writing do they reflect?
- 5 Do you think the use of model compositions has a role in a writing course? What are some advantages and limitations of the use of models?
- 6 Do you think it is useful for students to examine examples of poorly written texts by novice writers? If so, how could these be used in teaching?
- 7 In essay-writing courses, students are often taught to write according to particular patterns or models, such as narration, description, comparison/contrast and exposition. Take one of these text types and locate an example of authentic text that reflects the particular text type. What patterns or organization do you find in the text?
- 8 What are some examples of creative writing? What kinds of skills does creative writing require? Do you think creative writing is a useful activity to include in a writing course?

- 9** Examples of the cohesive devices of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion were discussed in section 15.4. Choose a section of a magazine or newspaper article or any other suitable text. Can you find examples of these devices in the text?
- 10** In any given culture, a text has certain accepted conventions and cohesive elements. Why don't the following work as texts?

A	He offered her some chocolates. She took two chocolates out of the box. She put one chocolate on her plate. She started to eat the other chocolate. 'These chocolates are delicious,' she said. 'Are those chocolates delicious?' he asked. 'Why don't you have another chocolate?' he suggested. 'I will take another chocolate,' she replied. She took another chocolate.
B	Michael took a book off the shelf and gave it to Jane. He was applying for a new job. She's been to the supermarket that morning. The book was a pictorial history of Singapore.
C	'I'd always wanted to go to New York. However, you can imagine how excited I was once we got there. We wanted to do some shopping and, unfortunately, it was raining heavily. Meanwhile, we went to the Guggenheim, instead. Moreover, it's a wonderful museum.'

- 11** What types of strategies can writers use throughout the writing process? Make a list of: before-writing, while-writing and after-writing strategies. Which of these do you think are the most useful to teach?

Appendix 1:

Teaching topic writing

Review the sample lesson plan below, submitted by Qin Bangjin, a teacher and teacher educator in Yunnan, China. What types of writing knowledge – content, system, process, genre or context – do you think it will be most successful in teaching? What reasons can you give?

1 Goal

To learn the organization pattern of comparison – advantages and disadvantages

2 Resources

A. *Handout 1*: Hard copies of a reading passage

The discussion about the impact of the Internet on our lives has never stopped in the past few years. Perhaps all of us agree that the Internet has both advantages and disadvantages.

The biggest advantage of the Internet is that it provides a platform from which we can obtain most information we need and through which we can communicate with others conveniently. 'What's more, we can study and entertain ourselves with it. Last but by no means least, the Internet also brings friendship between individuals and even between countries. However, the negative effects are also obvious. To begin with, some content on the Internet is violent and offensive, which will corrode some people's souls. Furthermore, the chatting on the Internet may have harmful effects on people's study and rest, particularly on those who become addicted to online chats.

Up to now, we can see clearly that the Internet itself is not beneficial or harmful. The key lies in the user. So long as we can make proper use of it, it can be helpful to us in many ways.

B. *Handout 2*: Hard copies of the organization pattern

Advantages and disadvantages

The discussion about the impact of _____ on our lives has never stopped in the past few years. Perhaps all of us agree that _____ has both advantages and disadvantages.

The biggest advantage of _____. What's more, _____. Last but by no means least, _____. However, the negative effects are also obvious. To begin with, _____. Furthermore, _____.

Up to now, we can see clearly that _____ is not beneficial or harmful. The key lies in _____. So long as we can _____, it can be helpful to us in many ways.

3 Timing: 50 minutes

4 Grouping: Pair work, group work

5 Activities

- Question and answer (Q and A)
- Reading
- Discussion
- Presentation
- Topic writing
- Summary

6 Sequencing

- Opening (5 minutes)
 - 1) Q and A: Teacher asks three or four questions as a lead-in activity, for example:
 - *Do you have a computer?*
 - *What do you use your computer for?*

- *Do you use the Internet?*
 - *How do you use it?*
- 2) Presentation: Teacher describes the goal of the lesson and states the activities students will do.
- Main activities (40 minutes)
 - 3) Reading: Teacher gives students Handout 1, and students read for the main ideas.
 - 4) Pairwork: Students try to give out the main ideas by asking and answering questions:
 - *What is the passage about?*
 - *What are its advantages?*
 - *What are its disadvantages?*
 - *What is the conclusion?*
 - 5) Groupwork: Teacher gives students Handout 2 and divides them into groups of three to five. Each group is assigned a topic and discuss it by trying to find out its advantages and disadvantages, on the basis of Handout 2. The possible topics are:
- ①Mobile phone ②Electronic dictionary ③Computer games ④Optional courses
 ⑤Part-time job ⑥Job interviewing ⑦Social practice ⑧Private car ⑨Travelling
 ⑩One-child policy
- 6) Checking: Teacher asks three or four students to give an oral presentation on behalf of their groups by filling in Handout 2.
- Closure (5 minutes)
 - 7) Summary: Teacher reviews and summarizes what students have learned.
 - 8) Homework: Students choose a topic and write a short essay in three paragraphs, including the thesis statement, advantages, disadvantages and conclusion.
 - 9) Teacher dismisses the class.

Appendix 2:

Guidelines for digital storytelling

Look at the activity for digital storytelling, submitted by Hayo Reinders, a teacher educator in Auckland, New Zealand. How might such an activity help students to become fluent writers?

Planning a digital storytelling activity

Here are some options to consider when planning for the activity:

Preparing the students

- 1 Explain and give a rationale for the activity.

Part 3 Language and the four skills

- 2 Make it clear what text type you are expecting your students to produce. Do you want a recount or a narrative? If a narrative, a biography or a romance?
- 3 Let's say you want students to produce a narrative. What do they already know about this, and what needs to be pre-taught? Do you need to give them, for example, a framework to help them structure their story, using an orientation, a complication, a sequence of events, a resolution and (optionally) a coda?
- 4 Do your students need to only write out their stories or also talk about or present them? Will you favour fluency or accuracy in your marking?
- 5 Be specific in what final product you expect to see. Do you want a movie of ten seconds or one of two minutes? A slideshow with three slides or 30? How much language should be included?
- 6 What level do you expect of your students? Clearly, beginner learners may not be able to produce more than a brief recording or story. Advanced learners may be asked to build a more complex narrative.
- 7 Do you have samples you can show students?

Technical preparation

- 1 Do you have the necessary computers and other hardware available? Ask your students to bring their mobile phones and MP3 players, if you will use them. How will students transfer their images and recordings onto a computer? Warn your IT support people for a barrage of help requests!
- 2 Do you have the necessary software installed and the appropriate licences?

Conducting the activity

- 1 Pair or group students to work on their stories together. Bear in mind the total number of projects to ensure you can handle them! It may be better to have groups of, say, four students to minimize the number of individual projects.
- 2 How will the students get their ideas? Perhaps you can give them some tips or scenarios, or a checklist so they can interview each other. Or, of course, you can leave it up to them!
- 3 Have them create a *storyboard* first. A storyboard shows the different elements of the story they want to tell and when they appear. It can show each slide or each scene from a movie and describe what will happen there.
- 4 Ask students to give feedback on each other's drafts. Hand out a peer-feedback sheet for this.

Concluding the activity

- 1 Ask students to present their work. Make it clear what you expect from them. Do they simply show or play their story, or do you want them to explain what they did and why?
- 2 Ask students to post their stories on a (school) website.
- 3 Ask students to post comments on each other's stories.
- 4 Give the students feedback.
- 5 As a follow-up, you could focus on those areas where students had difficulties completing the activity.

Appendix 3:

Developing writing skills

Look at the beginning of a lesson from the textbook *Academic Encounters, Reading/Writing: Human Behavior*, 2nd edition (Seal, 2012). What approach to teaching writing do you think this lesson reflects?

Practicing Academic Writing

In Unit 3, you have learned about the different elements of body language and how the way we use body language sends out messages. You will use this information to write a short handbook.

Nonverbal Communication in My Culture

Produce a handbook that will help someone who is not a member of your culture understand how your culture uses body language. Divide the handbook into sections. Each section will describe one of the following elements of nonverbal communication: gestures, facial expressions, eye communication, touch, and space. In each section, you will summarize what you have learned about that element of body language. You will tell the visitor to your culture what different elements of body language mean. You will also explain what body language to expect and what to avoid.

PREPARING TO WRITE

Outlining

When you have to write a document that has different sections, it is best to do careful planning. You need to decide what headings and subheadings you might use and what is to go under each heading. The best way to do this is to create an outline.

Outlining before writing an essay can be very simple; you can just create a skeleton outline of your main ideas. However, when writing a report or handbook with different sections, it is best to do quite a bit of planning. You can start with a skeleton outline, but then you should expand it to include more specific examples and details.

Many students develop their own system of numbers and letters when they create outlines, but there is one principle that is used by most people: indentation. The more specific your idea, the more it is indented to the right underneath the more general idea to which it belongs.

- I. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - A. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - 1. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - 2. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - B. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - 1. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - 2. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
- II. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
 - A. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

A Decide what the main sections of your handbook will be and create a skeleton outline.

B Decide how you are going to organize each section of your handbook into logical subsections with clear subheadings. This will make it easier for you to write and easier for your reader to follow. Make sure that your subheading language is parallel; that is, that each subheading uses the same type of grammar and language.

Work with a partner and discuss which of the following subsections and subheadings for the topic of Gestures will lead to a clear and well-organized section of your handbook.

1.

Emblem gestures

Regulator gestures

Gestures foreigners should avoid

2.

Gestures for visitors to know

Gestures for visitors to use

Gestures for visitors to avoid

3.

The gesture for “Everything is fine”

The gesture for “He’s crazy”

The gesture for “I need money”

4.

Rude gestures

Finger and hand gestures

Head gestures

C Analyze the structure of the readings in this unit. Notice how many have subheadings and what those subheadings are. Also notice whether the reading starts immediately with a subheading or if there is an introduction to the reading.

D Decide what subsections you want to use and expand the skeleton outline that you have created so far into a more detailed outline.

E Parts of your handbook will contain information that is specific to your culture. It is therefore unlikely that you will be able to use information from this unit to help you write those parts. However, you will also need to have general statements about each body language type. Here, the readings can help you.

F Go back through each reading in this unit and see if there are parts of the reading that you would like to summarize or paraphrase. Look back at the sections on paraphrasing on page 80 and on summarizing on page 135. Then write your paraphrases and summaries, following the guidelines and making sure that you do not plagiarize.

G Use some of the pre-writing strategies that you have learned so far (Making a List on page 51 and Freewriting on page 105). Use those techniques to start getting down on paper some ideas and phrases that you can use in each section of your handbook.

Further reading

- Ferris, D. and Hedgcock, J. (2005) *Teaching ESL Composition: Purposes, Process, and Practice*, 2nd edition, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
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- Jones, R. H. and Hafter, C. A. (2012) *Understanding Digital Literacies: A Practical Introduction*, London: Routledge.
- Paltridge, B. et al. (2009) *Teaching Academic Writing*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Williams, J. (2004) *Teaching Writing in Second and Foreign Language Classrooms*, Boston: McGraw Hill.

16

Discourse and pragmatics

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What is the nature of discourse analysis?
 - Defining discourse analysis.
 - The relevance of discourse analysis.
 - The tools of discourse analysis.
- What is the nature of spoken discourse?
 - The discourse features of spoken texts.
 - Implications for teaching spoken discourse.
 - Classroom discourse.
- What is the nature of written discourse?
 - The discourse features of written texts.
 - Genre.
 - Implications for teaching written discourse.
- What is pragmatics?
 - Speech acts.
 - Other genres.
 - Implications for teaching pragmatics.

16.1 Introduction

When we ask learners what aspects of their English they want to improve, they often identify elements of the language system as their primary concern, as we see in these comments from intermediate-level learners:

- 'My grammar is still not very good, and I make lots of mistakes in writing.'
- 'I need to work more on my pronunciation: people sometimes have difficulties understanding me.'
- 'I often come across words I don't understand, so I want to have a bigger vocabulary.'

It is not surprising, therefore, that in many textbooks and language courses, the emphasis is often on establishing the components, or 'building blocks', of language – the knowledge of how sounds, words and grammar are used to create sentences in English – or to master what we have referred to elsewhere as *linguistic competence*. The sentence as a discrete entity has often been the focus of teaching and learning in language teaching, but as the cover of a recent book comments: 'Language teachers have long been aware of the devastating effect of learners' grammatically correct, yet situationally inappropriate, spoken or written communication.' 'Situationally appropriate communication' is the focus of discourse analysis and pragmatics – two domains of applied linguistics that are based on the assumption that communicative competence in a second language involves learning how to use language as written or spoken communication – that is, as discourse (Gee, 2010; Rose and Kasper, 2001; Hoey, 2001). Discourse analysis and pragmatics are concerned with how language is used to create different kinds of spoken and written texts, and the knowledge of context and procedures people make use of when they use language appropriately as discourse. Both discourse analysis and pragmatics have expanded our understanding of the nature of communicative competence in a second language, and in this chapter, we will explore the implications of these areas for the teaching of English as a second language. We will first examine the nature of discourse analysis and then turn to the nature of pragmatics.

16.2 The nature of discourse analysis

Defining discourse analysis

The term *discourse* refers to naturally occurring speech or writing. Discourse analysis focuses on how sentences function as spoken and written texts, and how such texts reflect the specific purposes or uses, as well as the contexts, in which they occur. These contexts include the physical setting (a bank, a classroom, an office) and the participants involved (who the people are and what their relationships are), in a particular time (one that makes references to what happened before and what might happen next), in the context of other texts or utterances (Jones, 2012: 3). Discourse analysis is based on the assumption that people have a shared understanding of the patterns and rules that underlie different types

of discourse that are used in a speech community or, rather, a discourse community. (A speech community is a group of people who share one or more common speech varieties.) These patterns may be associated with particular types of interaction (e.g. conversations, telephone calls, seminars, interviews) and with particular kinds of texts (letters, reports, news stories, journal articles). A good definition of the scope of discourse analysis is given in Demo (2001):

Discourse analysis is the examination of language use by members of a speech community. It involves looking at both language form and language function.



Can you give examples of how the setting of an interaction, and the participants involved, will affect the form such an interaction takes? For example, compare communication with a teacher inside and outside of a classroom.

Obviously, such a broad focus means that discourse analysis is an aspect of many different disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, communications and education, as well as within the language-based disciplines of linguistics and sociolinguistics. In language teaching, discourse analysis draws mainly on the latter two disciplines and focuses on the nature and role of written and spoken texts. But why is discourse analysis relevant to language teaching?

The relevance of discourse analysis

Discourse analysis studies the nature of *authentic* speech and writing and focuses on how people use language to communicate in the real world – a focus that also became important in communicative language teaching (see Chapter 3). However, as we saw in Chapter 3, the language which students encounter in classrooms and in traditional teaching materials often consists of isolated sentences or specially constructed texts designed to demonstrate and practise particular teaching points.

A discourse analysis approach would start from an example of authentic use of spoken or written language and examine how it reflects the context in which it occurred, the activity the speakers were involved in, and how these factors affected the grammatical and other choices the speaker made.

The tools of discourse analysis

A discourse analysis perspective argues that typical textbook exercises often do not present language realistically and authentically, and that in order to understand and participate in real communication outside of the classroom, learners need to work with examples of real language and study how language is used in authentic communication. (Finding suitable sources for texts of this kind is a challenge for textbook writers, but the internet

has made the task somewhat easier.) The tools of discourse analysis involve collecting examples of authentic speech or writing in order to understand not only the linguistic features of real discourse but also how authentic discourse reflects the purpose of the speech or writing, and the context in which it occurs. Analysis of spoken discourse involves recording examples of authentic speech, transcribing it and analyzing it, often using software specially developed for this purpose. The data may involve casual conversation, interviews, work-place communication, lectures and other types of classroom discourse, telephone communication, meetings and discussions. Analysis of written discourse is generally based on collecting examples of written texts and the establishment of corpora – collection of texts that enable patterns of usage to be identified.

A focus on texts

Texts are the units of expression that people use in communication. The term ‘text’ refers to units of both spoken and written discourse, as well as multimodal texts such as movies and television programmes. In both the study of spoken and written discourse, texts are the basic units of analysis. (Many such corpora are available on line, e.g. The Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/research/sbcorpus.html) or the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English, known as MICASE (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/micase/>).

Texts are studied in terms of how they are organized, the linguistic resources they employ, such as grammar and vocabulary, and how they reflect the situations in which they are used. In language teaching, discourse analysis has been used to help understand the nature of classroom discourse, as well as the nature of the spoken and written texts that learners encounter in their lives, and informs syllabus and materials design, in addition to classroom teaching (O’Keeffe et al., 2007).



Think of a situation or purpose for which your learners need to use English. How could you collect information about how English is used in that situation?

Texts are constructed of words and sentences, but they function in communication as units. They may be constructed from a single word, a sentence or much longer constructions. For example, the following are all examples of texts:

- ‘Stop!’
- ‘School zone. No horns’
- ‘Restaurant closed today. Sorry for the inconvenience’

And so is the following:

- ‘John knew his wife’s operation would be expensive. There was always Uncle Harry. John reached for the telephone book.’

Each of the units of communication above suggests a situation, participants, purposes and activities, and it is not difficult to imagine settings in which they could occur. They are

hence examples of texts. (In the last example, the links that create the sense of a text from the sentences derive from our knowledge of a schema: the ‘problem–solution schema’, in this case, asking a wealthy person to help us when we have financial need.) However, the following does not constitute a text, because the succession of sentences does not constitute a meaningful unit of communication and suggest a function, a setting or a goal:

- ‘The club lounge is for guests only. Italian is a romance language. I deserve a compliment.’

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) lists the following text types as examples of texts learners may need to understand, produce or participate in:

Spoken texts	Written texts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public announcements and instructions. • Public speeches, lectures, presentations, sermons. • Rituals (ceremonies, formal religious services). • Entertainment (drama, shows, readings, songs). • Sports commentaries (football, cricket, etc.). • News broadcasts. • Public debates and discussion. • Interpersonal dialogues and conversations. • Telephone conversations. • Job interviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Books: fiction and non-fiction. • Magazines. • Newspapers. • Instructions (e.g. cookbooks, etc.). • Textbooks. • Comic strips. • Brochures, prospectuses. • Leaflets. • Advertising material. • Public signs and notices. • Supermarket, shop and market-stall signs. • Packaging and labelling on goods. • Tickets, etc. • Forms and questionnaires. • Dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual), thesauruses. • Business and professional letters; faxes. • Personal letters. • Essays and exercises. • Memoranda, reports and papers. • Notes and messages, etc. • Database (news, literature, general information, etc.).

Discourse analysis examines different text types such as these, in order to find out how their content, organization and language features reflect the contexts of their use, their users and their purposes.



What kinds of spoken and written texts do your learners, or a group of learners you are familiar with, most frequently encounter in their daily lives?

16.3 Spoken discourse

The discourse features of spoken texts

Discourse analysis of spoken language focuses on how interlocutors participate in the management of interactions and how this is reflected in the discourse features of spoken texts. In other words, discourse analysis of spoken texts explores how spoken interactions and exchanges (and their organizational features) are constructed. Discourse analysis has sought to identify the patterns of organization underlying many everyday uses of spoken language, such as casual conversations, interviews, discussions, meetings, telephone calls and service transactions, and the information revealed through such research has obvious practical relevance to language teaching. The findings have served to clarify important features of spoken texts that need to be addressed in the teaching of spoken English. These include:

Openings and closings

Openings and closings pertain to how conversations and other exchanges typically open, develop and close, and what creates their internal unity. For example, where do you think these conversation fragments occur – at the beginning, middle or end of a conversation?

A: Well, I bought it in Italy.

B: It looks really good on you.

A: Thanks.

B: Anyway, so where are we going for dinner, since you're all dressed up like that?

A: We must get together sometime soon.

B: That would be great.

A: Maybe for coffee or something?

B: Definitely.

Topic development

Topic development pertains to how topics are introduced and developed in conversation, and how participants maintain topics and expand, clarify and change them. For example,

what do you think the function of the italicised phrases are in these extracts from spoken texts?

- 'Well, I guess that's one way of putting it.'
- 'Actually, she is one of my best friends.'
- 'By the way, when are we meeting again?'
- 'In any case, that's not what I meant.'

Adjacency pairs

Adjacency pairs refers to the use of units of conversations made up of two turns between speakers, and where the first normally anticipates the second. For example:

congratulate-thanks; apologize-accept; inform-acknowledge; request-grant; question-answer; compliment-accept; complain-apologize; complain-deny.

A: You're late.

B: Sorry.

A: You're late!

B: No, you're early.



What is inappropriate about the response from a clerk in a bookstore in Bangkok when the customer thanked him for helping locate a book?

Customer: Thanks very much.

Clerk: It doesn't matter.

Providing an appropriate second-part turn in an adjacency pair is a part of pragmatic competence, which we discuss below.

Turn-taking

Turn-taking relates to how speakers know when to take a turn in conversation; that is, how speakers decide when it is appropriate to give the turn to another person or to take a speaking turn. In formal settings, turn-taking is often determined by the person who holds greater power (e.g. a teacher in classroom exchanges or a doctor in an interview with a patient). In casual conversation, speakers have to judge when it is appropriate to take turns (Goh and Burns, 2012: 107).

Back-channelling

In conversation, listeners are often required to signal that they are engaged in what the other person is saying and to signal such emotions as 'enthusiasm, empathy, sympathy, surprise, shock, disgust, etc., at what the speaker is saying, without taking over the

turn' (O'Keeffe et al. 2007: 152). This is known as back-channelling and involves the use of expressions such as *really*, *absolutely*, *Is that right?*, *No kidding*, *No way*, *fantastic*, *brilliant*, *awesome*, *wow*, *cool*, *That's true*, *amazing*, etc. Back-channelling is also discussed in Chapter 13. A teacher comments on how he uses texts to teach back-channelling and turn-taking:

Teaching back-channelling and turn-taking

I give my students practice in back-channelling by giving them transcripts of conversations (or textbook dialogues) with spaces for back-channel expressions to be used. Pairs come up with their own suggestions, and then we compare before they practise the dialogues. Or we use dialogues with no back-channelling, and students have to add them [back-channelling expressions]. To focus on turn-taking, I sometimes give out strip dialogues – each strip contains one line of a dialogue. Students have to work in pairs or groups to reconstruct the original dialogue sequence. It's useful that dialogues for this activity have clear turn-taking signals.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

Routines

Discourse analysis has also shown how a great deal of spoken discourse contains fixed expressions or 'routines' which often have specific functions in conversation and which give conversational discourse the quality of naturalness (see Chapter 13). For example:

- 'This one's on me.'
- 'I'm not sure.'
- 'I don't believe a word of it.'
- 'I don't get the point.'
- 'How have you been?'
- 'What's the matter?'
- 'You look great today.'
- 'As I was saying ...'
- 'What a day!'
- 'I'll be making a move, then.'
- 'I see what you mean.'
- 'Let me think about it.'
- 'Just looking, thanks.'
- 'I'll be with you in a minute.'
- 'It doesn't matter.'

Learners need to acquire a large repertoire of such expressions and use them appropriately when they are needed.

Implications for teaching spoken discourse

Contemporary teaching approaches, such as text and task-based teaching, as well as the teaching of skills, often draw on a discourse-based approach. For example, in order for learners to understand and acquire the features of spoken interaction in English activities, the following approach is recommended:

- Students work with authentic texts or with texts that reflect the features of authentic spoken interaction.
- Awareness-raising activities are used that focus on awareness of features of spoken interaction, such as openings, closings, turn-taking or back-channelling.
- Modelling and explicit instruction of features is provided.
- Students take part in guided and open-ended practice of specific features.

Texts can be extracts from movies, TV and radio programmes, as well as teacher-sourced texts, based on recorded interviews, conversations and role plays. Classroom activities include:

- Studying transcripts of spoken texts to identify specific features and strategies.
- Watching extracts from videos, TV programmes or the internet to identify discourse features.
- Analysis of textbook dialogues to review what and how different features of spoken discourse are introduced.
- Rewriting of textbook dialogues to reflect more closely authentic spoken interaction.
- Role play and other pair and group activities to practise using specific discourse features and strategies.
- Recounts.

There are two different kinds of text types that are used in describing past experiences: *recounts* and *narratives* (Slade, 1997; Thornbury and Slade, 2006). The former is a common feature of spoken discourse. The purpose of a recount is to list and describe past personal experiences by retelling events in the order in which they happened (see Chapter 13). Recounts have the purpose of either informing the listener or entertaining him or her, or both. There are two main types of recounts (Thornbury and Slade, 2006):

- *Personal recounts*: Usually retell an event the speaker was personally involved in (e.g. a traffic accident).
- *Factual recounts*: Describe an incident the speaker is familiar with (e.g. a school fair).

Recounts typically have three parts:

- The setting or orientation, providing background information concerning who, when, where and why.
- Events described in a chronological order.
- Concluding comments, usually expressing a personal opinion regarding the events described.

Linguistic features include past tense verbs and adverbs. Personal recounts are common in casual conversation and in email communication, blogs, etc. Narratives are similar to recounts and share many of the linguistic features of recounts, except that, rather than simply recounting events, they tell a story. They are described more fully below, in the context of written discourse.

Classroom discourse

Classroom discourse is a very specific type of spoken discourse. Some important early studies of discourse examined the use of language in classrooms and the patterns of interaction that typify much classroom talk (McCarthy, 1991). It was soon realized that classroom interaction differs in important ways from out-of-classroom language use (not surprisingly, of course, since it has a pedagogic purpose rather than a social purpose). The exchanges between teachers and learners were seen not merely to consist of strings of exchanges but to be linked together to form a pattern that consists of *I* (initiate) – *R* (respond) – *F* (follow up), as in the following example:

Teacher: Where is Colombia? Anyone know?

Pupil: In South America.

Teacher: Good.

Johnson (1995: 9) suggests that in the classroom, the teacher, 'being the one with the authority to control, is the one who dominantly carries out the initiation and evaluation acts as a way of controlling classroom discourses'. In contrast, the students act mainly as respondents to the teacher's question in the talk. Typically, the following features are found in classroom discourse:

- The teacher takes most turns.
- The teacher's turns are longer than the students' turns.
- The structure is based on adjacency triplets or exchanges (initiation–response–feedback).
- The teacher reformulates, summarizes and evaluates what the students say.
- The students' answers are usually short and elliptical.
- The teacher uses 'known answer' or 'display' questions (i.e. questions to which students already know the answer).



Are there both advantages, as well as disadvantages, to the kind of classroom discourse described above?

Teacher discourse is seen in the following example from an intermediate EFL class from a secondary school in Malaysia. The lesson is a vocabulary exercise from the class textbook and is based on an advertisement for a clearance sale. The teacher (T) is asking a series of questions to the students (from Johnson, 1995: 94–6):

Turns 1–34:

- 1. T:** What is this advertisement about?
- 2. Peersak:** Radio ... sale.
- 3. Milo:** Cheap sale ...
- 4. T:** What is the word that is used there?
- 5. Suchada:** Clearance sale.
- 6. T:** Clearance sale. OK, in the first place, do you know the meaning of 'clearance sale'?
- 7. Suchada:** Clearance sale.
- 8. T:** Clearance sale. Let's look at the word 'clearance'. What word does it come from?
- 9. Peersak:** Clear.
- 10. T:** Therefore, 'clearance' sale will mean what?
- 11. Suchada:** To clear up.
- 12. T:** To clear up, that's right. To clear up all the goods in the store. OK, let's look at the items which are for sale. Where is the photographic department? Peersak, look at the advertisement and tell me, where is the photographic department?
- 13. Peersak:** Ground floor.
- 14. T:** Yes, on the ground floor. Now, if you go to the [photographic department], you get the?
- 15. Peersak:** Camera.
- 16. T:** A camera. Can you be more specific? What kind of camera?
- 17. Peersak:** A Kodak ... Instamatic 76X camera.
- 18. T:** OK, a Kodak instamatic camera. What is the usual price of the camera?
- 19. Peersak:** Twenty-seven and forty cents.
- 20. T:** Twenty-seven dollars, forty cents. And what is its price after the sale?
- 21. Peersak:** Twenty-three dollars, seventy-five cents.

- 22. T:** Twenty-three dollars, seventy-five cents. Now, if you buy that camera, what free gift will you get?
- 23. Peersak:** ... Ball.
- 24. T:** A ball. Now, let's move on to some other department in the store. Milo ...
- 25. Milo:** First floor.
- 26. T:** What can you buy there?
- 27. Milo:** Stainless steel kettles.
- 28. T:** How many sizes of kettles?
- 29. Milo:** Five.
- 30. T:** OK, these stainless steel kettles come in five sizes. And what is the special feature of this kettle?
- 31. Milo:** Imported.
- 32. T:** What other special features?
- 33. Milo:** Movable handle.
- 34. T:** Yes they have movable handles in addition to being stainless steel. OK, now ...

The underlying communication sequence in this example is the unmarked IRF sequence, where the teacher initiates, the students respond and the teacher follows up by evaluating – thereby illustrating how the teacher controls the learners' participation in the lesson.

More useful to language learning is interaction that supports learning through the use of what has been termed *dialogic interaction* (Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994) or *collaborative dialogue* (Swain, 2000). This process involves the joint construction of knowledge through the activity of assisted performance, or *scaffolded learning* (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). The teacher assists the learners in completing learning activities by observing what they are capable of and providing a series of guided stages through the task, and through collaborative dialogue – scaffolding the learning process by initially providing support (the 'scaffold') and gradually removing support as learning develops. (An example of this process is seen in Chapter 2.) Therefore, learning is initially mediated and directed by the teacher or other more advanced learners and is gradually appropriated by the individual learner. Throughout, the teacher provides opportunities for noticing how language is used, experimenting with language use, practising new modes of discourse and restructuring existing language knowledge. (Scaffolding, in the context of sociocultural theory, is discussed in Chapter 2.)

Demo (2001) suggests that in order to assess the nature of the interaction that occurs in their classrooms, teachers can make use of a four-part process of record–view–transcribe–analyze, and use discourse analytic techniques:

To investigate the interaction patterns in their classrooms and to see how these patterns promote or hinder opportunities for learners to practise the target language. This process allows

language teachers to study their own teaching behavior—specifically, the frequency, distribution, and types of questions they use and their effect on students' responses.

The procedure contains the following steps:

Step 1: A complete lesson is videotaped, capturing all of the teacher's questions and the students' responses.

Step 2: The videotape is reviewed in order to identify the kinds of questions the teacher asks and the impact the teacher's questioning style has on the students' responses.

Step 3: The lesson is transcribed, allowing for more detailed analysis of the questions and student responses.

Step 4: The videotape and transcript [are] analyzed to find out the kinds of questions that were asked, the extent to which they provided opportunities for student interaction and participation, and the kind of responses the teacher gave.

Demo suggests that a similar process can be used to study communication patterns in different classroom activities, such as pair and group-based activities. Walsh (2011) suggests how discourse analysis of classroom discourse can serve as the basis for reflective practice, in order to understand better the relationship between language, interaction and learning. The goals are:

- To identify the strategies teachers use to give feedback to learners on their language use.
- To understand the questioning strategies teachers use and to develop strategies that encourage more effective interaction.
- To make the discourse of classrooms more communicative through the use of more appropriate interactional resources.
- To better understand how teachers use processes such as scaffolding, modelling, recasting or stretched output.

A teacher educator comments on effective classroom discourse:



Monitoring teachers' classroom interaction

A few years ago, a couple of colleagues and I decided to record some of our classroom interaction. We were interested to see who did most of the talking (us or the students) and what type of interaction patterns were most common. To our surprise, we found that initially we dominated the speaking and that the IRF pattern was the most common type of interaction. Being aware of this helped us to actively encourage more student talk and more student-to-student interaction. We also found, however, that reducing the amount of teacher talk too much led to less overall language use by the students.

There appears to be a 'sweet spot' in providing enough opportunity for speaking, but also enough support to encourage that speaking to continue.

Hayo Reinders, teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

16.4 Written discourse

The discourse features of written texts

Written texts, as opposed to spoken texts, often reflect the results of planning, drafting and revision, and hence their underlying patterns of organization are often more readily identifiable. Discourse analysis and other approaches to the study of texts have revealed a great deal of what makes a succession of written sentences a 'text', i.e. what the characteristics are that give it a sense of unity.



People have a natural urge to try to create 'texts' from language we encounter. Can you imagine a context where the following sentences could form a text? (Check your answer below.)

- 'Live young.'
- 'Absolute purity from the French alps.'
- 'Perfectly balanced in minerals for everyday consumption.'
- 'Tear from here.'

The sentences are from a label on a bottle of mineral water.

Let us turn to some of the characteristics of written texts.

Recognizable patterns of text organization

As mentioned earlier, texts are units of spoken and written discourse that reflect recognizable and conventional patterns of organization. In writing, texts include letters, reports, essays, announcements and narratives. As in speech, in using written language, we have to learn to create texts that follow the conventions of different text types. We noted above the wide range of text types learners may encounter. In school-based learning, the following text types are often encountered:

Text type	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative. • Recount. • Personal recount. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To tell a story. • To tell what happened. • To relate personal experience.

Text type	Purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factual recount. • Imaginative recount. • Instruction. • Explanation. • Information report. • Exposition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To report on an event. • To describe an imaginary event. • To describe how to make or do something. • To explain how or why something works. • To define, classify and give the characteristics of a thing or class of things. • To express an opinion and convince the reader.

An analysis of an information report is given in Appendix 1.

We examined recounts and narratives in the context of spoken discourse. Students will have come across many different forms of narratives in their reading, and common to many of them is a structure that consists of:

- *Orientation*: The setting is presented, and the characters in the story are introduced.
- *Complication*: That part in the story in which the character or characters experience some kind of problem.
- *Resolution*: Where a solution is found to the problem or complication.

Here is an example of a narrative written by a 10-year-old boy (Derewianka, 1991: 41):

John slumped in the beanbag, his arms crossed and his face with a gloomy frown. He was a new kid in town, but no one knew he was even there. John wasn't the type of person you could have fun with. He didn't like anybody and they didn't like him. All day he sat hunched in the beanbag, staring blankly out the window. Through the window, he caught a glimpse of a gigantic hollow tree in a vacant lot. The tree seemed to beckon him. He stood slowly up as if he was in a trance [and] then started to walk towards the tree. Its branches were scraggly and tough; its roots dug into the ground like claws. The tree had thorns all over it, and vines hung around it. John tried to turn away, but he couldn't. A mysterious force was pulling him into the hollow. John never reappeared ... but no one noticed or cared.



Can you identify the structure of a narrative in the story above?

A similar structure may be reflected in many simple narratives. Expert language users are not only aware of the nature of different text types, such as narratives, but are also aware of the situations where texts are used, the expectations of the readers of different text types and the linguistic, cultural and rhetorical conventions that different texts may

reflect. Familiar text or rhetorical patterns found in texts include:

- 1 Problem–solution.
- 2 Cause–consequence.
- 3 Phenomenon–reason.
- 4 Phenomenon–example.



Which of the four text patterns above does this text reflect?

Teenagers are all alike. They love to spend time on social media, updating their Facebook entries and finding out what their friends are up to. My daughter is no exception. Every morning, as soon as she gets up, even before she has breakfast, she texts her friends and looks to see who has contacted her on Facebook.

McCarthy (1991: 161) comments:

Finding patterns in a text is a matter of interpretation by the reader, making use of clues and signals provided by the author; it is not a question of finding one single *right* answer, and it will often be possible to analyze a given text in more than one way. But certain patterns do tend to occur frequently in particular settings: the problem–solution pattern is frequent in advertising texts ... and in texts reporting technological advances. Claim–counterclaim texts are frequent in political journalism, as well as in the letters-to-the-editor pages of newspaper and magazines ... General–specific patterns can be found in encyclopaedias and other reference texts.



Can you suggest ways in which students can be made aware of the patterns underlying a text?

Cohesion

Cohesion (also discussed in Chapter 15) refers to indications of links and connections between different parts of a text. The unity of a text is also reflected through the use of linking relationships that are explicitly expressed in the surface structure of the text (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

Fifty years ago, an adult-figured doll was created, and its popularity soon spread throughout the world. Her name was Barbie.

Ruth Handler is credited with designing the doll, which she named after her daughter Barbara. Barbie made her debut at the American International Toy Fair on 9 March 1959. This date is still used as Barbie's official birthday. In 1964, the US toy company Mattel began producing Barbie dolls. Around 350,000 Barbie dolls were sold during the first year of production.

Despite the fact that she has been dubbed the most popular doll of the twentieth century, and an American cultural icon, Barbie has not been as successful in the Chinese market as in the rest of the world. In March 2011, the Barbie flagship store in Shanghai, the largest of its kind in the world, closed after just two years of operation. Toys based on cartoon characters are more popular with Chinese kids under six, so the adult-figured doll has not been well received in the Chinese market.



How many examples of the following types of cohesion can you find in the text above?

- **Lexical repetition.**
- **References to the topic.**
- **Pronouns that refer back to previous referents (known as anaphoric pronouns).**

Jones (2012: 89) points out that different kinds of texts use different kinds of cohesive devices:

Descriptive texts which give information about people or things (scientific descriptions, encyclopaedia entries) often make heavy use of pronoun reference since pronouns allow writers to refer to the person or thing being talked about, without repeating his, her or its name. Advertising texts, on the other hand, which describe products, are more likely to use repetition, since there are benefits to repeating the name of the product in this context. Legal texts also prefer repetition to reference since repeating a word, rather than referring to it with a pronoun, avoids ambiguity. Analytical and argumentative texts often make heavy use of conjunctions, since making logical connections between ideas is usually central to the process of making an argument.

A teacher describes an activity he uses to teach cohesion:



Teaching awareness of cohesion

An activity I sometimes use to familiarize my students with the function of cohesive devices and other indicators of textual unity is to give students a jigsaw activity – a text in which the sentences have been scrambled and students have to work in pairs to try to reorder the sentences and construct the original text. An alternative procedure that is fun for the students is to give them a text containing content that is fairly familiar to them, but to remove selected sentences from the text to see if they can recreate them using contextual clues. Once they have tried this, perhaps as a group activity, I give them the original text to compare.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

Coherence

Coherence is a complementary dimension of text organization to that of cohesion and refers to the overall semantic structure and unity of a text (see Chapter 15). But the sense of unity and cohesion of a text does not always depend on the direct presence of cohesive signals of the kind discussed above.

An important component of coherence is the use of appropriate schemas or scripts. Cohesion is then inferred by the reader on the basis of these schemas and scripts (see Chapters 2 and 14). Texts often assume familiarization with knowledge about recurring events and situations, who the participants are in those situations, what their goals or intentions are, what procedures are involved in achieving them and what the intended outcomes are. These are all examples of *schemas*. An often cited text illustrating the concept of schemas is the following (from Anderson et al., 1977: 372), which can be understood one way if the title is assumed to be 'A prisoner plans his escape', and quite differently if the title is 'A wrestler in a tight corner':

Rocky slowly got up from the mat, planning his escape. He hesitated a moment and thought. Things were not going well. What bothered him most was being held, especially since the charge against him had been weak. He considered his present situation. The lock that held him was strong, but he thought he could break it.

Earlier, we saw that spoken discourse is often unplanned. Nevertheless, both spoken and written texts may make implicit reference to many different kinds of schema, such as those referring to particular topics, situations and activities (e.g. breakfast, an earthquake, a blind date, buying food in a market, buying clothing in a store, eating in a restaurant, a visit to the doctor or a wedding ceremony). When predictable sequences of activities or events are involved, they are referred to as *scripts*. For example, the script for 'A dental appointment' includes:

- 1 Enter dentist's office.
- 2 Greet receptionist.
- 3 Enter the dentist's room.
- 4 Take seat in dental chair.
- 5 Dentist examines teeth.
- 6 Dentist describes teeth condition and needs. (etc.)



What kinds of scripts can you identify for these situations?

- A visit to a hairdresser.
- Visiting a person's house for dinner.

Scripts are familiar to us because they reflect known patterns. It may be said that 'the text reflects norms of the discourse community in which it occurs: it reflects features of a genre'.

Genre

A genre refers to the body of texts that are used by members of a discourse community (e.g. doctors, lawyers, business persons, sports enthusiasts, university teachers). A discourse community has an implicit understanding of how coherent texts should be organized. Genres are particularly important in writing, as we saw in Chapter 15. In a business setting, for example, people have expectations as to how business letters, faxes, memos, etc. should be written; members of a chat room on the internet also have expectations as to the nature of their exchanges. Tarone (2005) describes a discourse community in terms of a group of people who share an understanding of their common goals and their expected norms of communication and interaction. They also have shared knowledge of the purposes and nature of the genres they use. Those who have expert knowledge of these genres can pass on this knowledge to newcomers of the discourse community.

And so accountants know what company reports should look like; chefs know what recipes look like; university teachers know how academic essays should be written; employers know what to expect in job-application letters; and the internet has created new genres, such as the texts of internet scams (Viswamohan et al., 2010). And each part of a text has its own features. For example, Swales (1990, summarized in Jones, 2012: 45) demonstrated that the introductions to academic articles were characterized by four moves that have the following functions:

- 1 *Establishes the field* in which the writer of the study is working.
- 2 *Summarizes the related research* or interpretations of the field.
- 3 *Creates a research space*, or interpretive space for the study, by indicating a gap in the current knowledge or by raising questions.
- 4 *Introduces the study*, by indicating what the investigation being reported will accomplish for the field.

Discourse communities hence typically make use of conventionalized ways of organizing their texts, which members of that community recognize, although the rules may be broken, sometimes for comic effect, as with this example of a gay personal ad in Hong Kong (Jones, 2012: 47):

CHINESE, 20, STILL YOUNG, but not good-looking, not attractive, not sexy, not hairy, not fit, not tall, not experienced, not mature, not very intelligent, but thoughtful and sincere, looking for friendship and love.

Implications for teaching written discourse

Developing an awareness of the features of written texts, as well as learning how to create well organized texts, is an important component of the teaching of reading and writing.

The following approach can be used (see also Thornbury, 2005c):

- 1 *Collecting examples of texts:* A set of texts can be assembled relevant to the learners' needs and proficiency level. These can be both authentic texts as well as good examples of learner-produced texts. Learners can also collect examples of texts.
- 2 *Recognizing text features:* Activities are developed to focus on recognizing the discourse features of texts, through comparing different text types, identifying specific grammatical, lexical and discourse features of texts, and through examining learner-generated or other texts that do not reflect good features of text organization. These can be used as the basis for revision and rewriting tasks.
- 3 *Practice in text creation:* Students create their own text, individually or with partners. They review each other's texts in groups and give suggestions for improvement, where necessary.

16.5 Pragmatics

What is pragmatics?

The term *pragmatics* refers to the use of language in face-to-face communication, and in particular, to how participants communicate and understand intended meanings. Jones (2012: 17) offers this definition:

Pragmatics is the study of how people use words to accomplish actions in their conversations: actions such as requesting, threatening, apologizing. It aims to help us understand how people figure out what actions other people are trying to take with their words and respond appropriately.

In language teaching, pragmatics focuses on the nature of cross-cultural communication in a second language and how differences in pragmatic conventions among cultures can influence communication in intercultural encounters (Ishihara and Cohen, 2010). As teachers, we sometimes respond to what learners say with, 'I know exactly what you mean, but it's better not to say it quite like that'. An underlying assumption of research on second language pragmatics is that when we communicate in a second language, our goal is not merely to make ourselves understood, using acceptable norms of pronunciation, lexical usage, grammar and discourse; we also seek to achieve communication that acknowledges the social relations between speaker and listener. Research on pragmatics in applied linguistics has explored the following issues:

- How speech acts such as requests, apologies, invitations, complaints and refusals are realized in cross-cultural communication.
- How transfer of speech-act conventions from one language to another can lead to misunderstanding.
- How politeness is realized in second language communication.
- How conversation and other forms of spoken interaction reflect pragmatic norms.

- How participants in face-to-face interactions co-construct meaning.
- How pragmatic conventions can be taught to second language learners.

A teacher educator comments on his development of pragmatic skills in Arabic:

Being too direct

I remember living in Damascus and trying out my developing Arabic skills. In casual conversation, I was fine, but in service encounters, things never seemed to go quite so smoothly. It took me a long time to realize that, perhaps because of my Dutch background, I was far too direct in such contexts. I used to say what I would say in Dutch in Arabic, but found later that being a little less 'to the point' and establishing more of a casual exchange first would greatly help with the communication.

Hayo Reinders, teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand

The ability to use English in ways that are appropriate, in terms of who the participants are, what the situation is and what the participants intend, is an important dimension of communicative competence and hence has a central role in teaching spoken English.

Speech acts

Speech acts are utterances which are used to achieve a particular purpose, such as to communicate requests, apologies, advice, complaints, orders, opinions, criticism, suggestions and invitations. We saw in Chapter 3 that these are often a focus in communicative language teaching, where they are referred to as *functions*. Speech acts are of particular interest from the perspective of pragmatics, since they may be realized in many different ways, depending on the context in which the communication takes place, the participants involved and the relationship between them. For example, the following are all examples of requests, yet they cannot be used interchangeably. Some of these requests would be appropriate in some circumstances, but not in others and illustrate how people communicate politeness (discussed more fully below) through language by varying the level of directness of a request:

- 'Lend me your camera.'
- 'I need to borrow your camera.'
- 'Are you using your camera?'
- 'Can I borrow your camera?'
- 'Do you mind if I borrow your camera?'
- 'You couldn't lend me your camera, could you?'
- 'Would it be OK if I borrowed your camera for a few minutes?'



Can you think of situations where each of the expressions above a) would be acceptable, and b) would not be acceptable?

Several different factors contribute to the appropriate expression of speech acts.

Appropriate strategies for expressing the speech act

When studying a second language, learners need to understand how speech acts are realized in the language, since the strategies for expressing speech acts may differ across languages. Ishihara and Cohen (2010) point out that in expressing an apology, there are five potential strategies a person could use; depending on the circumstances, speakers will choose strategies appropriate to the situation that they are in. However, cultures also differ in terms of which ones they typically make use of:

- 1 *Expression of apology*: 'Oh, sorry.'
- 2 *Acknowledgement of responsibility*: 'It was my fault.'
- 3 *Explanation or account*: 'I wasn't paying attention.'
- 4 *Offer of repair*: 'Let me pick it up for you.'
- 5 *Promise of non-recurrence*: 'I'll be more careful in future.'

In some cultures, if a student arrives late for class, it may be acceptable simply to offer an explanation: 'The bus was late'. However, in the US, an expression of apology would also be expected: 'Oh sorry, the bus was late'.



If your first language is not English, how are apologies, such as the above, expressed? (If your first language is English, perhaps you can think of examples from another language you have learned.) Are the two languages different? In English, how might apologies be different in various contexts, e.g. in a classroom and in a restaurant?

Sometimes speech acts may be introduced by a supportive move or a 'lead in', rather than expressed directly:

- 1 A: Are you doing anything on Friday night? [*supportive move*]
 B: I don't think so.
 A: Care to see a movie? [*invitation*]
- 2 A: Are you going downtown after class? [*supportive move*]
 B: Yep.
 A: Can you give me a lift? [*request*]

3 A: I think there's a problem with your watch. [*supportive move*]

B: Really?

A: Yes, you are ten minutes late. [*complaint*]

Without a suitable supportive move, some speech acts may appear abrupt or impolite. 'Pragmatic errors' may occur when the conventions employed across cultures differ (Wannaruk, 2008). In the US, it is acceptable to compliment people on their appearance (*You look great!*) and on their possessions (*Nice sweater!*) and to accept such complements (*Thanks*). In some cultures, it is not considered polite to accept compliments of this kind, and they typically might be mitigated (*Do you think so?*).

The example below illustrates how speech acts for simple interactions, such as saying goodbye, may differ across languages (author's data):

Misunderstanding the rules for saying goodbye

As a young volunteer teacher, I spent a year teaching at a university in Indonesia. I had had a wonderful time during my time at the university and judged that my assignment had gone very well, since I had made many new friends and been invited to return to teach there in the future. So I was somewhat surprised, on my last day at the university, when the head of the English department said to me, 'Before you leave, you should go around and apologize to all of your colleagues.' Apologize for what? I wondered. It was only some time later that I came to realize that part of the leave-taking ritual in Indonesian culture involves issuing an expression that means something like 'Please forgive me if I have made any mistakes', and that it does not constitute an actual apology for any wrongdoing.

The degree of social distance between the participants

A crucial aspect involved in expressing many speech acts is how they express relations between participants. Some speech acts can be thought of as involving an imposition on the other person (e.g. requests, invitations), and some can involve a potential loss of face (e.g. criticisms, refusals, complaints). In this case, they may be performed indirectly, rather than directly, depending on how well the participants know each other. In the case of speech acts that involve impositions or threats to face, indirect expression of speech acts are a form of politeness. Whether a speech act is performed directly or indirectly depends on the relationship between the two persons and reflects factors such as social distance, age, gender and power.

In intercultural communication, learners need to use a speech act that is appropriate to the circumstances (e.g. *student-student*, *student-teacher*, *stranger-stranger*, *friend-friend*, *employer-employee*) if he or she is not to create a pragmatic error.

Speakers use a number of strategies for expressing indirectness, as we see in the following examples of how a request for permission to turn on the air conditioner in a stuffy room could be made:

- *Hint*: 'I wonder if the air conditioner is working.'
- *Ask about the other's comfort*: 'Is the temperature OK for you?'
- *Make a negative statement*: 'I don't suppose we could turn on the air conditioner?'
- *Enquire about the consequences*: 'Would it inconvenience you in any way if I were to turn on the air conditioner?'

Saito-Stehberger (2010: 141) points out that students are taught direct strategies for performing speech acts such as these (particularly complaints), although in real life, face-threatening acts, such as complaints, are normally expressed indirectly.



Consider how you could express the following complaints indirectly:

- **Your neighbour's TV is too loud and is bothering you.**
- **The teacher regularly arrives late for class.**

For second language learners, language proficiency may affect the learner's ability to use an appropriate strategy. For example, in expressing a refusal to an invitation, a learner with high proficiency is likely to be able to create an appropriate response – to give an explanation for a refusal, rather than stating the refusal directly:

A: Can you come to my party on Sunday?

B: Oh sorry. I would love to, but I have already made plans. My cousin is in town, and I am taking her out to see the ...

A low-proficiency learner may lack the linguistic resources to use an indirect strategy and use a more abrupt, and possibly impolite-sounding, response:

A: Can you come to my party on Sunday?

B: Sorry. I can't. I'm not free.

There is considerable literature on refusals in encounters between Japanese and Western business people, particularly during business negotiations, where a direct refusal on the part of the Japanese person would be unlikely to be expressed directly. The title of a much-cited paper on this topic is hence 'Sixteen ways to avoid saying "no" in Japanese' (Ueda, 1974).

Expressing opinions is another speech act that can be problematic for both native and non-native speakers. Bouton et al. (2012: 105) observe that textbooks typically present only the most basic expressions for opining, such as *I think* or *Maybe*, which learners tend to overuse, although native-speakers use a much greater variety of linguistic resources. They also point out that cultures also differ in the extent to which they express opinions directly or indirectly.

Expressing opinions in university seminars and discussion groups can be problematic for students, who may opt for a direct rather than indirect strategy for voicing an opinion, often with the unintended effect of sounding rude or opinionated:

Direct strategy:

- 'I disagree with you.'
- 'No, I don't agree.'
- 'That's not right.'

Indirect strategy:

- *Acknowledge the other's point of view, and then state your own:* 'That's a very good point. I would like to add, however ...'
- *Hedging:* 'I wouldn't necessarily agree with that. My idea is ...'

Expressing disagreement is a speech act where speakers use a variety of strategies to avoid conflict, the choice of strategy depending on how well the interlocutors know each other. For example, if two people were discussing opinions of a movie, consider how the second speaker could use varying degrees of indirectness to express his or her opinion if it was very different:

A: Did you enjoy the movie? I thought it was fantastic.

B: [Expresses alternative opinion indirectly.]

Other genres

Pragmatics also focuses on genres, such as small talk, conversations, discussions, interviews, meetings and public speeches, and how norms for carrying out events such as these may differ across cultures, leading to potential misunderstandings. A number of issues are involved.

Openings and closings

The different conventions for opening and closing encounters (discussed above in relation to spoken discourse) are also of interest from the perspective of pragmatics. Casual encounters in English generally start with what appears to be a health question (*How are you?*), though it is not responded to, as such. In other cultures, similar encounters may start quite differently, as in Indonesian (where the equivalent of *Where are you going?* is used) or Chinese (where the equivalent of *Have you eaten yet?* occurs). Transfer of the native-language routines to English can create confusion (Richards and Sukwivat, 1983). Similarly, conversational closings in English often involve a pseudo invitation: *We must get together again soon*, or *Let's have coffee sometime soon*. To express the wish to see the other person again soon is a form of politeness. However if a listener mistakes the routine for a genuine invitation, a misunderstanding is likely.

Presentation of self

In face-to-face interaction, the impression we convey of ourselves depends on what we talk about, how much talking we do, how much power or dominance we assert, attitudes we

communicate towards such things as our past accomplishments and future plans, and the topic we select to discuss. Cultures vary as to whether the favoured style for interpersonal communication is one in which speakers reveal very little of themselves (their beliefs, wishes, opinions, likes, dislikes and things which may not be shared with others), or one in which there is generally a willingness to reveal details of one's inner self in interacting with others. Thus, if we compare two cultures, we may find that what is regarded as part of the private self in one may be part of the public self in another (Richards and Sukwiwat, 1983; LoCastro, 2012). If we compare topics, such as those in the list below, we may find differences in how they are assigned to the domain of public self versus private self and, consequently, the likelihood that they will be discussed in particular types of encounter.

- One's family.
- Marital status.
- Hobbies and spare-time interests.
- Political beliefs.
- Religious beliefs.
- Personal finances.
- Personal possessions.
- Career plans.
- Ambitions.



In your culture, which of the topics above would be suitable to discuss in casual conversation with someone you have just met? Which would not? What are some examples of questions you would normally never ask in a casual encounter?

Topic development

Cultures may also be different in the degree that topics are expected to be developed in conversation, rather than merely touched upon. Farad Sharifian (2013) comments that one of the first differences that an Iranian learner of English may notice in the way Iranians and speakers of English (e.g. Americans or Australians) communicate with each other is in the area of greetings. Speakers of Persian usually follow the greeting, i.e. *salām* ('hello'), with a series of exchanges that inquire about the health of the hearer's family and possibly close friends, what the hearer is up to, the latest news, etc. Not only does one usually inquire about someone's health, but also about the health of any of that person's friends and relatives with whom one is acquainted. With many Iranians, it usually takes some time before one can proceed to other topics within a communicative event, even in everyday conversations with family and friends. The following is an example of a telephone conversation (translated) between two speakers of Persian:

Part 3 Language and the four skills

- A:** Hello.
- B:** Hello?
- A:** Hello, dear Ali.
- B:** Hi. How are you?
- A:** Are you well?
- B:** Thanks. How are you? Are you well?
- A:** Not bad, thanks.
- B:** What's new? How is Zari?
- A:** Zari is also well, thanks.
- B:** How is Nasrin?
- A:** Nasrin is also fine. Nasrin is also fine, and healthy.
- B:** How is Fariba?
- A:** Well. Everybody is well, thanks.
- B:** What is Amir doing? Is Amir well?
- A:** Amir is well. Home today. Well, with Fariba.
- B:** Okay is he well?
- A:** Yes, he is off next week. Yeah, he is well.

This typical telephone conversation clearly reflects the Persian schema of greeting in that it is marked by several moves that inquire about the health of the family members and their latest issues and news. Iranians find the format of greetings commonly used by speakers in English-speaking countries consisting of a short exchange (e.g. 'Hi, how are things?') very 'brief' and 'inappropriate'. They may find Westerners' greetings very dry and neither sufficiently elaborated nor intimate. Likewise, Westerners may find the Persian style of greeting 'unduly lengthy'.

Similarly, Liddicoat and Crozet (2001: 128–30) report that Australians and French speakers often handle such a simple exchange as a question about the weekend (*Did you have a pleasant weekend?*) quite differently. In Australian English, the question is part of a ritualistic exchange and is not intended to lead to a real discussion about the weekend. A typical example is:

- A:** Did you have a pleasant weekend?
- B:** I did. What about you?
- A:** I did too.
- B:** What did you do?
- A:** We went to a birthday dinner on Saturday and a barbecue on Sunday.
- B:** Food, food, food.
- A:** Yes, we ate our way through most of the weekend.

The exchange follows the pattern of a greeting ritual, is simple in structure, says something positive about the weekend and does not go into much detail. In the French cultural context, however, the authors report that ‘the question is not ritualized. The question functions to initiate a topic, and the expectation is that talk on the topic will be generated by the question. The resulting talk is quite long’. They go on to say that such differences can be a significant cause of frustration and of intercultural communication breakdown.

To address such issues, the authors describe the following pedagogical strategy in teaching French to Australian students:

Awareness-raising phase:

- *Step 1:* Discussion of stereotypes about French and Australians.
- *Step 2:* Students discuss possible answers to the question, ‘Did you have a good weekend?’ in both English and French. Teacher then presents information from a research project describing French people and Australians’ frustration with the way both cultures answer the question about the weekend.
- *Step 3:* Teacher discusses differences between the way the question is responded to in the two cultures.

Experimentation phase:

Students work with videotaped conversations of native speakers of French, displaying norms of interaction discussed in the previous phase.

Production phase:

Students perform role plays about the weekend, which are video-recorded.

Feedback phase:

The role plays are reviewed.

See Appendix 2 for a conversation script showing a variety of speech events, and Appendix 3 for a teacher’s lesson plan designed to teach pragmatics.

Implications for teaching pragmatics

Much of the literature on pragmatics in second language learning has focused on interaction between native and non-native speakers (e.g. Ishihara and Cohen, 2012). But in the context of English as an international language or as a lingua franca – where both participants in an interaction may be non-native speakers – an important issue is the extent to which non-native speakers want to identify closely with the pragmatic norms of English speakers (see Chapter 1). Should they aim for ‘optimal convergence’, where both seek to follow the norms of native-speaker interaction, or seek to preserve their own cultural identity? Davies and Tyler (2000) suggest that in learning a second language, learners may develop discourse strategies that do not correspond to the norms of either their native language or English. Seidlhofer (2004: 18) suggests that in the case of English-as-a-lingua-franca communication (referred to as ELF) where both speakers are non-native speakers of English, the following features are often found:

- Misunderstandings are not frequent in ELF interactions; when they do occur, they tend to be resolved either by topic change or, less often, by over negotiation, using communication strategies such as rephrasing and repetition.
- Interference from L1 interactional norms is very rare – a kind of suspension of expectations regarding norms seems to be in operation.
- As long as a certain threshold of understanding is obtained, interlocutors seem to adopt what Firth (1996) has termed the ‘let-it-pass principle’, which gives the impression of ELF talk being overtly consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive, and thus fairly robust.

Yates (2005) suggests that from the point of view of the interlocutor’s perspective, there is some degree of acceptance of convergence of L1 and L2 communicative norms, but that if the learner adopts target norms too closely it can be perceived as patronizing.

McKay (2009) hence describes an approach to the teaching of pragmatics in the context of English as an international language that has the following features:

- It would not be based on the native-speaker model as the pedagogical target.
- The curriculum should focus on the learner’s need to be flexibly competent in international communication through the medium of English.
- Explicit attention should be given to introducing and practising repair strategies, such as asking for clarification, repetition and rephrasing, and allowing for wait time.
- A variety of conversational gambits should be introduced and practised, including such items as managing turn-taking, back-channelling and initiating topics of conversation.
- Attention should be given to developing negotiation strategies that involve such features as suggesting alternatives, arguing for a particular approach and seeking consensus.
- Teaching materials should be based on data drawn from English as an international language (EIL) interactions, as well as from L1/L2 interactions.

Strategies for teaching speech acts and other dimensions of pragmatics are similar to those discussed above for teaching the structure of spoken and written discourse:

- *Collect examples:* Use transcripts of people expressing different speech acts (e.g. from videos or published materials, or using elicited examples made by asking native speakers or advanced learners to role play situations that call upon particular speech acts). Give students transcripts of spoken interactions to examine and to explore how speech acts are realized, and perhaps to compare how they would be expressed in their own language.
- *Use real-life situations:* Choose situations from the learners’ experience, and focus on the kinds of speech acts that occur in such contexts.
- *Identify strategies:* Examine how speech acts are realized and what factors in the situation influence the strategies speakers use – such as the choice of direct vs.

indirect strategies. Model different ways of realizing speech acts, and discuss their appropriateness in different contexts (e.g. apologies, complaints, requests).

- *Discuss pragmatic errors:* Discuss examples of misunderstanding caused through choice of inappropriate strategies.
- *Model and practise:* Teach ways of realizing different speech acts, and develop role plays for students to practise them.

Appendix 4 shows a textbook lesson designed to teach aspects of discourse and pragmatics.

16.6 Conclusion

Both discourse analysis and pragmatics have contributed greatly to our understanding of what effective written and spoken communication in English entails. Discourse analysis has drawn attention to the nature and organization of authentic spoken and written texts and prompted a rethinking of the kinds of texts that are often used as models in language teaching. Technology today makes it much easier to locate authentic texts as sources for teaching, and these can be used to help students develop awareness of differences between spoken and written language as well as of the features of conversational discourse and interaction. Since second language learning often involves some form of cross-cultural encounter, pragmatics can contribute greatly to our understanding of how linguistic features of such encounters may differ across cultures, creating a potential for misunderstanding. As the use of English as an international language becomes more widespread, there is a greater need to prepare learners to use English in contexts where different norms and conventions for the use of spoken and written discourse may be present. Awareness of differences of this kind can help teachers better prepare learners to become effective users of English as an international language.

Discussion questions

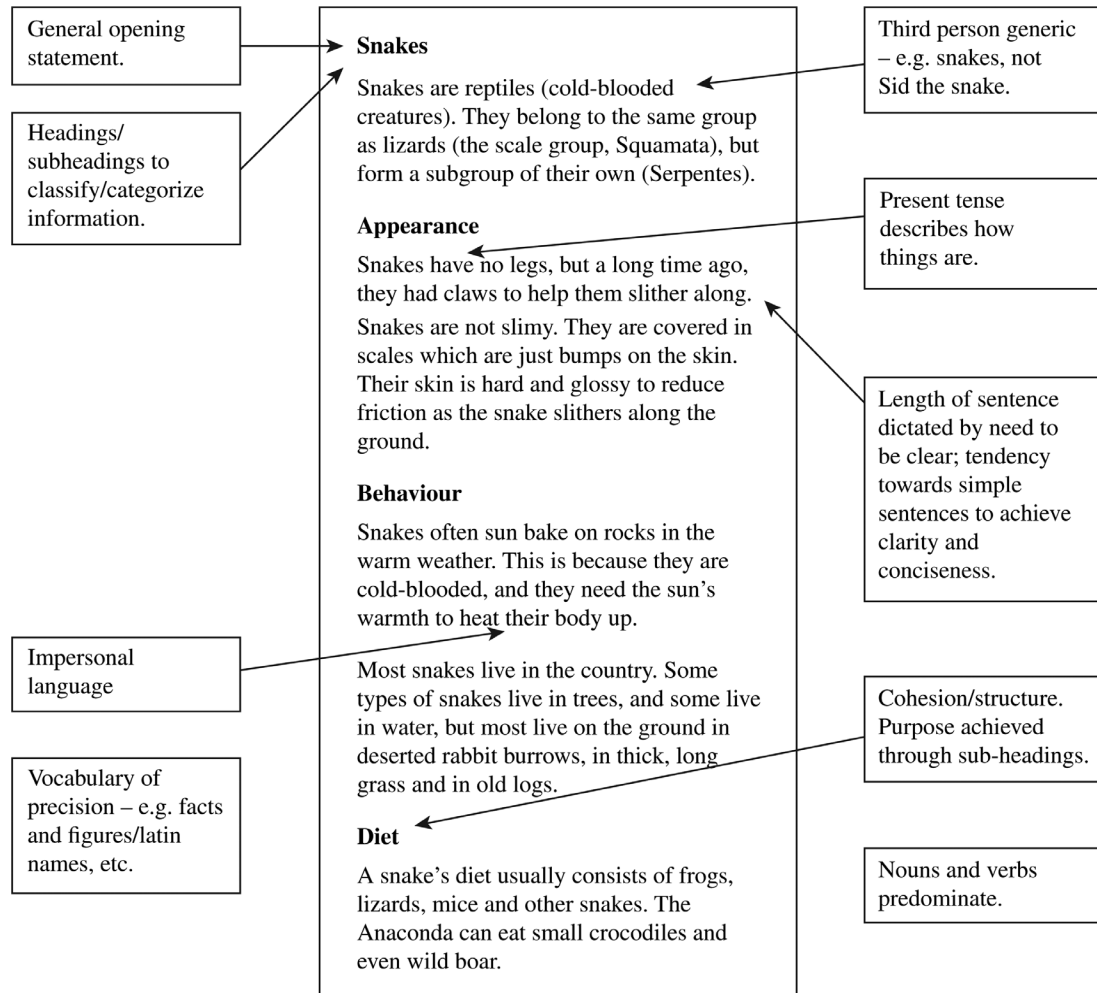
- 1 Have you observed any learners' use of English recently that you considered situationally inappropriate? What rules or norms were not followed?
- 2 Sometimes people comment that it doesn't matter if learners' language use is inappropriate as long as they can make themselves understood. What are your views on this issue?
- 3 Try to transcribe a short sample of someone speaking naturally in an unrehearsed situation (e.g. from YouTube). How does the text differ from written English?
- 4 Observe people engaged in conversation (e.g. in the cafeteria). Can you find examples of turn-taking and back-channelling?
- 5 Examine the list of spoken and written text types from the CEFR in section 16.2 and rank them in order of importance for your learners. What other kinds of texts might be important for them?

- 6** Take a suitable dialogue from a textbook and rewrite it in several different ways, e.g. as if the participants were a) young children, b) a teacher and a student, and c) two strangers. What aspects of the exchange did you have to change? How useful do you think activities of this kind are for learners?
- 7** Examine a coursebook for teaching spoken English. What kinds of adjacency pairs does it teach?
- 8** Write a set of dialogues to practise a) openings and closings, b) turn-taking, and c) back-channelling.
- 9** Can you suggest ways in which the internet can be used to develop students' awareness of features of spoken discourse?
- 10** Observe a teacher's class (or a video of a teacher's lesson). What features of classroom discourse do you observe? How do you think these support learning?
- 11** Presentation of self and topic development are two areas that differ across cultures. What are some personal topics that are not appropriate conversation openers in your culture? Similarly, what topics are 'ritualized' in your culture as conversation openers? What can you teach students about handling these topics pragmatically in conversation?

Appendix 1:

An information report

Look at the information report, adapted from *Exploring How Texts Work* by Beverly Derewianka, a primary teacher in Australia (Primary English Teachers' Association, 1991). A number of features are summarized. Which of these do you think are common features of information reports in general?



Appendix 2:

Conversation script

Look at part of a script of a conversation from www.betteratenglish.com/real-english-conversations-perfectionism-and-procrastination-3/. Can you find examples of the following?

- Openings.
- Supportive moves.
- Topic development.
- Back-channelling.

Rewrite the script as a set of written instructions. What major differences do you notice? What cohesive devices did you use?

Lori: Actually, there was one thing that I think in our last conversation about perfectionism and procrastination that we didn't really cover ...

Yvette: OK, Lori ... and that's what you do to get out of the procrastination habit once you've identified that you have a problem with it. Like if you have any methods that you've used to help you over the fear of starting, or working on whatever it is you're supposed to be working on.

Yvette: [Laughs] You're asking me?

Lori: Yeah, yeah, we didn't talk about that.

Yvette: How you actually get out of it? Wow ...

Lori: If there's anything you do ...

Yvette: If you find out, let me know. I mean, that's kind of tricky. Wow, that's something to think about. Well, usually I start with a plan. You break it down and smaller bits ... so ... the way that I can do it sometimes is to just say, 'There is ... I need to do a task, and let me just first open the file folder.' That's my first step. Once I've got that opened up and I've got the file maybe even opened in my browser – whatever I needed to be in – then I can start working on it. But it really is just kicking my butt ... giving myself a good kick and going, 'Come on, you can do it today'. But I tend to just find 15 other things to do first, which is clear my desk ... oh yeah, I need lunch ... oh, I need to do to the – let me do the groceries right now instead of later, so I don't get interrupted by that. Um, so I tried to get rid of things, but I don't know, I try to plan it better, but that usually doesn't work – for me, anyway.

Lori: Uh huh. Well, it sounds to me, when you mention that, for example, if it's a writing project, that you start by just opening the file ...

Yvette: Yeah.

Lori: ... to me that sounds like you're breaking it down to something you know you can do that really doesn't require any performance. I mean, it's not difficult to just open the file and look at it, but then at least you make that first step.

Yvette: Yeah, it's ... I do find though, that is the hardest step, that very first one. Once I've got that one, it pretty much moves on from there. Once I've got the file, and I know what I'm looking at – and maybe part of that is that it's a bit chaotic, especially as a writer, I may have 15 drafts of a similar text, and I'm not even sure what the first one or the last one was that I used, and which one I was in, and I try to make notes of this in a notebook that I keep specifically for that purpose, umm, but to know what part, what I should be working on, just that, identifying that helps. And then I can open that file in my word processor and start working, umm, and then it's OK. And then it's just a matter of not getting interrupted by anything or anybody.

Lori: Yeah, that's really hard.

Yvette: Because once that interruption comes, then it's very hard to go back to it.

Lori: Yeah, it takes you a while to get back into the flow once you've been interrupted.

Yvette: But it's also kind of overcoming a sort of fear of not being able to do it. Umm, you know, when you want to start a task and you think, 'Ah, I don't know, it's a big task; I'm not sure I can do it'. You know, to just get started and throw out the idea that it needs to be perfect, and that, you know, any effort right now would be good. But by that time, though, I've already procrastinated to a point of it almost not being possible anymore, or at least being way too late. You know what I mean? It's like you've already kind of passed five deadlines at this point.

Lori: Yeah, mmm. I guess we're coming round again to that idea that just getting started is often the hardest part, and by that I don't mean like actually 'started at the beginning of a project', but maybe even when you're working on it, like, getting started with your work period for the day, or whatever, that's really hard.

Yvette: Yeah.

Lori: And I found, for me, there was actually a site on the Internet that had what they called a 'procrastination hack' ...

Yvette: OK!

Lori: ... that I've actually used it from time to time, and, it, I find that it's been quite helpful in just getting me ... when it ... especially for jobs that are just a matter of like, sitting your butt in the chair for a certain amount of time and just focusing on it, you know, to get it done ... umm, and what they call it is the Procrastination hack

Yvette: OK ...

Timer Lori uses for the procrastination hack:



Lori: And basically what it is, is you need to use a little timer, and you set your timer for 10 minutes, and the idea is that you're going to sit down, and you're going to single-mindedly focus on your task and work on it for 10 minutes, and after that, you get to take a two-minute break and just screw around and do what you want for two minutes. And after that, you've got another 10-minute work period, and then followed by a two-minute break. And if you do that five times, you've basically spent an hour, of which 50 minutes, you've been productively working on your task. And it sounds, like, really kind of cheesy and stupid, but when you're, like, so desperate, and like, can't find any way to get started, and you know that 'Well, if I just do that first 10 minutes, then I can spend two minutes dorking around and doing whatever I want', it just kind of makes it more concrete ... that you have the specific work period ...

Yvette: I see ...

Lori: And it's not too long, I mean, 10 minutes is only 10 minutes. And I've found – I don't actually use it anymore – but I have used it in the past, and I found that it was actually, kind of a way to make the task seem less daunting. You know, you're putting a limit on it, and you're giving yourself a chance to screw around, and ... umm, yeah, I found it really useful.

Appendix 3:

Making requests

Look at the activities for making requests, prepared by Anuwat Kaewma, a teacher and teacher educator from Sakon Nakhon province, Thailand. What aspects of pragmatics do you think these activities are aiming to teach?

Handout 1

Work in pairs, and answer these questions.

- 1** What do these expressions mean?
- 2** How would you respond to these requests?
- 3** Do you think some of these expressions are more polite than the others? Why?
 - Can you *show me your photo album, please*?
 - Could you please *help me carry the books*?
 - Will you *lend me your book, please*?
 - Could you possibly *show me the way to the post office, please*?
 - Would you *help me with this exercise, please*?
 - Would you mind *lending me your pen, please*?
 - Would you mind *opening the window, please*?

Complete the gaps by choosing the following forms: gerund (verb + *-ing*) / infinitive (basic form of a verb).

- 1 The request begins with ...
 - Can you
 - Could you (possibly)
 - Would you (please) usually followed by
- 2 The request begins with
 - Would you mind usually followed by

Handout 2

Making a request	
Could you please <i>help me</i> ...	<i>look</i> for my dog? <i>open</i> the door? <i>carry</i> the books?
Can you ... Will you ... Could you possibly ...	<i>open</i> the door for me, please? <i>carry</i> the books for me, please? <i>take</i> a photo for me, please?
Would you mind ...	<i>opening</i> the door for me ? <i>taking</i> a photo for me? <i>carrying</i> the books for me?
Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can you show me your photo album, please? ● Could you please help me carry the books? ● Could you please help me carry the bag? ● Will you lend me your book, please? ● Could you possibly show me the way to the post office, please? ● Would you help me with this exercise, please? ● Would you mind lending me your pen, please? 	

Responding to a request	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Accept a request.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">OK.Sure. Here you are.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Refuse a request.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No, I'm sorry. I need it.I'm afraid I can't.I'd love to, but ...(give a reason)I am allergic to dogs.I am using it right now.

- 1 Which is more polite? Could you ... ? Can you ... ? Will you ... ? Would you ... ?
- 2 When you use expressions beginning with 'Would you mind ...', should you use a gerund (verb + *-ing*) or an infinitive (basic form of a verb)?
- 3 When people ask you, 'Would you mind lending me your money, please?', what would you respond?
- 4 When do we use, 'Excuse me'? In a request or in responding to a request?
- 5 When we respond, 'I'd love to, but ...', we usually give our
- 6 Is it better to say, 'I'm sorry', rather than only saying, 'No', to refuse a request?

Appendix 4:

What were you saying?

Look at the page from the textbook *Touchstone*, (McCarthy et al., 2005). What discourse features are taught, and what pragmatic knowledge do the speakers in the conversation demonstrate?

Lesson C What were you saying?

1 Conversation strategy Dealing with interruptions

A How do you interrupt a conversation politely in your language? Do you use expressions like these?

A *Hi, how are you?*

B *Good. Oh, just a minute – someone's at the door! Can you hold on?*



Now listen. What does Maria want to tell Lucy?

Lucy *Hello?*

Maria *Hi, Lucy. It's Maria.*

Lucy *Hey. How are you doing?*

Maria *Great! Guess what? You remember that photo contest I entered?*

Lucy *Yeah? Oh, just a minute. There's someone at the door. . . . So, you were saying?*

Maria *Well, I won a trip to Mexico. . . .*

Lucy *No way! Oh, sorry. Hold on a second. I just need to switch phones. . . . So, what were you saying?*

Maria *Well, it's a trip for two, and I was just calling to ask. . . . do you want to come with me?*

Lucy *Are you kidding?
Of course!*



Notice how Lucy interrupts the conversation and comes back to it with expressions like these. Find examples in the conversation.

Interrupting a conversation:

Just a minute / second.

Excuse me just a second.

I'm sorry. Hold on (a second).

Could / Can you hold on a second?

Restarting the conversation:

What were you saying?

You were saying?

Where were we?

What were we talking about?

B Pair work Student A: Think of some good news. Then “call” and tell your partner the news. Student B: “Answer” your partner’s call. Interrupt and restart the conversation twice, using the ideas below. Then change roles.

■ your dinner is burning

■ the bathtub is overflowing

■ you just spilled your coffee

■ your cell phone is ringing



SELF-STUDY
AUDIO CD
CD-ROM

Further reading

- Ishihara, N. and Cohen A. D. (2010) *Teaching and Learning Pragmatics: Where Language and Culture Meet*, Harlow: Pearson Education/Longman.
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Part

4

**The teacher's
environment**

17

The language course

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What does effective curriculum planning entail?
 - The course context.
 - Needs analysis.
 - Planning learning outcomes and course levels.
- How is a course syllabus developed?
 - Global teaching approaches and methods.
 - Special-purpose methods.
 - Selecting units of course organization.
- What steps are involved in implementing a course design?
 - Deciding on teaching principles.
 - Choosing materials and resources.
 - Orienting learners to the course.
 - Monitoring the impact of a course.
- What characterizes forward, backward and central planning?
 - Which approach is best?

17.1 Introduction

English teachers teach on many different kinds of courses and in many different kinds of circumstances. Ideally, they may work in institutions where a language programme has been carefully developed to include a range of different courses that cater to the needs of the particular kinds of students the institution serves. For the courses offered, there would, at best, be descriptions of the goals and objectives of each course, a syllabus, course materials, established testing and assessment procedures, and guidelines for teachers on how to teach within the course framework. The roles and responsibilities of teachers will hopefully have been clearly articulated, and systems would be in place for the monitoring of courses and instruction. However, in many situations, teachers also find their responsibilities include issues related to course design, and many teachers like to be involved in the process of developing or revising the courses they teach. In fact, moving from classroom teaching to course development is a natural stage in career development for many teachers.

In the past, four ingredients were seen as essential to provide for effective teaching: *teachers, methods, course design* and *tests*. Teaching was viewed rather narrowly, as a self-contained activity that didn't need to look much beyond itself. Improvements in teaching would come about through fine-tuning methods, course design and materials and tests. By comparison, effective language teaching today is seen both as a pedagogical issue and well as an organizational one. On the pedagogical side, teachers are no longer viewed merely as skilled implementers of a teaching method, but as creators of their own individual teaching methods, as classroom researchers and as course planners and materials developers. Beyond the pedagogical level, however, and at the level of the institution, schools are increasingly viewed as having similar characteristics to other kinds of complex organizations in terms of organizational activities and processes, and can be studied as a system involving inputs, processes and outputs. Language teaching is often embedded within an organizational and administrative context and influenced by organizational constraints and processes. This management view of education has brought into language teaching concepts and practices from the commercial world, with an emphasis on planning, efficiency, communication processes, targets and standards, learning outcomes and competencies, quality assurance, programme evaluation and best practice. These processes have an important role to play in course development and implementation and create new areas of responsibility for many teachers. These may be welcome for some teachers, a challenge for others. In this chapter, we will examine the topics of curriculum planning, syllabus development, course implementation and different approaches to curriculum design.



How are courses developed in your institution? Who is involved in course development?

17.2 Effective curriculum planning

The course context

The design and implementation of a language course reflects the context in which the course takes place. Some language courses are planned for centrally organized state-school systems where a great deal of direction and support for teaching is provided. Others take place in settings where there are limited human and physical resources available. Some proposals for new courses are well received by teachers, but others may be resisted. In some situations, teachers are well trained and have time available to plan their own lesson materials. In other situations, teachers may have little time for lesson planning and materials production and simply teach from their textbooks. Each context for a language course thus contains factors that either can potentially facilitate the successful implementation of the course or may hinder it (Graves, 2000).



What kind of context do you work in? What kinds of support are available for teachers?

The main contextual factors for planning a course are the following:

The institution

A teaching institution is a collection of teachers, groups and departments, sometimes functioning in unison, sometimes with different components functioning independently or sometimes with components in disagreement with each other. Within an institution, there may be a strong and positive climate to support teaching and effective and positive leadership. Guidelines for quality school practice may have been developed. On the other hand, there are also cases where teachers do not always work well together and have no strong commitment to the school. Institutions have their own ways of doing things, and with particular patterns of interaction, communication, role relations and conduct that constitute the school culture. The way a course is implemented and received will be influenced by institutional factors, such as the ones above. A teacher describes how the institution is instrumental in implementing positive changes that impact learners:



Teachers' workloads

The EFL industry in Brazil has gone through major changes in the last 15 years. As branch manager of one of the biggest centres in Rio de Janeiro, I witnessed firsthand the efforts of the schools in face of the changing market trends in the EFL arena. One of the most significant of these trends was the increasing flexibility in the use of teachers'

paid hour loads. Until the late 90s, it was common practice in the industry to engage teachers in administrative work at schools during term breaks, which resulted in a great amount of unproductive paid teaching hours. With the introduction of what was called the 'hours bank', teachers started utilizing these paid hours throughout terms, outside regular teaching hours, mostly in activities that catered to learners' needs, such as support classes, field trips and events. As a result, learners benefitted from more exposure to the language and a wider range of customized activities, while teachers enjoyed extended breaks. In most cases, the 'hours bank' was introduced gradually so as to allow the teaching staff to understand its rationale and practical application. Since the bank had a direct impact on teachers' hour loads, it was met with mixed feelings by members of the teaching staff, who initially viewed it as overtime. Once the initial reluctance was overcome, however, the 'hours bank' became a powerful tool in the school's efforts towards providing high-quality tuition while offering a reasonable amount of personalized service to their clients – a shift that not only reflected a worldwide trend in increased productivity but also placed the learner at the centre of most institutional efforts.

Priscilla Brooking, teacher and teacher educator, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Sydney, Australia

The teachers

Teachers are a key factor in the success of a course. Good teachers can often compensate for a poorly designed course or set of materials, but poorly trained teachers may be handicapped by limitations in the course or the materials. In any institution, teachers may vary according to factors such as their language proficiency, their teacher experience and expertise, their beliefs about teaching and learning and their preferred teaching styles, and these factors should be taken into account when designing a course or teaching materials. A course may be designed to reflect principles of communicative language teaching, but if teachers are not familiar with communicative methodology or committed to it, they may teach it in ways which do not reflect the principles the course has been designed around.

The learners

Understanding the types of learners in a course is crucial to determining the course's success. Nunan (1988: 176) comments:

The effectiveness of a language programme will be dictated as much by the attitudes and expectations of the learners as by the specifications of official curriculum ... Learners have their own agendas in the lessons they attend. These agendas, as much as the teacher's objectives, determine what learners take from any given teaching/learning encounter.

Learners may affect the outcomes of a course in unexpected ways. For example, a textbook or set of materials may be engaging, at a suitable level, and provide a lot of useful practice, but may not be appreciated by the students because they fail to see any links between the book and an examination they need to take. Or a programme in business English for

company employees, sensibly predicated on the assumption that the students really want to be able to discuss business topics in English, may turn out to be off target because what the employees really want is an hour's escape from the pressures of their office and the chance to practise social and conversational English.



Can you think of a classroom activity that could enable teachers to find out what student's expectations are for a course they are taking?

Teaching resources

Schools vary greatly in the resources they have available to support teaching. These include such things as computers, interactive whiteboards, projectors, DVD players, computer software and recorders, as well as class sets of readers, textbooks and self-study materials. In some schools, students have access to a self-access centre, a student reading room and a multimedia centre, and the availability of resources such as these can obviously have an impact on a language course. Increasingly, today's teachers are expected to be familiar with the potential of new technology in teaching – resources that can shift much of the responsibility for learning from the teacher to learners themselves. However, mastering such technology and integrating it successfully into a teaching programme often requires a considerable amount of time as well as specialized training and support. (Technology is discussed further in Chapter 19.) A teacher comments on effective use of resources involving technology:



The place of technology

While some of the schools in which I have taught lack any kind of technology, some have at least a cassette player and DVD players; however, now it is becoming more common to find wireless internet access, video projectors, interactive whiteboards, online Webinars and sometimes tablets for students. Technology confronts us with decisions about what technology to use and how to use technology effectively, rather than as just a gimmick. Some teachers I know seem very reluctant to take the plunge. I belong to the group who want to make use of some of the excellent digital resources that are available. However, I want to use technology in a way that supports effective teaching, but does not replace it. Many of my adult students sit in front of computers all day in their jobs, and they don't want to do the same thing in a language class.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

Constraints

The design of a course is also impacted by a number of practical constraints. These include the amount of time available for the course (e.g. 50 or 100 hours), the budget for

the course, the intensity of the course (e.g. one hour or three hours a day), the number of students per class and the physical characteristics and layout of the classrooms. For example, some classrooms are noisy, and it may be difficult to use audio materials for this reason. Time of day is also a factor, as well as whether the students are full-time (and able to devote their time to the course) or part-time (and have to fit the classes into everything else in their lives). The technical resources available will also be important, including the learners' access to computers or to other electronic resources, and the capacity of the school's server in cases where large numbers of students are working on computers simultaneously.



What kinds of constraints affect the development and implementation of courses in your teaching context?

Needs analysis

An approach often recommended in designing a course is to start by determining learners' needs and to use the information obtained to determine the goals of the course (Long, 2005). 'Needs' generally refers to the difference between what learners currently can do in English and the kinds of demands they will face when they use English outside of the classroom. While this understanding of needs may be appropriate for advanced learners and particularly for adult learners, younger learners do not necessarily have identifiable needs of this kind. As Cameron (2001: 30) observes:

Many children do not use the foreign language much outside the classroom, except perhaps on holiday, with tourists to their country, and when using computers. Beyond these limited domains, their outside lives do not readily provide a needs-related syllabus for foreign language learning. Furthermore, their adult lives and possible needs for the language are still too far away to give content to lessons ... The best we can do is aim for dynamic congruence: choosing activities and content that are appropriate for the children's age and sociocultural experience, and language that will grow with the children ...

With adult learners, however, or learners studying English for academic or professional purposes, more specific needs for English can generally be identified. Procedures used to determine learners' needs are known as *needs analysis*. Processes commonly used in needs analysis include interviews, questionnaires, observation, use of information from tests and information on the language that learners will encounter in work or school situations (Richards, 2001). Needs analysis can be used to find out the following kinds of information:

- The language skills the learners need (e.g. reading, writing, listening, speaking).
- Their current level of language proficiency.
- The situations or activities for which they need English.
- Difficulties they encounter with learning English.

- What their prior language-learning experiences are.
- What their views are about learning and teaching English.

In the case of needs analysis in ESP courses, Basturkmen (2010: 19) suggests that the term refers to a course-development process, and involves the following:

- *Target-situation analysis*: Identification of tasks, activities and skills learners are/will be using English for; what the learners should ideally know and be able to do.
- *Discourse analysis*: Descriptions of the language used in the above.
- *Present-situation analysis*: Identification of what the learners do and do not know and can or cannot do in relation to the demands of the target situation.
- *Learner-factor analysis*: Identification of learner factors, such as their motivation, how they learn and their perceptions of their needs.
- *Teaching-context analysis*: Identification of factors related to the environment in which the course will run. Consideration of what, realistically, the ESP course and teacher can offer.



How do you usually determine your students' needs?

Usually, information from several different sources is needed to get a comprehensive picture of the learners' needs. For example, to determine the needs of students who are on a pre-university academic-writing skills course, needs analysis could involve:

- Samples of students' writing.
- Interviews with writing teachers.
- Interviews with students already in the university programme.
- Information on the writing assignments students do in their content subjects.
- Survey of content of textbooks teaching academic writing.
- Internet search on writing problems of advanced ESL learners.

Sometimes, when this kind of information is not available, more informal information-gathering can be used. A useful way of understanding learners' needs is to develop a comprehensive needs profile. Depending on the kind of course the students are taking, this profile can include the following kinds of information:

- Reasons the students are taking the course.
- What they hope to get out of it.
- Their current and longer-term learning goals.
- Difficulties they encounter with their learning.

- Learning resources they have access to.
- Current proficiency level.
- Out-of-class use of English.
- Their preferred classroom learning activities.

Information of this sort can also be a focus of regular classroom activities, including conversations with students, activities in which students discuss issues related to needs and goals, group discussions, questionnaires, journal writing and other forms of writing. An example of a needs-analysis questionnaire may be found in the appendix.

Planning learning outcomes and course levels

While language teaching has been shaped, for many years, by discussion and proposals for the most effective language-teaching methods (see Chapter 3), a complementary issue has been how best to identify the learning outcomes of a course as a way of determining the focus of instruction as well as measuring learner achievement. These outcomes are variously referred to as standards, benchmarks, core skills, performance profiles and target competencies. The primary motivation for an increased emphasis on statements of learning outcomes in the design of language programmes, and particularly the use of 'standards' as ways of identifying learning targets across a curriculum, is described by Leung (2012):

The prominence of outcomes-based teaching in the past thirty years or so can be associated with the wider public-policy environments in which the twin doctrines of corporatist management (whereby the activities in different segments of society are subordinated to the goals of the state) and public accountability (which requires professionals to justify their activities in relation to declared public policy goals) have predominated.

Standards are descriptions of the outcomes, or targets, students should be able to reach in different domains of curriculum content, including language learning, and are usually described in terms of *competencies* – skills needed to accomplish different kinds of learning tasks. The most widespread example of an outcomes-based approach in language teaching is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, known as CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001; see also Chapter 13), which is designed to provide a 'common basis for explicit description of objectives, content and methods of the study of modern languages, within a wider purpose of elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe' (Council of Europe, 2001: 1). CEFR describes six levels of achievement, divided into three broad divisions – from lowest (A1) to highest (C2) – which describe what a learner should be able to do in reading, listening, speaking and writing at each level:

- Basic user: A1, A2.
- Independent user: B1, B2.
- Proficient user: C1, C2.

CEFR is increasingly being used as a reference framework for the design of courses and published materials. However, like earlier frameworks used for planning language courses (such as the threshold level), critics such as Fulcher (2010) argue that CEFR is ‘theory-free’, not research based, has been developed largely from the intuitions of experts and is based on a compilation of other similar rating scales. And since it is intended to be used across many different languages, it does not specify the actual language or discourse skills that learners need to acquire to reach any given level. These have to be elaborated by users. In working with the framework, teachers and textbook writers are hence similarly dependent upon intuition in deciding what linguistic knowledge and skills learners should be taught, depending on their learning context and needs. Nevertheless, many programmes find CEFR indicators to be useful to teachers and students alike, as this teacher educator explains:

CEFR in practice

Spain offers a unique system of publicly funded language courses for adults, the *Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas* [Official Schools of Languages]. These centres are open to citizens aged 16+ and offer courses in more than 20 foreign languages at levels ranging from beginner (A1 of the CEFR) to mastery (C2 of the CEFR).

The curricula for these schools are a good example of the usefulness of the CEFR recommendations and level descriptors for teaching a foreign language for ‘general purposes’, and are based on the definition of outcomes, or standards, following the structure below:

- 1** Define a learning target.
- 2** Select and/or develop learning activities and materials.
- 3** Guide the selection and design of assessment tasks.

As learning targets are public and, therefore, accessible to learners, learner initiative and control is fostered, and teachers can organize their teaching and their assessment activities in a transparent way.

The quality and the quantity dimensions in the CEFR descriptors (the ‘what’ and the ‘how well’) have been incorporated into the learning targets, thus allowing for the phrasing of objectives or outcomes, like the following for speaking production and interaction, claiming to be linked to B1 – describing what students should be able to do at the end of the course:

- Make simple, rehearsed presentations on familiar topics, highlighting important points.
- Initiate and maintain conversations and intervene in discussions in standard language on general topics and/or related with his/her work, following social conventions.

- Interact, in a coherent and comprehensible way, in a variety of learning and everyday situations to tell a story, share ideas and information or express feelings.

Neus Figueras, teacher and teacher educator, Barcelona, Spain



How are learning outcomes described for English courses in your school?

Clear specifications of the desired learning outcomes is a prerequisite to successful teaching, since if neither the teacher nor the learners know where they are going, neither will know how to get there or when they have arrived. Clarification of the goals of a course enables course planning, materials preparation, textbook selection and related processes. Planning course goals is a complex process and ideally a team-effort that requires input from many different teachers. Initially, goal statements should be viewed as tentative targets that need to be revised after a course has been taught several times. In planning business English courses, Ellis and Johnson (1994: 53) refer to the 'training gap', a distinction that applies to many other types of courses. They describe this as referring to the difference between the level at which a group of learners start a course, and the target level they need to reach by the end of it. The starting level can be determined through the use of tests or interviews and through needs analysis. It can also be described in terms of performance using some of the available performance scales (such as CEFR).



Identifying learners' reasons for studying and their goals is important, but many learners find it difficult to articulate their beliefs and preferences, and many set unrealistic goals. How could you overcome these obstacles in planning and implementing a course?

The number of levels a course has will depend on the length of the course, and the entry and exit levels that it seeks to deliver. Institutional requirements may also determine the number of levels a course may be divided into – for example, the number of teachers available or that management are prepared to pay for. If the course makes use of a published coursebook series, the levels in the coursebook series (typically, four to six levels, designed to take learners from elementary to upper intermediate or advanced levels) may be used as a basis for determining the number of course levels in the programme, an approach that can at times be problematic since coursebook levels can be somewhat arbitrary and may not provide for a well-developed transition between levels (see Chapter 20).

The planned learning outcomes of a course can generally be described in terms of the target tasks or activities the learners need to be able to carry out in English at the end of the course and the component skills or competencies that the activities call upon. Here are some examples:

Target task	Component skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use spoken English for shopping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask about prices. • Describe wants. • Ask about features of items. • Comment on features of items. • Ask about payment. • Make payment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand lectures in English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow an argument, theme or topic of a lecture. • Recognizing main ideas and details. • Distinguish facts and opinions. • Take notes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take part in simple conversations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to simple questions on common daily-life topics. • Use appropriate ways of opening and closing conversations. • Manage small talk.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read short fictional narrative texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify topics and main ideas. • Follow a sequence of events. • Recognize words from context. • Make inferences and conclusions. • Recognize role of discourse markers.

The Common European Framework of Reference similarly describes learning outcomes across the four skills at different proficiency levels. In applying the framework, however, the descriptors generally will need to be adapted to match the specific teaching and learning context, as mentioned above. Teachers working with these descriptors in planning a conversation course could use them as a starting point, modifying and supplementing them based on the particular students the course is designed for.

The following is an example of a description of a target task and activities, and the component skills involved, for a course in foundation reading skills for first-year university students in an EFL context (adapted from Frankel, 1983):

Target task: Read authentic non-specialist, non-fiction texts in English.

Component skills:

- 1** To use linguistic information in the text as clues to meaning, including:
 - Deducing the meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items through an understanding of word formation and context clues.
 - Decoding complex phrases and sentences.
 - Recognizing and interpreting cohesive devices for linking different parts of a text.
 - Recognizing and interpreting discourse markers.
- 2** To understand the communicative value of a text, including:
 - Its overall rhetorical purpose, e.g. giving instructions, reporting an event.
 - Its rhetorical structure, including ways of initiating, developing and terminating a discourse.
- 3** To read for information, including:
 - Identifying the topic (theme).
 - Identifying the main idea, stated and implied.
 - Distinguishing between the topic and the main idea.
 - Reading for detail.
 - Distinguishing important from unimportant details.
 - Skimming to obtain the gist of a text.
 - Scanning to locate specific information.
- 4** To read interpretatively, including:
 - Extracting information not specifically stated by making inferences.
 - Distinguishing fact from opinion.
 - Interpreting the writer's intention, attitude or bias.
 - Making critical judgements.

? Can you suggest some other skills that might be needed if students were also required to read fiction?

17.3 Developing the course syllabus

In planning courses, a distinction is made between the curriculum and the syllabus. *Curriculum* is a broader term than *syllabus* and refers to an overall plan for the teaching of a subject: it may include the statements of the goals and objectives of a course or group

of courses, the content of the programme and the sequence in which the content will be taught (i.e. the syllabus), the teaching procedures and learning activities and resources that will be used, the means used to assess learning and the means used to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme. Thus, in a ministry of education, those experts who develop the total educational programme for schools work in departments of curriculum planning. Content experts in different subject areas later develop the syllabuses to cover the content of their areas of specialization. Similarly, the range of courses in an MA TESOL programme is its curriculum. Each course in the programme will also have its own syllabus.

A syllabus, therefore, (also called a *scope and sequence plan*), is a description of the contents of a course and order in which the content will be taught. Syllabus design is a core component of course design, and an area that has long been the focus of discussion and debate in language teaching. It continues to arouse controversy today. The reason for this is because there is no firm consensus as to what the core components of second language proficiency are in listening, speaking, reading and writing, and a lack of consensus as to the nature of the various competencies that underlie ability in language use. For example, although reading and listening are often described as calling upon the development of the use of component skills, or microskills, that contribute to the overall ability the learner has with reading and listening, researchers do not agree as to the nature of these skills or whether they actually describe the processes learners make use of when they use them. Syllabus planners are left to decide which of the inventory of potential skills they wish to include in a given course. And, as we saw in Chapter 9, there is still controversy around such a basic question as the importance of grammar and its role in a language syllabus. In developing a syllabus for any type of course, there are hence different options as to how the course can be organized and what the units of course organization will be. The major units of organization that are used in language courses can be grouped into two basic areas: those that reflect global-teaching approaches and methods and focus on language and the four skills, and those that reflect special-purpose methods.

Global teaching approaches and methods

Grammar

Grammar has traditionally provided the core framework of general English courses. Such courses are usually developed around a structural syllabus – a graded sequence of grammatical items that are regarded as establishing the basic building blocks of language proficiency, particularly at the level of the sentence. Choice of grammatical items has normally been based on linguistic difficulty, frequency and communicative need. Grammar is often also a component of writing and reading courses since grammatical knowledge contributes to reading and writing ability. It may also be a strand in speaking courses if a focus on accuracy is a component of the course. The grammatical syllabuses in use in English language courses owe their origins to the work of applied linguists in the US and

the UK, working mainly in the first part of the twentieth century. Palmer, a pioneer in work on grammar and vocabulary selection, commented in 1922 on criteria for selecting and sequencing grammatical items in a course. He termed the latter issue *gradation* (1968: 68, based on original, 1922):

The grammatical material must be graded. Certain moods and tenses are more useful than others: let us therefore concentrate on the useful ones first. In a language possessing a number of cases, we will not learn ... the whole set of prepositions, their uses and requirements, but will select them in accordance with their degree of importance. As for lists of rules and exceptions, if we learn them at all, we will learn them in strict order of necessity. In most languages, we shall probably find certain fundamental laws of grammar and syntax upon which the whole structure of the language depends; if our course is to comprise the conscious study of the mechanism of a given language, then, in accordance with the principles of gradation, let us first learn these essentials and leave the details to a latter stage.

More recently, a need for syllabuses to reflect authentic language use has led to the use of discourse analysis and corpus research to determine features of authentic spoken and written discourse and the most frequent language forms and usages for inclusion in language courses (O'Keeffe et al., 2007). The result of such research has often revealed considerable differences between traditional grammar syllabuses and the frequency of grammatical items in authentic language use. (See Chapter 18 on textbooks.)

Vocabulary

Vocabulary has similarly been a central component of general English courses, as well as other types of courses (see Chapter 10). Vocabulary targets have been developed for general English courses, identifying words students need to master at the basic, intermediate and advanced levels (Gu, 2003). General English courses in EFL contexts typically seek to develop a 4,000 to 5,000 word vocabulary by the time learners reach an advanced level, although some suggest higher targets (e.g. O'Keeffe et al., 2007). At early stages of learning, Nation (2001) comments that the first 2,000 most frequent words in English provide a high level of coverage of the words learners are likely to encounter in texts, and that an additional 570 frequent academic words (the Academic Word List – Coxhead, 2000; 2011) account for a significant portion of the vocabulary of academic texts. The figures Nation gives are:

- The first 1,000 words account for 75% of the successive words in a text.
- The second 1,000 words account for 5% of the successive words in a text.
- 570 academic words account for 10% of the successive words in an academic text.

However, it should be remembered that the words not accounted for in this way (i.e. the unknown words in a text for intermediate-level learners) are likely to be words related to the topic of the text and may hence still be important for comprehension. Targets for vocabulary learning are discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.

Skills

As we've seen above, courses in the four macro-skills have been built around the micro-skills that each skill involves. Organizing a course around skills is based on the belief that learning a complex activity, such as 'reading fluently and with understanding', involves mastery of a number of individual skills that together make up the activity (Munby, 1978). For example, reading micro-skills include the following:

- Recognizing the rhetorical forms of written discourse.
- Recognizing the communicative function of written texts.
- Using background knowledge to make inferences.
- Inferring links and connections between events.
- Distinguishing between literal and implied meanings.
- Using strategies such as scanning and skimming and guessing meanings of words from context.

In a reading course, a focus could be on practising individual skills and in using skills in combination (see Chapter 14). Pronunciation is generally included as a component of a spoken English syllabus and criteria for the selection of pronunciation features are discussed in Chapter 11.

Functions

Communicative language teaching led to the development of functional syllabuses as an alternative to structural syllabuses (see Chapter 3). *Functions* are the acts of communication that are realized in conversation, such as *offers*, *requests*, *suggestions*, *complaints*, *apologies*, *agreeing*, *disagreeing*, *accusing*, *denying* and so on. Functions have often been used as the basis for speaking courses, in which students are taught how to carry out specific functions, using strategies and language appropriate for different situations, on the assumption that communicative competence involves mastering a core of communicative functions. One of the most comprehensive descriptions of functions is found in the Council of Europe publication *Threshold Level 1990* (Van Ek and Trim, 1990) which identifies 126 functions grouped into the following categories:

- Imparting and seeking factual information.
- Expressing and finding out attitudes.
- Deciding on courses of action.
- Socializing.
- Structuring discourse.
- Communication repair.

Critics of functional syllabuses have argued that they represent a simplistic view of communication based on the idea that there is a predictable relationship between form

and function, when, in fact, the realization of functions (technically known as *speech acts*) depends on much more complex processes of negotiation and interaction between speakers (see Chapter 16). It has also been pointed out that students learning from functional materials may have considerable gaps in their grammatical competence because some important areas of grammar may not have been elicited by the functions taught in the syllabus. Here is where a teacher's creativity and skill comes into play, since with a functional course, the teacher may be required to build in additional grammar support based on students' needs.

Situations

Courses and materials for teaching spoken English, particularly in the past, have been organized around common situations and the interactions that typically occur in such situations. A travel course, for example, might contain units on situations such as *on an airplane*, *in a restaurant*, *at the airport* or *in a taxi*. Foreign-language phrase books are often organized this way, although the lack of any clear development in language across units makes such an approach problematic, an observation that also applies to courses based on functional syllabuses.

Special-purpose methods

Competencies

Whereas skills-based courses focus on developing proficiency in the four macro-skills, competency-based courses focus on the skills needed to carry out real-world activities (see Chapter 3). For example, in order to be able to make telephone calls in English, a learner would need to be able to acquire the following 'competencies':

- Read and dial telephone numbers.
- Identify oneself on the telephone, and when answering and calling.
- Request to speak to someone.
- Respond to a request to hold.
- Respond to an offer to take a message.

Competency-based approaches have been widely used in developing work-related courses and courses for new arrivals.



How could the competencies required for a job such as a hotel receptionist at the check-in counter be determined?

Processes

Sometimes a course may be organized around the sequence of processes utilized in understanding or producing texts. For example, in the process approach to teaching

writing (see Chapter 15), learners are guided through the processes of *planning*, *drafting*, *reviewing*, *revising* and *editing* a text. In a text-based approach to teaching writing, learners are taken through a five-part cycle of *building the context for a text*, *modelling and deconstructing a text*, *joint construction of a text*, *independent construction of a text* and *linking related texts*. These different stages in the process of creating a text can be used for sequencing units in a course.

Texts

Language courses can also be organized around the different kinds of written and spoken texts types that students will use and encounter, or need to master. Text types refer to units of discourse that have recognizable features of structure and organization and that reflect the social and cultural situations in which they are used. For example, conversation often involves the following text types: accounts of past experiences, known as *recounts* and *narratives*; discourse that is information focused, or *information reports*; the discourse of *explanations* and *procedures*; and the expression of opinions and points of view, or *expositions* (see Chapter 3).

Tasks

Tasks are activities that are designed to facilitate interaction and communication, and which thus facilitate language learning, such as *finding a solution to a puzzle*, *reading a map and giving directions* or *reading a set of instructions and assembling a toy*. The tasks may be based on real-world tasks students will need to use English for or be specially designed classroom tasks (such as information-gap tasks). Task-based syllabuses have been proposed as an alternative to grammar-based syllabuses (Long and Crookes, 1992; see also Chapter 3). Long and Crookes propose that tasks can be determined by needs analysis and sequenced according to complexity. A task-based syllabus reverses the order in which grammar is normally addressed in a syllabus. Traditionally, grammar is chosen first, and then tasks are selected to practise the grammar. With a task-based approach, tasks are chosen first, and then when they are used in the classroom, the grammar students need is identified and taught, based on the learners' performance (Willis and Willis, 2007).

Content

A course may be organized around content or themes, as well as components such as grammar, functions or texts. Content may provide the sole criterion for organizing the syllabus or a framework for linking different syllabus strands together, as in content-based instruction and CLIL (see Chapter 3). All language courses, no matter what kind of syllabus they are based on, must include some form of content. But with other approaches to syllabus design, content is incidental and serves merely as the vehicle for practising language structures, functions or skills. In a typical lesson in a grammar-based course, for example, a structure is selected, and then content is chosen to show how the item is used

and to provide a context for practising the structure. In a content-based syllabus, however, content proves the vehicle for the design of the course, and other syllabus strands are derived from it. For example, an area of content may be chosen such as 'the contemporary cinema'. Issues that will be developed around the content will then be chosen, followed by activities in the areas of listening, speaking, reading or writing. Language-focused activities will then be added to support the skills-based activities. Integrating content and language can be both rewarding and challenging, as one teacher describes:

The challenges of a CLIL syllabus

In my experience as a CLIL trainer and as a CLIL course writer, CLIL is all about facing challenges. When teaching a subject in, and through, a foreign language, teachers must face a kind of triple challenge: to use the appropriate methodology of the content subject area, to apply strategies related to second language acquisition and to be able to integrate language and content.

It is obvious that when planning, for example, a science unit for non-native speakers of English, there has to be a real focus on the balance between cognitive and linguistic demands if we want our students to progress both in the learning of science and English. A CLIL unit should include activities with different cognitive demands, from low-order to high-order thinking skills, so that students do not only remember and understand but also apply, evaluate and create. That is, to move from simple to complex and from concrete to abstract. For this to happen, it is crucial to design and prepare the needed language scaffolding.

This has many implications, but from my point of view, the most relevant one is that teachers need to embrace a new paradigm of teaching and learning to truly realize the added value of the 'I' (integrated) in CLIL.

Natàlia Maldonado, teacher and teacher educator, Barcelona, Spain

Selecting units of course organization

Macro-level and micro-level units of organization

The various syllabus options described above are often in a complementary relationship, since a language course will generally need to include many different syllabus strands. A course which is built around multiple syllabus strands is said to be based on an integrated syllabus, which is the approach used in most general English adult and young-adult courses today, including my own (see Chapter 18). Krahnke comments (1987: 75):

For almost all instructional programmes, it is clear that some combination of types of instructional content will be needed to address the complex goals of the programme ... for most general teaching applications, whose goal is functional ability in broadly defined settings and structural and communicative ability in specific situations, a combination of functional, structural, situational and skill-based instruction is the probable choice. On the other hand, in some second language

teaching settings, skills and tasks can be more narrowly specified, instructional resources are richer, or specific structural or formal knowledge is not required by the programme for students to succeed, and a combination of task based, skills-based, situational, functional, and content instruction may be chosen.



What would be an example of a course where specific structural or formal knowledge is not required?

However, sometimes one syllabus strand will be used as the planning framework for the course, i.e. at the macro-level of organization, and others will be used as a minor strand of the course, i.e. at the micro-level. This is often the case with skills-based courses, such as courses in speaking or writing. For example, the table below shows different options for a writing course, with different syllabus units as the macro- and micro-level syllabus strands.

	Macro-level	Micro-level
• Option 1.	• Skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text types. • Grammar. • Composing processes.
• Option 2.	• Text types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills. • Topics. • Grammar.
• Option 3.	• Composing processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text types. • Grammar. • Vocabulary.

Lessons, units and modules

While the learning outcomes of a course determine its long-term goals, a course will normally be organized around smaller instructional sections, each with their own learning outcomes, and which are sequenced in a way that promotes effective teaching and learning. These could be lessons, units or modules.

A *lesson* is a set of material that can normally be taught in one or two class periods. It provides a sequence of activities that guide students towards a learning outcome. The format for individual lessons will reflect the content of the lesson, i.e. whether it is a reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar or some other type of lesson. A reading lesson, for

example, often consists of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities, while a speaking lesson may take many different forms, depending on whether it reflects a functional, text-based or task-based syllabus.

A *unit* is a teaching segment that normally links a number of single lessons and is the most common way of organizing teaching materials. Thus, a unit is normally a group of lessons that is planned around a single learning outcome. The factors that account for a successful unit include:

- *Length*: Sufficient, but not too much, material is included.
- *Development*: One activity leads effectively into the next; the unit does not consist of a random sequence of activities.
- *Coherence*: The unit has an overall sense of unity.
- *Pacing*: Each activity within the unit moves at a reasonable pace. For example, if there are five sections in the unit, one does not require five times as much time as the others to complete.
- *Challenge*: Activities are at a level that presents a reasonable challenge, but does not lead to frustration on the part of the learners.
- *Interest level*: The content of the unit is likely to arouse the learners' interest.
- *Outcome*: At the end of the unit, learners are able to demonstrate a set of learning outcomes.

A *module* is a self-contained and independent learning sequence with its own learning outcomes. For example, a 120-hour course might be divided into four modules of 30 hours each. Assessment is carried out at the end of each module. Modules allow for flexible organization of a course and can give learners a sense of achievement because learning outcomes are more immediate and specific.

17.4 Implementing a course design

Once decisions about the goals, syllabus and organization for a course have been made, a number of steps are involved in making the course a reality.

Deciding on teaching principles

In developing a syllabus framework for a course, a commitment has been made to the principles that will determine the teaching methods to be used, but these now will have to be made more explicit, through discussion, by those involved in teaching the course. The goal is to develop a coherent set of principles that reflect how teaching and learning should be approached in the course. This important step in course planning is sometimes ignored, but is a crucial activity that results in a statement of the 'teaching philosophy'

of the course and serves as the basis for decisions about classroom methodology. The following statements describe the teaching philosophy supporting a secondary-school EFL programme:

- There is a consistent focus throughout on learning English in order to develop practical and functional skills, rather than as an end in itself.
- Students are engaged in practical tasks that relate to real-world uses of English.
- Realistic and communicative uses of English are given priority.
- Maximum use is made of pair and group activities in which students complete tasks collaboratively.
- There is an appropriate balance between accuracy-focused and fluency-focused activities.
- Teachers serve as facilitators of learning, rather than presenters of information.
- Assessment procedures reflect and support a communicative and skill-based orientation to teaching and learning.
- Students develop an awareness of the learning process and their own learning styles, strengths and weaknesses.
- Students develop the ability to monitor their own learning progress and ways of setting personal goals for language improvement.



Do you know the teaching philosophy of your current courses? How can a course philosophy be developed?

Choosing materials and teaching resources

In deciding on teaching materials, there are a number of options:

- Choosing a suitable published course.
- Adapting a published course to match the needs of the students.
- Using teacher-made materials and authentic materials as the basis for the course.

There are a number of advantages to using teacher-made materials for a course:

- *Relevance:* Materials can be produced that are directly relevant to students' and institutional needs and that reflect local content, issues and concerns.
- *Development of expertise:* Developing materials can help develop expertise among staff, giving them a greater understanding of the characteristics of effective materials.
- *Reputation:* Institutionally prepared materials may enhance the reputation of the institution by demonstrating its commitment to providing materials specifically for its students.

- *Flexibility:* Materials produced within the institution can be revised or adapted, as needed, giving them greater flexibility than a commercial coursebook.

However there are also potential disadvantages:

- *Cost:* Quality materials take time to produce, and adequate staff time and resources need to be allocated.
- *Quality:* Teacher-made materials will not have the same standard of design and production as commercial materials and hence may not present the same image as commercial materials. In addition, they will not have been written under the guidance of one or more professional editors and this may result in materials in which lessons are not well sequenced or developed.
- *Training:* To prepare teachers for materials-writing projects, adequate training is necessary. Materials-writing is a specialized skill, and not all teachers are capable of writing good materials.

The many factors involved in textbook development and selection are the topic of Chapter 18.

Orienting learners to the course

For a course to be successful, it is important that learners understand its goals, organization and the approaches to learning it will take. Particularly in the case of adult learners, it cannot simply be assumed that they will be positively disposed towards the course, will have the appropriate skills the course demands or will share the teacher's understanding of what the goals of the course are. Brindley, writing of learners in adult programmes, states (1984: 95):

When learners and teachers meet for the first time, they may bring with them different expectations concerning the learning process in general, but also concerning what will be learned in a particular course and how it will be learned. The possibility exists for misunderstandings to arise. It is important that from the beginning of the course, mechanisms for consultation are set up, in order to ensure that the parties involved in the teaching-learning process are aware of each other's expectations. If learners are to become active participants in decision-making regarding their own learning, then it is essential that they know the teacher's position and that they are able to state their own. Teachers, conversely, need to canvass learners' expectations and be able to interpret their statements of need.

Learners begin a course with their own views of teaching and learning, and these views may not be identical to those of their teachers. How do they see the roles of teachers and learners? What do they feel about such things as memorization, group work, the importance of grammar correction and pronunciation? Learners also have different learning styles (see Chapter 5), and perhaps they are not as enthusiastic about collaborative learning and group work as their teachers.



How can teachers orient their students to a course? When should this ideally be done?

Monitoring the impact of a course

Once the course begins, information needs to be collected on all aspects of the course to find out what is working well or proving difficult and what issues need to be resolved. This is sometimes known as *formative assessment* (see Chapter 20). Monitoring can take place through meetings with teachers involved in the course, through student evaluations and through observation of classes. Questions to ask are:

- Has enough time been spent on different aspects of the course?
- Is the material at the right level for the students?
- How well are the materials being received?
- Is the methodology the teachers are using appropriate?
- Are students enjoying the course? If not, what can be done to improve their motivation?
- Are students getting sufficient practice?
- Is the pacing of the course appropriate?

Assessment can also be used to promote the quality of learning in a course. This is sometimes referred to as *assessment for learning* and involves using assessment information gathered on a regular basis, throughout a course, to help improve the quality of learning in a course (see Chapter 20). Grabe suggests (2009: 364):

When implementing assessment for learning, the first step is to agree upon feedback mechanisms from students to teachers that allow students to signal difficulties that they are having. Responses from teachers should a) address skills needed to improve learning; b) encourage greater student awareness of what successful outcomes would look like; and c) provide students with opportunities to become more successful.

For example:

- Students set their own learning goals at the beginning of a course and monitor their own progress.
- Students engage in peer assessment of other students' work and give suggestions.
- Teachers provide feedback that encourages learning.
- Students signal for assistance whenever they don't understand something or need support.
- Students plan together before they carry out an activity and then later review how useful their plans were.



Looking at the examples above, how does the concept of assessment for learning relate to the development of learner autonomy (see Chapter 5)?

17.5 Forward, backward and central planning

Curriculum, as mentioned earlier, is a broader term than *syllabus* and refers to the overall design of the course. As Wiggins and McTighe (2006: 6) state:

Curriculum takes content (from external standards and local goals) and shapes it into a plan for how to conduct effective teaching and learning. It is thus more than a list of topics and lists of key facts and skills (the 'input'). It is a map of how to achieve the 'outputs' of desired student performance, in which appropriate learning activities and assessments are suggested to make it more likely that students achieve the desired results.

Three processes are central to curriculum development in language teaching: input, process and output. *Input* refers to the linguistic content of a course. It seems logical to assume that before we can teach a language, we need to decide what linguistic content to teach. Once content has been selected, it then needs to be organized into teachable and learnable units, as well as arranged in a rational sequence. The result is a syllabus. Once input has been determined, issues concerning teaching methods and the design of classroom activities and materials can be addressed. These belong to the domain of process. *Process* refers to how teaching is carried out and constitutes the domain of methodology in language teaching. Methodology encompasses the types of learning activities, procedures and techniques that are employed by teachers when they teach and the principles that underlie the design of the activities and exercises in their textbooks and teaching resources (see Chapter 3), and is central to implementing a language course. (*Process* is not to be confused with the word *processes*, used earlier to refer to student processes as a component in syllabus development, such as in writing.) *Output* refers to learning outcomes; that is, what learners are able to do as the result of a period of instruction. This might be a targeted level of achievement on a proficiency scale – such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency scale, or on a standardized test, such as TOEFL – or the ability to engage in specific uses of language at a certain level of skill, such as being able to read texts of a certain kind with a specified level of comprehension. Thus far, this chapter has considered aspects of input, process and output in sequence, implying a linear order, but that is not necessarily the case.

It is important to realize that curriculum development in language teaching can start from input, process or output, and that each starting point reflects different assumptions about both the means and ends of teaching and learning. Conventional wisdom and practice tends to assume that decisions relating to input, process and output occur in

sequence, each one dependent on what preceded it. Curriculum development from this perspective starts with a first-stage focus on input, when decisions about content and syllabus are made; moves on to a second-stage focus on methodology, when the syllabus is ‘enacted’; and then leads to a final stage of consideration of output, when means are used to measure how effectively what has been taught has been learned. However, this view of the curriculum does not, in fact, reflect how language teaching has always been understood, theorized and practised in recent times. Much debate and discussion about effective approaches to language teaching can be better understood by recognizing how differences in the starting points of curriculum development have different implications and applications in language teaching. This leads to the distinction between forward design, central design and backward design. *Forward design* means developing a curriculum through moving from input, to process and to output. *Central design* means starting with process and deriving input and output from classroom methodology. *Backward design*, as the name implies, starts from output and then deals with issues relating to process and input. This distinction is developed more fully in Richards (2013), but can be summarized briefly as follows.

Forward design

Forward design is based on the assumption that input, process and output are related in a linear fashion. In other words, *before* decisions about methodology and output are determined, issues related to the content of instruction need to be resolved. Curriculum design is seen to constitute a sequence of stages that occur in a fixed order – an approach that has been referred to as a ‘waterfall’ model (Tessmer and Wedman, 1990), where the output from one stage serves as the input to the stage that follows. Wiggins and McTighe (2006: 15) give an illustration of this process, with an example of a typical forward-design lesson plan:

- The teacher chooses a topic for a lesson (e.g. racial prejudice).
- The teacher selects a resource (e.g. *To Kill a Mockingbird*).
- The teacher chooses instructional methods based on the resource and the topic (e.g. a seminar to discuss the book and cooperative groups to analyze stereotypical images in films and on television).
- The teacher chooses essay questions to assess student understanding of the book.

In language teaching, forward planning is an option when the aims of learning are understood in very general terms, such as in courses in ‘general English’, or with introductory courses at primary or secondary level, where goals may be described in such terms as ‘proficiency in language use across a wide range of daily situations’ or ‘communicative ability in the four language skills’. Curriculum planning in these cases involves operationalizing the notions of ‘general English’, or ‘intermediate-level English’ or ‘writing skills’ in terms of units that can be used as the basis for planning, teaching and assessment. This is the approach that was adopted by the Council of Europe in the

1970s with the threshold-level syllabus. With a forward design approach, decisions about teaching processes or methodology *follow* from syllabus specification. Ideally, the planner starts with a theory of language and a syllabus derived from it and then looks for a learning theory that could be used as the basis for an appropriate pedagogy. The point here is simply that with forward design, decisions about how to teach follow from decisions about the content of a course, and decisions about output, or learning outcomes, follow from decisions about methodology. The audiolingual method, situational language teaching and early versions of communicative language teaching, as well as content-based teaching / CLIL are all examples of forward design (see Chapter 3).

Central design

While a progression from input, to process, to output would seem to be a logical approach to the planning and delivery of instruction, it is only one route that can be taken. The second route is referred to here as *central design*. With central design, curriculum development *starts* with the selection of teaching activities, techniques and methods, rather than with the elaboration of a detailed language syllabus or specification of learning outcomes. Issues related to input and output are dealt with *after* a methodology has been chosen or developed, or during the process of teaching itself. Clark (1987: 40) refers to this as *progressivism* and cites it as an example of a process approach to the curriculum, that is one in which one reviews the language that has occurred during the process of carrying out an activity. Clark emphasizes that this focus should arise out of language use rather than precede it. In this way, learners are able to discover how language is used in the context of communication.

In general education, this approach was advocated by Bruner (1966) and Stenhouse (1975) who argued that curriculum development should start by identifying the processes of inquiry and deliberation that drive teaching and learning – processes such as investigation, decision-making, reflection, discussion, interpretation, critical thinking, making choices, cooperating with others and so on. Content is chosen on the basis of how it promotes the use of these processes, and outcomes do not need to be specified in any degree of detail, if at all, a view advocated by Stenhouse (Stenhouse, 1975, cited in Clark, 1987: 35) who viewed learning as successful to the extent that it makes the outcomes of learning unpredictable in behavioural terms.

Clark's description of the features of progressivism (1987: 49–90) captures the essence of central design when he describes it as focusing less on syllabus specification and more on methodology and procedures, more on learning processes than predetermined outcomes, more on the efforts of learners and their active role in the learning process, more on learning as a process involving creativity and problem-solving and more on the role of the teacher as a creator of his or her own curriculum in the classroom.

A central-design approach is reflected in some of the alternative teaching methods that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, which rejected the need for predetermined syllabuses or learning outcomes and were built, instead, around specifications of classroom

activities. While some of these older methods, such as the natural approach or the silent way, are no longer or rarely in use, a more recent example of the use of central design in language teaching has been labelled *dogme* by Scott Thornbury, who introduced a term taken from the film industry that refers to filming without scripts or rehearsal and applied the approach to language teaching (Meddings and Thornbury, 2009). It is based on the idea that instead of basing teaching on a pre-planned syllabus, a set of objectives and published materials, teaching is built around conversational interaction between teacher and students and among students (<http://scottthornbury.wordpress.com/2012/01/22/a-is-for-approach>):

Teaching should be done using only the resources that the teachers and students bring to the classroom – i.e. themselves and what happens to be in the classroom.

Thornbury explains that *dogme* considers learning as experiential and holistic, and that language learning is an emergent jointly constructed and socially constituted process, motivated by both communal and communicative imperatives.

The syllabus or language focus is not pre-planned, and language and content emerge from the processes of interaction and negotiation that the teacher initiates. Midlane comments (2010):

A *dogme* approach focuses on emergent language; teaching is not a question of imposing an external language syllabus, but of nurturing the students' in-built language-learning mechanisms and language acquisition agenda.

Tsui (2005, cited in Graves, 2008: 168) contrasts forward-design and central-design approaches by comparing the kinds of questions a teacher might ask while working within each approach (although she does not use either of these terms):

Forward design issues:

- What linguistic forms do we want to teach?
- How do we represent these items in the form of tasks or activities?
- How do we get learners to use the target items to complete the tasks or activities, either individually or in pairs/groups?
- Are there any gaps between the target language structures/functions and those produced by the students?

Central design issues:

- What opportunities are afforded for learners to participate in meaning making?
- What kind of shared understanding needs to be established among the learners?
- What kind of participation framework is being set up, and what are the role configurations for the group and for the individual learner over time?
- What opportunities have been created by learners in the process of participation?

Graves (2008: 169) observes:

The former type of questions are more concerned with how specific 'inputs' become observable 'output', rather than with ways in which learners are themselves creators of meaning and collaborators in understanding and extending it.

With central design, the syllabus or learning input, rather than being something that is predetermined or prescribed and regarded as essential in initiating curriculum development, is rather an *outcome* of teaching and learning. In the older method-based proposals referred to above, testing has the role of assessment *of* learning (i.e. achievement testing), while in the more recent proposals, a more dynamic role for assessment is assumed, as mentioned earlier – assessment *for* learning – where teaching and assessment inform each other at every stage of the teaching/learning process (see Chapter 20).

Backward design

The third approach to curriculum design is to begin with a specification of learning outputs and to use these as the basis for developing instructional processes and input. This is called *backward design*. Backward design starts with a careful statement of the desired results or outcomes; appropriate teaching activities and content are then derived from the results of learning. This is a well-established tradition in curriculum design in general education and, in recent years, has re-emerged as a prominent curriculum-development approach in language teaching and in materials writing. It was sometimes described as an '*ends-means*' approach, as seen in the work of Tyler (1949) and Taba (1962), who viewed instruction as the specification of ends as a prerequisite to devising the means to reach them. Tyler's work had a considerable impact on curriculum planning and helped establish the use of objectives as planning units in instructional design. An objectives-based approach reflects the essential assumptions of backward design. Tyler (1949) argued that the use of objectives provided a set of criteria that could be used to make decisions related to the selection of instructional content, the choice of teaching materials, the development of teaching methods, tests and forms of assessment. The use of objectives was recommended as a way of describing the student learning outcomes that were to be achieved. Tyler (1949) identified that this was required in order for teaching strategies and methods to be developed to attain the objectives previously set.

From the 1950s, educating teachers in how to describe learning outcomes in the form of objectives became a minor industry, and since then, generations of teachers have been taught to use objectives in curriculum planning. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) similarly argue for starting with a clear description of learning outcomes as the basis for curriculum planning. In backward design, they recommend that three steps are required:

- 1 Identify desired results.
- 2 Determine acceptable evidence of learning.
- 3 Plan learning experiences and instruction.

The planning process begins with a clear understanding of the ends in mind. It explicitly rejects, as a starting point, the process or activity-oriented curriculum in which participation

in activities and processes is primary. It does not imply any particular pedagogical approach or instructional theory or philosophy. A variety of teaching strategies can be employed to achieve the desired goals, but teaching methods cannot be chosen until the desired outcomes have been specified.

In language teaching, a number of curriculum approaches and procedures have been advocated that reflect the principles of backward design, including the use of needs analysis, objectives, competencies and standards.

Identifying learning outcomes, or objectives, is often seen to depend upon a systematic analysis of the learners' communicative needs and emerged in the 1960s as part of the systems approach to curriculum development – an aspect of the prevalent philosophy of educational accountability from which the use of objectives was also derived (Stufflebeam et al., 1985). Needs analysis is the starting point for curriculum development in some versions of task-based language teaching and is used to determine an inventory of target-tasks learners need to be able to master in the target language. The methodology of TBLT is thus built around activities or tasks that require communicative language use – activities from which the learners' need for particular aspects of language are then derived (see Chapter 3).

Competency-based instruction (see Chapter 3) is another widely used example of backward design. With CBLT, the starting point of curriculum design is a specification of the learning outcomes in terms of *competencies* – the knowledge, skills and behaviours learners involved in performing everyday tasks and activities need, and which learners should master at the end of a course of study. Like other backward design approaches, CBLT makes no assumptions about teaching methods, since any set of classroom activities can be used that enables students to master the desired competencies. However, since student learning is assessed on the basis of performance and the ability to demonstrate mastery of pre-specified skills and behaviours, teaching is generally based on helping learners acquire the communicative skills needed for specific situations, tasks and activities. As with other backward-design approaches, needs analysis is the starting point in curriculum development.

A related approach to backward design is through the use of *standards* (also known as benchmarks, core skills, performance profiles and target competencies). Standards are descriptions of the outcomes, or targets, students should be able to reach in different domains of curriculum content, including language learning, and are generally specified in very general terms. For example, standards related to the use of both oral and written language could include (McKay, 2000):

Students will develop knowledge and understanding of ...

- The relationship between texts and contexts.
- Cultural reference in text.
- The relationship between purposes and structures of texts.
- Language forms and features of texts.

Snow and Katz (2009: 67) offer the following explanation of standards:

Standards may be described as tools that can be used to improve outcomes. The kind of outcomes desired depends on the goals for improvement – whether they target teachers, teacher trainers, educational leaders, students, programmes – and so on. The major benefit of standards is that they set out clear expectations for all involved in the educational enterprise, including the public. They provide a 'common language' for talking about the process of teaching and learning. For teachers and administrators, they provide guidelines for designing instruction, curricula, and assessment.

Perhaps the most widespread example of backward design using standards in current use is the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), discussed earlier. With the CEFR, no specifications are given for input or process. It is the teacher's or course designer's responsibility to work out how the outcomes can be achieved and to develop teaching strategies, materials and content relevant to the context in which they are teaching.

Which approach is best?

A question teachers and planners often ask when presented with alternative ways of addressing an issue is, 'Which approach is best?' The assumption I have taken is that there is no best approach to curriculum design, and that forward design, central design and backward design might each work well, but in different circumstances. They might also work concurrently in some circumstances. Crabbe (personal communication) suggests:

In fact, design goes backwards and forwards whatever the starting point. As you point out, it's not that curriculum designers don't think of goals when designing a syllabus. It's just that a content item is not expressed as a goal. Similarly, a central design has a broad outcome in mind, even though it might not be specified in detail. A backward design will often take account of the process of teaching an item in formulating the outcome and it will often have content built into it. All three may be thought of at the same time, rather than being linear.

Each approach, however, makes different assumptions about the context for the curriculum, for example:

- Whether intended for large-scale or small-scale implementation.
- The role of instructional materials and tests.
- The level of training of teachers.
- The roles of teachers and learners.
- Teachers' proficiency in English.
- The demands made on teachers.
- The level of teacher-autonomy assumed for teachers.
- The amount of support provided for teachers.

A forward-design option may be preferred in circumstances where a mandated curriculum is in place; where teachers have little choice over what and how to teach; where teachers rely mainly on textbooks and commercial materials, rather than teacher-designed resources; where class size is large; and where tests and assessments are designed centrally, rather than by individual teachers. Forward design may also be a preferred option in situations where teachers may have limited English language proficiency and limited opportunities for professional development, since much of the planning and development involved can be accomplished by specialists, rather than left to the individual teacher.

Central-design approaches do not require teachers to plan detailed learning outcomes, to conduct needs analysis or to follow a prescribed syllabus; hence, they often give teachers a considerable degree of autonomy and control over the teaching/learning process. In the case of methods-based approaches, however, teachers may be required to understand the sometimes obscure theory underlying the method, as well as to master techniques and procedures that may initially prove difficult. Or they may simply adopt the practices, without worrying about their claims and theoretical assumptions, since they offer a supposedly 'tried-and-tested or expert-designed' teaching solution. Adoption of a central-design approach may also require a considerable investment in training, since teachers cannot generally rely on published coursebooks as the basis for teaching. Teaching strategies are developed based on the teacher's understanding of the context in which he or she is working, as well as on his or her individual skill and expertise in developing teaching materials and forms of assessment. High levels of professional knowledge as well as language proficiency are probably a prerequisite.

A backward-design option may be preferred in situations where a high degree of accountability needs to be built into the curriculum design and where resources can be committed to needs analysis, planning and materials development. Well-developed procedures for implementing backward-design procedures are widely available, making this approach an attractive option in some circumstances. In the case of large-scale curriculum development for a national education system, much of this development activity can be carried out by others, leaving teachers mainly with the responsibility of implementing the curriculum. In other circumstances, such as a private institute developing company-specific courses, a much more bottom-up approach may be adopted, and the work required carried out by a well-trained and skilful individual teacher or group of teachers working together.

17.6 Conclusion

Planning and developing a language course is a complex and multifaceted activity, and the success of a course depends not only on decisions about what aspects of language to include and in what order, but on the extent to which the course reflects the expectations

of teachers, learners, employers, and others who have an interest in the outcomes of the course. Well-designed language courses are essential to meet the needs of today's language learners, who may have to pass high-stakes English tests or to develop the language skills needed for education or work-related purposes. Good course design is informed not only by an understanding of teachers, learners and the resources available to support teaching and learning, but also by an understanding of the nature of language and of second language learning.

Course design has benefited from a long tradition of research and experience in how to design language syllabuses, how to sequence learning items, how to choose appropriate content, and how to plan learning outcomes. Language teaching approaches and methods often make different assumptions about how these issues should be addressed in a language course, and different solutions are seen in methods such as task-based teaching and text-based teaching and in CLIL and the Common European Framework of Reference. Course design issues are hence central to language teaching today and of increasing relevance and importance to the work of language teachers worldwide.

Discussion questions

- 1** Compare two coursebooks of the same skill area (e.g. reading, listening). How similar are the syllabuses in each coursebook?
- 2** Review the courses available in your institution. What approach is used to describe a) course goals, b) the course syllabuses, and c) the learning outcomes of each course?
- 3** What needs analysis procedures could be used to design a course for hotel employees? Discuss at least three different forms of needs analysis and the advantages and limitations of each procedure.
- 4** How could you develop a needs profile of a group of learners you are familiar with? What kind of information would you include in the profile?
- 5** Choose a level for any skill area from the CEFR. How useful would this be in developing a course to address learners at this level? What steps would be needed to develop a course aimed at this level?
- 6** Choose a unit from a coursebook and try to write a description of the specific learning outcomes the unit achieves.
- 7** Review the example of target tasks and component skills in section 17.2. Choose target tasks from a different skill area for a group of learners you are familiar with and prepare similar descriptions for three target tasks.
- 8** What principles could be used to sequence the skills covered in the following kinds of courses: a) a writing course, and b) a speaking course?

- 9 Consider the following functions that have been selected for inclusion in a lower-level speaking course: apologizing; inviting; giving suggestions. What decisions would be needed to develop these into units in a course?
- 10 Examine one of the levels in an international coursebook. What are the macro and micro levels of organization in the coursebook?
- 11 Under what circumstances do you think central planning could be used in a language course? What difficulties might it pose and how could these be addressed?

Appendix:

Needs-analysis questionnaire for adult courses

Look at the needs-analysis questionnaire on the next page. Are there other questions you would add to each part, based on the information in this chapter?

Part A

In what situations would English be useful for you? (5 = very useful; 1 = not useful)

	5	4	3	2	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking a taxi.• Taking other public transport.• Asking for directions.• Talking to people at work.• Talking to neighbours.• Receiving telephone calls.• Making telephone calls.• At the post office or bank.• At a doctor's or clinic.• At a government office.• In a store or supermarket.• In a restaurant or cafeteria.• In a department store. <p>Other:</p>					

Part B

How useful would these activities be for you?

	5	4	3	2	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practising dialogues. • Free conversation with native speakers. • Learning words in a list. • Studying grammar. • Doing translation exercises. • Working in pairs or groups. • Learning English songs. • Playing games in English. • Learning with a computer. 					

Part C

In class, would you like your teacher to do the following? Tick Yes or No.

	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain grammar. • Correct any mistakes I make in front of others. • Tell me about mistakes privately. • Mainly correct my pronunciation. • Mainly correct my grammar. 		

Further reading

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Graves, K. (2000) *Designing Language Courses*, Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

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- Mickan, P. (2012) *Language Curriculum Design and Socialization*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
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18

Textbooks

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What is the history of the major approaches in textbooks?
 - Integrated-skills courses.
- How do textbooks move from concept to classroom?
 - Product-driven versus market-driven publishing.
 - Goals of textbooks.
 - Textbook development.
 - Design and production.
 - Marketing.
- What are some criticisms of English language textbooks?
 - Authenticity of language.
 - Representations of content.
 - Textbooks versus teacher-made or locally-made materials.
- What are some issues involved in choosing textbooks?
 - The teaching context.
 - The process of selection and evaluation.
- How can textbooks be adapted?

18.1 Introduction

Despite advances in technology and the role of the internet, printed textbooks are the main teaching resource used by many of the world's English teachers. They are integral to setting common standards, helping institutions to function and enabling students to succeed in high-stakes tests that will determine their future. It is safe to say that the extent of English teaching worldwide could probably not be sustained without the support of the many different kinds of textbooks, and their accompanying components, that are available to English teachers. In many schools, the textbooks provide the main basis for the curriculum (Richards, 1993). Appel comments (2012: 50–1): 'In no other school subject do coursebooks exert a similar influence as in language teaching'. The book is, in fact, often treated as the syllabus, and determines the goals and content of teaching, as well as the methods teachers use. For both teachers and learners, the textbook provides a map that lays out the general content of lessons and a sense of structure that gives coherence to individual lessons, as well as to an entire course. Dubin and Olstain observed that because teachers often are not involved in curriculum planning, 'the tangible element that gives a language course face validity is the textbook' (1986: 167).

McGrath (2002: 8) presents a number of metaphors teachers use to describe the role of a textbook for them: 'recipe', 'springboard', 'straightjacket', 'supermarket', 'holy book', 'compass', 'survival kit', 'crutch'. As these metaphors suggest, some teachers use textbooks as their primary teaching resource. The materials provide the basis for the content of lessons, the balance of skills taught and the kinds of language practice students take part in. In other situations, the textbook may serve primarily to supplement the teacher's instruction. For many inexperienced teachers, a textbook, together with the teacher's book, may be an important source of on-the-job training. For learners, a textbook and its audio or video components may provide the major source of English language input they receive, apart from that which they get from their teacher, and serves as the basis for in-class use as well as for self-study, both before and after lessons. A textbook can give learners a sense of independence, which teacher-prepared lesson handouts do not provide. Crawford notes (2002: 28):

It may well be this sense of control which explains the popularity of textbooks with students. Consequently, a teacher's decision not to use a textbook may actually be 'a touch of imperialism' ... because it retains control in the hands of the teacher, rather than the learner.



Which metaphor would you use to describe textbooks? And what metaphor do you think your students would choose to describe their textbook?

Types of published materials

While thirty years ago, a textbook course meant only the basic student's book, workbook, teacher's book and audio component, today a new course entails a sophisticated blend of print and digital materials. Publishing in English language teaching has become a

complex and many-faceted business, and competition for adoption of new texts may be fierce. As a few minutes browsing in any ELT bookshop or catalogue will reveal, there is a wide range of textbooks and materials to support every type of teaching and learning situation. These include:

- Multilevel textbook series for domestic or international markets.
- Materials for specific age groups – children, teenagers, adults.
- Materials for specific skills – reading, writing, listening, speaking.
- Materials for specific purposes – e.g. academic study, travel, business, law, engineering.
- Materials for exam preparation – e.g. TOEFL, TOEIC, IELTS, KET (see Chapters 1 and 20).
- Reference materials – dictionaries and grammars.
- Self-study materials in grammar, vocabulary and other areas.
- Readers.

These are often accompanied by digital components to enable teachers and learners to extend the learning opportunities in the book through the use of disk- and web-based resources, downloadable applications and so on.



What kinds of published materials do you use on a regular basis? What proportion of a typical lesson that you teach is based on the use of published materials?

18.2 History and approaches

In many ways, the history of textbooks for learners of English mirrors the evolution of the field of English language teaching, and reflects not only prevailing philosophies of language acquisition but also the approaches and methods popular at a given time. As Tomlinson (2012: 159–60) notes:

The blurbs on the back [of textbooks] are constantly changing. In the sixties and early seventies, they stressed they were teaching the language directly, without the use of translation or explanation: in the seventies, they boasted that they were following a communicative approach which featured either the learning of functions or notions, or both. Subsequently, they have claimed to be following natural approaches based on topics, themes or tasks and many coursebooks nowadays stress that their syllabus is based on the ‘can do’ statements of the Common European Framework [of Reference], for example, Redston & Cunningham (2005).

Despite the prevalence and importance of published textbooks, Tomlinson also points out that language-learning materials received little attention in the field of applied linguistics until the 1990s. Today, however, materials development is a recognized field of academic study (2012: 144; Gray, 2010).

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to consider the history of all of the many different kinds of English language publishing, it will be useful to consider the background to today's global, multilevel, integrated-skills courses.

Integrated-skills courses

The textbooks many learners study from today are generally described as integrated-skills (i.e. they include all four skills in the same unit) and also contain strands that deal with grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Audiolingual and situationally-based courses of the 1960s and 70s led to communicative courses in the 1980s, while contemporary courses are often outcomes-based and corpus-informed.

Audiolingual materials

Some of the earliest textbooks developed for the teaching of English in the twentieth century reflected an emphasis on vocabulary and grammatical control by drawing on work in the field of syllabus design. Vocabulary syllabuses were developed that identified targets of 4,000 or so words as well as lists of the core grammatical patterns and structures needed to support courses from beginner to upper-intermediate level (Richards, 2001). Thus in *Essential English, a Progressive Course for Foreign Students*, published in 1938 by Longmans, Green & Co., students first looked at pictures of frequent words and then repeated such sentences as 'Number 1 is a man. Number 2 is a woman'. Later they practised sentences that incorporated basic grammatical patterns:

Teacher: That is a door.

Class: That is a door.

Teacher: That is a window.

Class: That is a window.

Teacher: What is that?

Class: That is a door.

During and following the Second World War when there was a need for a greater emphasis on oral skills, in the United States the audiolingual method was adopted as the basis for textbooks (see Chapter 3). Substitution drills and repetition were still the foundation of these texts, but a greater attempt was made to give the sentences some context, to introduce humour into artwork and dialogues and to reduce exchanges where students simply repeated the obvious. Audiolingual textbooks came to be especially popular in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. Among the most popular audiolingual textbooks published, selling millions of copies worldwide, were *English 900* (Collier Macmillan), *The Lado English Series* (Regents Publishing Company) and *Side by Side* (Prentice Hall). The revised *New English 900*, for example, published by Collier Macmillan in 1978,

contextualizes pattern practice through short dialogues, has a cast of recurring characters and is situationally based. A fairly typical dialogue teaches the demonstrative pronouns *this* and *that* as follows:

Girl:	Excuse me, sir.
Bill:	Yes?
Girl:	Is this the Museum of Modern Art?
Bill:	No, this is the Space Building. That's the Museum over there.
Girl:	Thank you very much.
Bill:	You're welcome.

Students then practise substituting various people (Laura, Madam, Sir, Mr. O'Neill, Mrs. Farias, Miss Yamamoto) and various places (the bank, the library, the post office).

Situational materials

In the United Kingdom, where the situational approach emerged as the dominant language-teaching methodology of the post-war years, publishers developed textbooks based on the principles of situational language teaching (see Chapter 3) and the Presentation, Production, Practice (P-P-P) lesson template. One of the most successful publications was the three-level *Streamline* series, published by Oxford University Press in 1979. This was the first series to be published in colour and soon all new textbooks followed suit. The *Streamline* series emphasized humour and everyday situations and offered extensive practice of all four skills. Because it was perceived to be transparent and could be used by teachers who may not have received extensive training in language teaching, it continued to be highly popular well into the 1980s, and beyond.

Communicative materials

When communicative language teaching emerged in the 1980s and the Council of Europe introduced a framework for a communicative syllabus, publishers and textbook writers were challenged to develop materials based on this new syllabus model – one in which topics, functions and notions were central in place of the more familiar categories of grammar and vocabulary (although the latter were also included). Almost immediately, a debate ensued as to what constituted a communicative textbook, since it was not immediately clear how functions and other communicative syllabus elements could be introduced or practised. In fact, the early communicative courses, still relying on a P-P-P lesson format and a drill and practice methodology, had much in common with situational texts. Thus, textbook author Jeremy Harmer states (1982: 165), commenting on a popular book of that period:

Part 4 The teacher's environment

Syllabuses cannot be communicative either. They can only supply you with lists of language or behavioural objectives. Abbs and Freebairn (1980) say that their book [*Developing Strategies*] is based on 'notional and functional categories of language', and that 'the approach, therefore, is communicative – what students need to express through language is the most important criterion for selecting, grading and organizing the language presented in the course'.

Harmer goes on to say that teaching functions in textbooks does not constitute communication, *per se*, and that activities are needed that involve authentic communication, i.e. where there is an 'information gap'. The rationale is that the gap in information provides a genuine reason to communicate and in so doing, resembles real life communication.

However, he adds (1982: 167):

A 'communicative drill' (even where it is based on an information gap, thus creating a communicative purpose and perhaps a desire to communicate) is a contradiction in terms ... Drills are, after all, form-based and deal with only one or two language items at a time. The purpose of a drill, after all, is largely manipulative, to encourage the accurate reproduction of prescribed language.

In response to the challenge perceived in developing communicative textbook materials, Harmer set out the following criteria for communicative activities:

Non-communicative activities	Communicative activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No desire to communicate.• Form not content.• One language item.• Teacher intervention.• Materials control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A communicative purpose.• A desire to communicate.• Content not form.• Variety of language.• No teacher intervention.• No materials control.



Would you want to modify the list of criteria for communicative activities in any way?

Others distinguished accuracy-based activities, which focus on creating correct examples of language use, from fluency-based activities, in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings and work to avoid communication breakdowns (see Chapters 3, 9 and 13).

The application of criteria such as those outlined in the table above in materials design is seen in textbooks that have been published since then; in nearly all published materials today, lessons move systematically from controlled to less controlled activities, often

culminating in open-ended tasks that synthesize the language presented and involve fluency work. Moreover, lessons are discrete, often repeating this process every four to six pages (see Appendix 1).

While the earliest communicative courses originated in the United Kingdom, American English textbooks soon followed the example of their British counterparts. Like British English textbooks, the very early communicative courses, such as the *In Touch* series, published by Longman, Inc. in 1983, were situationally based, were developed around a functional syllabus and presented a recurring set of characters. Another major communicative series that soon followed, *Spectrum*, published by Regents Publishing Company in 1985, attempted a more systematic approach to a functional syllabus, integrating it with grammar and distinguishing receptive from productive language. Also, the course generally introduced receptive language in a storyline before it was explicitly presented. However adept *Spectrum* was at implementing a functional syllabus, many of its activities still failed to meet Harmer's criteria for communicative activities. Teachers often found that the techniques used to practise functions were somewhat contrived, and much of the practice work continued to rely on the substitution drill, so common in all prior textbooks of the era.

In my capacity as a textbook author, this was the challenge I faced when I set out to write the *Interchange* series in the late 1980s: how to use a communicative syllabus as the basis for communicative and fluency-based activities within a four-skills unit – activities that would progress, during the lesson, from controlled to less controlled and at the same time, provide schema building; focus on the four skills; offer grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation practice; and lead the students toward motivating, authentic exchanges. This was no easy task to achieve and required extensive field-testing and research into teachers' and students' needs. However, the course soon found a large audience worldwide and, after several new editions (Richards et al., 2012), continues to be a popular choice for students and teachers. The experience of writing *Interchange* had led me to a philosophy of textbook development that perhaps resembles Krashen's (1985) principle that input must be only slightly above a learner's level of competence (see Chapter 3): textbooks also must strike the right balance between innovation and familiarity to be successful teaching resources.

Outcomes-based and corpus-informed materials

The last decade of textbook publishing has again mirrored developments in language teaching more generally, with an increased focus on authenticity of language content on the one hand, and through links to international benchmarks and standards on the other. For example, the impact of corpus research on features of spoken interaction is seen in courses such *Touchstone* (McCarthy et al., 2005), an American English integrated course, which includes a comprehensive syllabus of conversation strategies. The need for textbooks to be referenced to standards is seen in the use of the benchmarks of the Common European Framework of Reference (see Chapter 17) in courses such as *Four Corners* (Richards and Bohlke, 2011), where each lesson is linked to an outcome or 'can-do' statement in the CEFR (see Appendix 2).

18.3 Moving from concept to classroom

Product-driven versus market-driven publishing

Before considering in more detail the processes generally involved in publishing language teaching materials, it is useful to consider two different approaches to publishing and the impact they have on the development of textbooks.

Product-driven publishing

This approach assumes that an excellent product will create its own market and that the primary goal in publishing is to identify new products that have features likely to appeal to users. A good example of how this works outside the field of publishing is with the success of tablet devices. Before these products were created, no-one realized that there was a market for them. Once the product appeared, it had immediate appeal to consumers and generated an enormous market, as well as a variety of competing products with similar features to the original tablet. This sometimes happens in textbook publishing. Two examples are the *Oxford Picture Dictionary*, and the *Cambridge Grammar in Use* series. Both were unanticipated publishing successes based on the fact that, in each case, a novel product had widespread appeal to teachers and learners. The *Oxford Picture Dictionary* was not the result of market research into learners' needs, but the chance result of a decision by an editor in the Kuala Lumpur office of Oxford University Press in the late 1960s. The editor decided to take a topical word list that appeared as an appendix to an Oxford dictionary and publish it as an illustrated bilingual picture dictionary. Following the initial success of the book in the Southeast Asian market, it was re-published by Oxford University Press's New York office in a more sophisticated version for the international market and soon became a bestseller. Other publishers soon published their own picture dictionaries. Cambridge's *Grammar in Use* series began as a set of teacher-made materials for use in the institute in the United Kingdom where the teacher (Raymond Murphy) worked in the 1980s. Cambridge University Press at the time was looking to develop and expand its ELT publishing list and persuaded Murphy to publish his materials in the familiar form used by thousands of teachers and students today: a two-page lesson with explanation of grammar points on the left page, and practice activities on the right. This format proved extremely popular with students and so one of the world's most successful grammar series was established, using a format that other publishers later used for their own series.

Product-driven success stories such as these, however, are fairly rare in textbook publishing. Because of the costs involved in publishing in today's very competitive market, publishers now generally employ a market-driven rather than a product-driven approach. This will be described in more detail later, but its features can be briefly summarized as follows.

Market-driven publishing

As the name suggests, market-driven publishing means publish only what the market needs and publish only books that will sell. Such an approach begins with market research in order to identify what gaps and needs there are in the market and what kinds of books will be needed to address these needs. Books are then written specifically to meet those needs. Whereas product-driven publishing can be seen as author-based, market-driven publishing is increasingly publisher-driven, with major decisions made by the publisher rather than the author. Authors write to the publisher's brief and much of the developmental process takes place in-house, entailing authors working very closely with editors to tailor their material to the needs of the market. And with digital publishing occupying a more central place in the agenda of publishing companies, much of the specialized skills needed to develop such products can be either done in-house or outsourced to digital experts, meaning that there is a decreasing need for the traditional author, who may see his or her role reduced or even made redundant. In addition, some publishers are now moving away from textbooks to other delivery formats, such as online aggregated content, suggesting that the days of the printed textbook written by one author with a particular approach may be numbered. We will see this change from author-driven to publisher-driven publishing reflected in the discussion that follows.



What do you think are some of the negative effects of market-driven as compared to product-driven publishing?

Goals of textbooks

English-language-teaching textbooks designed for public/state schools follow a radically different process from those designed for private schools.

Materials for public/state schools

In public/state schools, materials are generally produced or approved by the ministry or department of education in a given country and are a good example of market- or needs-based publishing. Not all countries allow international publishers to submit materials for textbook selection, and those that do may provide very strict guidelines, covering everything from syllabus, to approach, to activity format. The goals of the ministry are to standardize the educational objectives of large numbers of students and often to provide materials that will prepare them for standardized tests. These goals may be forward-thinking or traditional, but the key point is that the conceptual development of the materials is done at the state or national level, typically within the curriculum division of the ministry of education. Writers are chosen to implement the official vision, rather than to create their own, and any commissioned materials take into account many aspects of the local reality: prevailing learning styles of students, existing views on teacher-centred versus learner-centred classrooms, class size and management, and even the typical school budget,

depending on whether students or the ministry will be paying for the materials. Once completed, new textbooks are reviewed and adopted according to guidelines set by school districts. Only textbooks on an approved list may be selected for use in class.

As an example of how this process is implemented, in some countries (e.g. Japan and China) groups of academics and teachers often work together to write textbooks according to ministry guidelines. The guidelines might include the exact number of words to be taught at each level, topics and verb tenses to be covered, types of classroom activities to be used, and a list of approved assessment procedures. Selecting a small number of textbooks from among the many drafts submitted is a kind of competition, and successful candidates may sell in huge quantities. In this way, the ministry of education retains control of content that will be taught in its public/state schools. In these environments, individual teachers do not have a lot of input into what is taught, although there will inevitably be some individual choice in how the content is delivered.



What kinds of English-language textbooks do students use in public/state schools in your country? How would you describe their quality?

Materials for private schools

Private schools, on the other hand – even in programmes where the textbook is chosen and the curriculum coordinated by a core group of teacher educators – generally allow for more creativity in teaching. Global textbooks – such as the *Interchange*, *Touchstone* and *Four Corners* series, referred to above – are intended mainly for teachers in private schools and institutes, rather than public/state schools. Thus, this chapter will focus more directly on the many decisions teachers need to make when choosing and implementing textbooks in private-school settings.

Commercial textbooks for private schools in international or regional markets undergo a different publication process from those used in public/state schools. Most textbooks are researched and commissioned by publishers and written by experienced teachers – in cooperation with editors and consultants who guide the writers through the development process – reflecting the market-driven approach described above. Effective textbooks do many of the things a teacher would normally do as part of his or her teaching. These include:

- Arouse the learners' interest.
- Remind them of earlier learning.
- Tell them what they will be learning next.
- Explain new learning content to them.
- Set clear learning targets.
- Provide them with strategies to use in learning.

- Help them get feedback on their learning.
- Provide practice opportunities.
- Enable them to check their progress.



What are the most important things you look for when you consider a new textbook for potential use in your classroom?

While many teachers are successful in preparing materials to help specific learners achieve their goals, commercial textbooks are aimed at the widest possible audience for a particular publication. In preparing materials for their own classes, teachers can draw on a great deal of knowledge about what their learners' individual interests, needs, difficulties and learning style preferences are. Teachers will, of course, also draw on their own beliefs, principles and assumptions about effective teaching. In published materials, however, the aim is to produce materials that can be used in many different circumstances and taught by teachers with widely different teaching styles and levels of training. This means the goals of the materials and the activities they contain must be much more explicit (Cheng, 2002) – the materials must 'stand by themselves', because the author is not present to fill in the missing links, as is the case with teacher-produced materials. During the preparation process, development editors will consult widely with teachers in countries or contexts where a book will be used to ensure that the material has the characteristics those teachers want. Byrd observes (1995: 7):

For the writer of textbooks, the most demanding of the differences between writing for a particular class and writing for publication is the search for coherence. At its best, a textbook is a unified, seamless whole rather than a random collection of materials. The creative energy demanded for writing textbooks involves more than the ability to present language learning materials that are different in some way from those that have been published previously. Textbooks need to be different in conception and organization from previously published materials that all of us develop over the years as we teach our various ESL courses.

The design and preparation of classroom teaching materials is a much more complex and challenging task than is often realized, demanding levels of expertise that those with little experience in designing materials often underestimate. This 'minimalist' perspective on the demands of materials development is the view taken by Kumaravadivelu (2012), who argues that teachers can easily acquire the knowledge and skills required to develop teaching materials through a course or workshop at either pre-service or in-service level.

In actual fact, the majority of the world's English language teachers are non-native speakers of English, with intermediate to upper-intermediate levels of proficiency in English, and may teach up to 30 hours a week. Designing their own classroom materials is hence often not a practical option.



Do you agree that textbooks need to be different in conception and organization from previously published materials? Do you look for 'innovation' when you evaluate textbooks?

Textbook development

Textbook development involves the creation of books for a very broad audience. To do that, a number of processes are usually involved. The larger the audience, the more involved the publisher is at the early stages and an in-depth process of market research becomes essential to define the audience. With a product-driven approach, a teacher or group of teachers might come up with a concept for a book, based on their perception that the concept has some advantages or unique features that would make it appealing to teachers and/or students. They contact a publisher with their proposal. However, as we noted above, this happens less and less today, and some publishers will not consider any unsolicited proposals from prospective authors. More commonly, a publisher identifies the need for a new book through market research and comes up with an initial concept for a course. A number of writers are then invited to submit sample materials and the most appropriate is chosen. It's not unusual for a team of writers to be commissioned to work on a course which consists of a number of levels and components.



What do you think are the three most important factors that determine the success of a new textbook or course?

At the early stages of development, editors (and, at times, even the writers) may be involved in visiting schools in the target markets, observing classes, talking to teachers and trying to understand the commonalities among students and teachers in a given type of programme and/or region. At this stage, there are no samples of new materials to try out, but editors can conduct in-depth focus groups on materials teachers are currently using.

Based on this initial research and working to a brief supplied by editors, writers may produce or revise sample materials and do further work on their proposals, such as describing in depth the philosophy of the course and its intended audience, as well as fleshing out a draft syllabus. These sample materials are then sent for formal review, both internally (to editors and sales staff) and externally (to teachers and consultants), sometimes to as many as 20 different countries where the course is likely to be used.

Despite globalization and the presence of 'new Englishes', described in Chapter 1, the vast majority of textbooks are still in American or British English, although listening texts increasingly provide examples of other varieties, such as Australian or Indian English, or English spoken with non-native accents. American (or Canadian) English tends to predominate in North America, Northeast Asia, and most of Latin America and the

Caribbean, while British English is the preferred variety in Europe, Southeast Asia and a few countries in Latin America. British English may also be preferred in Northeast Asia in self-study grammar and vocabulary materials. Matsuda (2012) points out that it is common for ELT materials designed for classroom use to provide examples of standard British and North American English, since these are the varieties that are usually found in ELT curricula and tests. For many teachers, these varieties of English have been regarded as the natural targets for learners. However, Matsuda (2012) argues that there are multiple varieties of English which have not often been acknowledged in textbooks and teaching materials.



Do you think it is difficult for a teacher who doesn't speak a particular variety of English (e.g. British or American English) to teach a textbook which is based on that variety of English?

When initial research and review is complete, and it has been established that the sales of the textbook will justify the development expenditure, the concept for the book project will be developed in more detail (Richards, 1995). This process will normally be the primary responsibility of the publisher and the editorial team who will manage the project. Questions such as the following will be fine-tuned at this stage, known as conceptualization:

- What kind of teachers, learners and institutions is the book intended for?
- What features are they likely to look for in the book?
- What approach will the book be based on, and what principles of teaching and learning will it reflect?
- How many levels will be involved, and at what level will the book, or books, start and end?
- How will the material in the book be organized, and what kind of syllabus will it be based on?
- How many units will the book contain, and how many classroom hours will be needed to teach it?
- What other components will be involved, such as teacher's book, workbook, tests, audio component, video component, digital and online components, and who will develop these?
- What will the format of units be, and what kinds of exercises and activities will be used throughout the book?

As the answers to these questions are clarified, the writer, or writers, will now be in a position to develop more of the course, generally beginning with the lowest level. Because textbooks evolve in an environment of ever-changing approaches to language learning and new developments in applied linguistics, as we saw earlier, it is important to 'foresee the

future', as far as is possible, so that the textbook does not soon become obsolete. Therefore, a second market-research phase is likely, based on actual sample materials developed for the new course. This phase may involve piloting of designed samples (including samples of the accompanying teacher's books and audio components, etc.), as well as 'blind' focus groups, where the identity of all courses being compared is hidden and teachers respond to lesson samples without knowing which one is in development. Piloting of materials in actual classes, if it occurs, is a complicated process, often requiring school permission as well as the need to find a way of fitting the sample materials around the term's syllabus. However, it can be a very valuable process as it can find out, for example, whether the proposed page design is considered user-friendly in all markets; whether there is anything that might be offensive or irrelevant to particular markets; and whether any elements might prevent the materials from being adopted.

Piloting may happen at any stage of the materials' development and not just at the conceptual stage. However, because of the time and cost involved, piloting of published materials has declined in recent years, with reviews and focus groups often assuming a more major role.

The conceptual phase, therefore, can be quite long, as writers and editors revise and test the prototypes to meet the needs of the intended audience. Only when the specifications for the book have been finalized can writing begin in earnest. A writing schedule is developed so that the publisher can plan for the different stages in editing, design and manufacturing that are involved in publishing a book.

Once the first full draft of the typescript is submitted to the publisher, it will be assigned to content editors who will work closely with the author(s) to revise the material over several draft stages. Publishers use both in-house as well as freelance content editors (in-house editors normally have important input at the earlier conceptual stage, as well as the development stage, although freelance editors will not usually be involved in concept development). During this content editing process, the material will be carefully examined to ensure that issues such as the following are addressed:

- Is the approach pedagogically sound and consistent?
- Does the syllabus meet the needs of the programmes where the course will be used?
- Are the materials appropriate for the ages, nationalities, learning styles and proficiency levels of the target audience?
- Does each unit of the material have clear aims, and are the aims fulfilled?
- Are the materials comprehensible and are the instructions clear and complete?
- Is the pacing of the material appropriate and are the units of appropriate length?
- Is there enough practice material?
- Is the book sufficiently engaging and interesting?
- Is the material consistent in style with other books in the series?
- Does the material flow well?

- Is there a wide enough variety of tasks, text genres and exercise formats?
- Is there a balanced representation of genders, nationalities, varieties of families, jobs, lifestyles, etc.?



Can you add any further questions to the list above?

Throughout the content development process, a considerable amount of revision may happen until the material successfully answers the questions above.

Design and production

The development of more advanced software has brought enormous changes to the design and printing of textbooks. Not only has the cost of full-colour textbooks become more reasonable, but most artwork can be prepared digitally, and designers can even prepare the colour separations needed for printing directly from their computers. This means that designs of second language textbooks have become increasingly sophisticated, often resembling magazines in their general appearance.

Design, however, is not merely decorative, or a sales tool. Effective designs make materials easier to navigate, highlight important features of the course and raise learner engagement. It might even be claimed that since some students are visual learners, good design lowers the ‘affective filter’ (see Chapter 5) and makes learning fun. Artwork, if planned properly, may be an intrinsic part of an activity, used not only to teach vocabulary but also to accomplish the communicative goals described earlier by Harmer. Good design may also reduce teacher-preparation time by ‘sign-posting’ the more important sections of the lesson, and facilitate classroom management by easing the transitions between activities.



Low-level textbooks often contain more artwork and photos than upper-level academic textbooks. Is there a teaching reason behind this?

Because of the importance of design and visuals, the production process for a new textbook course can be lengthy. Design and artwork, sometimes known as ‘one-time costs’, form a major part of the pre-publication budget of any new series. As with content, the publisher often does research to ensure that the style of design and the accompanying artwork will not date and become obsolete quickly, as fashions change.

Production may involve up to five passes of pages, known as proof stages, as art and photos are placed, layouts adjusted and content edited to provide a seamless integration of text and visuals in the lesson. However, this time-consuming, often laborious, process

needs to be balanced with an ever-increasing pressure to get textbooks out as soon as possible to be able to succeed in a fiercely competitive and demanding market. Some customers, for example, will only consider adopting a course once all levels are published, leading to as few as three proof stages being undertaken for some projects. Publishers nowadays constantly struggle with this trade-off between being thorough and being quick to get to market.

Marketing

Marketing of a textbook course begins long before publication. The publisher may employ marketing and sales staff with extensive teaching and teacher-training backgrounds in key countries, and during development they are integral to the process of focus groups and piloting, as well as being involved in key decisions about component mix, design and so on. Increasingly, publishers are also recruiting digital marketing specialists (who may not necessarily have any teaching or ELT experience), to come up with innovative product campaigns and demos via social media platforms, and so on. Teacher training, offered by the publisher, may be an essential component of the marketing and is often a key factor in securing an adoption of a new course. A decision to change textbooks may even be preceded by what is known as a 'post-publication pilot', where schools try out the new course for as long as a year before selecting it.



If you were marketing a new textbook to a school, what features of the book do you think you would emphasize?

18.4 Some criticisms of English language textbooks

English language textbooks are a source of activities for teaching English. As such, they provide information about English and examples of how English is used. They also contain real-world information; the texts and other materials they make use of intentionally or unintentionally present information about countries, cultures, people, lifestyles, beliefs and values. Two important issues textbooks raise, therefore, have to do with the authenticity of language they contain and the representations of content they provide (Harwood, 2010).

Authenticity of language

There has been a great deal of discussion and debate in language teaching over the kind of language that is presented in textbooks and the role of constructed vs. authentic language examples (Waters, 2009). Carter and McCarthy (1988: 369) comment:

We know from our knowledge of our first language that in most textbook discourse, we are getting something which is concocted for us, and may therefore rightly resent being disempowered by teachers or materials writers who, on apparently laudable ideological grounds, appear to know better.

Generally, authentic texts are seen as more appropriate than specially written texts (McGrath, 2002: 105):

Authenticity is felt to be important because it gives learners a taste of the real world, an opportunity to 'rehearse' in a sheltered environment; hence the less authentic the materials we use, the less well prepared learners will be for that real world.

Traditionally, the writers of textbooks generally employed their own intuitions about language use as the basis for writing dialogues, inventing scripts for listening texts and creating reading passages. This process of intuition was often justified on the grounds that using authentic texts, taken from real life, would expose learners to language that was unnecessarily complex and would not allow the writer to include a specific language focus within texts that are designed to support instruction. The result has sometimes been the charge that textbooks contain unnatural or 'artificial' language, such as we see in the following dialogue introducing different forms of the verb *sing* (Saslow, unpublished paper):

- A:** When did you learn to sing?
B: Well I started singing when I was ten years old, and I've been singing every day since then.
A: I wish I could sing like you. I've never really sung well.
B: Don't worry. If you start singing today, you'll be able to sing in no time.
A: Thank you. But isn't singing very hard?
B: I don't think so. After you learn to sing, you'll be a great singer.

Proponents of the use of authentic language in textbooks also suggest that target language contained in textbooks is often based on author intuition and therefore may not reflect the findings of corpus linguistics or any other evidence of how language is really used. Jones and Waller (2011) compare information about conditional structures in textbooks, where they are typically divided into zero, first, second and third types, a distinction they find is not supported by corpus-based data on how conditionals are used in English. Similarly, Chan (2009) compares the language for expressing functions in business English textbooks with the language used in actual business meetings and notes that the textbooks' language is over-explicit. The textbook language tends to suggest that there is a close relationship between function and form, whereas in real communication functions are realized in much more complex and subtle ways, as shown in the chart below (Chan, 2009: 11):

Function	Examples from contemporary textbooks	Examples from real-life business meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You've got a point there. I totally agree with you. Absolutely. / Precisely. / Exactly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Mmm' (implied by the function 'accept', e.g. 'yes'). Nods (implied by not disagreeing).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disagreeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That's not right. I don't agree. I don't quite agree with that point because ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Well' (+ comment). But ... Yes. But ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggesting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I suggest that ... I propose that ... What about ...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We could ... So if ... Imperative.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interrupting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sorry to interrupt, but ... If I may interrupt, could you ...? Sorry, can I just say something? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, but ... But ... Repetition of overlapping utterance (e.g. 'I got, I got ...').

Reflecting this concern about authenticity, a teacher comments:

Researching textbook language

The language in the textbooks we used in class often struck me as unnatural. Especially in situations where the textbook is one of the few sources of the target language for my learners, this worried me. For my PhD, I decided to investigate this more closely and looked at the role of modals in Malaysian textbooks. What I found was that many of the scripted language models and dialogues were unnatural and inappropriate for language learning. Many of the textbooks depicted unrealistic views of real-life situations and oversimplified the language, neglecting important information on the semantic and syntactic aspects of modals. In addition, the frequency with which the different modals were presented in the textbooks did not match what I found in corpora of native-speaker English; some that were not common received a lot of attention in the coursebooks; other much more common ones, very little at all. Many other corpus-based studies have made similar observations about other grammatical and lexical aspects. As teachers, we have to become aware of the limitations of textbooks. Corpora can be a great help in giving us insight into native-speaker use of the target language, and we can draw on this

in our own teaching and even show our learners how to use them by themselves. That way, we can become less dependent on the textbook.

Laleh Khojasteh, teacher and teacher educator, Shiraz, Iran

Some more recent textbook materials have tried to address these concerns through drawing on corpus research into spoken and written language. However, Burton (2012) notes that, at present, there does not appear to be a requirement from most publishers that textbook authors use corpora to validate their statements about language or the choice of target language they have selected to teach. But, in a survey conducted of 13 textbook authors, the majority did make use of corpora, and two even consulted non-native speaker data, a sign of growing awareness of English as a lingua franca (see Chapter 1). The vast majority indicated they would use corpus data more if teachers and students demanded it.



How important is it to you that a textbook makes use of corpus-based information?

No textbook writer or publisher, of course, would advocate using texts or language models that provide incorrect or inaccurate information about how English is used, but *corpus-based*, as opposed to *corpus-informed*, materials may overload students with information the teacher feels they do not need at their language level. McCarthy, as cited in Burton (2012: 91–2), makes a useful distinction between these two types of materials, as follows:

Corpus-based materials as those that ‘try to be absolutely faithful to what the computer tells you about language use’, and *corpus-informed* materials as those that ‘take from the corpus ... what one believes will fulfil those ambitions, those needs, and the teacher’s or material writer’s task is essentially to mediate corpus information, filtering it for pedagogical purposes.

The goal, then, is to use texts and discourse samples that show how language is really used and that also enable learners to use authentic communicative processes when carrying out activities. A dialogue in a textbook or one prepared by a teacher may have been written by the textbook author or teacher, but may have been constructed to reflect features of authentic conversational interaction. In many cases, it is these features, rather than the text itself, that form the focus of classroom activities.

Another dimension to the debate over authenticity concerns the extent to which models of established varieties of English should be used in textbooks, as opposed to examples of less-frequent varieties of English (e.g. Irish, Australian) and English as an international language, or lingua franca. Matsuda (2012) observes that the global spread of English as an international language has changed the nature of who uses English. English is no longer simply a language used by those for whom it is a native-language nor by native-speakers of English communicating with non-native speakers of other languages. In many situations, English is used among non-native speakers. In view of this, she suggests that it is important that English teaching materials reflect both who the users of English are as

well as the kinds of English they speak. When English is represented in this way, learners will acquire a better understanding of what English is and of what their future uses of English may be.

While teachers can find examples of these varieties of English in different sources and use these sources to remind students of the reality Matsuda refers to, in textbooks, a distinction is often made between language examples that serve as *production models* (e.g. spoken texts that students may imitate to practise sounds, functions, expressions, etc.) and those that are used for *reception*, such as for listening comprehension. The former typically will be presented in a widely used variety of English, such as American or British, while the latter increasingly provide examples of other varieties and uses of English.



Do you think it is useful for students to hear examples of different kinds of English? If so, what kinds?

Thus, while the use of authentic texts in materials may be a desirable goal, it is not always feasible. McGrath (2002: 104–5) comments:

Strictly speaking, an authentic listening text would be neither scripted nor edited; in practice, poor quality, length, and other pedagogical considerations lead to spoken texts being re-recorded and/or edited for use in classrooms. Written texts may similarly be retyped and edited.

More recent textbooks have attempted to address the issue of authenticity in various ways. For example, audio and video material may be partially scripted; the speaker responds to questions that would naturally produce graded language and high-frequency vocabulary, thereby creating predictable, authentic, spontaneous material for the learner. Partially scripted material has the advantage of containing false starts, spoken-grammar constructions and the many pragmatic markers that characterize natural conversation (see Chapters 9 and 16). Listening material may also be entirely unscripted, particularly for upper-level learners. In fact, considerations of learner level often mitigate the level of authenticity – whereas advanced textbooks will often contain authentic texts, such texts are more often adapted for use at lower levels. Textbook writers can also use technology as an aid to comprehension of authentic unscripted language. Options include video where the visuals add schemas and context to support understanding, subtitles in English so students can read as they listen, and software allowing listeners to slow down the rate of speech.

To what degree materials should focus on authenticity remains a vital question for materials writers. In choosing reading and listening texts, writers may find that sometimes real-world sources may not suit their needs because they require too much background knowledge. At other times, it may not be possible to find texts that are the right length or level of difficulty, or that reflect the reading or listening skills that are being addressed, or that are relevant to the unit topic. In this case, the writer may adapt or create a text, but making sure that it requires the use of the *processes* the text is intended to practise, such as listening to make inferences or reading to identify cause and effect. The writer

consciously may decide that what is important is authenticity of *process*, rather than authenticity of *text*.



Can you think of other examples of classroom activities that involve authenticity of process?

This teacher recommends relying on the internet for authentic materials that may complement textbooks (pedagogical uses of technology will be looked at in more depth in Chapter 19):

● Using authentic materials

With the rapid development of computer technology, access to authentic English learning materials is now widely available online in the Chinese EFL context. (This should also be true, I think, for many other EFL countries.) However, not all students know which websites they should visit to access the authentic text or language materials; or even if they know some such websites, they may just surf the sites briefly and aimlessly, without actually reading the web content. The following are some guidelines for EFL teachers when they encourage students to access online, authentic English learning materials:

- Bear in mind that there are different websites that offer authentic English language content for various levels of learners. Teachers, therefore, should recommend websites according to the English proficiency levels of the students they teach.
- Online authentic texts can be used in the background or [as] extended reading tasks for the content that is being taught. This is useful in the sense that, in so doing, students can both acquire background knowledge about the given content and, at the same time, learn how English is used in real-life situations.
- It would be more fruitful if teachers could design some tasks for students to complete when they read authentic English-language materials. For example, it can be a set of multiple-choice questions based on the facts of a certain event; or it can be a one-page summary of a news story – one on a chosen topic; or it can even be an inventory of uses of certain words in a news story.
- Students can, and should, be encouraged to read as many authentic materials as possible after class. Teachers can allocate time for students to present what they have read.

Ao Ran, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China; Singapore



How important do you personally think authenticity is in textbook materials? How practical do you think it is to include it?

Representations of content

In writing textbooks, the writer has to create contexts for the presentation of language and find texts that illustrate how that language is used. In doing so, decisions are needed about how that content is presented. The choices the writer or materials development team makes can send different kinds of messages to students. As with authenticity, the discussion behind how content is represented is more than three decades old. (Gray, 2010: 142) reports:

The kind of English contained in coursebooks can be called 'cosmopolitan English' because it 'assumes a materialistic set of values in which international travel, not being bored, positively being entertained, having leisure and, above all, spending money casually, and without consideration of the sum involved in the pursuit of these ends, are the norm'.

Critics such as Gray observe that British and American English language textbooks normally contain characters who reflect a middle-class lifestyle with an emphasis on travel and consumption, and avoid 'real' issues that many students have to face in their own lives. Publishers normally argue that it is not their aim to use the textbook as a vehicle for presenting western values, but, rather, to present what is perceived as 'neutral' content. Neutral content, to many publishers, means content that is generic enough so that all students may potentially 'see themselves' and identify with the materials. This presents a considerable challenge: students come from many backgrounds and, in fact, may hold views that are not only different from, but even conflict with, those of their textbook writers.

Nevertheless, writers for major publishers seek to ensure that their textbooks reflect progressive and politically acceptable values within their own culture and the cultures of the teachers who will be selecting their textbooks. Efforts are made to avoid social bias and ethnocentrism and, as mentioned, to reflect universal human concerns, needs and values in the content of books. Part of one publisher's guidelines include the following information to avoid stereotypes in book illustrations:

- Maintain a 50–50 balance between the sexes – numerically and in terms of the significance and prominence of the activity illustrated.
- Aim for a gender-neutral style of illustration.
- Use illustrations that include all physical types, with occasional evidence of physical disability. Avoid stereotypical association of images.

Such guidelines, however, sometimes lead to a criticism that books are 'watered down' and present an idealized view of the world or fail to represent real issues. In order to make textbooks acceptable in many different contexts, controversial topics may be avoided. Gray (2010: 3) describes the global coursebook in these terms:

A carefully constructed artefact in which discourses of feminism, multiculturalism and globalization are selectively co-opted by ELT publishers as a means of inscribing English with a range of values and associations that include individualism, egalitarianism, cosmopolitanism, mobility and affluence, in which students are increasingly addressed as consumers.

The comments of this teacher reflect, however, that not all student ‘consumers’ may wish to ‘see themselves’ or identify with the content, as mentioned earlier:

My students have busy, stressful lives and, as often as not, what they seem to want from English classes is an exposure to ‘the brighter side of life’. They don’t really come to class to try to solve the problems of the world, but want to have a chance to socialize with their friends and have fun. Their own lives are often quite a struggle, and the English class is a time to enter a different imaginary world.



Of these two very different perspectives, realism or idealism, which is closer to your own view, and why?

In sum, while the popular perception may be that materials writers avoid controversy so that publishers can sell more copies of their books to teachers, in reality, it may be the students themselves who, as consumers, are the impetus for this avoidance. Student views may also vary enormously, depending on the environment in which they are studying. For example, students studying in ESL situations, as opposed to their home countries, and exposed daily to the values represented by the culture of the target language, may, in fact, be very receptive to controversy. Even here, however, receptivity does not necessarily translate to a comfort level in discussing controversial topics in class with ‘strangers’, and some topics may be deemed by students to be intrusive and inappropriate. Materials writers, therefore, often feel it is best left to the individual teacher to gauge what ‘controversial’ content is acceptable in a given context, and that it is not the role of the textbook to make such decisions for them. It is worth noting, however, that publishers often produce various regional versions of particular textbooks for different markets, allowing them to tailor the content more closely to the teachers and students in a particular context.

Textbooks versus teacher-made or locally-made materials

Some have argued that teachers should avoid the use of textbooks, particularly international textbooks, entirely; that textbooks impose teaching styles on teachers; that they promote ‘the native-speaker’s language competence, learning styles, communication patterns, cultural beliefs and even accent as the norm’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2012: 18); and that dependence on textbooks reduces the teacher’s role to that of a technician. For example, among the proposals made by Allwright (1976: 7) was the suggestion that teachers should:

... use no materials, published or unpublished, actually conceived or designed as materials for language teaching.

As Allwright more recently comments (Allwright and Hanks, 2009: 47), this view was not influential 'although it did generate considerable professional interest (especially for Lancaster MA students) in the 1970s and 1980s'.

Kumaravadivelu (2012) hence argues that textbooks should be local, rather than international in origin, although this is probably not practical in many situations except in the case of textbooks for public/state education systems which are normally developed and published at the local level. Judging from the sales of international textbooks, students in private institutes in many countries, however, generally prefer the content, quality and variety of international textbooks, as well as the digital and other resources that often accompany them.

18.5 Choosing textbooks

The teaching context

Textbooks are often published with specific regions of the world or specific teaching contexts in mind. They reflect learning styles, methodological approaches, goals and content perceived to be of interest to teachers and learners in those contexts. Two writing texts, for example, may be based on a process-writing approach and may appear to be more or less at the same level; however, one may be aimed at students in academic programmes in the United States (and contain many references to American culture), while another may be aimed at students internationally who are more interested in personal writing and 'academic-light' content.

Textbooks may also be chosen either for institutions or for individual classes. In some countries and teaching contexts, individual teachers choose their own textbooks, and/or students may take a variety of single-skills classes requiring a different textbook for each one. In other countries and situations, the textbook and all of its many components (print and digital) may be used to coordinate an entire curriculum, define the syllabus, set outcomes and standards, be a teacher-training resource and even be used as an incentive for attracting students to the programme. In these cases, textbooks may be chosen for teachers by coordinators or committees.

Several levels of review are involved in choosing textbooks (Cunningsworth, 1994; 1995). Apart from the content and quality of books themselves, choice of textbooks will reflect a combination of institutional, teacher and learner factors.

Institutional factors include:

- The type of curriculum and tests in place in the school.
- The organizational structure of the institution.
- Length and intensity of the English course(s).
- Cost and availability of the various course components.

- Resources in place such as whiteboards, computers and self-access facilities.
- Support available to prepare new teachers for the use of textbooks.
- Classroom conditions, such as class size and seating arrangements.

Teacher factors include:

- Proficiency in English.
- Level of training and teaching experience.
- Familiarity with different methodologies.
- Attitudes towards use of textbooks.
- Preferred teaching styles.

Learner factors include:

- Learners' needs and aims.
- Proficiency level.
- Language-learning experience.
- Age range.
- Interests.
- Cultural background.
- Language background.
- Occupations.
- Preferred learning styles.

An experienced teacher and coordinator comments on the process:

Choosing textbooks by committee

When I became director of studies at a large private language school in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, I implemented a new system for selecting textbooks/series for our students. We formed a committee that consisted of all of the academic supervisors and myself. The academic supervisors were, at that time, responsible for a number of levels each. Previously, each supervisor would be in charge of reviewing all available series for the level that we needed new books for and recommending a series. Under the new system, the supervisor in charge would first review the available series, checking how well they matched our school's programme and syllabi, and would then prepare a list of series that were to be considered by the committee. The shortlisted books would then be evaluated by the committee, who would ask questions in order to identify the textbook/series that would best fit our programme's goals.

One of the prerequisites for a series to be chosen, also introduced at the same time that the committee was created, was that all levels and components of the series be launched and published. This ensured that there would be no future problem with stock and availability of materials.

Daniela Meyer, teacher and teacher educator, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

As the factors above suggest, if a school decides to use a textbook, there must be a good degree of fit between the book and the context in which it is going to be used. However, arriving at this decision may be far from simple. Within the school, there may be competing viewpoints and needs, and supplementary materials may have been developed over a long period to accompany a former textbook choice. And there may even be views among students – the following account captures this complexity well:

Students' views of textbooks

As both an ELT textbook editor and writer, I've had many opportunities to talk with teachers around the world about textbooks. As may be expected, teachers' opinions vary wildly. Some love textbooks and couldn't imagine teaching without one, while others despise the idea of textbooks and refuse to use any text. Publishers listen to teachers and administrators as they research new materials, as they should, but I always found it equally helpful to find time to talk to students about their opinion of their book. Very often the opinions were very positive. I remember once actually apologizing to my class for using the textbook that day, with my students confusingly asking 'why'. They told me they appreciate the step-by-step approaches and careful grading a text offers, and like to know what is coming up next. They were less concerned about the book being fun or topical – that is what they expect from their teacher. I'd encourage teachers to find out what students like and dislike about their textbooks, as the results can inform and improve one's teaching.

David Bohlke, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Singapore

The process of selection and evaluation

Textbook evaluation can be divided into separate phases: pre-use (also known as pre-evaluation), during-use (or in-use) and after-use (or post-use) (Cunningsworth, 1995).

Pre-use: analysis

Most textbook evaluation schemes distinguish two essential stages that are necessary at the pre-evaluation phase: a description or *analysis* phase, and an interpretation or *evaluation* phase (Riazi, 2003). In the first phase, the contents of the book have to be

carefully described in terms of scope and sequence, organization, and the types of texts and exercises contained within. Riazi (2003: 67) gives this explanation:

Analysis: a detailed analysis of the materials. It is more or less neutral and provides the evaluator(s) with the information on categories of different elements presented in the materials.

This is distinguished from evaluation, which Riazi describes as follows:

Evaluation: a professional interpretation of the information obtained in the analysis stage. The evaluator(s) may use their experience and expertise – reflecting their views and priorities based on a number of factors, such as learner and teacher expectations, methodological preferences, the perceived needs of learners, syllabus requirements and personal preferences – and give weights or provide value judgement to the obtained information.

The analysis phase will involve identifying these kinds of information:

- Aims and objectives of the book.
- Level of the book.
- Skills addressed.
- Topics covered.
- Situations it is intended for.
- Target learners.
- Time required.
- Components.
- Number and length of units.
- Organization of units.

Information of this kind can be best identified by reading the introduction to the book, as well as information provided by the publisher or book distributor, and by studying carefully the scope and sequence (syllabus) along with several representative units or lessons. Lee (2003: 173) gives an example of this level of analysis in describing a book on academic writing:

The map of the coursebook as a whole	
Focus	Description
1. Year of publication	1996
2. Title of the book	<i>First Steps in Academic Writing</i>
3. Intended audience	High-beginning writing students of ESL

4. Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic writing. • Not identified as main or 'core' course or supplementary. • Multilingual class use for ESL writing course.
5. Design and layout	No colors. A4 size. 212 pages.
6. Extent	(a) Components: One book for students. No teacher's book. (b) Total estimated time: Not mentioned.
7. Distribution	(a) Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual materials (pictures & photographs). Yes. • Guidance on use of the book. No. • Tests. No. • Answer keys. No. (b) Access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content list. • Content name. • Page number. • Appendix. • Index.
8. Subdivision	Six units with four parts in each unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 1 (organization). • Part 2 (grammar and mechanics). • Part 3 (sentence structure). • Part 4 (writing process).

Pre-use: pre-evaluation

This stage of evaluation is more difficult since it involves subjective judgements, and these often differ from one person to another. For this reason, group evaluations are often useful. A number of checklists have been developed to assist at this stage of Pre-evaluation, such as Cunningsworth (1995), which is organized under the following categories:

- Aims and approach.
- Design and organization.
- Language content.
- Skill.
- Topics.

- Methodology.
- Teacher's book.
- Practical considerations.

However, checklists such as Cunningsworth's involve somewhat subjective categories and usually need to be adapted to reflect the particular book under consideration. In general, textbook evaluation addresses the following issues:

Goals: What does the book seek to achieve and how clearly are its learning outcomes identified?

Syllabus: What syllabus framework is the book based on? Is the syllabus adequate or would it need to be supplemented (e.g. through additional activities for grammar or pronunciation)?

Theoretical framework: What language-learning theory is the book based on? Does it present an informed understanding of any underlying theory?

Methodology: What methodology is the book based on? Is it pedagogically sound?

Language content: What kind of language does it contain and how authentic and relevant is the content? Is it an appropriate level of difficulty for the learners?

Other content: What topics and themes are covered and are they appropriate for the target learners?

Organization: Is the book well organized into units and lessons, and within lessons are the purposes of activities clearly identified? Do units have a coherent, consistent organization and do they gradually progress in difficulty throughout the book?

Teacher appeal: Does the book look easy to teach and is it self-contained, or would the teacher need to develop supplementary materials to use with it? Would it require special training or could it be used by teachers with limited experience, and by both native-speaker and non-native-speaker teachers?

Learner appeal: How engaging would it be for learners? How would they rate the design of the book (including the photos and illustrations), the topics and the kinds of activities included? Is the material clearly relevant to their perceived language-learning needs? Are self-study components included?

Ancillaries: What other components does the book include, such as a teacher's book, a workbook, tests, and digital and web-based support? Are all of these components published and available?

Price: Is the book affordable for the intended buyers?



Have you ever been involved in textbook selection? Which of the areas above were most important to you? What other factors would be relevant in evaluating textbooks in your teaching context?

A teacher comments on factors he considers when choosing a textbook:

Getting to know the textbook

In any one week, I teach in three or four different institutions and also work with learners whose ages range from 10 to 50. I have no choice but to use published materials for all of my classes. Before choosing a textbook, I analyze it carefully to find out exactly what it contains, how it works, how well organized it is and how relevant it will be to my learners. The better I know the book and understand what it contains and how it is constructed, the better I am able to use it and know where I may need to adapt it to my needs. I am constantly reminded of how fortunate we teachers are that we have such an amazing range of published materials to choose from, many of an extremely high quality. Without them, for many of us, life would be impossible.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

When a group-evaluation process is used, all of the issues above and others specific to the teaching context can be discussed, and if several books are being considered, a consensus reached on the book that most suits teachers' needs. The decision may not rest entirely on the book's merits. For example, if students are known to use a certain coursebook in private high schools, the book may be rejected for use in private-language programmes that attract university students.

Evaluating during and after use

In-use evaluation focuses partially on the global needs of the institution: if testing is important, the comprehensive nature of the tests may be evaluated closely; if lab work is important, the pedagogical effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the online components may be evaluated in depth; if the school transitions students from a younger-learners programme to an adult programme, the ease of the transition from the coursebook for younger learners may be reviewed.

In terms of the classroom experience, however, and overall learner satisfaction, in-use evaluation focuses on how well the book functions in the classroom, and depends on monitoring the book whilst it is being used by collecting information from both teachers and students. Information collected can serve the following purposes:

- To provide feedback on how well the book works in practice and how effectively it achieves its aims.
- To document effective ways of using the textbook and assist other teachers in using it.
- To keep a record of adaptations that were made to the book.

This monitoring process may involve ongoing consultation with teachers to address issues that arise as the book is being used and to resolve problems that may occur. For example:

- Is there too much or too little material?
- Is it at the right level for students?
- What aspects of the book are proving least and most effective?
- What do teachers and students like most or least about the book?

Various approaches to monitoring the use of a book are possible:

- *Observation*: Classroom visits to see how teachers use the book and to find out how the book influences the quality of teaching and learning in the lesson.
- *Record of use*: Documentation of what parts of the book were used or not used and what adaptations or supplements were made to the book and why.
- *Feedback sessions*: Group meetings in which teachers discuss their experiences with the book.
- *Written reports*: The use of reflection sheets, or other forms of written feedback (e.g. blogs and online forums), in which teachers make brief notes about what worked well and what did not work well, or give suggestions on using the book.
- *Teachers' reviews*: Written reviews by a individual or groups of teachers on their experiences with the book, and what they liked or didn't like about it.
- *Students' reviews*: Comments from students on their experiences with the book.

Post-use evaluation serves to provide information that will help decide if the book will continue to be used for future programmes.



Student reviews are one source of information that can be used in evaluating a textbook. How useful do you think they are and what kind of information should they include?

Detailed information from textbook-evaluation processes, often conducted over a lengthy period, is a primary source of input when publishers decide to develop new editions of textbooks. Therefore, teachers may have a profound effect on the future direction of textbooks they are currently using.

18.6 Adapting textbooks

Once a textbook series is adopted, teachers frequently find that some form of adaptation to their local teaching context will be needed. Since international textbooks are designed to be used in many different contexts, they will invariably not address issues specific to a particular group of learners or a particular teaching situation.

A teacher explains the reasons for adapting content in a textbook:



Localizing the content of a textbook

In using international textbooks, some of the topics included can be problematic for both students and teachers. For example, when asked who John Lennon or Nelson Mandela were, my Cambodian students had absolutely no idea, let alone how to use the information about these people in the book to practise specific rules of grammar and discourse. In my current coursebook, there are sections where my students are introduced to the present perfect, at the early pre-intermediate level, by presenting information about famous people like these, a common practice in foreign coursebooks. For various reasons, Cambodian students have very limited knowledge of famous people and places outside of their country. Therefore, trying to introduce new language and unfamiliar content at the same time creates an unnecessary learning burden for my students. To help connect learning English to their own lives, I generally localize the content of the lesson by using names of people and other information that my students are familiar with, which helps them connect learning of English with their own knowledge and interests.

Theara Chea, teacher and teacher educator, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

The following are typical examples of the kind of adaptation that may be needed:

- **Localizing:** Generic textbook topics and activities may be more effective if modified to reflect local issues and content. Content may also need to be changed because it does not suit the target learners' demographic, e.g. their age, gender, occupation, religion or cultural background. Localization also involves adapting or supplementing content to address the specific language-learning needs of a group of learners. For example, pronunciation problems relating to a specific L1 – which are unlikely to be covered in an international textbook – may need to be addressed.
- **Reorganizing:** A teacher may decide to reorganize the syllabus of the book and arrange the units in what she or he considers a more suitable order. Or, within a unit, the teacher may decide not to follow the sequence of activities in the unit, but to reorganize them for a particular reason. Or some exercises within a sequence may be dropped.
- **Modifying tasks:** Exercises and activities may need to be changed to give them an additional focus (McAndrew, 2007). For example, a listening activity may focus only on listening for information, so it is adapted so that students listen a second or third time for a different purpose. An activity may be extended to provide opportunities for more personalized practice.
- **Providing additional practice:** A book unit has a limited number of pages and, at times, the teacher may feel additional practice of grammar, vocabulary or skills is required, and so he or she sources additional materials to supplement the book.

- *Addressing testing requirements:* Sometimes supplementary material may be needed to address the demands of a specific institutional or other exam. For example, the reading component of an institutional test may make use of multiple-choice questions, rather than the kinds of comprehension tasks found in a textbook, so extra material to practise using multiple-choice questions may be required.

See Appendix 3 for an example of a lesson from a textbook that has been adapted for a specific teaching context.

While the potential reasons for adaptation are many, at times, a school will not allow individual teachers to adapt materials. A teacher comments on why this might be:

When adaptation is not an option

Sometimes, the institution may not allow teachers to adapt their coursebooks, and this can become a problem for the teacher, especially for someone who is trying to meet learners' needs. I remember, when I was teaching in Italy, being given a coursebook to use with a particular group of students. When I said, 'Thanks, I'll see what activities I can add to it', I was told in no uncertain terms that I was not to do this. The students, I was told, measure their progress in terms of how far they have got through the coursebook, and the company that was funding the classes did the same thing. If I added anything to my lessons, I was told, the students weren't going to progress, and the director wouldn't be able to show the company how far they had progressed.

Brian Paltridge, teacher and teacher educator, Sydney, Australia

Furthermore, textbook adaptation may not always be expected or welcomed by learners, even when it is encouraged by schools, as described here by another teacher:

Learners' views of textbook adaptation

Students' ideas of how a teacher should use a textbook reflect their cultural background and perceptions of what a teacher's role is. For example, while I was teaching EFL in Brazil, teachers who followed the textbook in its entirety, without attempting to adapt the content or tasks to class needs, would be seen as lazy and boring. Most learners expected their teacher to be able to make sound decisions on what to adapt and how; these learners valued the feeling that the textbook was being tailored to their needs and usually responded well to teachers who did this. When I moved to Australia and started teaching multicultural classes, I became aware that some learners expected every single item in the textbook to be dealt with, however superficially. These learners either very tactfully questioned my decisions to adapt the textbook or relayed their feelings through the director of studies. I learned to address this issue by either dealing briefly with every textbook feature or explaining to students why I was making the choice to change or skip an item.

Priscilla Brooking, teacher and teacher educator, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Sydney, Australia



If you were told by your school that you could not adapt the textbook, how would you address this situation? What would you do if your learners objected to any adaptations you made?

18.7 Conclusion

Textbooks are an important resource for many teachers and learners, and despite the growing impact of technology in language teaching, few teachers and learners do not use textbooks as a learning resource. As we have seen, textbooks are more than published sets of lesson plans. They are normally the result of a long and complex developmental process that seeks to take account of learners' and teachers' needs, current trends in language teaching, and the many different kinds of contexts in which teachers work. Hence they are normally intended as a resource to support creative teaching rather than a framework that constrains the way that teachers teach and that learners learn. Learning how to use textbooks creatively should be an important goal in teacher development programmes. The nature of textbook publishing today is changing as the development of textbooks moves from authors to publishing houses as a consequence of the cost of publishing in today's world, as well as the pressures of a highly competitive market.

Textbooks are primary resources to present and practise language. However, decisions about the kind of language to include as well as the kind of contexts that are suitable as vehicles for language content pose important issues for those involved in developing textbooks. The choice of what to include – such as varieties of English, accents, text types and other components of textbooks – influences the kinds of messages learners receive about English and people who speak English, hence textbooks are not neutral carriers of content. Teachers need to be sensitive to these issues when using textbooks, particularly those that originate from other countries and cultures.

Teachers in training can benefit, therefore, from learning how to analyze and review textbooks as well as finding effective ways of using them, including localizing them for their specific teaching contexts.

Discussion questions

- 1 Examine a unit from a textbook that might be suitable for a group of learners you are familiar with. What kinds of adaptation do you think would be necessary to make the book effective?
- 2 Design an activity for a speaking class that is built around an information gap. What kind of support do you think would need to be provided for this activity to be used effectively?

- 3 Review a unit from an integrated skills textbook. Is there a movement from controlled activities to more open-ended activities through the unit or within a particular activity?
- 4 Imagine you worked in a ministry of education and were recruiting writers to work on a textbook series for public/state schools. What kind of qualities would you look for in the writers?
- 5 Think of a teaching environment you are familiar with. Prepare a set of questions that would help you develop a teacher and student profile that could be used for textbook writers.
- 6 Design a checklist that could be used by learners to evaluate a textbook they are using.
- 7 Examine a level from an international textbook series. What kind of cultural content does it contain? What kind of information does it contain about people and their lifestyles and values?
- 8 Examine a textbook, in particular its design and layout. What kind of brief do you think the designer was given to design the book?
- 9 Examine a textbook that teaches speaking skills. To what extent do you think it provides examples of authentic English? In what ways are the examples it provides 'authentic'?
- 10 Imagine that a school insisted you could only use authentic materials in your classes. What kinds of materials would you use? What demands would that place on you as a teacher?
- 11 Choose a textbook to evaluate, either one you are using or one you would like to use. What three important changes for a new edition might you suggest to a publisher?

Appendix 1:

I've never heard of that!

Look at part of a lesson below from the textbook *Interchange*, 4th edition (Richards et al., 2012). What principles of communicative language teaching, discussed in this chapter and in Chapter 3, do you see reflected?

4 I've never heard of that!

1 **SNAPSHOT**

3 PRONUNCIATION Consonant clusters

A Listen and practice. Notice how the two consonants at the beginning of a word are pronounced together.

/k/	/t/	/m/	/n/	/p/	/r/	/l/
skim	start	smart	snack	spare	brown	blue
scan	step	smile	snow	speak	gray	play

B PAIR WORK Find one more word on page 22 for each consonant cluster in part A. Then practice saying the words.

4 GRAMMAR FOCUS

Simple past vs. present perfect

Use the **simple past** for experiences at a definite time in the past.

Use the **present perfect** for experiences within a time period up to the present.

Have you ever **eaten** snails?

Yes, I **have**. I **tried** them last month.

Did you **like** them?

Yes, I **did**. They **were** delicious.

Have you ever **been** to a Vietnamese restaurant?

No, I **haven't**. But I **ate** at a Thai restaurant last night.

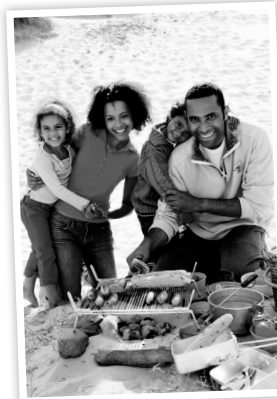
Did you **go** alone?

No, I **went** with some friends.

A Complete these conversations. Then practice with a partner.

- A: Have you ever been (be) to a picnic at the beach?
B: Yes, I My family and I (have) a picnic on the beach last month. We (cook) hamburgers.
- A: Have you ever (try) sushi?
B: No, I , but I'd like to.
- A: Did you (have) breakfast today?
B: Yes, I I (eat) a huge breakfast.
- A: Have you ever (eat) Mexican food?
B: Yes, I In fact, I (eat) some just last week.
- A: Did you (drink) coffee this morning?
B: Yes, I I (have) some on my way to work.

B PAIR WORK Ask and answer the questions in part A. Give your own information.



5 LISTENING What are they talking about?

Listen to six people ask questions about food and drink in a restaurant. Check (✓) the item that each person is talking about.

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> water | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> a meal | 3. <input type="checkbox"/> soup | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> coffee | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> cake | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> the check |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bread | <input type="checkbox"/> a plate | <input type="checkbox"/> pasta | <input type="checkbox"/> meat | <input type="checkbox"/> coffee | <input type="checkbox"/> the menu |

I've never heard of that! ■ 23

Appendix 2:

Rules and recommendations

Look at the lesson below from the textbook *Four Corners* (Richards and Bohlke, 2011). The outcome of the lesson is given at the bottom of the second page. What specific language does the lesson teach to enable students to achieve this outcome? Now look again at the characteristics of conversation in the Common European Framework of Reference chart in Chapter 13. What CEFR level do you feel this material is?

C Rules and recommendations

1 Vocabulary Extreme sports

A Label the pictures with the correct words. Then listen and check your answers.

bungee jumping	paragliding	skydiving	waterskiing
kite surfing	rock climbing	snowboarding	white-water rafting



1. _____



2. _____



3. _____



4. _____



5. _____



6. _____



7. _____



8. _____

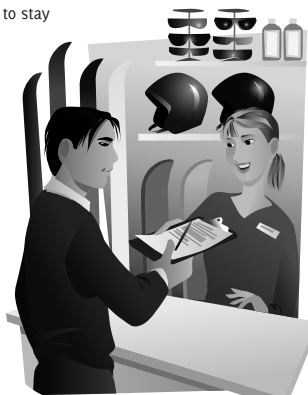
B Pair work Which sports would you consider trying? Which wouldn't you do? Why not? Tell your partner.

2 Conversation First-time snowboarder

A Listen to the conversation. Why does Sarah tell Kyle to stay in the beginners' section?

Kyle: Hi. I'd like to rent a snowboard, please.
 Sarah: OK. Have you ever been snowboarding?
 Kyle: Um, no. But I've skied before.
 Sarah: Well, we offer lessons. You don't have to take them, but it's a good idea. You'll learn the basics.
 Kyle: All right. When is your next lesson?
 Sarah: At 11:00. You've got to complete this form here to sign up.
 Kyle: No problem. What else do I need to know?
 Sarah: After your lesson, you should stay in the beginners' section for a while. It's safer for the other snowboarders.
 Kyle: OK. Anything else?
 Sarah: Yes. You must wear a helmet. Oh, and you ought to wear sunscreen. The sun can be very strong.

B Listen to the conversation between Kyle and his instructor. Why is Kyle uncomfortable?



3 Grammar Modals for necessity and recommendations

Necessity

You **must** wear a helmet.
 You **ve got to** complete this form.
 You **have to** listen to your instructor.

Lack of necessity

You **don't have to** take a lesson.

Recommendations

You'd **better** be back before dark.
 You **ought to** wear sunscreen.
 You **should** stay in the beginners' section.
 You **shouldn't** go in the advanced section.


A Circle the best travel advice. Then compare with a partner.

1. You **should** / **must** get a passport before you go abroad. Everybody needs one.
2. You **don't have to** / **'ve got to** visit every landmark. Choose just a few instead.
3. You **should** / **don't have to** book a hotel online. It's often cheaper that way.
4. You **ought to** / **shouldn't** get to your hotel too early. You can't check in until 2:00.
5. You **shouldn't** / **'d better** keep your money in a safe place. Losing it would be awful.
6. You **have to** / **should** pay for some things in cash. Many places don't take credit cards.
7. You **must** / **don't have to** show your student ID to get a discount. Don't forget it!
8. You **ought to** / **shouldn't** try some local food. It can be full of nice surprises!

B Pair work What advice would you give? Complete the sentences with modals for necessity or recommendations. Then compare answers.

1. You _____ go paragliding on a very windy day.
2. You _____ have experience to go waterskiing.
3. You _____ have special equipment to go bungee jumping.
4. You _____ be in good shape to go kite surfing.

4 Pronunciation Reduction of verbs

A  Listen and repeat. Notice the reduction of the modal verbs.

You've **got to** pay in cash. You **have to** check out by noon. You **ought to** try the food.

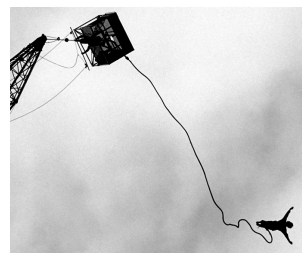
B Pair work Practice the sentences in Exercise 3. Reduce the modal verbs.

5 Speaking Rules of the game

A Group work Choose an extreme sport from Exercise 1. What rules do you think there are? What recommendations would you give to someone who wanted to try it?

- A:** You *must* sign a form before you go bungee jumping.
B: Yeah. And you *should* wear a helmet.
C: Oh, and you *shouldn't* be afraid.

B Class activity Share your ideas.



6 Keep talking!

Go to page 150 for more practice.

I can talk about rules and recommendations. 

Appendix 3:

Get it right!

Look at the lesson below from a workbook in the *face2face* series (Tims et al., 2009). How do you know this lesson has been adapted for a local audience?

Confusing words: *make* and *do*

TIP! • There aren't any rules for expressions with *make* and *do*. Learn some of the most common expressions.

1 Fill in the gaps with *make* or *do*. Use the correct form of the verb.

- 1 We need to *make* a decision about our computer suppliers.
- 2 We are more business online now.
- 3 I don't understand this new technology, but I'll my best.
- 4 We've a lot of changes at our office.
- 5 Did you know you can use the Internet to phone calls now?
- 6 He doesn't anything apart from play computer games.
- 7 I'm going to study. I have to an exam tomorrow.

Confusing words: computers

TIP! • A *file* is information stored on a computer, for example, a document.
• A *folder* is a place on a computer where you save related documents.
• A *carpet* is a thick piece of material which covers the floor of a room.
• *Save* means to put information onto a computer disk or memory stick.
• *Guard* means to protect someone or something from being attacked or stolen. It is not used in reference to computing.

2 Choose the correct words.

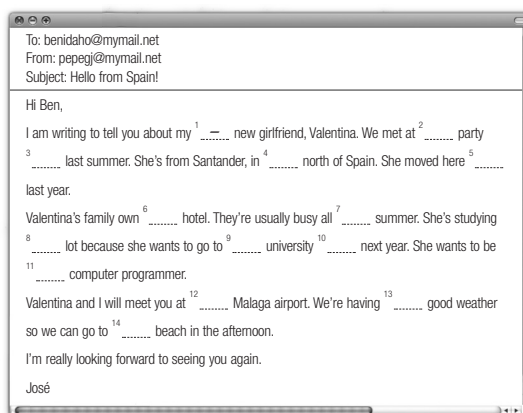
- 1 I'm going to create a separate *(folder/carpet)* for all these documents.
- 2 There were two policemen *(saving/guarding)* the door.
- 3 Did you *(save/guard)* the changes you made in this document?

- 4 The bedroom has a beautiful red *(folder/carpet)* on the floor.
- 5 You should save these *(files/carpets)* on your memory stick.

Review of use of articles

TIP! • We don't use *a/an* before plural or uncountable nouns: *The sports centre has big showers.* not *The sports centre has a big showers.* *I'm hoping for good weather.* not *I'm hoping for a good weather.*

3 Read the email from José to his friend, Ben. Fill in the gaps with *a*, *the* or no article (–).



Spelling: compound words

TIP! • In English we often put two words together to make compound words. Some of these are two separate words (*rubbish bin*), some need a hyphen (*washing-up*) and some become one word (*dishwasher*). There are no rules.

4 Complete the table with more compound words you know.

two words	with hyphen	one word
mobile phone	hand-held	webcam
washing machine		

Further reading

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19

Technology

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What are some ways to use technology?
 - Ways to interact with technology.
- How did technology emerge, and what are its benefits?
 - The emergence of technology in language teaching.
 - The benefits of TLLT.
- What current teaching approaches are found with TLLT?
 - Communicative language teaching.
 - Content-based instruction (CBI and CLIL).
 - Task-based language teaching.
- How can language skills be taught with TLLT?
 - Teaching the four skills.
 - Teaching other language and communication skills.
- The challenges of TLLT.
- Testing and assessment in TLLT.
 - Institutional or large-scale testing.
 - Classroom assessment.

19.1 Introduction

Today's learners live in a world dominated by technology and increasingly expect their language-learning experiences to reflect the reality of their daily lives outside the classroom. Teachers and institutions turn to technology to deal with the practical demands of teaching increasing numbers of students. However, technology isn't only a practical classroom-management tool. It also has potential pedagogical benefits for learning and teaching, which have led to an increase in its use worldwide. In English language teaching today, technology can be used in essentially three ways: (1) It may be incorporated into the classroom and form part of the lesson; (2) it may enable teachers to move part of the curriculum outside of classroom hours, to an off-site location (either home or a language lab), in a combination known as *blended learning*; or (3) it may allow students to complete a course entirely off-site, an approach known as *distance learning*. We use the term *technology* here in a broad sense to include both hardware (laptops, cell phones, tablets) and software (the internet, email), either designed specifically for language learning and teaching or simply useful for it.

19.2 Ways to use technology

Even when teachers embrace technology for language learning and teaching (TLLT), using technology is not without its challenges. Changes in TLLT are rapid, and teachers and institutions that wish to use technology as a teaching resource need to be open to change – willing to take risks and try out new ways of teaching. Some describe commitment to technology as requiring a paradigm shift in how we understand teaching and learning because it creates new roles for teachers and learners. However, just using a particular technology will not make one a better teacher. What is needed is an awareness of how to use technology to improve one's teaching and enhance opportunities for learners. A teacher comments on the importance of integrating technology effectively with the rest of the lesson, as opposed to simply providing a technological add-on:

The importance of an integrated lesson

As ICT coordinator at a young-learner teaching centre, I would often be asked by teachers for ideas of things to do in the computer room. I would always respond by asking the teachers what they were doing in class, or what was next in the coursebook. I'm a firm believer that learning technology should be integrated into the syllabus and used to enhance language-learning objectives, rather than as a break from the usual classroom routine. Once I'd established what the teacher was doing in the rest of the lesson, it was easier for me to suggest a computer-room activity that would fit in and would build upon what the learners had done beforehand or help set the scene for something to come.

As time went on, and teachers became more confident in their use of learning technology, my recommendations tended to move away from tried-and-tested activities, with little required by the teacher other than supervising, to more interesting sessions involving the learners more actively using language to practise different skills by creating animated stories, playing computer games or using blogs and wikis.

In the classroom, too, with each classroom equipped with an interactive whiteboard (IWB), it was important to support teachers and make it easy for them to use this technology and integrate it into their everyday classroom practice. To this end, making sure that learning technology was a core part of in-service teacher training was essential, and this often took the form of teachers showing-and-telling how they used the IWB, as well as standard input sessions. Above all, the focus needs to be on how to use technology in a pedagogically sound way.

Graham Stanley, teacher and materials writer, Barcelona, Spain



Have you ever tried to incorporate a new technology into your classes? What issues did you face in doing so?

A distinction is often made between technology as a *tool*, as a *tutor* or as a *medium* for learning. An example of technology as a tool is the use of word processing software for the teaching of writing. Although not designed for language learning, word processing software includes many features that are helpful for learners, such as spelling checkers and review tools. Technology as a tutor, on the other hand, is designed to teach some aspect of the language. Examples include a website with grammar quizzes or a CD-ROM with audio clips and listening-comprehension questions. Technology as a medium emphasizes the social aspect of technology and its ability to connect learners, either with authentic language input (e.g. the internet), or with native speakers or other learners (e.g. email).

A teacher in Hong Kong describes how he used technology to help reach out to students in areas that interest them:

To help develop the use of English as a communicative tool, we try to build bridges between students' family and youth cultures and the academic texts we want them to study. We don't use textbooks, and instead study music, films and documentaries from around the world, read stories and poetry, play games, and do work online. We use Facebook groups to communicate and to do writing, and each student has their own blog. This year we joined quadblogging.net to collaborate on blogging with three classrooms around the world. I learn about the conflicts they face in their lives, and use English as a way for them to learn about themselves and learn to solve problems in their communities.

Carlos Soto, teacher cited in Anjali Hazari, Gift Rapped, South China Morning Post, 3 June, 2013



What are some benefits students can get from collaborative blogging?

Blended learning

Technology allows learning to take place partly or wholly online. In blended learning, a mix of face-to-face and online instruction is built into the design of a course, rather than offering online instruction as simply an add-on to complement the course. Classroom instruction is often used to prepare learners for the blended component, and a variety of means may be employed to facilitate the delivery of content, from laptops to tablets to mobile phones. Blended learning emerged as a response to the fact that face-to-face instruction cannot adequately meet the demands of a large number of students: students who have only a limited amount of time available for classroom instruction and for whom self-study is insufficient.

Distance learning

The internet has made distance learning possible. Distance learning entails not only a complement to classroom instruction or an integration of classroom instruction with TLLT, but the delivery of entire courses online, making it possible for much greater numbers of students to have access to language-learning opportunities. Web-based learning, or online learning, has grown rapidly in recent years, as governments struggle to meet the demands for training huge numbers of learners for whom face-to-face instruction is not possible. For example, some language-teaching institutions deliver language courses online to over a million students. The effectiveness of courses of this kind depends on a number of factors, including the design of the course, the role of tutors who provide support and feedback during course delivery and the role of assessment. The success of an online-learning course for 115,000 students in Colombia described in Glick and Fang (2010: 257) depended on:

- A well-structured e-learning course design.
- A clearly defined role for e-tutors.
- Training and orientation for e-tutors and students before the course.
- Regular assessment of tutors.
- The inclusion in the course of a range of automatic tools for assessment and self-learning.

Ways to interact with technology

Another way of looking at technology is through the way learners and teachers interact with it. Levy (2010: 16–17) identifies five levels at which technology can support language teaching:

- 1 *The physical level*, with tools such as mobile phones, digital cameras, laptops and tablets.
- 2 *The management level*, which includes learning management systems (LMSs) that enable the administration, delivery, tracking, reporting etc. of a language course.
- 3 *The applications level*, including word-processing software, email and chat clients, social-networking sites and blogs.
- 4 *The resource level*, which includes access to authentic materials, such as online newspapers, magazines, language tutors and dedicated websites for learners.
- 5 *The component technology level*, such as spelling checkers, grammar checkers, electronic dictionaries and other support tools.



Which of the aspects of technology above are available to teachers and students in schools in your country?

19.3 The emergence of technology and its benefits

The emergence of technology in language teaching

The use of technology in language teaching actually has a very long history. From Sumerian clay tablets over 5,000 years ago, to printed books in the middle ages, to tape recorders, projectors with filmstrips, photocopiers and the language laboratory with audio recorders in the 1960s, language teachers have always made use of the technology available to them. The arrival of the computer in the early 1980s heralded a particularly important development, as it offered the potential for new ways of teaching and learning. Word processors and simple text-editing programs, in particular, initially made an impact as they allowed teachers to create and assign grammar exercises electronically, with automatic error correction and feedback. In this way, teachers could easily access many students' work, making the revision process – a key aspect of the process-writing approach which requires extensive feedback from teachers on students' writing – much easier to accomplish. The use of audio and video was limited at this time. Despite the excitement and the emergence of CALL, or computer-assisted language learning, as a separate professional field, the pedagogy of the first generation of CALL programs mostly did not extend the nature of the learner's experience beyond offering learners a new mode of practising grammar and composition. The mechanical drill-and-practice methodology of audiolingualism (see Chapter 3) was simply transferred from the classroom to the computer. As Roche observes (2010: 45), some contemporary uses of technology in language teaching, such as that used in Rosetta Stone, have not moved beyond this approach to learning:

For the most part, the learner is supposed to match auditory and visual clues, from the word level to the sentence level. In fact, programs such as this one are not based on pedagogical innovation but are rather in line with the pattern-drill methodology of the 1950s wrapped in a more colourful and pseudo-interactive surface. In a way, such programs present a reinvention of culture-free language-training programs, which to my knowledge have never proved effective beyond certain short-lived drill effects. It is not conceivable how such a program could lead to any usable skills in authentic communication.

In the late 1980s, personal computers with much greater capacities were developed and became available at much lower prices, allowing many people to use video, sound, texts, images and animation at home or in the workplace. From the early 1990s, computers also became increasingly networked, i.e. connected to one another, in particular, with the appearance of the internet and the World Wide Web. Hypermedia, or interlinking of objects on webpages, allowed for content to be linked, and different tools allowing learners and teachers to communicate with others around the world became widely available. Although this period saw a great deal of excitement and innovation, it took time for the field to find ways to make the most of these developments.

Healey (2010: 8) describes the limitations and audiolingual nature of the early programs available:

First, early software in general was written either by programmers who knew little or nothing about pedagogy, or by teachers who knew very little about programming. Second, lack of teacher training in CALL meant that most teachers used drills because they understood what they were supposed to do. Sadly, not many teachers were as adept at creating learning spaces for students, using simulations, games, and text reconstruction programs and encouraging student autonomy.

While teachers gradually became more familiar with technology, new developments also made it easier to design better learning experiences. Early authoring tools (programs used to create language-learning software) became available, such as Hypercard and Toolbook, which made it much easier to develop good-looking programs, including audio and video. Voice-recognition technology added a new dimension for pronunciation practice, and text reconstruction programs allowed the focus to move beyond the sentence to the text level. Students reorganized texts according to appropriate paragraph format, and software packages produced by companies such as DynEd and Auralog developed software that could be used across a range of skills.



How has the use of technology changed since you started teaching or learning a language?

It was the advent of the World Wide Web, however, that really showed the potential of technology to many language teachers. Not only did it provide access to a new source of content with language-teaching potential – much of it free through sites that integrated texts, sound, video, animation and so on – but as the internet developed and became

increasingly interactive, language teaching also introduced interactivity. Real-time interaction and communication between learners in different locations, as well as between learners and teachers and among teachers themselves, all became options. Textbooks started to come with CD-ROMS and companion websites with additional materials for learners and teachers. Just as classroom-based teaching during this period saw a move from teacher-centred to more learner-focused teaching, technology created the potential for a great level of learner autonomy in learning.

Here a teacher comments on how technology helps to support learner autonomy:



Technology and learner autonomy

I can summarize the use of the internet and multimedia technology for educational purposes as the chance to bring the world into my classroom. Whatever the topic and/or language item I am working with, I always expand my lesson with a real-life, multicultural and multimedia experience. My students really enjoy the different accents and cultural contexts in which the target structure or function we are studying comes alive through the videos on the internet.

Real-time, online communication gives the conversation-club activities a whole new meaning. It is the most rewarding experience for my students to see that they are able to have a conversation with real native speakers over the internet; they get a chance to discuss current topics of mutual interest, and the cost for the institution and for me as a private tutor is [very] affordable.

On top of all of the benefits I have mentioned, the aspect I consider the most relevant is that the internet has become my best tool to promote learners' autonomy. Not only do I teach the lesson, but I also teach the strategies that my students can apply to take advantage of the internet without the need of a teacher, and that is the kind of learning that really helps a person move from being a student to being a user of English.

Husai Ching, teacher and teacher educator, Morelia, Mexico

Another way of looking at these developments over time is to see how they impacted on learning and teaching. Warschauer (1996) distinguishes three phases of CALL, beginning with *behaviouristic* CALL, during which time the computer served mainly as a tutor or as a delivery mechanism for learning materials. This phase lasted until the late 1980s, and programs that are based on behaviouristic principles, such as grammar drills and pronunciation-practice software, are still prevalent, especially in many language laboratories. A behaviouristic approach to CALL was fully compatible with the audiolingual and situational methods still popular during this early period (see Chapter 3). During the second, or *communicative*, phase, which took off in the early 1990s, the computer was still used for skill practice, but in a non-drill format and with more opportunities for student choice, control and interaction. Other language skills, such as reading, writing and discussion skills were included more commonly. Computers were also increasingly used

as tools for learning, for example, through the use of word processors or concordancers. In the third, or *integrative*, phase, which started from the late 1990s, multimedia and the use of the internet became widespread. During this phase, we began to see more integration of the different language skills in a single program or website and a stronger focus on the different ways in which learners can work together using email, chat, blogs and other communication tools. More recently, the number of ways for learners to communicate has increased, through the use of social-networking tools and the increasingly widespread use of mobile technologies.



What resources are available in your school? Consider the computers and the software installed on them, the resources in the computer lab and the materials in the library and on your network (if you have one) and that you use in your classroom. Would you classify these as behaviouristic, communicative or integrative?

The benefits of TLLT

The benefits for learners

The potential benefits to learners are many. These include:

- *Wider exposure to English:* For learners whose exposure to English is limited, the internet allows them to extend their exposure beyond the classroom, both to authentic and instructional materials.
- *Compatibility with current theories of SLA:* Erben et al. (2008: 154) suggest that research on second language acquisition identifies five features of effective language-learning environments, which underlie the design of many TLLT activities:
 1. Learners have many opportunities to read, write, listen to and discuss oral and written texts expressed in a variety of ways.
 2. Their attention is drawn to patterns of English-language structure.
 3. Learners have time to use their English productively.
 4. They have opportunities to notice their errors and correct their English.
 5. The learning environments involve activities that maximize opportunities for learners to interact with others in English.
- *Increased opportunities for authentic interaction:* TLLT allows learners to connect with other learners worldwide and to participate in real communication (Chapelle, 2005).
- *Enables flexible learning:* Students can learn in their own time and at their own pace. They can learn from their own home or workplace, rather than in the classroom.
- *Supports different ways of learning:* TLLT allows students to find learning resources that match their preferred way of learning, for example visual or auditory.

- *Supports different skills:* Some students may wish to focus on a particular skill (e.g. reading or speaking) and can access resources that address a particular skill (see below). For example, students can join a mailing list that focuses on a particular aspect of learning English, such as idioms.
- *Suitable for learners of different ability:* Learners can choose activities and resources suitable for their proficiency level, from beginners to advanced.
- *Encourages more active learning:* The roles of students change. They are no longer the passive recipient of instruction, but are actively engaged in furthering their own knowledge and skills, and more in control of the process and the outcomes.
- *Encourages learner autonomy:* Learners have a greater level of choice over what they learn and how they learn it, thus developing a greater sense of learner autonomy.
- *Provides a stress-reduced environment:* For some learners, TLLT is a much less stressful way to practise using English than classroom-based activities, where learners may feel they are being compared with their peers. It supports individualized learning.
- *Provides a social context for learning:* It allows learners to join a learning community in which they interact socially with other learners. In this way, it encourages collaborative learning. Students provide peer tutoring, helping each other accomplish tasks.
- *Increases motivation:* Motivation often increases when students are engaged in TLLT, and discipline problems decrease.
- *Access to more engaging materials:* TLLT provides access to content that is often very engaging for learners, such as digital games, YouTube content and so on.
- *Encourages situated learning:* Mobile technologies, in particular, can be helpful in supporting learners to use English at the point of need, for example, when travelling.
- *Offers opportunities for more, and alternative, types of feedback:* Many programs include immediate or delayed feedback to learners, and collaborative tools such as email and chat allow learners to work with other learners to get peer feedback, or to get help from a (remote) teacher.



Can you choose three benefits from those listed above that you think offer the strongest reasons for the use of technology?

A teacher comments on how highly motivating blogs can be for students (also see the appendix):



The power of blogs

In 2003, when blogs first started to emerge as interesting tools for teachers to use with learners, I was asked by a secondary-school English teacher in Brazil to be a

mystery guest on her class blog. I posted three clues about myself, and the learners were invited to guess where I was from, where I lived and where I was next going on holiday. The response was overwhelming, with the learners introducing themselves and posting their guesses the same day I wrote my guest post. I responded to them and the guessing continued all week.

The teacher told me the learners were talking about the activity in their breaks and trying to get their teacher to reveal the answers. This experience showed me the potential that blogs could have in language learning and demonstrated the power that online communication could bring to the classroom. It was clearly very motivating for the learners and was a fabulous way of using technology to provide the learners with an audience for their writing outside of the classroom.

Since then, I've been very interested in publishing learners' work online (both written and spoken language), and the key to its success is in getting an audience beyond the classroom for this work and showing them this audience exists. In my experience, asking the learners to produce more and better quality written work is easier when they feel there's someone out there reading what they write, other than the teacher.

Graham Stanley, teacher and materials writer, Barcelona, Spain

The benefits for teachers

Many teachers find that the use of technology and computers in teaching is no longer a question of personal preference. In many cases, teachers are mandated to integrate technology and IT into their teaching. Despite an initial reluctance on the part of some teachers, there are many potential benefits that technology-supported learning offers them. While making the transition from traditional modes of teaching to technology-supported teaching initially may prove difficult for teachers, making the transition potentially enhances teaching in several ways:

- *Enables more learner-centred teaching:* It enables the teachers to help learners engage with content that interests them and more closely suits their needs, rather than the traditional 'one hat fits all' approach to teaching.
- *Supports teaching with mixed-level classes:* Allowing students to take more control of their own learning is particularly helpful in mixed-level classes. Students can be working on skills they most need to practise, rather than all working on the same materials.
- *Expands the classroom to the real world:* Using the internet, students can follow up on topics dealt with in class and explore authentic multimodal content drawn from the real world.
- *Enriches the curriculum:* Teachers have access to a huge range of content and resources that enable them to develop a much richer and more varied curriculum.

Part 4 The teacher's environment

- *Develops wider range of expertise:* Familiarity with TLLT gives teachers a much wider range of strategies to use in teaching the four skills.
- *Provides new roles for teachers:* The role of the teacher broadens from being a transmitter of knowledge to being a facilitator who supports and guides student learning.
- *Provides opportunities for teachers to take greater individual responsibility for their courses:* The flexibility available through TLLT gives teachers a chance to adapt and fine-tune their courses to match their students needs, giving teachers a greater sense of responsibility for what and how they teach.
- *Creates a better learning environment:* TLLT offers ways of creating a more interactive learning environment, where students are engaged in interactions and communication among themselves.
- *Greater opportunities for monitoring:* Course and learning management systems, as well as many CALL materials, include tools for monitoring students' learning, allowing teachers to provide early intervention where necessary.
- *Provides practical support:* CALL environments can make the administration of assessments, the grading of papers and many other practical tasks more efficient. Learning management systems (LMSs) can help with the recording of student information and the distribution of learning materials, as well as provide means for learners and teachers to communicate outside of the classroom.
- *Offers support for teacher development:* The teacher can join a virtual teacher's group or network to share ideas and materials and discuss problems. Some sites allow teachers to share materials they have developed on a public web server.



What do you think are the most difficult challenges teachers face in moving to TLLT?

A teacher describes how technology provides a means for increasing learner engagement with tasks:



Finding activities that engage learners

Last term, my intermediate-level students were assigned the task of producing a two-minute PSA (public service announcement / ad) to be included in their final presentation on a social issue of their choice. Since we had an Apple lab in the school, I thought it would be exciting for us to learn to use the iMovie software installed in the Apple computers (they were all PC users). First, I produced a two-minute video myself over the weekend. When they saw how I could create a video out of a short recording made with my cheap Nokia phone, they were keen. In our introductory lab session, they came with some video recordings shot with their iPhones so that

they could ‘fiddle’ with the different functions and effects available in the software. I walked them through the basic steps of importing the recordings, cutting up segments, inserting transitions and adding visual and sound effects. But quite quickly, they took over the learning themselves in their groups. Following the introductory session, they made new video recordings for their PSA. The next five to six hours were spread over two more sessions in the lab. They completed their two-minute video productions by the second session! I was amazed at how quickly they figured out software they had never used before. They were basically in their element, and the mode used for the task was something they were cognitively linked to. This is the generation of ‘digital natives’, and when we deliberately plan for language learning to take place in a multimodal setting, one they feel comfortable in, we stand a good chance of engaging them instantly.

Chee Soo Lian, teacher and teacher educator, Singapore



Which of the potential benefits for teachers above have you experienced yourself?

The benefits for institutions

There are also benefits to a school that invests in technology and uses computer-mediated learning as a component of its courses. Often, decisions on the adoption of a particular technology have a potentially wide-ranging impact across the institution. For example, if a school decides to deliver online tests through a learning management system, then this means all teachers need to be aware of how to use the system, how to create tests for it and how to use it with their students in class. Similarly, if a school decides to offer part of its courses online, then this will have a major impact on the teaching as well as the learning experience. Such decisions often not only have a practical or organizational effect but can also lead to changes in the way that the institution and its teachers think about the language-teaching process. For example, by placing some materials online for students to complete out of class, teachers may have greater flexibility in dealing with individual students’ needs. Teachers may assume more of a facilitator’s role, as a result. The flip side of this, however, is that individual teachers cannot always make decisions independently on the use of technology, as their choices impact those around them and require certain changes – for example, in the available technology, policies around the use of technology in class and procedures around monitoring and assessment. The most successful examples of the integration of TLLT into a curriculum are those where teachers and management collaborate closely and exchange ideas, and where everyone works to implement changes together.

Some of the benefits for institutions in the use of technology are:

- *Enhances the reputation of the school:* A commitment to technology sends a message to students, teachers and parents that the school is eager to stay at the forefront of

developments in education and wants to make efforts to connect with learners, many of whom expect technology to play a role in their learning.

- *Supports a more individualized approach to teaching:* Nutta (1998: 50) points out that in programmes with open-ended, open/exit enrolment, such as adult and vocational adult-education courses, students need not enter the class in the middle of a linear instructional sequence. Instead, the syllabus could be based on themes of interest and relevance to students, and individual students could follow a grammatical syllabus in computer-based instruction outside the classroom.
- *Better learning outcomes:* Student achievement may be higher, since students receive additional learning opportunities beyond the time scheduled on the timetable.
- *Allows for greater flexibility in the curriculum:* With a mix of face-to-face and computer-mediated learning – i.e. through blended learning – schools can use the mix that best suits the needs of their clients. And a school may be able to offer a course delivered entirely online that they do not offer through face-to-face instruction.
- *Simplifies administration and record keeping:* The use of a learning management system (LMS) removes much of the burden of organizing and monitoring courses, attendance and student learning.

19.4 TLLT and current teaching approaches

Communicative language teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) emphasizes the need for teaching to be organized around authentic and meaningful uses of language that are linked to the learner's communicative needs. The goals are to develop fluent, appropriate and accurate language use, through the use of a communicative curriculum built around functional and interactional uses of language. In a traditional classroom, these aims are realized through a variety of activities that involve negotiation of meaning, natural language use and the development of communication strategies. However, the classroom context is often an artificial setting for authentic communication to be realized. TLLT, however, provides opportunities for authentic interactions during which learners have to employ and expand their communicative resource, supported by the ability to link sound, word, texts and images in the process. Chat rooms, discussion boards and teleconferencing can all be used in this way. Access to authentic materials, collaboration on tasks with learners in different locations and the utilization of different forms of communication can enhance the learning experience. Topics, functions and activities in a coursebook, and used for classroom practice, can be extended through follow-up work in the media lab or on computer, where students work with real examples of the interactions and transactions they practised in the classroom. Research on computer-mediated communication suggests it has a number

of characteristics that reflect the assumptions of CLT (Erben et al. 2008, 84–5). These include:

- Increased participation on the part of the students.
- Increased access to comprehensible input.
- Increased opportunities for negotiation of meaning.
- Encourages group-based learning, since it creates a context for interaction.
- Creates a social learning environment that promotes language learning.



How do you think computer-mediated communication can lead to ‘increased participation’?

Content-based instruction (CBI and CLIL)

TLLT similarly offers support for content-based instruction, including CLIL. Content-based instruction is content driven and integrates language learning and content learning (see Chapter 3). Teachers can make use of authentic content on the internet in the target language, and encourage students to explore websites, online videos, demonstrations and simulations, while providing opportunities for them to reflect on and interact with other learners about this content. Students may be given specific questions to answer, more elaborate tasks to complete (for example, in the form of webquests), their own materials to produce (individually or in groups) or the opportunity to record their own reflections in the form of blog posts or podcasts. Other students can then comment on these reflections, and the teacher can encourage further engagement with the content, all while using the target language.

Task-based language teaching

Task-based language teaching uses tasks as the organizing unit in the curriculum (see Chapter 3). Language development is fostered by students completing tasks that involve a real-world outcome, that draw on the integration of skills and that require collaborative negotiation of meaning, as well as involving a focus on form. As with other communicative approaches, discourse used by learners in communicative online tasks provides significant opportunities for negotiation of meaning, as well as opportunities for noticing and restructuring language (see Chapter 2) as learners work with both spoken and written texts (Pellettieri, 2000). Task-based language teaching takes a broad, or holistic, view of language development, with different skills being integrated and needed for the completion of different learning activities. Integrative CALL (see above) shares this integration of skills and technology and now is being used increasingly for the creation and delivery of task-based language teaching (Thomas & Reinders, 2010).

19.5 TLLT and language skills

Teaching the four skills

Speaking and pronunciation skills

The teaching of speaking skills is one of the more challenging areas of TLLT. Most early programs only allowed for learners to record brief segments in a scripted environment. For example, a learner sees a picture or video of someone who asks them how they are doing. They then have to choose one of several answers given on the screen. Speech recognition can identify whether the student has given the correct answer. Although such activities do allow for some speaking practice, they are, of course, limited in scope and not truly interactive.

Modern possibilities for integrating TLLT with the teaching of speaking skills include:

- *Computer-mediated communication:* Synchronous (real-time) computer-mediated communication, such as chat rooms and some other forms of near instantaneous interaction (for example, microblogs), shares many of the characteristics of spoken language, even though the communication takes place through text written on screen. It is immediate, usually rather informal, and it includes many of the linguistic elements found in spoken interaction. As such, it can offer good conversational-skills practice, and in an environment that many learners experience as non-threatening. Many digital games include a chat component, similar to the kinds of chat environments many learners use in their daily lives, and these, too, have been found to be encouraging to learners who are otherwise reluctant to communicate (Reinders and Wattana, 2012).



Have you observed differences in your students' communicative behaviour during traditional classroom speaking practice and online communication?

- *Spoken interaction:* Actual spoken interaction can be facilitated in a number of ways using technology. Programs such as Skype and Google Hangout allow two or more participants to interact. The inclusion of video in many of these programs can be particularly helpful for learners, as the added visual information helps them to understand the message. For example, learners can meet with target language speakers online (or can contact individuals or organizations) for a language exchange that allows for authentic communication.

Some more specific suggestions for using technology in the teaching of speaking include:

- *Observing how interactions take place:* The student may watch video clips of real or simulated interactions (e.g. checking into a hotel), and then play the part of either of the participants in the interaction.
- *Identifying responses during a conversation:* Students may watch a character in a situation and note responses used during the conversation, such as back-channelling expressions (e.g. *Really! Is that right? Oh I see*), turn-taking signals or opening and closing routines. They can later practise using these.

- *Developing a topic:* The learner may be offered choices as to how a topic may develop, and if a particular option is selected, the conversation continues in a different direction.
- *Comparing spoken texts:* Some websites allow students to record a spoken text, such as a story, a conversation or an oral presentation. Students can then compare their production with the speech of a native speaker.

Comparing spoken texts is also useful for the practice of pronunciation skills. In addition, there are programs that allow learners to record their voices and then display a visual representation of that recording for learners to compare with a native speaker. Although not always easy to interpret, such exercises can be helpful for some learners to help them identify how their pronunciation and intonation may be different.

Listening skills

Technology is an ideal resource for developing listening skills, since it offers a number of features that can support listening, such as the linking of sound, text and visual content. These features include the opportunity to provide comprehensible input that is fine-tuned to the learner's listening ability; the use of video to support understanding; and the opportunity to process authentic language, but with the ability to control the rate of input, and with access to varying levels of support, such as transcripts. The internet provides access to a wide variety of listening resources for classroom use or self-study. Students have the option of downloading materials, and in the case of mobile devices, listening to them while on the go. Coursebooks increasingly come with DVDs, self-study audio components and additional online listening practice. Specific suggestions include:

- *Listening resources for L2 learners:* Sites are available with materials specially designed for L2 learners and offering a variety of graded listening or viewing texts, with aids such as subtitles, glossaries, captions, transcripts and comprehension quizzes. These sites often contain listening activities with a similar format to those in textbooks, with pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening activities (see Chapter 12).
- *Authentic materials with learner support:* A number of websites provide access to a variety of listening text types (advertisements, movie clips, YouTube videos), accompanied by listening-comprehension tasks, e.g. www.LearnEnglishFeelGood.com. (See also www.breakingnewsenglish.com). Both websites are recommended by Russell Stannard on his site: www.teachertrainingvideos.com/index.html
- *Authentic listening without learner support:* This area includes authentic listening materials in the form of news broadcasts, home videos, interviews and TV shows, which a teacher can then create activities for. DVDs are useful, too, as they usually include subtitles.

Reading skills

Reading resources online range from materials written specifically for language learners, to authentic materials with accompanying instructions and exercises, to original, authentic

texts. Tools such as electronic dictionaries and concordancers can help learners to make sense of the texts they encounter. An advantage of many of the reading materials available online is that students can choose texts based on their level and interests. Many learners who may not be enthusiastic readers may be excited to read blog posts or their friends' social networking profiles and status updates. Some other activities for developing reading skills include:

- *Phonics*: Games and animated stories to practise letter-sound relations.
- *Fluency development*: Speed-reading practice, with texts that progress in length and difficulty. Many programs include built-in timers and the ability to control the pace at which one reads, e.g. www.eyercize.com/ (recommended by Russell Stannard on his site: www.teachertrainingvideos.com/index.html).
- *Sentence and text awareness*: Activities that develop awareness of the grammatical and discourse organization of texts. Paragraphs may be presented with jumbled sentences that students reorder, or a whole text may be presented with jumbled paragraphs. Some software allows the reader to call up a visual presentation of how a text is organized or choose exercises that focus on such features as main ideas, topic sentences and conclusions.
- *Test preparation*: Activities to prepare students for the reading component of standardized tests can include timed components, immediate or delayed feedback and model answers.
- *Practice in reading skills*: Students can choose to practise a range of skills, such as skimming, scanning, inferencing and summarizing, with some software highlighting key parts of the text, with accompanying explanations.
- *Vocabulary building*: Text-completion tasks where students see a text, guess missing words and get feedback on their choices.



In what ways does reading a text in a book differ from reading a text online?

Writing skills

Word-processing software has long been available to help with the mechanics of writing, and identifying errors of grammar, spelling and word choice. Some of the earliest applications of CALL were in software to monitor and correct grammar in writing. Computer-mediated writing software can provide support for each stage in the writing process, from elaborating topics for a composition to drafting, reviewing and editing for sentence structure and text organization. Commercial software is available to assist writers in editing their writing and identifying errors of grammar and sentence organization. Interactive writing and grammar software also is available on coursebook CD-ROMs and on the Web. Students also can work collaboratively on writing assignments, either among themselves or with the teacher's guidance, with software that allows them to

create a text jointly and display it on a whiteboard or other device. Software can prompt students when they reach a block. Students can choose images and sound effects to accompany stories or texts that they write. And students can post their written work on websites that serve this purpose, allowing them to compare their compositions with students around the world. Writing can thus become an interactive and collaborative activity, rather than a solitary one, giving students a greater motivation to write. Roche (2010: 54–5) gives an example of how a resource designed for children has potential as a resource for second language learners:

Hollywood Theatrix is such a program. It is not a language learning program; it is designed for kids to make movies by allowing them to write scripts and by having the movie synthetically generated according to the script. . . . The script is written by the actor/student/learner, and the director's cues, chosen from a pre-set menu, are automatically entered into the manuscript. Once the script is complete, the program generates a cartoon movie which can then be 'publicly' presented in theatre mode.

Specific suggestions for integrating TLLT with the teaching of writing skills include:

- *Learner support:* Web-based writing labs to help students with writing assignments.
- *Sharing and showcasing work:* Students can share their compositions through desktop publishing or through sharing via a blog or web publishing.
- *Journal writing:* Students can keep electronic journals and share them with other students and the teacher, either by email or on a social network.
- *Computer-mediated peer review:* Students can share drafts of written work, for example, in the form of blog posts that other students can then comment on.
- *Collaborative writing:* A range of tools exists that help students to collaborate on writing tasks, making the process of generating ideas, drafting and revising a piece more interactive. Wikis are a good example of texts that are written by more than one person.
- *Personal writing:* Blogs enable students to create more personal and expressive writing. They can also compare their blogs with those of other writers, including native speakers.
- *Interactive whiteboards:* These can be used in class to encourage students to contribute more. The teacher could, for example, start a short story and invite contributions, which learners can add from their seats.
- *Editing tools:* These include dictionaries, spelling checkers and model texts to assist learners as they write.

Teaching other language and communication skills

Vocabulary for writing

Vocabulary for writing, a productive skill, requires a higher level of competence than vocabulary for comprehension or reading, which are receptive skills. While computer programs can help students to learn vocabulary relevant to any of the four skills, through

games, crossword puzzles, categorizing activities and other electronic activities, the following may be especially useful aids when writing:

- *Online dictionaries and mobile-phone dictionary applications:* Extensive monolingual and bilingual dictionaries are available for mobile phones for a one-time fee. Learner dictionaries also may be accessed online.
- *Thesauruses:* Online thesauruses, also available as mobile-phone applications, can encourage advanced students to expand their word choice.
- *Search engines:* Using simple search engines like Google, students can check their knowledge of collocations.

Grammar

Software programs that focus on the role of grammar in spoken and written English have become increasingly sophisticated and have moved well beyond the error-correction features of earlier programs. Modern programs provide interactivity with learners as they guide them through the processes of decision-making, monitoring and evaluation that are involved in the use of grammar. The use of TLLT for grammar instruction offers a number of benefits for teachers and students. It shifts the location of grammar-focused instruction from the classroom to the multimedia-learning centre, allowing the teacher to use valuable class time for other activities. It enables students to engage in form-focused learning online in their own time. And it provides a more stress-free environment to explore and practise grammar, one in which students can devote as much time to grammar as they feel they need to. However, the challenge for software designers is to develop activities that do not simply mimic the kinds of practice students find in their coursebooks and workbooks. TLLT activities should be more than simply electronic workbooks; they should allow for communicative and meaning-focused uses of language. Many teachers have experimented with digital games, webquests and social networking sites to encourage a focus on meaningful exchange of information, while asking students to pay attention to particular (formal) aspects of the language (e.g. forms of address on social networking sites, or requests for information in digital games). Software offers different forms of support for grammar instruction, allowing grammar to be taught both deductively and inductively. Specific suggestions include:

- *Diagnostic testing:* Computerized diagnostic tests can be used to assess learners' grammatical knowledge.
- *Monitoring students' performance:* Teachers can create a database constructed from learners' difficulties and use it in curriculum planning.
- *Integrating of grammar with other skills:* Grammar can be seen as it is used in different skills and text types, such as narratives and conversation.
- *Comparing the grammar of spoken and written language:* Learners can view clips of speakers using features of grammar in spoken and written language, or they can compare spoken and written versions of a text.
- *Using a concordancer:* Students can use concordancers to identify the rules behind the language they encounter.

Intercultural awareness

The role of English as an international language – as a medium for communication across cultures – makes the development of intercultural awareness, or intercultural competence, an important focus of language teaching. An important benefit of the use of technology is that, regardless of the actual language skill that is focused on, it can help develop learners' intercultural competence. Intercultural competence includes the following areas:

- Learners' ability to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds.
- Sensitivity to the values and practices of people from different cultures.
- Self-awareness of the nature and values implicit in one's own practices.
- Willingness to share and experience other people's cultures.
- The ability to modify one's own behaviour in intercultural settings.

Digital media enable learners to communicate with people from many different cultures and to acquire knowledge and skills needed for intercultural communication. Numerous websites enable learners to explore aspects of different cultures, to see how people live and interact and to take part in activities that involve comparisons across cultures.

19.6 The challenges of TLLT

Many opportunities for using technology have been outlined above. But what of the challenges? These fall into three categories, prompted by the concerns of researchers, students and teachers:

- 1 Logistical.
- 2 Pedagogical, related to approach and the process of second language learning.
- 3 Pedagogical, related to learning styles and teacher training in the implementation of TLLT.

Logistical problems often result from the lack of IT support in a school, an internet connection that is too slow to download files, insufficient computers and password problems. Computer networks are also expensive to maintain. As more resources move online, and mobile learning becomes more widespread, some of the challenges for schools in providing a technical infrastructure may diminish. A teacher describes an issue of pedagogical design with online learning:



An experience with blended learning

Blended learning seems like a good solution to the problem of teaching English when face-to-face instruction is not always feasible. However, the reality does not always live up to the promise. I have been tutoring on a blended course which consists

of 10% face-to-face and 90% online. My task has been to grade lots of poorly written exercises from the students and to give feedback on equally poor examples of oral activities. I can't see that the students will learn much from the online oral activities since providing online feedback on their speaking can be very difficult. The students get feedback through a text message in which I am expected to explain what good speaking performance entails – a difficult task when such things as back-channelling are involved. Nor does the software distinguish between different kinds of oral interaction, such as interactional and transactional exchanges. I try to identify mistakes that could lead to a breakdown in communication, but from the recordings the students submit, it is not possible to tell if they were naturally recorded or just read from a prepared script.

However, even when the criteria for completing the oral tasks is provided, they are generally not attainable by the students. The software is no substitute for a teacher. For example, the platform provides speaking activities where participants are supposed to listen to different conversations, record their own part in a conversation and then notice the difference between their pronunciation and that of the native-speaker model. But if their English is poor, they generally do not notice the mistakes they make. I don't think it is possible to provide personalized tutoring in spoken English for courses like these that are aimed at hundreds or thousands of participants. Another problem is that the students' participation is limited to the activities designed by a programmer, who does not necessarily understand the different needs and problems that second language learners face.

In practising writing, the use of written models or guided writing activities online seems to be more manageable. However, when the students need to practise personal writing or to go beyond the model text types provided, the online platform itself does not provide enough help to enable students to improve their writing. The online platform can only provide models, but cannot help with the content of writing, and the 'support' provided cannot answer even the simplest questions that students may have. Undoubtedly, these technological methods are restricted to the guiding of tutors and not replacing them.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

Logistical solutions, however, do not address the question of whether TLLT is efficient or effective. The research base on TLLT is growing, but not enough is known about the impact of TLLT on second language acquisition, the demands it places on teachers and the requirements for professional development, as well as the impact of TLLT on changing ineffective teaching behaviours. Similarly, the design of TLLT activities has not always reflected what is known about successful language learning – being driven by the technology, rather than by second language learning theory. Roche comments (2010: 47):

Most of the time, media developers or companies are fascinated by the opportunity to produce some fancy looking and well selling products but are only informed and guided by

an intuitive notion of how language learning works. Their conceptions of methods are usually more geared towards entertainment than learning. As a result, the market is packed with colourful programs where learners are often put in a rather passive position of doing exercises that someone else has created for them. Such programs rarely offer opportunities for creative use of language.

But perhaps the greatest challenges are posed for teachers, who need to develop new ways of teaching, take on new roles and responsibilities and provide support and guidance for students in new learning environments. Institutions who plan to make greater use of TLLT need to invest in training – for both learners and teachers. Possibilities for teachers include workshops, tandem teaching with teachers who use TLLT, joining a teachers' network to share issues and experiences, and certificate and degree courses on using technology in language teaching (Levy, 2012; Reinders, 2009).

A teacher captures well the difference between rote learning and effective pedagogy by comparing virtual learning environments (VLEs) and personal learning environments (PLEs):

VLEs or PLEs?

Traditionally, virtual learning environments (VLEs) mirror offline classrooms in an online space. Just as classrooms have walls which separate them from the wider school and the wider world, so too do VLEs. Just as classrooms are stable, safe, protected spaces, so too are VLEs. But if they come with many of the long-established benefits of classrooms, VLEs also carry the same, if not more, drawbacks. In my experience, most VLEs are used as information dumps or as repositories for behaviourist drills and quizzes. In my teaching in Perth, Hong Kong and Singapore, I see the same thing everywhere. Rarely are VLEs used more inventively to support interactions and collaborations between students and teachers. Rarely do they showcase the range of student creativity which is possible with Web 2.0 tools.

We can see that real-world classrooms are beginning to change. This is partly due to a push towards a more social-constructivist approach to education, incorporating problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning and challenge-based learning. It's partly due to a push for students to acquire what are often called twenty-first century skills, like communication, collaboration, [digital] curation and autonomous learning. And it's partly due to our sense that there is more of a need than ever for students to learn by networking with other students and teachers around the world.

Mobile devices allow us to learn anywhere, anytime, about anything, from anyone. In the real world, classroom walls are breaking down. Why would we resurrect those walls in cyberspace? Why wouldn't we, instead, promote personal-learning environments (PLEs), where students can build their own online spaces at the centre of a web of networked learning? It seems to me that unless VLEs adapt quickly, they will go the way of bulletin boards and LISTSERVs. The future is about PLEs, not VLEs.

Mark Pegrum, teacher and teacher educator, Perth, Australia

TLLT in practice: some teachers' experiences

So what does the implementation of TLLT look like in practice? Many teachers use technology for a wide range of different purposes. Some make occasional use of one specific program for a particular group of learners, whereas others adopt technology wholesale for all aspects of their teaching. Below are some comments from teachers from different countries. In these vignettes, technology has many purposes, including modelling language, assisting with classroom management and teaching specific skills or grammar.

Johannus describes the video-sharing site YouTube as his best friend. He uses music videos by pop stars like Katy Perry and Bruno Mars to help his students understand that narratives should be structured. He says, 'It's more engaging, since it's stuff they like to watch, and they can see how a story plays out'.

For Rosemarie, technology helps her shy students speak up. To boost students' confidence in using English, she uses software that allows her pupils to record videos of themselves reading and speaking.

Kevin's coursebook includes videos that accompany each unit and which are designed as models for students to create their own videos, using their phone or another device. They can share their videos with students in other countries who are using the same book.

Lina loads all her students' attendance and test scores onto her school's learning management system and is alerted automatically by email if a student's attendance or performance drops.

Jasmine's students are allowed to bring their mobile phones to class. For some activities, they use their mobile phones to text answers to grammar exercises from the textbook. Every answer appears without their name on it, on a wall-mounted interactive whiteboard for everyone to see. Jasmine says this takes the boredom out of doing grammar exercises.

David sometimes uses poetry in his class of young adult learners in Mexico. To present a poem, he often uses a podcast of someone reading the poem, since there are usually many examples available online. One of the sites he regularly uses is www.greatbooksaudio.com. The site includes a reading of the poem, a short text about the poem and some illustrations. David uses these as a warm-up to the lesson.

? Which of the above have you tried yourself? Can you think of additional purposes for each of these uses of technology?

The challenge for many teachers is to know which tools to use and how to make the best use of them. The key, as with any changes or new developments, is to start small and to work with colleagues and share experiences. Rather than implementing, for example, the use of interactive whiteboards in all classes across the curriculum, perhaps one class could trial the use of whiteboards for one hour per week. As teachers and students become more comfortable with using the whiteboard, its use can be expanded. The main question, as in all teaching situations, though, is whether there is a benefit to the use of the particular tool. If the interactive whiteboards prove difficult to operate, are time-consuming to use and do not improve learning outcomes, their cost may not be justified. Many labs and classrooms remain full of underutilized computers and programs, simply because expensive decisions were made without sufficient trialling before implementation.

Below is the story of one teacher's experiences in working in two different language schools in Thailand. This description shows that the challenges may involve learning styles and the learner's notions of what is appropriate, as well as purely pedagogical concerns:

The challenge of learning styles

I remember, about eleven or twelve years ago, working in a language school in Bangkok. Technology was all the rage, and the government was making available large sums of money for computers and software. All schools were keen to show they were up to date with the latest developments and to get a slice of the funding that was available. Almost overnight, one of the largest classrooms was emptied, and a truckload of computers was installed. Rows with banks of PCs with headphones were set up in booths with tall dividers, and an expensive electronic lectern system was built at the front of the room for the teacher. It was all very spiffy – the teacher could see all computers graphically represented on the computer screen and click on any one to see what that student was doing, and even chat to that student directly. The teacher could also control all computers at once.

This was all wonderful except that a year later, all computers were taken out of the room, and it once again became a classroom! There were several reasons for this. Firstly, none of the teachers really knew how to operate the system. It was quite complicated, and there had been no training. Looking back, I think one of the reasons was that there really was no one familiar enough with the system to teach us about it. Secondly, although there was some software installed on the computers, none of it was particularly relevant to our students. The level was not right, and the software was too childish for our adult learners. Another problem was the configuration of the room. The booths prevented learners from seeing each other. Most of our students were professional people, eager to develop their conversation skills. Most teachers made conscious efforts to include discussion and presentation activities in class. The dividers made this impossible.

This was a very different experience from that in my current place of work. Two or three years ago, social networking became extremely popular in Thailand. The latest buzz was to integrate this in some way into our teaching. In our school, however, we have a 'curriculum-innovation' committee, which consists of several teachers, someone from management, one person from IT and one of the librarians. I remember a meeting where we discussed whether we should make use of social networking in our classes. We decided to do a survey of our students to see how they felt. It became clear fairly quickly that most of our students did not feel comfortable at all with mixing personal and educational communication in one platform. To many, it simply felt like an invasion of privacy. We also found that many of the teachers in the school were not comfortable with the technology, and it would have taken a lot of training to change this. We decided not to make use of social networking, for the moment.

What I have learned from these two contexts is that it sometimes pays to take risks, but not without consideration. The purpose of adopting a particular tool or technology has to be clear. If it does not meet that purpose, or is unlikely to, it should not be blindly implemented. I use technology in many ways in my own teaching, but this is always my motto. If it doesn't help my students, then why use it?

Anuwat Kaewma, teacher and teacher educator, Sakon Nakhon province, Thailand

Here is the experience of a teacher who has successfully tapped into his students' learning styles and preferences:

Students creating for YouTube

In my teaching, I try to use technology in ways that reflect my students' out-of-class practices. For example, on one course in English for science students, the students work in groups to do a project reporting a scientific experiment on a simple topic. Students use video to create a scientific documentary, which is uploaded to YouTube and shared through a publically accessible course blog. I've been impressed by the amount of work that students put into this project: they work very hard to create a documentary which will impress the authentic YouTube audience and often share their creations with friends in online social networks, expanding the learning beyond the classroom setting. The project work engages students at multiple levels; as well as designing the visual elements of their videos and choosing a suitable soundtrack, they also have to master the necessary language skills to write a compelling script and orally present it effectively. When they see their own work published in the class blog, they have the opportunity to review it, reflect on it and provide peer feedback, in a way that would be impossible with a 'traditional' in-class presentation. I feel that the reason why this activity works well is because the students have the opportunity to participate in a digital practice – creating and sharing on YouTube – which they are familiar with and which intuitively makes sense to them.

Christoph A. Hafner, teacher and teacher educator, Hong Kong, China

These are just a few personal vignettes about technology use, but they highlight the need for careful planning, as well as the same knowledge base teachers use to deliver the parts of the lesson not based on technology. Clearly, introducing technology at the classroom level carries less risk than attempting implementation for an entire programme, and, as we've seen, the latter may require an investment in training as well as in equipment.

19.7 Testing and assessment in TLLT

TLLT may be used in assessment at both the institutional and classroom levels.

Institutional or large-scale testing

Computers offer new possibilities in language testing, and computer-assisted language testing (CALT) is now widely used as a way of testing large numbers of students efficiently, particularly with standardized tests such as TOEFL. In this and similar high-stakes, computer-administered tests, computers play an important role in test design, administration and the processing of results. Computers offer the advantages of ease of administration, suitability for large-scale testing and the use of multimedia in the development of test items. They also provide immediate feedback to the examiners and allow records of performance to be stored electronically. However, most computer programs cannot handle open-ended questions readily, so response choice is limited, and reading a long text on a screen poses difficulties that are different from reading a printed text.

Computer-adaptive testing (CAT) refers to a test in which the software adapts the test items based on the test-taker's performance and offers a useful tool for placement and achievement testing. If the student answers a question correctly, a more difficult question is provided. If an incorrect answer is given, an easier question is provided, and the test stops when an optimal level of performance is reached. A test of this kind is the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE), a test for students entering graduate and business programmes in the US.

Classroom assessment

TLLT is also available to teachers who wish to use technology for assessment in their own classes. Software includes support for teacher-designed tests and performance-based assessment.

Hot Potatoes (<http://hotpot.uvic.ca>) is software that provides support for teacher-designed tests. It allows teachers to create interactive tests by drawing on a bank of test types (multiple choice, question-answer, gap-filling) for delivery on the Web via web-browser software. A teacher can use the software to customize the test, using his or her own test content (e.g. grammar, reading). There are many such programs available.

TLLT provides a variety of approaches to performance-based assessment, rather than typical achievement tests, allowing for students to produce evidence of learning in the form of a product that can be reviewed. For example:

- *Performances*: Performances refer to a variety of activities that can be performed orally or in writing and that often call upon the integrated use of different skills, giving a better picture of communicative ability than tests of the kind developed using Hot Potatoes (see above). Examples include performances that may be audio and/or video recorded, simulations or role plays that are recorded with a digital video and posted on a classroom website, and talks and discussions that are recorded electronically and uploaded to a classroom website for future viewing (Erben et al., 2008: 153).
- *E-portfolios*: E-portfolios provide students with opportunities to showcase their learning by uploading different kinds of content to a webpage, that can include audio and video podcasts, as well as examples of written work in the form of Microsoft Word documents and blogs.

19.8 Conclusion

As in other domains of life, technology changes at a pace that is sometimes difficult to follow, and today's innovations sometimes turn out to be tomorrow's memories. However, technology is here to stay and teachers and schools are accumulating growing experience and expertise in the use of technology in language teaching. In the process, teachers are finding creative ways of using technology to enhance both their own teaching and, as well, the learning opportunities provided for their learners. In doing so, they are finding ways of using technology not as a gimmick or novelty but as a resource that can be used to support the teaching of all aspects of language as well as for assessment and evaluation.

In the process, new roles for teachers and learners are emerging as the nature of classroom language learning changes. Rather than being defined by the content of the textbook and by the activities and materials that the teacher has selected for teaching, online and technology-supported learning provides limitless opportunities for new modes of learning – learning that draws on multiple modalities and that takes learners out of the classroom and into a world without walls. Changes in the ways people learn also requires changes in the ways teachers teach and that schools operate. However, for technology to be used effectively, investment is needed not only in the technology itself and the means that schools need to provide for it to function effectively, but equally important, investment in the training and support teachers need in order for them to be able to make the best uses of technology in language teaching.

Discussion questions

- 1 How much training and support is available for teachers in your school, in the use of technology? Draw up a plan for the kind of training programme that you think would be useful, particularly for new teachers.

- 2 Talk to teachers in your school (or go online) and find out what kind of current websites your colleagues recommend for both teachers and learners, and why.
- 3 In section 19.2, Levy lists five levels at which TLLT fits with current thinking in second language acquisition and can support language teaching. Can you think of an example of how technology could help with each of these?
- 4 Review the three phases of CALL, identified by Warschauer, and some defining characteristics of each phase. How would you situate popular programs like Rosetta Stone in terms of these three phases?
- 5 What new skills might learners and teachers need to acquire to use TLLT effectively?
- 6 This chapter listed many ways that technology can support the teaching of the four skills, as well as vocabulary, grammar and intercultural awareness. Choose one of these areas and develop a lesson plan where technology is fully integrated.
- 7 A teacher who gives out homework for students to complete online after school is making a number of assumptions about his or her learners, their (preferred ways of) learning and their home situations. What are some of these assumptions, and are there any pitfalls to be avoided?
- 8 Teachers often do not allow students to use mobile phones in class. What are some ways in which mobile phones CAN be used effectively as learning tools?
- 9 Do your students have access to Skype? Develop an activity that could be used with Skype.
- 10 How can the internet be used to develop intercultural awareness? Design an activity that has this as a focus.

Appendix:

Classroom activities

Below are two activities from the textbook *Language Learning with Technology* by Graham Stanley, a teacher and materials writer in Barcelona, Spain (Cambridge University Press, 2013). The first activity is discussed in this chapter and the second in Chapter 15. How might you integrate these activities into a larger lesson? For each, what specific language or topics would you include, and what areas of the overall syllabus might these activities combine with?

Mystery guest

Main goals: Encouraging participation.

Level: Pre-intermediate (B1) and above.

Time: Ongoing, over one to two weeks, for homework.

Learning focus: Making predictions.

Preparation: This activity is appropriate if you have a class blog with your learners and is good to use to keep interest from waning. Ask another teacher you know to be a mystery guest on your blog and to write a cryptic guest post, finishing with three questions about themselves for the learners to answer (e.g. Where am I from? Where do I live now? What do I do?).

Technical requirements: Learners should have internet access, outside of class, and should already have been introduced to the tutor blog or class blog.

Procedure:

- 1 Tell the learners that you have invited a mystery guest to the blog, and that this person will be asking some questions for the learners to answer.
- 2 Ask the learners to respond, in the comments area, to the questions that the mystery guest posts, and to do their best to answer them. This activity can also be extended to other language-related games where learners guess information.
- 3 Be sure to talk in class about what the learners, and the guest, have written, making a clear link between what happens on the blog outside of class and what happens in class.

Speed writing

Main goals: Fluency/achieving grammatical accuracy

Level: All levels

Time: 15 minutes (ongoing, weekly)

Learning focus: Personal writing

Preparation: Think of a subject for the learners to write about in class, or ask them to suggest one.

Technical requirements: A class set of laptops/netbooks/tablets and word-processor software

Procedure:

- 1** Tell the learners that they are going to be speed writing for a short period in class, that the objective of this activity is to increase their writing fluency and that (over time) they will start making fewer mistakes.
- 2** Decide on a subject to write about and set the time limit (10 minutes is probably enough). Tell the learners that the objective is for them to write as much as they can in 10 minutes, rather than writing to a specific word limit, and start the clock.
- 3** After five minutes are up, tell the learners that they should be in the middle of their story (or whatever writing task they are doing). After eight minutes, tell them that they should be thinking about bringing their text to an end.
- 4** Once they have finished, ask the learners to count the number of words and to write this at the bottom of the text. When you correct the writing, circle each of the mistakes and subtract the number of mistakes from the total number of words each learner has written, creating that learner's score.
- 5** Make a note of the number of words and the score for each learner. Tell the learners that their objective is to write a little bit more each time they do the activity, and also to improve their score (i.e. make fewer mistakes). It is a good idea for the learners to look at the previous lesson's writing just before starting to write again.

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20

Testing and assessment

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What is the nature of testing and assessment today?
 - Changing approaches.
 - Types of tests and their features.
- What does assessment at the institutional and classroom level entail?
 - Proficiency tests.
 - Placement tests.
 - The purpose of classroom assessment.
 - Diagnostic tests.
 - Formative assessment.
 - Summative assessment.
- How are tests developed, designed and scored?
 - Developing tests and assessments.
 - Designing test items.
 - Methods of scoring and evaluating.

20.1 Introduction

Tests and other forms of assessment play an important part in the lives of both language learners and teachers. Teachers spend as much as a third or a half of their professional time involved in assessment-related procedures, although many do so without familiarity with principles of language assessment (Coombe et al., 2012). Tests and other forms of assessment have many different purposes. Assessment procedures help determine learners' needs, they place learners in the appropriate place in a language course, they help measure students' progress during a course, they provide information that can be used to fine-tune teaching and they enable the learning outcomes of a course to be measured. Hence, tests provide the basis for many kinds of important decisions that involve teachers, learners and institutions. Their purposes may be decided by the teacher, by the school or by an organization external to the school. For example, a teacher may want to know how effective his or her teaching of reading skills has been. A school may want to know how effective their language programmes are, as part of a review of their curriculum. A learner may need to know what areas he or she needs to improve on in order to pass a test. A law company may want to know if an applicant for a job has the language skills needed to work as a lawyer. Tests and assessment may be intended to improve teaching and learning or to evaluate the outcomes of teaching and learning. Or they may be designed to measure proficiency in relation to some external goal, such as entrance to a profession or admittance to university. They may use teacher-made or institutional tests and other forms of assessment for these purposes.

Learners often study English in order to perform well on tests that may have a significant impact on their lives (known as *high-stakes tests*). High-stakes tests may determine a student's acceptance into a university, in their own country or abroad, and teachers often have to prepare students for tests of this kind, such as the TOEFL or IELTS tests. Or in some contexts, students may be studying towards a test based on a standard that has been established by their local or national educational authority.

A *test* is one form of assessment and refers to procedures designed to measure a student's learning at a specific point in time and often involves collecting information in numerical form. Common forms of tests are multiple-choice questions and gap-fill, or cloze tests. In English classes, teachers also need to assess their students' learning to determine the effectiveness of their teaching and the materials they are using. *Assessment* refers to any of the procedures teachers use to do this sort of evaluation, such as by making observations, interviewing students, administering questionnaires and reviewing students' work (Douglas, 2010). Assessment covers a broader range of activities than testing and involves both formal and informal procedures. (Nowadays, the two terms are often used interchangeably and *assessment* is the preferred term to *testing*.) Assessment is an essential component of successful language teaching, and teachers need to be familiar with the necessary knowledge and skills that assessment entails (Bailey, 1998; Brown, 2003; McNamara, 2000).



What kinds of tests do you regularly make use of? What other forms of assessment do you use?

20.2 The nature of testing and assessment today

Changing approaches

Approaches to language assessment began in the early part of the twentieth century as part of the worldwide expansion in English language teaching (see Chapter 3). In the UK, the birth of the University of Cambridge ESOL examinations – now called Cambridge English Language Assessment and part of Cambridge Assessment, a department at the University of Cambridge that forms Europe's largest assessment organization – dates to this period. The first of the 'Cambridge exams' was the Cambridge Proficiency Examination (CPE) that was produced by the Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate (UCLES) in 1913 (O'Sullivan, 2012a: 11) and which, in his words, 'set a precedent for the approach to assessment that still dominates Britain and much of Europe, the assessment of language through performance, where test content was central and validity was key'. In the US, at around the same time period, educationists began to develop the first standardized tests to assess written composition and introduced the first use of multiple-choice questions to assess reading ability. By the 1940s, high-stakes testing in the United States had moved almost entirely to a standardized multiple-choice format. With the single exception of the military-inspired Foreign Service Oral Proficiency Interview, '... language testing in the United States continued to follow suit' (ibid). This was seen in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), which was published in the 1960s by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) – now the world's largest private educational testing and assessment organization – and was the first major test of English as a foreign language. Since that time, the development of general proficiency examinations has been a growth industry. Following the Second World War, Cambridge English Language Assessment introduced the First Certificate in English (FCE) and an array of other proficiency exams. (These and other widely used proficiency tests are described further in the next section.)

The emergence of communicative language teaching, beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, prompted new directions in language testing, with an attempt to develop tests that reflected the communicative purposes for which learners needed English. In 1979, ETS introduced the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), and in the 1980s, test developers interested in developing a test of English for specific purposes developed the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) – a test of English for academic purposes, managed jointly by several British organizations, including Cambridge English Language Assessment and the British Council. Today, proficiency tests such as TOEFL and IELTS are a major industry attracting millions of test takers every year.

Types of tests and their features

High-stakes tests/assessment

As we noted above, many students worldwide study English in order to pass *high-stakes tests*, which often serve a 'gate-keeping' function, and failure in such tests can

have a significant impact on the life of a student. For example, most universities in China (of which there are over 1,000) require students to pass the College English Test (CET) – the national test of English as a foreign language in the People's Republic of China – in order to graduate, and students' grades on the test are often a factor in employment. Courses for high-stakes tests typically focus on test preparation and test practice. Success on such tests may also reflect the extent to which financially advantaged students have had opportunities for extra coaching or private lessons (McNamara, 2000). Such tests are *standardized*; that is, they follow strict development, trialling and revision procedures to ensure that they are reliable (i.e. give consistent results) and valid (i.e. measure what they are supposed to measure), and norms for performance on the test have been established, as well as uniform procedures for administering and scoring the test. As Cohen and Wollack (2006: 358) summarize this last point, the 'directions, conditions of administration and scoring are clearly defined and fixed for all examinees, administrations and forms'. A number of organizations including both Cambridge Assessment and Pearson provide tests of this kind, some focusing on general English, some on academic English and some on business English. Examples of some widely used tests of this kind, including the ones mentioned earlier, are described below.

The Cambridge exams are offered worldwide and provide students with a qualification that describes their level of English language proficiency. They are more common in countries where British English is the variety taught as a foreign language. They are tests of general proficiency, and because they are administered by centres that are independent of teaching institutions, the results can be relied on by potential employers. These employers may use evidence of performance on a Cambridge or similar exam as a criterion for hiring new employees, including language schools hiring teachers whose first language is not English. The TOEIC exam is widely recognized in Asia and to a lesser extent in the US, Canada and Mexico, but is less familiar in Europe and the UK. TOEFL has traditionally been the test of preference for students planning to study in the US, but both IELTS and the Pearson Test of English are offered in increasing numbers of countries. The ECCE exam also has a growing following.

Examples of high-stakes, standardized tests

- *Cambridge Exams*: A set of examinations developed by Cambridge English Language Assessment (all in British English), which place students according to five levels of proficiency, from basic (1) to advanced (5):
 1. Key English Test (KET).
 2. Preliminary English Test (PET).
 3. First Certificate in English (FCE).
 4. Certificate of Advanced English (CAE).
 5. Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE).

- *TOEIC, the Test of English for International Communication*: A test of overall English language proficiency in real-life, day-to-day and business contexts (in American English). The TOEIC test consists of two sections (listening and reading), each with 100 multiple-choice items, and takes two hours for test takers to complete.
- *TOEFL, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (in American English)*: A standardized test of English proficiency, administered by the Educational Testing Service, and widely used to measure the English-language proficiency of foreign students wishing to enter American universities.
- *IELTS, the International English Language Testing System*: A test of English for academic and migration purposes (in British English), used widely to measure the English language proficiency of international students whose native language is not English and who intend to enter universities in Australia, Canada, the UK and elsewhere. A high score on the test is a criterion for immigration to some English-speaking countries.
- *The BULATS (Business Language Testing Service) test, published by Cambridge English Language Assessment*: is a multilevel test, designed for companies and organizations, which is used to test English, French, German and Spanish and used for business and industry recruitment and in the design of workplace English courses.
- *Pearson Test of English*: A recently introduced computer-based exam that tests proficiency in academic and general English.
- *ECCE, Cambridge Michigan Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English*: A standardized high-intermediate test of general English proficiency (in American English), aimed at the B2 level on the Common European Frame of Reference, and intended to provide evidence of competence in English for personal, public, occupational and educational purposes.

These tests are mainly based on either British or American English. However, critics argue that they should be revised to reflect the realities of today's world and include examples of the many other varieties of English that are spoken in various countries.



Which of the above exams is the most popular in your country? What is the main purpose for which students need the test score?

Validity and reliability

There are several important features of a good test. Two of the most important are validity and reliability. A test has validity if it measures what it is supposed to measure and nothing else. This means that a test of listening ability should measure listening skills and not reading or writing ability. This is known as content validity. It should contain test items that measure a representative sample of the sub-skills it seeks to measure. For example, in the case of a listening test, there should be a representative

sample of bottom-up and top-down listening skills that reflect the level of listening that is being assessed (e.g. basic, intermediate, advanced), rather than focus only on skills involved in bottom-up processing (see Chapter 12). Validity also has to do with whether the test reflects an appropriate view of the phenomenon or 'construct' being tested, i.e. construct validity. For example, does a test of conversation skills reflect an adequate understanding of the nature and features of conversational interaction, or does it reflect some other model of conversation that is not supported by current theory and research? A valid test also should give results that are consistent with other forms of assessment of the same skill, i.e. concurrent validity. For example, if a teacher has a good sense of how well a group of students can perform in listening from his or her teaching experience and familiarity with students, a listening test that gave results to the students' performance dissimilar to those obtained on another (well-established) standardized test would lack concurrent validity; in other words, it would fail to relate to other measures of the same ability. The face validity of a test is also important; that is, the degree to which a test appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it aims to measure, based on the subjective judgement of an observer. For example, if a test of reading comprehension contains many dialect words that might be unknown to the test takers, the test would be said to lack face validity.

Reliability is another important feature of a good test. A test is reliable if it gives consistent results and if it gives the same results when given on different occasions under the same exam conditions or when given by different people. If two teachers use a checklist to assess a student's essay and give completely different assessments, the checklist would lack reliability. It would also lack reliability if a teacher gave one set of marks using the checklist on one occasion, and then assessed the same piece of writing on another occasion and gave it a different grade. Several factors influence the reliability of a test, including the clarity of the test instructions, the extent to which objective scoring of the test is possible, the familiarity of the scorers with the test, the circumstances in which the test is administered (e.g. noise and other distracting factors) and the size of the student's language samples the text measures (Hughes, 2003) – for example, is the writing task in a writing test sufficient to enable the students to demonstrate his or her writing skills? Both validity and reliability are crucial aspects of a test. McDonough comments (1998: 188): 'Reliability is essential in a test, because without it, one cannot believe the results ... but it is useless unless the test is valid as well, for without validity, one does not know what has been tested.'

Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests

One common approach to marking tests is to compare the scores of test takers. For example, we use *norm-referencing* when we say that a student's performance on the test places him or her in the top 5%, the top 10% or the bottom 10%. Norm-referenced tests are useful when we want to assess and compare students in order to separate out the top performers from the others. For this reason, high-stakes standardized tests, such as TOEFL, are norm-referenced tests, since, as with other standardized tests, the goal is for the test to arrange test-takers so that they are on a continuum across a range of scores and,

in this way, to enable the test-takers to be differentiated according to their relative ranking – in other words, to allow some people to enter university and exclude others.

In *criterion-referenced testing*, the learner's performance is measured according to a particular standard or criterion that has been agreed upon. The learner must reach this level of performance to pass the test. For example, here are the descriptions of what a learner at level B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference can do in the domain of listening comprehension:

- Can understand straightforward factual information about common everyday or job-related topics, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided speech is clearly articulated in a generally familiar accent.
- Can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc., including short narratives.

If we set these as the criteria for a listening test, a student either reaches the standard or does not. His or her performance is not compared with other students. Criterion-referenced approaches are useful when we want to know if students have learned enough in a certain domain to enable a particular skill or activity to be performed, such as whether their listening skills are sufficient for them to be able to follow university lectures in English or whether their writing skills are good enough to enable them to write effective business letters.

Standards-based assessment

The term *standards* refers to levels of performance; therefore, *standards-based assessment* refers to the use of tests to assess learners' performance in relation to a set of standards, such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) or the performance bands on the IELTS test. Another example is the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) in the US, which uses a six-point scale for the assessment of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Another well-known scale used in foreign language programmes in the US is the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale, which contains five levels. Since the CEFR is becoming more widely used internationally and has been described as 'the most significant recent event on the language education scene in Europe' (Alderson, 2005: 275), it will be useful to examine it more closely.

In Chapter 3, we noted the work of the Council of Europe that led to a number of important proposals that have had an important influence on language teaching, notably the threshold-level communicative syllabus that is reflected in many popular coursebooks. In 2001, the Council of Europe published the CEFR as a common basis for the development of language syllabuses, examinations and textbooks by describing, in a comprehensive way, what language learners need to learn in order to be able to participate in effective communication. The framework describes six levels of proficiency, illustrated by performance descriptors. A number of these have already been cited in other chapters of this book. These descriptors now are referred to in many widely used language

examinations, which are referenced to the proficiency level on the CEFR that they assess. For example, the BULATS test provides a score related to a CEFR level. Kantarcioglu and Papageorgiou comment (2012: 85):

The proficiency scales of the CEFR have gained popularity because they describe in a comprehensive way objectives that learners can set to achieve at different levels of language proficiency. The descriptors are always phrased positively, as they are intended to motivate learners by describing what they can do when they use the language, rather than what they cannot do. What is more, this set of language-learning objectives is available as a common metalanguage to teachers and learners, who can now compare the level of proficiency required by curricula, language courses, and examinations across different educational settings.

In some situations, standards may be defined in relation to a specific task or occupation, such as air-traffic control or English language teaching. Typically, standards are described in terms of a number of levels of performance, ranging from simple to complex, as with the CEFR. What they essentially do is attempt to operationalize what we understand by 'basic, intermediate and advanced', when we describe levels of proficiency in language use. And since they are not designed specifically for English, they do not specify the language that would be needed to achieve a given level on the CEFR. The lack of a syllabus or specification of content that would enable the outcomes in the CEFR to be achieved has been identified as problematic in using the framework and has led to the development of the English Profile project, a collaborative research programme registered with the Council of Europe and mainly funded by Cambridge University Press and Cambridge English Language Assessment (www.englishprofile.org/):

The aim of English Profile is to create a 'profile' or set of reference-level descriptions of [the grammar, vocabulary and functions of] English linked to the CEF[R]. These RLDs [reference-level descriptions] will provide detailed information about the language that learners can be expected to demonstrate at each level, offering a clear benchmark for progress that will inform curriculum development as well as the development of courses and test materials to support learners, teachers and other professionals involved in the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language.

However, Fulcher (2010) points out that although the levels identified in standards-frameworks such as CEFR cannot be justified empirically, they often have practical value in that they enable learners to have a sense of progression from course to course or from year to year. Consequently, teachers and materials developers often are required to match their teaching to specific levels on the CEFR or other scales, and testing is similarly often linked to the standards. Numerous standards documents and standards-based tests are available on the internet. But standards can also be developed by teachers, when they work together to develop standards for their own contexts. As Fulcher points out (2010: 248): 'Standard-setting in a local context for clearly defined purposes can be a focus of real professional development and curriculum renewal.' Leung (2012: 165) comments:

Quite clearly teachers will need to judge the appropriateness of the B1 descriptors (or any others within the CEFR scales) in relation to the students they are teaching. If one is working with, say, a

group of Italian-speaking bank employees learning English for professional reasons, then some of the descriptors might make sense at some stage of their teaching. However, if one is teaching linguistic-minority students in England who are learning to use English to do academic studies, then these descriptors would only be, at best, appropriate in a very vague and abstract sense; they would need to be adapted and expanded locally because an independent user of English as a second language in school would have to do a good deal more than what is covered in these CEFR descriptors.



Do you use the CEFR framework in your school? If so, how, and how useful do you find it?

20.3 Assessment at the institutional and classroom level

Proficiency tests

Language schools may need to determine the level of students' English when they arrive to take courses. Such information may be available if students have taken a general proficiency exam, such as one of the Cambridge English Language Assessment exams, referred to above. In other cases, the school may use its own proficiency test, which may include reading, writing, listening and speaking components. The format for such an exam will depend on the number of students a school receives, and often, informal procedures may be used, such as a brief interview, a dictation test, an essay or a multiple-choice reading test.

Placement tests

Institutions also use placement tests designed to place a student into a particular level, course or section of a language programme and to assign students to the class that is most suitable for their level. Proficiency tests such as the Cambridge First Certificate of English sometimes give this sort of information, but often the results are too general, and more specific placement tests will be needed that more closely match the level and contents of the course that the student may be studying. Such placement tests are normally produced, administered and marked by teachers in the institution. If the course a student will take involves a large amount of reading and writing, the placement test will focus on these skills. Similarly, if it is a conversation course, the placement test will reflect the kind of skills that will be taught in the course. Learning Management Systems are often used for this purpose (see Chapter 19). Developing tests of this kind requires a considerable level of skill and experience in test design and administration, as will be clear when we discuss the design of test items later in this chapter. A teacher educator describes how CEFR is used for placement purposes at his institution:

Using CEFR in a language institute

The language school where I work uses the Council of Europe framework to help us assess students on their first day in order to place them at the right level. We have had the descriptors translated into the twenty or so different languages that our learners speak as L1 and have created a table for each. On their first day, the learners are given a chart and asked to self-assess against the descriptors, at one of the six levels (A1–C2), for each of the following skills: listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing. Their self-assessment is then added to their multiple-choice grammar and vocabulary test score and the results of a five-minute interview. The three pieces of data are then evaluated, and the student is placed into one of eight levels. The interesting thing is that the self-assessments need to be interpreted carefully. There seems to be a strong correlation between cultural background and self-assessment. Some nationalities tend to rate themselves higher than our perception of their language level, and some lower. Once these differences are taken into account, the self-assessments are very useful. We have been using this system for over ten years and now have very few misplaced students.

Peter Nicoll, teacher and teacher educator, Auckland, New Zealand



Who is responsible for developing tests in your institution? What processes are involved in test development?

The purpose of classroom assessment

Issues teachers face in using tests and other assessment procedures in the classroom are very different from those involved in the use of standardized tests of the kind referred to earlier in this chapter. Brown (2012: 134) comments:

In brief, standardized assessments are general in nature because students vary greatly in the abilities measured on such assessments; are primarily of interest to administrators because they are designed for purposes of deciding who should be admitted into a program or how students should be grouped into course levels; they are usually made up of a few large subtests; and have scores that are interpreted in terms of each student's relative position in the distribution of scores of all students in a population.

Proficiency and placement tests are standardized, institutional tests of the kind referred to above. Brown (*ibid.*) contrasts these with classroom assessments:

In contrast, classroom assessments are specific in nature because students are likely to vary much less on these measures (especially if they have been put into more-or-less homogeneous groups by the admissions and placement assessments); are primarily interesting to teachers because they are used for deciding what percentage of material students already know or can do in relation to a particular course; are therefore designed to measure specific course objectives

or teaching points; usually have a short number of subtests measuring different things; and have scores that are interpreted in terms of the percentage of the course material the students know or can do.

Teachers use different forms of assessment as part of their regular teaching to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses, to monitor students' learning, to assess the effectiveness of their own teaching and to give feedback to learners that will help them improve their learning. Teachers are also often interested in the *washback effect* of a test, that is, the effect the test may have on learning and teaching. In other words, it is important whether the assessment procedure will provide information that will help the student in his or her learning, i.e. information that 'washes back' to the learners. Alderson and Wall (1993) identify a number of effects of washback, pointing out that a test will influence:

- What teachers teach.
- How teachers teach.
- How learners learn.
- The rate and sequence of teaching.
- The rate and sequence of learning.
- Attitudes to the content and method of teaching and learning.

Sometimes the washback effect of tests has a negative influence on teaching and learning, such as when students and teachers only focus on skills that will be measured in a test. This is the case with many university-entrance exams. At other times, washback can have positive effects. For example, an institution may decide that students' listening skills are inadequate at the end of a speaking course and decide to increase the listening component, as the result of course assessment, to encourage teachers and students to spend more time on the development of listening skills. Below, we will consider a number of forms of classroom-based assessment, including diagnostic tests when the course starts; formative assessment when the course is underway; and summative assessment, or achievement tests, when the course ends.



To what extent are you expected to 'teach to the test'? If so, how does this influence the way you teach?

Diagnostic tests

Diagnostic tests are tests that provide more detailed information that can be used in planning instruction that matches the students' needs. For example, students may be enrolled in a speaking course and placed in a class based on their performance in an interview. However, if the students have similar pronunciation problems, due to their first language, the teacher now may decide that the students' pronunciation problems should

be addressed as part of the course and may use a test to assess their specific difficulties with pronunciation. In this case, a diagnostic test might require the student to read aloud from a reading passage or to take part in a recorded interview or conversation. His or her difficulties with the features of particular sounds are then noted and the information used in planning pronunciation activities in a course. A teacher educator comments on the value of diagnostic tests:

No two classes are the same

In my own context of working in an English for academic purposes (EAP) support programme for a North American university, the use of diagnostic tests has provided a wealth of information for teachers and administrators alike. As most teachers are well aware, no two classes are ever the same, so being able to identify the particular strengths and weaknesses of a class of learners is essential both to meet the needs of the students and as a way of reflecting on the relevance of the objectives of the course. If there is an objective that all students are consistently meeting [when] coming into the class, then maybe this is indicating a place for possible revision for the course itself.

Likewise, though all students in my programme take a placement exam at the beginning of the semester, many placement exams such as ours are dealing with a very narrow range of proficiencies, and when it comes to accurately separating learners out into different levels, based on the test alone, there is always some amount of variability. This is further increased when dealing with learners from a variety of different cultural backgrounds who, quite simply, can respond to tests in different, unexpected ways. The use of diagnostic testing by teachers can help to identify learners who might have been placed higher or lower than is befitting of their abilities, and so can act as an additional check on final placement decisions. Given that diagnostic tests can also be more performance based than some forms of placement tests, which are oftentimes dominated by multiple-choice or discrete-point types of items, diagnostics can measure ability in different ways that are not logistically practical for a large-scale placement test.

Jonathan Trace, teacher and teacher educator, Honolulu, HI, US

Formative assessment

Once a course is underway, the teacher may want to administer informal assessments from time to time to find out how well the students are mastering the content of the course and whether the course material is helping them with their learning difficulties. Information collected during teaching is 'formative', since it is collected while the student's language skills are being 'formed', and may be based on quizzes, discussions, observations, teacher-made tests, checklists and journals, as well as self-assessment by learners of their own progress. Assessments with this purpose are progress tests and are one of the most common forms of assessment used by teachers in their day-to-day teaching.

Formative assessment only qualifies as 'formative' if it leads to feedback that is used by students to improve their learning. Computer software enables much of this monitoring to be carried out through the school's LMS. The software facilitates learner-to-learner and learner-to-instructor communication, through such features as chat rooms and discussion boards, permits the tracking of user behaviour and allows both instructors and students to monitor progress.

Since the purpose of formative assessment is to monitor the students' learning throughout the course, it can help teachers to find out what students are learning, help them to evaluate whether the course materials are effective, encourage the learners and help teachers to decide if any adjustments need to be made while the course is being delivered. In other words, formative assessment is designed to improve learning and, as mentioned in Chapter 17, is sometimes described as assessment *for* learning, in contrast to assessment *of* learning, which takes place at the end of a period of learning (Black et al., 2003). (The latter approach is summative assessment, and is described below.) Feedback given during assessment for learning is descriptive, rather than evaluative, and it is intended to show students how they can improve their learning. Advocates of assessment for learning argue that traditional approaches to assessment typically serve to measure what students have learned in order to measure progress or for grading and reporting purposes, but the assessment does not help students improve or understand their learning. By giving students feedback that will improve their learning, assessment *for* learning, by contrast, seeks to link teaching and learning more closely. It is described as having these characteristics (Davison and Leung, 2009: 397):

- [Assessment for learning] is embedded in a view of teaching and learning of which it is an essential part.
- Learning goals are shared with students.
- It aims to help pupils know and recognize the standards they are aiming for.
- Pupils are involved in self-assessment.
- It provides feedback which helps students recognize their next steps and how to take them.
- It is underpinned by confidence that every student can improve.
- Both teacher and student reflect on assessment data.

To summarize, then, the goal of assessment for learning is to gather information through formative assessment practices that can be used to modify teaching and to better improve student learning, rather than to grade students' performance. Procedures used with this approach involve the strategic use of questioning, as a deliberate way for the teacher to find out what students are able to understand and do, and effective use of teacher feedback, focusing on establishing success criteria that tell the students what they have achieved and where improvement is necessary. Feedback provides specific suggestions to help achieve improvement; self-assessment encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and incorporates self-monitoring, self-assessment and self-evaluation.

Because feedback from assessment for learning may also make use of summative evaluation (see below) to improve learning, some advocates of this approach recommend it as an alternative to final grades and scores; however, as Fulcher (2010: 69) points out, in many situations, there is an expectation that students will get a grade for a piece of work, and in large classes, such frequent grading hardly seems practical. (Problems involved in peer assessment with assessment for learning are discussed in Mok, 2011.) While there are many benefits to formative assessment, doing effective formative assessment may require training. A teacher educator describes her own experiences:

Learning to do formative assessment

When I started my career as a teacher, I had attended courses on methodology and on materials development, but I had not had any input on how to assess my students. I had to learn how to tackle assessment 'on the job'. When I needed to grade my students, I had to learn how to put together tests, how to develop marking schemes and how to best use them. My colleagues had the same problem I had; they had limited literacy on testing and assessment. Our tests were basically the result of cutting and pasting from different exam samples ... or from published tests in textbooks. Things did not improve when I needed to develop assessment materials for formative purposes; they actually became worse, as cutting and pasting was not always possible. If developing tests is challenging, developing formative-assessment instruments is even more challenging.

I am very glad that an association such as EALTA (European Association for Language Testing and Assessment – www.ealta.eu.org) was created, and I am very proud of having been involved in its creation and in the development of its guidelines for good practice in language testing and assessment. Teachers need to know more about language testing and assessment, and this can only happen through training and networking – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. I hope that in the future, literacy in language testing and assessment is higher, and that no teachers find themselves in the situation I found myself in.

Neus Figueras, teacher and teacher educator, Barcelona, Spain

The following are examples of procedures that can be used for formative assessment (or for assessment for learning). However, these procedures are not specific to formative assessment: it is their *purpose* that makes them appropriate for formative assessment:

- Questioning.
- Quizzes.
- Discussions.
- Interviews.
- Role plays.
- Observations.

- Teacher-made tests (e.g. of reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary).
- Checklists.
- Self-reports.
- Journals.
- Projects.

Various types of formative assessment may include the following.

Self-assessment

Self-assessment refers to activities in which learners complete an evaluation of their own performance, usually soon after they have completed the activity (Matsuno, 2009). For example, a student may watch a video of his or her oral presentation and then use a checklist to note the positive or negative aspects of the performance. Many contemporary coursebooks provide regular self-assessment tasks, throughout the book, e.g. my *Interchange* series (Richards et al., 2012). While some teachers are sceptical of the degree to which learners can accurately evaluate their own language skills, self-assessment can motivate learners and help develop learner autonomy. It is normally used in conjunction with other measures of student learning. However, for self-assessment to be effective, learners need training in how to assess their own work. Self-assessment can also make use of a digital or video diary, or, as Fulcher notes (2010: 71):

An online blog in which samples of work and a commentary are saved side by side. This naturally leads on to the use of portfolios, where students collect samples of writing, or digital copies of speech, into a collection of their work. However, it may also contain reading and listening texts, with an assessment of how well they were understood, and reactions to them.

Peer assessment

Peer assessment refers to activities in which students evaluate or give feedback on each other's performance on a task. It is often used in composition classes, where students read each other's draft compositions and give feedback and suggestions, perhaps using guidelines or checklists provided by the teacher. However, both self-assessment and peer assessment are normally used to complement, rather than replace, other forms of assessment. A teacher describes how he trains students in the process of peer assessment:

Preparing students for peer assessment

I teach English for academic purposes at a university language centre in Sydney. At the higher levels, an important part of the approach to teaching academic writing is students giving each other feedback on their work. As part of the assessment for the term, the students produce two longer pieces of academic writing, each within a

different genre. The students give each other feedback on their outlines and drafts for each piece. This is part of the scheduled teaching programme. It requires teachers to 'sell' the value of this process, as not all learners are convinced they have the authority or knowledge to make useful evaluative comments. It also requires careful systematic learner training in what to comment on (content, organization, task completion, accuracy, etc.) and, very importantly, how to make comments. It involves modelling and practising the language to praise, point out perceived problems, make suggestions for improvement and the like. It is an important part of developing the students' oral pragmatic competence.

Neil England, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Sydney, Australia



What would you say to a student who complained that the required self- and peer assessments are 'not useful' because they are not done by a native speaker?

Alternative assessment

Since the 1980s, the term 'alternative assessment' has referred to procedures, other than those in formal tests, used as a way of better capturing real-language ability and of reflecting natural conditions for language use (Coombe et al., 2012: 147):

Alternative assessment is defined as the ongoing process involving the student and teacher in making judgements about the student's progress in using nonconventional strategies. Hamayan (1995) describes alternative assessment procedures as those techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom.

Coombe et al. (ibid.) suggest that a more suitable term would be 'additional assessment', since they recommend that alternative assessment should be used in conjunction with more traditional forms of assessment as part of a 'multiple-measures' assessment scheme. Alternative assessment uses the formative assessment procedures mentioned earlier, including self-assessment, interviews, portfolios (see below), learner journals, student-teacher conversations or 'conferences', interviews and observation (Brown, 1998). Brown and Hudson (1998: 654–5) summarize the characteristics of alternative assessment:

- 1 Require students to perform, create, produce or do something.
- 2 Use real-world contexts or simulations.
- 3 Are non-intrusive in that they extend the day-to-day classroom activities.
- 4 Allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day.
- 5 Use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities.

- 6 Focus on process as well as products.
- 7 Tap into higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills.
- 8 Provide information about both the strengths and weaknesses of students.
- 9 Are multiculturally sensitive when properly administered.
- 10 Ensure that people, not machines, do the scoring, using human judgement.
- 11 Encourage open disclosure of standards and rating criteria.
- 12 Call upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles.

The notion of alternative assessment has been expanded in recent years and included within a more general approach to classroom assessment known as *teacher-based assessment* (TBA) (Davison and Leung, 2009). In many countries, language teachers increasingly are expected to make use of a variety of assessment procedures to monitor and evaluate their students' progress in their own classrooms. Davison and Leung (2009: 395) describe the characteristics of TBA that distinguish it from other forms of assessment:

- It involves the teacher from the beginning to the end: from planning the assessment programme, through to identifying and/or developing appropriate assessment tasks, right through to making the assessment judgements.
- It allows for the collection of a number of samples of student work over a period of time, using a variety of different tasks and activities.
- It can be adapted and modified by the teacher to match the teaching and learning goals of the particular class that is being assessed.
- It is carried out in ordinary classrooms, not in a specialist assessment centre or examination hall.
- It is conducted by the students' own teacher, not an outsider.
- It involves students more actively in the assessment process, especially if self- and peer assessment is used in conjunction with teacher assessment.
- It opens up the possibility for teachers to support learner-led inquiry.
- It allows the teacher to give immediate and constructive feedback to students.
- It stimulates continuous evaluation and adjustment of the teaching and learning programme.
- It complements other forms of assessment, including external examinations.



Different kinds of formative classroom assessment have been discussed above. What forms of alternative assessment do you think are most useful?

A teacher educator describes parents' views of assessment;



Importance of tests for stakeholders

As an EFL centre manager in Brazil, I frequently had to hold feedback sessions with learners' parents regarding learners' performance. In those situations, parents seemed inevitably more inclined to accept test results, which were always expressed in numerical format, than to accept results of any other alternative assessment method. When dealing with thousands of students, whose achievement needed to be measured twice in each academic year for course promotion purposes, the use of testing and numerical results was paramount because a successful, large scale EFL/ESL operation needs to provide stakeholders with a valid, reliable 'quantification' of linguistic competence. Without numerical test results, the logistical aspect of dealing with learner promotion within our course framework would have been nearly impossible, and consequently, this would have been reflected in low levels of learner retention at the end of each academic cycle. Thus, testing takes on a crucial role in the sustainability of EFL/ESL centres and certainly deserves to be the object of investment in any professional-development programme.

Priscilla Brooking, teacher and teacher educator, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Sydney, Australia

Summative assessment

Summative assessment refers to forms of assessment that are used at the end of a course or period of learning in order to measure what students have learned, both individually and as a group. Tests with this purpose are known as *achievement tests*. A variety of assessment procedures may be used to find out what students have learned from the course, such as assignments, end-of-course tests, projects and portfolios. These are similar procedures to those used for formative assessment; however, they are now used for a different purpose – to measure the extent of students' learning at the end of a course.

Preparation of achievement tests is a regular part of a teacher's responsibilities, although as Coombe et al. (2012) observe, many teachers have not had adequate training in the preparation of tests. In some cases, their textbooks may include a testing package that includes both progress tests and end-of-course tests. In other cases, teachers are expected to prepare their own tests. Achievement tests are often based on a course syllabus or on the textbook and materials used during the course. While this might appear reasonable, as Hughes (2003: 13) points out, if the syllabus and/or course materials are badly chosen or designed, the results may not give a true account of the student's ability. For example, a course may target a particular speaking level on the CEFR, including the ability to 'enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics'. However, if the test only requires students to complete dialogues relating to topics

covered in the textbook, the results will not show to what extent the students have achieved the course objectives.

Brown (2003: 48) suggests that the content of an achievement test should be determined: a) by what the objectives are of the material (e.g. the lesson, unit or course) that is being assessed; b) by how much importance is given to each of the objectives; c) by considering the tasks that were used during lessons or the material; and d) according to the degree to which the structure of the test is likely to lead to formative washback.

Hughes likewise recommends using course objectives as the basis for achievement tests (2003: 13):

First, it compels course designers to be explicit about objectives. Secondly, it makes it possible for performance on the test to show just how far students have achieved those objectives. This in turn puts pressure on those responsible for the syllabus and the selection of books and materials to ensure that these are consistent with the course objectives.

In preparing achievement tests, decisions must be made concerning what to test and how to test it. This is not as easy as it sounds. O'Sullivan (2012b: 48–9) poses questions to consider during the process of test design as follows, and although he focuses on larger-scale tests, many of the same issues are involved in designing classroom tests:

- Does the proposed test (or task) 'fit' with the profile of the test takers (e.g. in terms of their age, culture, gender mix and language-learning experience)? Will the task motivate or demotivate some test takers?
- How does it 'fit' with the inferences we wish to draw? (That is, is this task or item likely to elicit the kind of language we are planning to assess – e.g. if we are trying to elicit descriptive language in a test of speaking, is the task likely to result in language of this type being used?)
- How will we assess performance? (If we are focusing on grammatical knowledge, will we test it by including a 'grammar' criterion in a speaking or writing test, or will we create a multiple-choice test or a selective-deletion cloze in order to test knowledge more explicitly?)
- Is the task replicable? (That is, will it be possible to make more versions of this task that are equivalent in terms of the cognitive processing involved and the likely linguistic output generated?)
- Will it fit into the timescale we have in mind for the test? (That is, if we plan to have about five or six tasks, and this seems to require about two minutes of test-taker time, it is likely to be impractical to use it – particularly if the amount or range of language elicited is not great.)

Test items commonly used in achievement tests are described below.

20.4 Developing, designing and scoring tests

Developing tests and assessments

Planning for test preparation

Brown (2003: 43) suggests that five key questions that need to be considered when designing or revising tests concern: a) the purpose of the test; b) its objectives; c) the way in which the test's purpose and objectives are reflected in the test specifications; d) the ways in which the tasks in the test are selected and separated; e) the kinds of grading or feedback and scoring that are expected.

As we saw above, tests can serve many different purposes, such as placing students in a course, measuring their achievement, motivating learners, diagnosing their difficulties and reviewing the curriculum to identify gaps or weakness, as well as reviewing one's own teaching. If the purpose of the test (or some other form of assessment) is primarily to inform one's teaching, it should not be an unplanned add-on to instruction, but should be a regular part of teaching, providing information that can guide teaching and learning, as well as motivate learners.

Objectives for a test also should be clear and unambiguous and should reflect the course objectives and what the course has covered. For example, if the objectives for a speaking course include the following areas: to initiate conversations using greetings and small talk; to introduce familiar topics in casual conversations; to use questions to interact during conversation and to respond to the interlocutor's questions; to bring conversations to a close – then the test should measure how well the students can do these things.

Developing the test specifications

The term *test specifications* refers to what the test will consist of; what skills will be included; what types of items and tasks it will include; how many items will be included in each part of the test, and how much time will be allocated to each item; and how the test will be scored. Test specifications can be very brief or considerably complex, depending on the type of text and its purpose. Davidson and Lynch (2002: 14) provide a useful format for test specification, which is summarized as follows:

- 1 *General description (GD)*: A brief general statement of the behaviour to be tested, similar to the learning objective.
- 2 *Prompt attributes (PA)*: A complete and detailed description of what the student will see in the test.
- 3 *Response attributes (RA)*: A complete and detailed description of the way in which the student will provide the answer, and what will constitute failure or success.

- 4 *Sample item (SI)*: An illustrative item or task that the specification should generate.
- 5 *Specification supplement (SS)*: A specification of any additional information needed to construct test items, such as a list of sources from which reading passages may be selected in a reading test.

A specification such as the above can be used to produce any number and kind of tests, although the reaction of many teachers to detailed test specifications may be similar to the remark mentioned by Popham (cited in Fulcher 2010: 147): 'These specifications are too damned long to pay attention to!'

Davidson and Lynch (2002: 28) give the following example of a sample test specification for use in a portfolio-based writing-development course. The specification is for a test of composition skills for beginning adult language learners, focusing on multi-paragraph writing and revision:

General description (GD)

General objectives: Students will write multi-paragraph essays on assigned topics. Three of these essays will be selected by the students for revision. All drafts and revised essays will be submitted for a portfolio-based assessment.

Specific objectives: Students will demonstrate in writing their ability to express their ideas, thoughts and/or opinions within paragraphs while completing tasks on an assigned topic. In so doing, students will:

- Address the writing task.
- Present clear organization and development of paragraphs.
- Use details and/or examples to support a thesis or illustrate an idea.
- Display facility in the use of language.
- Exhibit grammatical accuracy in the area taught.

Sample item (SI): Describe your life in the United States now and your life in your country before. Tell which life you like better and why.

Prompt attribute (PA):

- 1 Students will be assigned a writing task on a specific topic. Requirements for the selection of a topic and tasks include the following characteristics:
 - A topic that is meaningful, relevant and motivating to written communication.
 - A task that is authentic and conducive to academic writing.
 - A task that requires comprehension of and/or response to a specific assigned topic.
 - A task that requires the integration of rhetorical strategies common in academic writing.

Directions: Write two or three paragraphs on the assigned topic.

- 2** Periodically, students will select one of their writing assignments, which have been collected in their portfolio, for revision. The revision will be based on criteria established by contract between the teacher and the student.

Response attributes (RA): Students will write their essays on the assigned topic. They will turn in the assignments as a portfolio for assessment based on:

- Correct use of grammar points covered in class.
- Meeting criteria established by the contract.

In this way, students can reflect on their own progress and growth as writers.

Specifications supplement (SS): For the use of SI construction, refer to *Grammar Directions 1* and class syllabus [provided to teachers].

Test specifications such as these serve to guide teachers in preparing tests.



What type of assessment do you think the example test specification from Davidson and Lynch would be best for: diagnostic, formative or summative?

Designing test items

Discrete-point tests

Discrete-point tests were developed at the time of audiolingualism (see Chapter 3) and measure knowledge of individual language items, such as a grammar test with different sections on adverbs, prepositions and tenses. Discrete-point tests reflect the view that language consists of different components (e.g. grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary) and different skills (e.g. listening, speaking, reading, writing), and these can be tested separately. Multiple-choice tests are usually discrete-point tests. Discrete-point tests have been criticized because they break language down into separate components and hence do not really assess overall language ability and therefore have low construct validity. But they are common in language teaching because they are easy to score, and the scoring is reliable. However, good multiple-choice tests are difficult to create, and they can promote guessing, which can have an effect on the score. In addition, multiple-choice tests only measure recognition knowledge, and one cannot be sure students actually understand the question since they do not have to generate an answer. True-false tests are an alternative to multiple-choice formats and are often used to test reading or listening comprehension; they offer the test takers a choice, generally between two items, one true and one false. An advantage of true-false tests is that students are quickly assessed on their choice between the alternatives and whether they understand the question. However, true-false tests need to be carefully designed to minimize guessing; since they require a choice between only two alternatives, it is

difficult to ensure that the test is testing exactly what it seeks to test. Gap-filling items are also used in discrete-point tests particularly, but need to be carefully constructed so that only a single word can be used to complete the gap in a sentence. For example, a grammar test might contain the item:

- Teresa plays the piano extremely well _____ though she is only seven.

Integrative tests

Integrative tests are often preferred to discrete-point tests because they require the learner to use several different skills at the same time, and are thought to better capture the knowledge that underlies authentic use of language. Examples are gap-fill (cloze) tests and dictation tests, which require the learner to use knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and listening or reading comprehension in completing the test. Gap-fill (cloze) tests are also sometimes used as diagnostic tests.

In a cloze test, _____ number of words are _____ from a passage, and _____ learners have to complete _____ missing words. The words _____ be deleted regularly (e.g. _____ fifth word), or deletions may _____ based on what the _____ is designed to measure. _____ tests are said to _____ integrative tests, since they _____ upon the learners' knowledge _____ grammar, vocabulary and text _____.

Dictation is a common activity both for teaching and testing and, as mentioned, a type of integrative test. An alternative to a standard procedure for administering dictation is a partial dictation test. Rather than the teacher simply reading a passage aloud, the students have a partially completed text and have to complete the missing words or sections. Critics of dictation argue that it is merely a test of spelling and memory. Supporters say that it taps into the learner's overall language proficiency. However, the effect of dictation on teaching should also be considered. If teachers use dictation extensively in teaching, it sends the message to students that when they listen, they should try to identify and remember every word they hear (i.e. adopt an exclusively bottom-up listening strategy), rather than focus on key words and main ideas.

Performance-based assessment

Performance-based assessment is an approach that seeks to measure student learning based on how well the learner can perform on a practical real-world task, such as the ability to write an essay or carry out a short conversation – i.e. to demonstrate communicative use of language. Performance-based assessment makes use of tasks that actually require the learner to perform the behaviour that is being measured. For example, to test students' ability to write a letter of application for a job, students might be given advertisements for jobs and asked to write application letters. An attempt may also be made to choose assessment tasks that prompt real uses of language the learner would encounter in school or work (sometimes known as *authentic assessment*). The goal is to assess language in contexts that closely resemble real-life uses of language, such as reading and discussing a real text from a student's academic discipline or writing a book or film review for a

magazine. When a test requires the learner to actually perform a real-life task, it is known as a *direct test*. In an *indirect test*, the learners are not performing a real-life task but an activity that resembles one. For example, if you asked learners to make real telephone calls and assessed their success on the task, this would be a direct test. A classroom role play involving telephone calls would be an indirect test. However, critics have pointed out that the distinction is quite ambiguous. A multiple-choice grammar or vocabulary test is an indirect test; however, a speaking or writing test which allows students to produce language samples which could be used to infer a level of their ability or achievement would be a direct test. But it is ironic that there can never be a true direct test because as soon as testing and assessment is involved, language use is no longer real life.



Authentic assessment has a number of obvious advantages. Can you think of some impediments to using this type of assessment, especially in mixed-ability classes?

Methods of scoring and evaluating

Students may receive separate scores on various features of their tests, or they may receive one overall score.

Analytic versus holistic scoring

One way of scoring a student's performance on a task is to give a separate weighting or score to the different features of the task. For example, writing tasks are often assessed in terms of content, organization, cohesion, style, register, vocabulary, grammar, spelling and mechanics, whereas speaking tasks include pronunciation, fluency, accuracy and appropriateness. Analytic scoring reflects the view that the student's overall performance in writing, speaking or other skills is equal to the sum of the individual parts that are assessed. Holistic scoring involves giving a single score to writing or speaking samples on the basis of an overall impressionistic assessment of the student's performance on the writing or speaking task as a whole. Hughes comments (2003: 105):

The choice between holistic and analytic scoring depends in part on the purpose of the testing. If diagnostic information is required directly from the ratings, then analytic scoring is essential. The choice also depends on the circumstances of the scoring. If it is being carried out by a small, well-knit group at a single site, then holistic scoring, which is likely to be more economical of time, may be the most appropriate. But if scoring is being conducted by a heterogeneous, possibly less well-trained group, or in a number of different places, analytic scoring is probably called for.

Computer-based tests

Computers and information technology now allow new approaches to language assessment, expanding the kinds of tasks that can be used for assessment and providing immediate

feedback on learner performance (Chapelle and Douglas, 2006). Many students today are required to take some form of computer-based test, and both analytic and holistic scoring are facilitated by computer-based testing. Many commercial language courses provide computer-assisted language tests or software that allows teachers to develop their own tests, relieving the teacher of much of the burden of assessing students' learning systematically and providing them with detailed feedback. Computer-based tests make use of multimedia, and *computer-adaptive testing* (CAT) allows the test to be tailored to the learner's performance. For example, if the test-taker gets an item wrong, an easier item is provided; if he or she scores correctly, a more difficult item is supplied. Brown (2003: 15) suggests that computer-based testing offers a number of advantages: it allows learners to test themselves on various aspects of language use, including the four skills, vocabulary, grammar and discourse; it enables students to prepare for high-stakes standardized tests; and in some cases (e.g. CATs), it provides some degree of individualization. Other advantages include automated marking, immediate results, ease of distribution of those results, (potentially) the ability to test any time or anywhere, integration of multimedia and the ability to use new test formats.

20.5 Conclusion

Procedures used in assessment have tended to reflect changes in approaches to language teaching and, therefore, changes in practices associated with the movement from audiolingual to communicative approaches to teaching. Just as teaching methodologies have moved away from a primary focus on linguistic dimensions of communication (such as vocabulary and grammar) towards communicative orientations to language, trends in testing, likewise, have moved towards communicative approaches. However, since the linguistic dimensions of language use are the easiest to measure, they still often receive priority in testing. Hence any school or university-based tests (such as university entrance examinations in many countries) still contain a strong emphasis on linguistic knowledge. However, the movement towards standards-based teaching and testing seen in CEFR as well as developments in technology are bringing changes to many practices in both institutional and classroom testing.

Teaching and assessment are closely connected aspects of a teacher's work, and effective assessment practices are essential in language programmes. Teachers need to be able to use effective informal classroom assessment procedures to monitor the success of teaching and learning. Institutions need to establish sound assessment practices for placing students in courses, monitoring their progress and assessing their learning outcomes. Good language-testing practices are needed to ensure that the best teaching and learning experiences are provided for learners; the practices must also ensure that the decisions that tests are often used to make are fair to those affected by them.

Discussion questions

- 1 Examine an ESL textbook series that includes a testing component. What kinds of tests does it include? Does it include a placement test? If so, what kinds of skills does it include and what kinds of test-items does it make use of?

- 2** Develop a rating scale that could be used to evaluate students' performance on a role-play task. What aspects of performance would you include?
- 3** Choose a reading text and imagine that you have to develop multiple-choice questions to assess comprehension of the text. What kinds of decisions would you have to make in order to do this?
- 4** Choose a high-stakes test and consider how you would prepare students for this test. What kinds of classroom activities would you make use of?
- 5** Your school has announced an essay-writing competition, with an attractive prize for the winner. Prepare a set of statements that describe the criteria the winning essay must demonstrate.
- 6** Choose a particular skill area and examine the standards described for one of the levels on CEFR for that skill area. How could these be adapted or extended to suit the needs of students in a programme that you are familiar with?
- 7** Choose a particular skill area and consider how you could use a diagnostic test to determine students' problems with that skill. What kind of test would you use?
- 8** You have decided to ask students in a writing class to compile a portfolio that you will use as the basis for their end-of-course assessment. What will you ask students to include in their portfolio? Prepare a checklist that could be given to the students.
- 9** Teacher-based assessment allows for the collection of a number of samples of student work over a period of time, using a variety of different tasks and activities. Suggest how this could be used in a) a speaking course, and b) a reading or writing course.
- 10** Visit www.examenglish.com to get more information about the Cambridge exams, TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS and the Pearson Test of English, and try free online practice tests.
 - Are the test specifications clear?
 - In doing the practice tests, what testing techniques could you identify?
 - Reflect on your test-taking experience. Did you 'enjoy' any of the tests more than others?

Appendix:

Analytic rating form for persuasive writing

Look at the analytic rating form for student essays below.* How might you use it to give a holistic score?

1 = does not meet the set criteria at all; 5 = meets the set criteria in every way

	Score
1. Structure	
1.1. Title The essay has a title which clearly corresponds with the content of the essay.	1 2 3 4 5
1.2. Structure The essay contains a clear division in: introduction, argumentation and conclusion.	1 2 3 4 5
1.3. Layout The essay is well organized. There is a clear division in paragraphs. Paragraphs are divided by a blank line, indented or started on a new line.	1 2 3 4 5
1.4. Sub-topic Every paragraph has its own (sub) topic.	1 2 3 4 5
1.5. Relationships between paragraphs There is a clear 'train of thought' between paragraphs: it is easy to determine coherence between paragraphs in the text.	1 2 3 4 5
1.6. Continuity Information which belongs together is presented together.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Content	
2.1. Introduction The thesis statement is presented in the introduction, and (possibly) the writer's own opinion on the thesis statement is also provided.	1 2 3 4 5

Part 4 The teacher's environment

	Score
<p>2.2. Persuasion</p> <p>It is clear what the writer wishes to persuade the reader to believe: a choice for or against the thesis statement.</p>	1 2 3 4 5
<p>2.3. References</p> <p>The essay contains at least two quotes from the sources, which are incorporated in the essay in a meaningful way. For example, they support the argumentation or are used as an example in the introduction.</p>	1 2 3 4 5
<p>2.4. Referring (quoting from the sources)</p> <p>Quotes from the sources are correctly marked in the essay. Literal quotes (between inverted commas) and paraphrases both include references to the sources.</p>	1 2 3 4 5
<p>2.5. Reader orientation</p> <p>The essay is easy to comprehend for readers who have not read the assignment. The writer does not, for example, refer to the assignment or to the experimental setting in the essay.</p>	1 2 3 4 5
<p>2.6. Reader involvement</p> <p>The writer tries to engage the reader's interest by including real-life, common-place examples in the essay.</p>	1 2 3 4 5
3. Argumentation	
<p>3.1. Support</p> <p>The argumentation consists of multiple arguments which support the writer's opinion.</p>	1 2 3 4 5
<p>3.2. Relevance</p> <p>The argumentation does not contain too much superfluous information, i.e. information which does not help support the writer's opinion.</p>	1 2 3 4 5
<p>3.3. Argumentation</p> <p>The arguments are clearly recognizable as such, for instance, by the use of constructions such as 'therefore, I do (not) think that ...', 'I do (not) agree with ...', etc.</p>	1 2 3 4 5

	Score
3.4. Referential and coherence relations The referential and coherence relations are clear if they are implicit, or else are marked explicitly. Examples of markings include: therefore, so, thus, because, firstly, secondly, thirdly, subsequently, etc.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Conclusion	
4.1. Conclusion The essay contains a clear conclusion, which corresponds with the rest of the text and indicates the writer's own opinion.	1 2 3 4 5
4.2. Closing It is clear the essay is finished, for example by a brief summary of the content of the essay or by a closing statement. There are no loose ends left.	1 2 3 4 5

*Reprinted with permission from Van Weijen, D. (2008) *Writing Processes, Text Quality, and Task Effects*, Utrecht, Netherlands: Graduate School of Linguistics.

Further reading

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21

Professional development

Overview

This chapter includes the following key issues:

- What types of teacher education are there?
 - Teacher training.
 - Teacher development.
 - Professional development.
- What defines institutional and personal professionalism?
 - The institutional perspective.
 - The individual perspective.
- How can professional development be implemented?
 - The institutional perspective.
 - The personal perspective.
 - Strategies for personal professional development.

21.1 Introduction

Language teaching provides a career for hundreds of thousands of teachers worldwide. Some may have just entered the language-teaching profession, while others may have careers that span 30 years or more. Maintaining the interest, creativity and enthusiasm of teachers in their profession is one of the challenges faced by teachers themselves, as well as by school owners and programme coordinators. The field of language teaching is subject to constant changes, both as the profession responds to new movements and trends in language teaching and as the demand for quality language programmes and language teachers expands. As a result, teachers need regular opportunities to update their professional knowledge and skills, that is, opportunities to participate in professional development. Teachers also need to expand their roles and responsibilities throughout their careers if they are to continue to find language teaching rewarding, and it is the responsibility of schools and other educational institutions to provide opportunities for teachers to develop longer-term goals and opportunities.

The nature of professionalism

Despite the fact that many people, whose only asset is their knowledge of English, still enter language teaching with no training or experience, English language teaching is not something that anyone who can speak English can do. It is a profession, which means that it is a career in a field of educational specialization (see Chapter 4). It requires a specialized knowledge base, obtained through both academic study and practical experience, and it is a field of work where membership is based on entry requirements and standards. The professionalism of English teaching is seen in the growth industry devoted to providing language teachers with professional training and qualifications – a recognition of the fact that employers and institutions have come to realize that effective language-teaching programmes depend on teachers with specialized training, knowledge and skills. This professionalism is reflected in continuous attempts to develop standards for English language teaching and teachers and in the proliferation of professional journals and teacher magazines, conferences and professional organizations – such as TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, an international organization based in the US, with over 100 worldwide affiliates); IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, an international organization based in the UK), and JALT (the Japan Association for Language Teaching). Professionalism is also reflected in requirements for English teachers to demonstrate their level of proficiency in English as a component of certification or as a hiring prerequisite, in line with the demand for professional qualifications for native-speaker teachers and in the greater level of sophisticated knowledge of language teaching required of English teachers.



**What professional organizations are there for English teachers in your country?
How familiar are you with them?**

In this chapter, we will use *teacher education* as an umbrella term to refer to the field that deals with the preparation and professional development of teachers, and *teacher development* and *teacher training* to refer to two approaches within the field of teacher education.

A range of qualifications in English language teaching are available worldwide, ranging from short certificate-level courses, designed to give prospective teachers basic teaching skills, to undergraduate and graduate courses, for those intending to make English teaching a long-term career. There is also a growing demand for online professional-development courses, as countries seek to respond to the increasing demand for qualified English language teachers. (As an example, see www.cambridgeenglishteacher.org; a teacher development website sponsored by Cambridge University Press and Cambridge English Language Assessment.) Below, a teacher comments on the process of becoming a professional English teacher:



Becoming a professional English teacher

I was trained to be an art teacher and taught for two years in the United States in a small rural community in the Midwest. I decided to move south to Mexico and immediately got a job teaching English as a foreign language. I was given the job because of my native command of English and because I had some experience as a teacher. I was often told I was a 'real' teacher; yet, to be honest, I did not feel like an English teacher. I fell into the job of teaching English in Mexico. It was somewhat haphazard, not at all planned. This means I was not trained to be an EFL teacher, but because English is my native language, I was given a job as an EFL teacher. I taught English for about ten years, and then I had the opportunity to study a master's degree in TESOL. Having received my degree, I felt more secure as a teacher and like a real teacher. It seemed that my previous teaching before my master's was "hit and miss" and based upon a lot of instincts. Some were good instincts, and others were not so good. Having the basis of my master's gave me comfort as a teacher. Finally, knowing what the basis of my profession was helped me to no longer guess what to do but to understand what decisions I could make as a teacher.

Martha Lengeling, teacher and teacher educator, Guanajuato, Mexico

Becoming an English language teacher means becoming part of a worldwide community of professionals with shared goals, values, discourse and practices, but one with a self-critical view of its own practices and a commitment to a transformative approach to its own role.

21.2 Types of teacher education

Our understanding of the nature of teacher education in language teaching has developed considerably since TESOL emerged as a profession. In the 1960s and 1970s, when I first started my professional training, learning to teach English as a

second language was a process of acquiring a body of knowledge and skills from an external source, i.e. from experts. It was a kind of 'top-down', expert-driven process, based on modelling good practices, the practices themselves built around a standard or recognized teaching method, such as those that were discussed in Chapter 3. Becoming a language teacher meant acquiring a set of discrete skills – lesson planning and techniques for presenting and practising new teaching points and for teaching the four skills. The approach that dominated graduate courses at this time consisted of a limited diet of theory courses, mainly confined to linguistics (syntax, morphology, semantics), phonetics, English grammar and sometimes literature, plus the study of methodology.

Since that time, the field of second language teacher education has come of age. The knowledge base of language teaching has also expanded substantially, although there are still differences of opinion concerning what the essential knowledge base of language teaching consists of. Experts arrive at different answers to questions such as the following:

- Is language teaching a branch of applied linguistics or a branch of education?
- How much linguistics do teachers need to know, and whose linguistic theories are most relevant?
- What are the essential subjects in a pre-service or in-service curriculum for language teachers?
- Do teachers need to know how to carry out research? If so, what kind of research?

Differences in the way these questions might be answered reflect the fact that the disciplinary base for language teaching is derived from many different sources, including linguistics, psychology, second language acquisition, applied linguistics and education, and each of these disciplines offers different perspectives on the nature of language teaching and learning (see Chapter 2). Therefore, the kind of professional preparation teachers may receive varies considerably from country to country, or even from institution to institution within a country.

From the 1970s to the present period, there has been a marked shift in our understanding of what we mean by teacher education – a movement from teacher training to teacher development (Richards, 1998a).

Teacher training

Teacher training normally involves providing novice teachers with the practical skills and knowledge needed to prepare them for their initial teaching experience. Teacher training involves processes of the following kind:

- Understanding basic concepts and principles as a prerequisite for applying them to teaching.
- Developing a repertoire of classroom techniques, routines, skills and strategies.
- Having opportunities to try out different strategies in the classroom.

- Developing ability to teach using a textbook and classroom technology.
- Monitoring oneself and getting feedback from others on one's practice.

Training involves the development of basic concepts, theories and principles and a repertoire of teaching skills, acquired through observing experienced teachers and engaging in practice-teaching in a controlled setting, e.g. through micro-teaching or peer teaching. Taking this perspective, good teaching is seen as the mastery of a body of basic knowledge and a set of skills or competencies. Qualifications in teacher training such as the CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) are typically offered by teacher-training colleges or by organizations such as the British Council, and provide novice teachers with a recognized entry-level qualification as an ESL/ELT teacher. The worldwide demand for qualifications of this kind has led to the development of many courses, available both in face-to-face formats or online. For example, the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) is a test developed by Cambridge English Language Assessment for teachers of English to speakers of other languages. The TKT tests knowledge of concepts related to language, language use and the background to and practice of language teaching and learning. TKT consists of three core modules: language and background to language learning and teaching; lesson planning and use of resources for language teaching; and managing the teaching and learning process. There is also a practical module and a further three specialist modules (Knowledge About Language, CLIL, Young Learners).



What do you think are the five most important practical skills a teacher needs in order to be an effective language teacher?

Teacher development

Teacher development serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of the teacher's general understanding of teaching, of the teaching context and of his or her performance as a teacher. It thus builds on the initial knowledge and skill base acquired through teacher training. One aspect of teacher development involves developing a deeper understanding of the knowledge base of language teaching. This has typically meant mastering the discipline of applied linguistics and developing a more advanced and theory-based body of knowledge, not linked to a specific teaching context. Applied linguistics includes many of the issues discussed in previous chapters of this book, encompassing the language-based subjects (e.g. grammar, phonology, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis), the learning-based subjects (e.g. second language acquisition, psycholinguistics, learning strategies), the teaching-based subjects (e.g. methodology, teaching the four skills) and the curriculum-based subjects (e.g. course design, materials design, assessment).

Another dimension of teacher development, however, deals with the examination of different dimensions of one's own practice as a basis for reflective review, which we discuss below, and that can hence be seen as practitioner-driven. Qualifications in teacher development such as the Delta course or an MA degree, are offered by training organizations and universities and are generally based on the assumption that the programme is intended

for teachers who have already developed their practical teaching skills and now wish to acquire the theory and knowledge base that supports these skills. Many such courses today are also available online or in distance mode, to suit the circumstances of the many practising teachers who are unable to take time off for full-time study.



Can you suggest some aspects of teacher development that go beyond what a teacher has acquired through basic teacher training?

Comparing the two dimensions of teacher education, Freeman observed (1982: 21–2):

Training deals with building specific teaching skills: how to sequence a lesson or how to teach a dialogue, for instance. Development, on the other hand, focuses on the individual teacher – on the process of reflection, examination, and change which can lead to doing a better job and to personal growth and professional growth. These two concepts assume different views of teaching and the teacher. Training assumes that teaching is a finite skill, one which can be acquired and mastered. The teacher then learns to teach in the same way s/he learned to tie shoes or to ride a bicycle. Development assumes that teaching is a constantly evolving process of growth and change. It is an expansion of skills and understanding, one in which the teacher is responsible for the process in much the same way students are for learning a language.

Within the discipline of TESOL, second language teacher development today is a focus of a growing amount of both theory and research (Johnson, 2009; Borg, 2009; Burns and Richards, 2009). Teacher development is viewed as a form of socialization into the professional thinking and methods of a community of practice (Johnson, 2006). The branch of language teaching that focuses on teacher development is known as second language teacher education (SLTE) and is influenced by research in applied linguistics, as well as by perspectives drawn from sociocultural theory (Johnson, 2009) and the field of teacher cognition (Borg, 2006). Just as second language learning may be viewed as both a cognitive and as a social process (see Chapter 2), so can teacher development. As a result, the knowledge base of teaching has been re-examined, with a questioning of the traditional positioning of the language-based disciplines as the major foundation for SLTE (e.g. linguistics, phonetics, second language acquisition) (Freeman, 2002) and a movement towards a greater emphasis on teaching itself. At the same time, SLTE has also been affected by external factors: by the need to respond to the status of English as an international language and by the growing demand worldwide for a practical command of English language skills.



How useful do you think theory is for teachers? How can they make use of theory?

A focus on the nature of teacher development has been central to a rethinking of both the content and delivery of SLTE programmes. The first shift in this rethinking was to recognize the cognitive dimensions of teaching. Thus, teacher development from

traditional perspectives was seen largely as a cognitive issue, something the learner did on his or her own. The problem of teacher development hence was often viewed as a question of improving the effectiveness of delivery. The failure of teachers to 'acquire' what was taught was seen as a problem of overcoming teachers' resistance to change (Singh and Richards, 2006). A focus on teacher development as a field of inquiry, however, seeks to examine the mental processes involved in teacher learning and acknowledges the 'situated' and the social nature of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). (The term *teacher learning* refers to the knowledge that results from the processes of teacher development.) From this perspective, learning takes place in a context and evolves through the interaction and participation of the participants in that context. This reflects a shift to a sociocultural view of learning (see Chapter 2). Teacher development is not viewed as translating knowledge and theories into practice, but as constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of teaching activities and processes. This latter type of knowledge, sometimes called 'practitioner knowledge', is the source of teachers' practices and understandings. As Freeman (2002: 11) puts it:

Teacher education must then serve two functions. It must teach the skills of reflectivity, and it must provide the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience.

In practical terms, an expanded view of teacher development and teacher learning has led to a reconsideration of traditional modes of teaching in SLTE programmes, as well as a focus on how practising teachers can continue their learning through the processes of teaching. Teacher development, from this perspective, is less concerned with finding more effective ways of delivering course content and more concerned with engaging teachers in the processes of understanding their role in the contexts in which they work, in developing a deeper understanding of themselves and their learners and in theorizing from their practice, as was discussed earlier in Chapter 4. Many academics involved in language teacher education, such as myself, have seen their professional interests evolve over time from primarily a 'teacher-trainer' to a 'teacher-development' perspective.



If you were to take a course to further your professional knowledge and skills, what course or courses would you like to take?

Professional development

Professional development encompasses both teacher training and teacher development and refers to both formal as well as informal activities that seek to promote different dimensions of teacher learning. While a formal programme leading to a qualification may initiate the process of professional development for language teachers (or at least the acquisition of formal qualifications needed for entry into the profession), professional development also continues once a teacher commences his or her career as a language teacher (Leung, 2009). The school and the teacher's classroom now become the main

context for continued professional development. Approaches to ongoing professional development for second language teachers are based on the following assumptions:

- In any school or institution, there are teachers with different levels of experience, knowledge, skill and expertise. Mutual sharing of knowledge and experience is a valuable source of professional growth.
- Teachers are generally motivated to continue their professional development once they begin their careers.
- Knowledge about language teaching and learning is in a tentative and incomplete state, and teachers need regular opportunities to update their professional knowledge.
- Classrooms are not only places where students learn; they are also places where teachers can learn.
- Teachers can play an active role in their own professional development.
- It is the responsibility of schools and administrators to provide opportunities for continued professional education and to encourage teachers to participate in them.
- In order for such opportunities to take place, they need to be planned, supported and rewarded.
- Professional development benefits both institutions as well as the teachers who work in them.

Professional development is something that teachers can pursue on their own or through collaborating with other teachers (Johnston, 2009). It is also something that can be provided for by the institution. The value of ongoing professional development is summarized well by this teacher:



The importance of continuing professional development

There are many ways to develop as a professional, and in my case, I decided to do the Cambridge DELTA course. Well, nothing surprising about that, you may think. However, given the fact that I have just turned 50 and have been teaching English for well over 25 years, the obvious questions I was asked were, 'Why now, at this stage in life? You don't *need* it for anything, Why put yourself through all of *that*?' – *that* being the stress, occasional frustration and downright hard work. Why indeed? Well, apart from all of the theoretical knowledge I've gained, this has been a perfect way to get back that feeling of excitement and enthusiasm that I felt at the beginning of my teaching career. It's easy to get into a rut and stick to the tried and tested, but it's also tremendously rewarding to experiment and try out new things and try to become the best teacher I possibly can – not 'the best teacher in the world' but try to fulfil *my* potential. By playing on our strengths and improving our weaknesses, we can become better professionals, and obviously, the benefits for our students will be evident. It's never too late!

Diana Croucher, teacher, Barcelona, Spain

21.3 Institutional and personal professionalism

The institutional perspective

There are two different dimensions to professionalism (Leung, 2009): institutional and personal (or individual) professionalism. Institutional professionalism sometimes reflects a managerial approach to professionalism – one that represents the views of ministries of education, teaching organizations, regulatory bodies and school principals that specify what teachers are expected to know and what quality teaching practices consist of. There are likely to be procedures for achieving accountability and processes in place to maintain quality teaching. Such specifications are likely to differ from country to country. This aspect of professionalism involves becoming familiar with the standards the profession sets for membership and a desire to attain those standards. Such standards involve acquiring the qualifications the profession recognizes as evidence of professional competence, as well as demonstrating a commitment to attaining high standards in one's work, whether as classroom teachers, supervisors, administrators or teacher trainers.

There is another dimension to institutional professionalism. In many situations, teacher training provides adequate preparation for a teacher's initial teaching assignments during the first few years in a school. New teachers tend to have a fairly heavy teaching load and tend to get the more 'basic' and less problematic courses. However, it is also generally the case that the pre-service courses they took were of a fairly general nature and not directly relevant to their teaching assignments, and thus much of what they need to know has to be learned on the job.



Does the above describe your own situation as a beginning teacher? How did you find opportunities to develop yourself?

After having taught for some time, teachers knowledge and skills sometimes become outdated, or there may be a lack of fit between the skills the teacher possesses and what the school needs. For example, a teacher may have to take on more difficult tasks for which he or she has not received any formal training, such as the preparation of tests. Or, as a result of staff changes, the teacher may have to take on new assignments that were not previously part of his or her teaching. Qualifications also become outdated as a result of changes in the field of TESOL.

The most practical response to this situation is for the school to provide the means by which teachers can acquire the knowledge and skills they need. Here, teacher development is primarily conceived in terms of the needs of the institution. Because development from this perspective refers to developmental activities within a school or institution, it is usually referred to as 'staff development' and often takes the form of in-service training.

However, other forms of development may also be needed that the school cannot provide. Some teachers may be quite competent, but lack a professional qualification such as the CELTA – a certificate-level qualification, mentioned earlier. Others may have been teaching for some time and seek to take a more advanced qualification, perhaps the Delta (Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) or an MA in TESOL, either part time or by distance, to enable them to take on more senior roles in the school. Enabling teachers to participate in staff development as well as to acquire professional qualifications, directly or indirectly, enhances the performance of the institution as a whole and contributes to the teacher's individual development. Hence, staff development has the following goals:

- *Institutional development:* It improves the performance of the school as a whole, to make it more successful, attract more students and achieve better learning outcomes. Most successful organizations regard the training and development of their staff as a matter of high priority.
- *Career development:* It also facilitates the professional advancement of teachers to more senior positions in the institution (e.g. senior teacher, coordinator) by providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills. The increased job satisfaction that results will lead to better teacher performance and better teacher retention.
- *Enhanced levels of student learning:* An important goal is to raise the achievement level of students in the institution, a goal that is not only important for its own sake but that also adds to the reputation of the institution and its teachers.

From the institutional perspective, professional development opportunities, therefore, are intended to improve the performance of teachers as well as benefit the school as a whole. Consequently, opportunities for professional development should be provided for all staff. A programme coordinator may well need to complete a master's degree in TESOL, but a newly hired teacher may also need training in how to assess student learning. Both needs are equally important, because the success of a school programme may depend on both the strengths of its curriculum and the teaching skills of its junior staff. Curriculum and teachers are both part of the process of institutional development. Burns (1999: 209) argues that professional development activities that are 'integrated into school or organizational change become a powerful way of facilitating school curriculum renewal and ensuring that language teachers retain greater ownership of curriculum implementation'.



What kinds of professional development opportunities are available in your school or institution? Are there additional activities you think would be useful?

A teacher comments on the importance of professional development at institutions and its role in attracting teachers:



Professional development and the institution

In the competitive TESOL arena, a well-designed PD [professional-development] programme may play a pivotal role in a successful operation. A portion of the PD programme will undoubtedly involve institutional issues (usually referred to as commercial issues), as well as the ever-changing profile of the 'effective teacher', which will vary depending on the provider's practices and standards – but a well designed PD programme fosters the culture of continuous improvement, both professional and personal. A PD programme that provides teacher training and development while encouraging professional maturity and nurturing personal interests in the language will help attract and maintain high-quality teachers. Teachers may initially accept engagements due to financial needs, but they gradually gravitate towards the providers who offer attractive PD possibilities. Institutions which offer the opportunity for their teaching staff to exchange ideas, share interests and engage in experiential projects will always profit from more engaged and productive teachers, as well as reduce teaching staff turnover.

Priscilla Brooking, teacher and teacher educator, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Sydney, Australia

Joyce (1991) identifies five dimensions of institutional improvement that professional development can contribute to:

- 1 **Collegiality:** Creating a culture through developing cohesive and professional relationships between staff (and the wider community), in which 'broad' vision-directed improvements as well as day-to-day operations are valued.
- 2 **Research:** Familiarizing staff with research findings on school improvement, teaching effectiveness and so on, which can support 'in-house' development.
- 3 **Site-specific information:** Enabling and encouraging staff to collect and analyze data on students, schools and effects of change, both as part of a formal evaluation and informally.
- 4 **Curriculum initiatives:** Collaborating with others to introduce change in their subject areas, as well as across the school curriculum.
- 5 **Instructional initiatives:** Enabling staff to expand their repertoires of teaching methods, such as learning to teach according to CLIL or text-based teaching.



Have you taken part in a successful professional-development activity? What was it, and what did you learn from it?

A teacher comments on on-site teacher development:

Teachers learning from each other

A professional-development opportunity that has been very valuable for me has been to have the opportunity to engage in teacher training, in my case, working with teachers in remote areas who have few opportunities for professional development or language improvement. These have been short courses of one or two week's duration. I negotiate the topics for workshops with the teachers who normally want to explore issues in methodology (e.g. approaches to teaching vocabulary or listening skills), as well as to work on their own language proficiency (e.g. to prepare for English proficiency tests such as KET, PET, FCE [and] TOEFL). The most interesting part of this experience has been to see a sense of a community of practice emerge through the discussions, problem solving and sharing of ideas that these workshops provide for. It is often the first time that teachers have come together in this way, and they begin to realize that collectively, they really know quite a lot.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

The individual perspective

The second dimension to professionalism is what Leung (2009) calls independent professionalism, which refers to teachers' own views of teaching and the processes by which teachers engage in reflection on their own values, beliefs and practices. A key to long-term professional development is the ability to be able to reflect consciously and systematically on one's teaching experiences. Reflection means asking questions like these about one's teaching:

- 1 What kind of teacher am I?
- 2 What am I trying to achieve for myself and for my learners?
- 3 What are my strengths and limitations as a language teacher?
- 4 How do my students and colleagues view me?
- 5 How and why do I teach the way I do?
- 6 How have I developed as a teacher since I started teaching?
- 7 What are the gaps in my knowledge?
- 8 What role do I play in my school, and is my role fulfilling?
- 9 What is my philosophy of teaching, and how does it influence my teaching?
- 10 What is my relationship with my colleagues, and how productive is it?
- 11 How can I mentor less experienced teachers?



Can you think of ways in which you could explore answers to some of these questions?

A teacher educator comments on how he has reflected on his own teaching practices as an aspect of personal professional development:

Becoming a learner again

The discussion of implementing personal professionalism from the individual perspective reminded me of when I took a language class after a long absence as a student. Language teachers can make tough language students, as we may expect teachers to teach as we have been doing for years. This is, of course, unfair. When I enrolled in my French class, I found that how I taught was not necessarily how I liked to learn. For example, while I did lots of pair and group-work activities as a teacher, surprisingly it was not something I cared too much for as a student. I also found that I needed more thinking time before I was expected to respond. For me, reflecting on my own teaching by doing something as simple as putting myself in my students' shoes was enlightening, as it raised awareness of techniques that I have come to rely on, techniques that had become routine.

David Bohlke, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Singapore

Professional development is thus directed toward the institution's goals and the teacher's own personal goals. Achieving personal growth and improving institutional performance can go hand in hand. Most schools strive for a mix of both. Teachers are generally interested in adding to their professional knowledge and keeping up to date with theory and practice in the field. By improving their teaching skills, they feel more confident about what they teach and achieve better results with their students. Working with such teachers is one of the most rewarding parts of my work in teacher education. Teachers may also be interested in clarifying their principles, beliefs and values, as well as the principles and values that are the foundation of the schools where they work, so that they can be empowered. These desires can all be considered as examples of teacher development from the perspective of the individual teacher.

A teacher reflects on his approach to professional development:

The instructor as a lifelong student

One way to see a language instructor is as a 'lifelong student', never detaching him- or herself from the constructs of education. When I see myself as a student, always striving to learn new information and improve my own skills, I feel more comfortable accepting the fact that I do not know the answer to every student question. It seems to be a common misconception of many students (whether they are in the language field or any other field of study) that instructors should know

the answers to all of their questions. As much as I wish I could live up to these high standards, the truth is that we, as teachers, are constantly learning and developing, just like our students. I have learned to confess when I do not know the answer to something, but I also tell my students that I will try to find an answer for them. Colleagues, textbooks and the internet are some of the best resources available for not only helping students answer questions, but also helping my own professional development, as well.

Brandon Narasaki, teacher, Tokyo, Japan

From the point of view of the teacher's personal development, a number of areas of professional development may be identified:

- *Subject-matter knowledge:* Increasing knowledge of the disciplinary basis of TESOL – those areas of applied linguistics that define the professional knowledge base of language teaching.
- *Pedagogical expertise:* Mastery of new areas of teaching, adding to one's repertoire of teaching specializations and improving ability to teach different skill areas to learners of different ages and backgrounds.
- *Understanding of one's teaching philosophy:* Exploration of the beliefs and principles that provide the basis for the teacher's practice.
- *Theorization of practice:* Developing theories of teaching and learning that derive from the study of one's practice.
- *Understanding of learners:* Deepening understanding of learners, learning styles, learners' problems and difficulties and ways of making content more accessible to learners.
- *Understanding of curriculum and materials:* Deepening one's understanding of curriculum and curriculum initiatives, and use and development of instructional materials.
- *Research skills:* Knowledge of research approaches used to investigate one's own classroom practices and to conduct small-scale classroom research.
- *Career advancement:* Acquisition of knowledge and expertise necessary for personal advancement, including mentoring and supervisory skills.



Which three topics on the list above are of most interest to you?

A teacher educator reflects on the process of professional development and the educator's role in this process (from Lengeling, 2010):



Novice teacher training: a hegemonic attitude

I remember, as a beginning teacher trainer, looking at the syllabus and thinking the task of training seemed somewhat easy and straightforward. My reflection was to just teach what was on the syllabus, and this knowledge would transform the teacher-learners into teachers. This thought did not last long. The more I conversed with the teacher-learners and observed them in their contexts, I quickly realized that the education process was more complex than I had expected. This reflection demonstrates how I also saw myself as the giver of knowledge to the trainees. I also realized I had a hegemonic attitude toward them as learners. Why did I think I could so easily give out knowledge to others and control this process? Why did I think knowledge was such a commodity and one to give and not share or construct? Sadly, I also assumed they did not have knowledge. The realities of being a teacher trainer abruptly shook my thoughts and preconceived ideas.

Martha Lengeling, teacher and teacher educator, Guanajuato, Mexico

21.4 Implementing professional development

The institutional perspective

Within an institution, a number of steps need to be taken to implement a professional development programme for its teachers:

1. Determine the needs of both the institution and its teachers

A strategic approach to professional development starts with needs analysis. Needs analysis here refers to both the institution's needs and the perceived needs of teachers. The former may be the judgement of senior teachers and management, while the latter may be determined informally, through conversations with teachers, or formally, through administering a questionnaire or collecting information in other ways (e.g. at a staff meeting). For the institution, appraisal is often used as a way to identify the professional-development needs of teachers. The appraisal process can be facilitated either by managers/mentors or by teachers themselves, as part of a process of reflective review of their collective needs and interests.

However, in determining the needs of an institution, it is important to realize that research on professional development emphasizes the importance of horizontal decision-making in determining goals (Sparks, 2002). Diaz Maggioli (2003: 4) observes:

Programmes which involve participants in the planning, organization, management, delivery and evaluation of all actions in which they are expected to participate have more chances of success than those planned using a top-down approach, where administrators make decisions in lieu of teachers.

A teacher educator describes the importance of linking academic knowledge to the concerns of classroom teachers:

Presenting research to teachers

Recently, I gave a series of talks at a language centre on teacher beliefs and how to research them. This was at the invitation of the director, who wants to encourage action research on the professional-development needs of experienced teachers. So talks from academics who can provide a possible conceptual framework, insights into how to go about researching a topic and leads for background reading can be useful – as long as the academic can bring things down to earth.

Neil England, teacher, teacher educator and materials writer, Sydney, Australia

2. Set goals for professional development

Information obtained from needs analysis forms the basis of setting both institutional and individual professional-development goals. At times, there may be differences between institutional needs and teachers' individual interests. Eraut (1995: 250) suggests that in planning teacher-development activities:

- Change should be managed and phased so as not to put impossible demands on a person at any time. Teacher development also needs to be planned over a period of time to keep its demands at a realistic level.
- Each professional-development activity has to be resourced and supported at a level that gives it a reasonable chance of achieving its purpose. Distributing resources over too many separate activities is likely to result in none of them being effective.
- Negotiation should take place, preferably with each individual teacher, about the proper balance between the teacher's personal needs and the needs of the school. A teacher's professional-development plan should incorporate elements of both.



Can you think of a situation where institutional and personal-development needs might clash?

3. Select the participants

Professional-development activities can be undertaken as either individual or collaborative projects. There should be an appropriate mix of both kinds of activities within a school or institution. Within a school, there are teachers with different levels of expertise, and some can take a leadership role in initiating or managing professional-development activities, such as action research (see below) or team teaching.

4. *Provide support*

In order to carry out professional-development activities, both institutional and peer support is crucial. For example:

- Providing information in the form of a dossier of articles or reports that contain examples and guidelines for carrying out different kinds of activities.
- Providing a forum for teachers to meet and review their progress.
- Arranging contacts with other schools where similar activities have been undertaken to learn from their experiences.
- Providing time for ongoing review and feedback about how well activities are working.

Diaz Maggioli (2003: 5) comments that 'the true impact of professional development comes about when efforts are sustained over time, and when support structures exist that allow participants to receive modelling and advice from more experienced peers'.

5. *Evaluate what has been learned*

Once an activity has been carried out, it is important to review how well it worked and what was learned from it, and to share the findings with others and decide if it is something that would be worth recommending. Issues that need to be addressed are:

- *Describing:* Reporting on what happened, within what time frame, the resources used and the problems that occurred.
- *Justifying:* Showing that something useful was accomplished from the activity.
- *Improving:* Suggesting how the activity could be improved or more widely applied in other contexts.

The personal perspective

Teachers can plan many aspects of their own professional development. The following guidelines reflect the teacher's perspective:

1. *Decide what you would like to learn more about in the field of language teaching*

This means identifying both short-term and longer-term goals. These goals could include such things as the following:

- To become up to date on current issues and developments in TESOL, such as critical pedagogy, blended learning or assessment for learning.
- To become familiar with a particular approach to teaching, such as corpus-informed teaching.

- To learn about new directions in assessment, such as teacher-based assessment.
- To develop online learning materials.
- To carry out classroom-based research.

The starting point in this is to focus on particular issues that seem to be important to your teaching or your understanding of teaching and that you would like to know more about.



What shorter-term and longer-term professional development goals do you have?

2. *Take steps to implement a teacher-development plan*

A number of concrete steps can then be followed:

- *Identify a strategy to explore the topic you are interested in:* For any particular area of interest, there are a number of ways of exploring it. (Eight potential strategies will be discussed later in this chapter.)
- *Talk to people who have taken part in a professional-development activity:* Try to meet and talk to teachers who have taken part in teacher-development activities of the kind you wish to try out. The internet is an excellent way of getting in touch with other teachers who share your interests.
- *Find out what kind of support you will need:* Some of the activities discussed below do not need support from others; however, some will benefit from institutional assistance. In such a case, discuss the goals of the activity with colleagues, and negotiate suitable support where available.
- *Select a colleague or colleagues to work with:* You may want to work with a colleague or colleagues in order to help you implement a teacher-development activity. This could be someone in your school or someone from a different institution.
- *Set realistic goals and establish a time frame:* It is important to have realistic expectations about what an activity may involve and how much time it will take. Once you commence an activity, you need to decide on when you feel it has achieved its aims.
- *Evaluate what you have learned and share the results with others:* Once you have carried out an activity, step back and review what you learned from the process and whether the process could have been improved or modified in any way. Then consider ways of sharing what you have learned with others.

Throughout this process, motivation is a key factor in personal professional development, as this teacher educator explains:



Professional development and motivation

As teachers, we are always looking for ways to motivate our students. But we also need motivating, at times. Recently, the teachers in our school learned about a scholarship that was available for English teachers to spend six weeks on a cultural-study programme in an English-speaking country. One of the requirements was a high score on the TOEFL examination. All of the 15 teachers in our English department decided to enter the competition. We committed ourselves to sharing the costs of buying books and test-preparation materials and to devoting two hours each day to preparing for the exam. And we agreed that the teachers who got the best grades on the exam would be given the chance to apply for the scholarship. We also agreed that even if none of us were successful, we had nothing to lose, since the opportunity to improve our TOEFL scores was well worthwhile anyway.

José Lema, teacher and teacher educator, Quito, Ecuador

Strategies for personal professional development

A number of strategies can be used to initiate personal professional development.

1. Find out how you teach

A starting point in teacher development is self-awareness of one's own teaching style and one's own strengths and limitations as a teacher. You may wish to find out how teacher-centred or learner-centred your lessons are, how much talking time you create for learners, what your action zone is and what works well or not so well in your classes. Although we often feel we know how we teach, when we look at ourselves objectively, we are sometimes surprised by what we find. Several procedures can help us discover more about ourselves as teachers:

- *Video record or audio record lessons:* From time to time, arrange to have lessons video or audio recorded. Then review the recordings to see what they tell you about your teaching (Freeman, 1998; Quin and Nicola, 1998).
- *Invite a colleague to observe your classes:* From time to time, it is useful to invite a colleague to observe how you teach. This does not necessarily involve asking the colleague to *evaluate* your teaching; it simply involves collecting information about your lesson that you can review later. You may want your colleague to observe how group work functions, how students interact during pair-work activities, how you give explanations or how much student participation occurs during lessons. It is useful to give the observer a task and to suggest how he or she should collect the information you are interested in (e.g. by using a checklist or by taking notes).



Have you tried any of these activities? What was your experience like?

2. *Expand your understanding of language teaching*

Language teaching is a field that is constantly revising its knowledge base, and while it is impossible (and unnecessary) to keep up to date with every new issue or development, it is important to be well informed about issues of direct relevance to your teaching situation. This can better equip you for your work, give you greater confidence in your work and prepare you for new responsibilities. Some ways you can become informed include:

- *Go online:* There are many sites for teachers which contain information related to almost every aspect of language teaching, and it is useful to become familiar with some of the more commonly visited sites.
- *Read journals and magazines:* Subscribe to a professional journal or magazine (or locate a library where you can find TESOL journals). For example, the journal *ELT Journal* is a key resource for teachers and schools, and you should encourage your school to subscribe to it. Other useful publications for teachers include *English Teaching Professional* and a variety of online publications.
- *Form a reading group:* You can set up a reading group in your school and arrange to meet regularly to read and discuss books or articles of interest, and to consider the applications to your own classrooms of what you read. Fenton-Smith and Stilwell (2011) describe the positive benefits of reading groups and give useful guidelines for implementing them. Kadjer (2007) discusses the role of podcasted reading discussions among student teachers:

Throughout the term, students participate in multiple literature circles / book clubs in which they discuss assigned and self-selected texts supporting course objectives in content-area literacy and adolescent literature. This work is as much about dialogue as it is about expanding who has voice and ownership in the classroom, as Alvermann (2006: 9) explains:

Teachers who invite students to take an active role in content area reading and learning base their instruction on students' needs and interests, as much as possible. This is done through choosing relevant reading material, making students aware of their progress toward short and long-term goals, or simply providing an open forum for discussion. In effect, these are the elements of participatory classroom instruction.

Each of these discussions is digitally recorded and posted to student blogs as a podcast.

- *Form a discussion group:* An informal discussion group focusing on shared interests and problems can be an effective way of facilitating sharing of knowledge and experience. There are many such discussion groups online.
- *Take a course:* You may also wish to take a course such as the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) to enable you to update your professional knowledge and to obtain a recognized qualification to demonstrate that you have acquired such knowledge.
- *Attend seminars, workshops and conferences:* In most countries, there are language teaching organizations and professional associations that organize meetings and conferences, and these provide valuable learning opportunities, as well as opportunities for networking with other professionals.



If you could attend a workshop series, what three topics would most interest you?

3. *Expand your teaching skills*

As teachers develop experience in teaching, they typically expand both the breadth as well as the depth of their teaching skills. For example, in addition to teaching spoken English to adults, a teacher may wish to develop experience in teaching EAP courses. He or she may also wish to become familiar with approaches to teaching spoken English to young learners. A teacher with a broad repertoire of teaching skills is likely to have better employment prospects, to be a more creative teacher and to enjoy a more stimulating teaching career.

- *Teach classes of different levels:* If you are familiar with teaching older learners, try teaching younger learners. This may prompt you to rethink some of your assumptions about teaching.
- *Experiment:* Do things differently from time to time. For example, try different ways of using a reading passage, or try using authentic reading texts, rather than the ones in the book, and reflect on the questions that arise.
- *Teach different kinds of classes:* Teach a lesson in an area you have never taught before (e.g. a pronunciation lesson), and find out what works with this kind of lesson.
- *Observe other teachers' classes:* Ask teachers who teach different kinds of students from you or who teach in areas you are unfamiliar with, and have conversations with them after their lessons about how to conduct these kinds of classes.
- *Team-teach with another teacher:* When possible, share a class with another teacher. Share the planning and the teaching of the class, and observe how your colleague teaches. Compare and discuss differences in the way you both teach (see below).
- *Attend a workshop:* Watch out for opportunities to attend workshops on teaching approaches you may be unfamiliar with.



What new area of teaching or schoolwork would you like to become proficient in?

4. *Review and reflect on your own teaching*

One of the goals of professional development is to deepen your understanding of teaching and of your own approach to teaching by finding opportunities to reflect on your own teaching experiences, i.e. to develop a reflective approach to your teaching. While much of our development as teachers depends upon experiences teaching over time and in different situations, experience itself is not always a sufficient condition for development. Ten years of experience might be one year of experience repeated ten times. In order for experiences

to support a growth in understanding, they need to be linked with opportunities to review and reflect on the experience of teaching.

- *Keep a journal:* A teaching journal is an ongoing written account of observations, reflections and other thoughts about teaching, usually in the form of a notebook or in electronic mode, which serves as a source of discussion, reflection or evaluation (Orem, 2001). The journal may be used as a record of incidents, problems and insights that occurred during lessons; it may be an account of a lesson that the teacher would like to review or return to later; or it may be a source of information that can be shared with others. Try to identify and describe the principles you use as a basis for how you approach your teaching and the beliefs about language learning, learners and teaching that account for the style you adopt in your teaching (Gebhard, 1999). Kadjer (2007) describes the use of weblogs as reflective journaling tools (in her case, as a component of a taught course).

Over the course of the semester, students are required to maintain a reflective weblog (or 'blog'), which brings together both their own learning and thinking about course content (and their eventual teaching) and their responses to the thoughts and questions posed by peers within the class interpretive community. Where the course formerly required this same kind of writing in a pen/paper journal, weblogs provide multiple affordances, including textual connections with others on and offline, the facility to comment on others' blog posts and the possibility of replying to comments on ones' own, hyperlinks to information sources, site meters which monitor 'visits' from others, the facility to embed other texts within one's own, and the possibility of including a range of modalities, from audio podcasts to video streams.

- *Write narratives:* Write an account of an event, problem or situation that seems important for you, but that you don't fully understand. Give as much information about the details of the event as possible, and review it at a later date to see if, after a period of time has passed, you can arrive at a better understanding of the event.



Does journal writing appeal to you? If so, what do you think the benefits would be?

5. Collaborate with other teachers

One of the greatest resources a school has is the teachers who work there. In any school, there are teachers with varied experience, knowledge and skills, and both the school as well as the teachers who work there can benefit by learning from each other and collaborating in different ways. The school then becomes a learning community, and its members constitute a community of practice. A community of practice has two characteristics:

- 1 It involves a group of people who have common interests and who relate and interact to achieve shared goals.
- 2 It focuses on exploring and resolving issues related to the workplace practices that members of the community take part in.

Developing a community of practice often takes the form of collaboration with other teachers in order to understand better the nature of the teaching and learning that goes on in our classrooms, to share knowledge and skills, to bring about changes in practice, when necessary, and to capitalize on the potentials that team work and group collaboration can bring about. Membership of a community of practice in a school provides opportunities for teachers to work and learn together, through participation in group-oriented activities with shared goals and responsibilities, involving joint problem solving. Collegiality creates new roles for the teacher, such as team leader, teacher trainer, mentor or critical friend (Richards and Farrell, 2005; 2011).

Collaborative approaches to learning are central to current pedagogies of second language teacher education (SLTE). The collective knowledge, experience and thinking of the participants, together with the course content and course-room artefacts (see below), provide the resources through which they learn. Danielewicz comments (2001: 141):

Collaborative learning creates a social context that helps students negotiate entry into the academic discourse community and acquire disciplinary knowledge. But, at the same time, their joint efforts will produce new knowledge and eventually lead to a critique of accepted knowledge, conditions, and theories, as well as of the institutions that produce knowledge.

Key concepts in a collaborative approach to learning are Vygotsky's notions of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and mediation (see Chapter 2. These two constructs present a view of learning as a process of 'apprenticeship', where apprentices collaborate in social practices with teacher educators, as well as mentors, critical friends and peers, to acquire and construct new forms of interaction and thinking (Vygotsky, 1978). Crucial to the process is the role of 'mediating artefacts' or resources in constructing new meanings. In the LTE (language teacher education) course room, these 'artefacts' include handouts, worksheets, technology and video, as well as the physical course-room layout (Singh, 2004).

Working in collaboration on classroom tasks offers many benefits. Johnston (2009) suggests that when teachers work in groups during a teacher education course, they are better able to make sense of the academic contents of the course, of themselves as both teachers and teacher-learners, as well as arrive at a better understanding of their own teaching contexts. These collaborative exchanges may take place face-to-face or through online communication. In both cases they are part of the process by which teachers develop a way of talking about teaching and the professional discourse used to do so. Johnston (2009) identifies that the teachers also come to realize that they constitute a community of like-minded professionals. This can also help them better appreciate the relevance of their university course work.

- *Shared lesson planning*: An example of how this kind of collaboration can happen is with the lesson study approach that has been widely implemented in Japan (Lewis and Tsuchida, 1998). As reported by Johnson (2009), teams of teachers co-plan a lesson that focuses on a particular piece of content or unit of study. Throughout the

planning process, they draw on outside resources, including textbooks, research and teaching theories, and engage in extended conversations while focusing on student learning and the development of specific outcomes. Once the plan has been developed, one member of the team volunteers to teach it, while the others observe. (Sometimes outsiders are also invited to observe.) After the lesson, the group discuss their findings in a colloquium or panel discussion. Typically, the teachers who planned the lesson focus on their rationale for how they planned the lesson and their evaluation of how it went, particularly in regard to student learning. The planning group then reconvene to review the lesson and revise it, and a different teacher then teaches it to a different class. The cycle culminates in the team publishing a report that includes lesson plans, observed student behaviour, teacher reflections and a summary of the group discussions. These are then made available to others.

- *Team-teaching:* This involves two or more teachers sharing the responsibility for teaching a class and, when circumstance permits, is an excellent form of collaborative learning. The teachers share the responsibility of planning the class or the course, for teaching it and for any follow-up work associated with the class, such as evaluation and assessment. Team-teaching, then, involves a cycle of team planning, team teaching and team follow-up. In team-teaching, both teachers generally take equal responsibility for the different stages of the teaching process. When two teachers teach a class, they can learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses. Each teacher will have different ideas on how to deal with any difficulties in the lesson, as well as a different body of experience to draw on. The shared planning, decision-making and review that result, serve as a powerful medium of collaborative learning. Team-teaching, in addition, promotes collegiality among teachers in a school. Learners also benefit from having two teachers present in the class. They hear two different models of language, and they experience two different styles of teaching. Furthermore, there is more opportunity for individualized instruction, because team-teaching creates more opportunities for contact between teachers and learners.
- *Support groups:* A support group is a group of teachers who meet to discuss goals, concerns, problems and experiences. Such a group can consist of teachers meeting together face to face or online. Virtual groups consist of groups of language teachers who communicate and interact on the internet, such as TESL-L, a LISTSERV for English language teachers. The group provides a safe place where teachers can take part in discussing teaching issues, take part in collaborative planning, review activities or describe innovations they may be implementing in their classes. Face-to-face group activities can involve:
 - Reviewing and reflecting on teaching.
 - Reporting on new teaching strategies.
 - Planning lessons and materials.
 - Observing video recording of lessons.
 - Developing research initiatives.
 - Listening to invited guest speakers.



What kinds of collaboration have you taken part in? What did you learn from them?

6. *Arrange for peer observation*

Peer observation refers to a teacher watching another teacher's lesson in order to gain an understanding of some aspect of teaching, learning or classroom interaction. Observation provides an opportunity for a teacher to see how someone else deals with a lesson and copes with common issues and problems in teaching. An observer may discover that a colleague has effective teaching strategies that the observer has never tried out. Observing another teacher can also trigger reflections about one's own teaching. For the teacher being observed, the observer can provide an 'objective' view of the lesson and can collect information about the lesson that the teacher who is teaching may not be able to collect otherwise. For both teachers, peer observation also has social benefits. It brings teachers together who might not normally have a chance to interact and provides an opportunity for the sharing of ideas and expertise, as well as a chance to discuss problems and concerns. Although it may be difficult, at times, to arrange because of timetabling concerns, it has much to recommend it.

However, observation should not be confused with evaluation. The purpose of peer observation, as discussed here, is for the observer to help the teacher explore his or her own teaching by collecting different kinds of information about the lesson. The following procedures can be used with peer observation:

- Select a colleague to work with. This may be a teacher who is teaching the same course or using the same textbook as you, or you could observe a different kind of class, depending on mutual interest.
- Each teacher takes turns at teaching and observing, as follows:
 - Arrange for a pre-observation orientation session. Before each observation, meet to discuss the nature of the class to be observed, the kind of materials being taught, the teacher's approach to teaching, the kinds of students in the class, typical patterns of interaction and class participation and any problems expected. The teacher who is teaching the lesson should identify a focus for the observation at this stage and set a task for the observer to carry out. The observer's role is to collect information for the teacher that he or she would not normally be able to collect alone. It is important to stress that this task should not involve any form of evaluation. For example, the observer might collect information on how students carry out tasks, the kind of language they use, how much talking students do, etc.
 - Decide on the observation procedures to be used (e.g. checklists, observation forms, seating plans), and arrange a schedule for the observations.
 - Complete the observation, using the procedures that were agreed upon.
 - Arrange a follow-up conversation to share and discuss the information collected.
 - The teacher and observer change roles and plan the next observation.

A teacher describes the importance of planning peer observation carefully:

Planning for peer observation

Peer observation, if well organized, is one of the effective ways for teachers' professional development. However, if the purpose is only for the sake of observation, the intended aims may not be achieved. My personal experience is that peer observation may not always be effective and rewarding. In my context of teaching, for example, it was required that every teacher observe two to six hours of peer teaching in each semester. The intention of the university was good, and most teachers could benefit from this requirement. However, there were often those who couldn't find time to observe until the semester was nearing the end, only to find that they could not benefit from the observation because most courses were then on the revision stage. And it sometimes happened that teachers teaching the same courses to the same grades often had to teach at the same time, making it impossible for them to observe one another in teaching. I think it is imperative for the school authority to create a nurturing environment in which teachers can grow professionally through peer observation.

Ao Ran, teacher and teacher educator, Yunnan, China; Singapore



What has been your experience with peer observation? Was it positive?

7. Document your own teaching

In addition to collaborative forms of teacher development, professional development is also increasingly viewed as something which is self-directed, inquiry-based and directly relevant to teachers' professional lives. The site for such inquiry is the teacher's own classroom, either through the teacher's own efforts or in collaboration with supervisors, university researchers or other teachers. This often takes the form of classroom research or other research-based activities.

Many teachers find it useful to collect information that gives a picture of how they approach teaching and that also provides a record of different aspects of their work. Such a record serves to describe and document the teacher's performance; it can facilitate professional development; and it can provide a basis for reflection and review. A teaching portfolio is a useful way of assembling and using this kind of information.

- **Teaching portfolio:** A portfolio consists of a set of different types of documents and other items that have been selected on a principled basis and that are organized to tell a story. The collection is updated and revised, when needed, and is accompanied by the teacher's account of the rationale behind the collection. The portfolio can serve several purposes:
 - It provides a demonstration of how a teacher approaches his or her work and presents evidence of the teacher's thinking, creativity, resourcefulness and effectiveness.

- It serves as a source of review and reflection. The process of compiling the portfolio prompts the teacher to engage in a comprehensive self-assessment of different aspects of his or her work.
- The portfolio can promote collaboration with other teachers. A useful type of portfolio is one that is part of a team-teaching collaboration in which two teachers create a joint portfolio to accompany a class they both teach.

Different kinds of things can be included in a portfolio. Typically these might be:

- Evidence of your understanding of subject matter and current developments in language teaching (e.g. book reviews, materials review, essays, lists of courses taken or workshops attended).
- Evidence of your skills as a teacher (e.g. student evaluations, examples of students' work, a video of lessons, comments by observers and lesson plans and materials you have developed).
- An account of your approach to classroom management and organization (e.g. a report on how you deal with management and classroom problems, and comments on your teaching by coordinators or colleagues).
- Documents showing your commitment to professional development (e.g. a professional-development plan for yourself, a list of courses you have taken or a list of books you have read recently).

A teacher educator comments on the value of portfolios in promoting professional growth:

The role of the portfolio

The students in the MA programme in my university are in-service teachers who develop a portfolio throughout the programme. Portfolios are not common in Mexican TESOL MAs. However, I think that the use of portfolios in teacher-development programmes is a tool which enables teachers to monitor and assess their work for further and continuing professional growth. Here, the portfolio is considered as an organized and systematic collection of teachers' work and experiences, through reflective narratives which help the teachers understand and extend their learning for professional growth. The purpose of the portfolio is to allow students to reflect on what students have learned in the master's programme and to provide evidence of how they have integrated and applied what they have learned. Throughout the portfolio, students demonstrate how their thinking and practice have changed and/or been influenced as a result of participating in this MA programme. Based on the reflective review of the students' own work, the MA faculty value and assess their growth as professionals in the field of applied linguistics.

Verónica Sánchez Hernández, teacher and teacher educator, Puebla, Mexico



If you were to keep a portfolio, what would it contain?

8. Research your own classes

Research in this context simply means collecting information to explore and better understand an issue. Lessons are complex events: many things happen during a lesson or a course. Some of the issues that arise may prompt questions such as, ‘Why did this activity prove to be too difficult?’ ‘Why did my learners not appear to learn anything from this task?’ ‘How can I make my classes more interesting?’ ‘How can I help my learners learn to use authentic language?’ ‘Why did this course not develop the way I had planned?’ By examining questions like these more closely, it is sometimes possible to learn valuable information that can enhance understanding or that may trigger changes in the teaching strategies you make use of. There are several research procedures that can be used to explore issues such as these:

- *Critical incidents:* A critical incident is an unplanned and unanticipated event that occurs during a lesson and that serves to trigger insights about some aspect of teaching and learning (Tripp, 1993). Critical-incident analysis in teaching involves documenting and analysing teaching incidents to learn from them and to improve practice. Most of the critical incidents that happen in classrooms are commonplace events that are critical in the sense that they reveal underlying beliefs or motives within the classroom. At first glance, they may appear insignificant, but they become critical when they are subject to review and analysis. Here are some examples of incidents that teachers described as critical in this sense (author data):

I regularly ask students to write short essays with thesis statements, topic sentences and so on. I assigned a task like this in a recent composition class. One student, who was new to the class, sat there, looking puzzled. He later asked me, ‘What do you mean by essay? What is thesis statement?’ I discovered he had never written an essay before.

I had been using our class textbook for some time and thought that the students were enjoying it. Then one day, a couple of students came to me and said, ‘Our class doesn’t really want to use this book any more’.

I had been spending some time working on my students’ pronunciation and trying to correct their serious pronunciation errors. When I talked to one girl about her pronunciation problems, she said, ‘I don’t really care about it. It’s not important for me, as long as I can make myself understood’.

Keeping a record of incidents, like these, and reflecting on them can be a component of journal writing; they can initiate discussions with other teachers; and such accounts can also be a component of a teaching portfolio.



Can you think of some critical incidents of your own? What did you learn from them?

- *Discourse analysis:* In order to understand the kind of discourse that occurs in your classroom, you may wish to audio or video record some of your lessons and examine the kinds of interactions that occur between you and your learners and among the learners themselves (Walsh, 2011; also see Chapter 16.) This may help reveal such things as whether you do too much talking or too little, how you scaffold tasks, how you give explanations, and how you provide feedback on learners' errors.
- *Case studies:* A case study involves collecting information over time about a teaching situation and using the information to increase understanding and to develop principles from that situation. A case study usually involves a detailed description of a situation, but does not necessarily analyze or interpret it. The case becomes the data for reflection, either by the teacher or by others. The following are examples of issues teachers have explored through case studies:
 - Information, collected over a period of a semester, concerning how two different students (one with high proficiency and one with low proficiency) performed during group work.
 - An account of the problems a teacher experienced during his or her first year of teaching.
 - An account of how two teachers implemented a team-teaching strategy.
 - An account of the difficulties the two teachers encountered.
 - An account of how a teacher taught a writing course.
 - A description of all of the changes a student made in a composition she was working on over a three-week period, from the drafting stage to the final stage.

A case is different from a critical incident in that it starts from identification of a particular issue or phenomenon and then selects a method for collecting information about it (Richards, 1998a). Critical-incident analysis involves looking back on an unplanned classroom incident and reflecting on its meaning. A case is thus a narrative description of a real-life situation as it unfolds over time. Analyzing cases, either individually – by the teacher – or with others, can provide a useful basis for arriving at insights about teaching and learning. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- Cases can be circulated for comment and discussion and later filed for others to read.
- They can be circulated by email to other teachers.
- They can be reviewed in group sessions.

An example of a case study is given in the appendix.

- *Action research:* Action research refers to teacher-conducted classroom research that seeks to clarify and resolve practice-teaching issues and problems (Burns, 2010). There are two dimensions to action research. The word *research* refers to a systematic approach to carrying out investigations and collecting information about an issue. The word *action* refers to taking practical action to resolve classroom problems. Action research takes place in the teacher's own classroom and involves a cycle of activities centring on identifying a problem or issue, collecting information about the issue,

devising a strategy to address the issue, trying out the strategy and assessing the results. Action research has the following characteristics:

- Its primary goal is to improve teaching and learning in schools and classrooms, and it is conducted during the process of regular classroom teaching.
- It is usually small-scale and is intended to resolve problems, rather than be simply research for its own sake.
- It can be carried out by an individual teacher or in collaboration with other teachers.

Action research consists of a number of phases, which often recur in cycles:

- Planning.
- Action.
- Observation.
- Reflection.

The teacher (or a group of teachers) (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 12–3):

- 1** Selects an issue or concern to examine in more detail (e.g. the teacher's use of questions).
- 2** Selects a suitable procedure for collecting information about the issue (e.g. by recording classroom lessons).
- 3** Collects the information, analyzes it and decides what changes might be necessary in his or her teaching.
- 4** Develops an action plan to help bring about the desired change in classroom behaviour (e.g. a plan to reduce the frequency with which the teacher answers his or her own questions, rather than providing time for students to answer them).
- 5** Observes the effects of the plan on teaching behaviour (e.g. by recording a lesson and analysing the teacher's questioning behaviour) and reflects on its significance.
- 6** Initiates a second cycle of action, if necessary.

The strategies described above differ in the demands they make on teachers, the kinds of support and resources they depend on and on what they seek to achieve. The success of the different strategies depends on the extent to which they bring about the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and understanding, and changes in classroom practices, as well as an increased sense of job satisfaction and professional competence. Teachers who wish to try a new professional-development activity should do so with a clear understanding of what its potential benefits and demands are.

21.5 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the nature of professional development in language teaching, distinctions between teacher training, teacher development and professional development at the institutional and personal levels, and the kinds of activities that facilitate teacher

learning in language teaching. Teacher training and teacher development have different goals and are appropriate at different stages in a teacher's career. Effective teacher development often needs institutional support, although personal professional development also can be undertaken as an individual initiative or by collaboration among teachers.

Professional development encompasses both teacher training and teacher development, and engaging in professional-development activities has benefits for both teachers and the institutions they work in. For teachers, the opportunity to deepen and extend their professional knowledge and skills can help maintain their enthusiasm for teaching, as well as better equip them for new roles and responsibilities in their schools. Their students benefit from the new levels of awareness and expertise teachers bring to their teaching, and the school benefits from the improved level of commitment and performance of its teachers. Many different development activities are possible, and some make greater demands than others. Teachers should start with small-scale initiatives and move on to more extended activities such as action research, depending on their own goals and needs. Institutions that recognize the benefits of professional-development opportunities for their teachers should adopt a strategic approach to such activities and provide the necessary conditions and support for them to be realized.

Discussion questions

- 1 If you have been teaching for some time, how has your approach to teaching changed since you started teaching? What prompted any changes you have made?
- 2 Go online and find some online teacher development courses that are available for language teachers. Which aspects of teaching do they address? Do you think they focus on training, on development, or both?
- 3 Imagine you are going to observe a teacher's class in order to learn more about the teacher's teaching approach. Think about the kind of class you are going to observe and what you might look for. Then develop an observation checklist that will help you focus your observation – the checklist should help you record how the lesson is conducted but not to evaluate it.
- 4 What are some ways in which teachers can improve their practical classroom skills? Identify five different strategies they could use and discuss the pros and cons of each approach.
- 5 Make a video recording of one of your (or another person's) lessons. Then review the video. What does it tell you about your own teaching? How useful do you think such an activity is?

This chapter draws both on Richards, J. C. and Farrell, T. (2005), *Professional Development for Language Teachers*, New York: Cambridge University Press, and Richards, J. C. (2008) 'Second language teacher education today', *RELC Journal*, 39(2), 158–77.

- 6 Do you think it would be useful for you (or someone else) to research your own classes and your own teaching? If so, what questions would you like to find answers for? How could you collect information to answer these questions?
- 7 How does theory inform practice? To what extent do you think your classroom practices are based on theory, or on experience? Can you give an example of a) where theory leads to practice, and b) where practice can lead to theory?
- 8 Would you prefer to take an online or a face-to-face professional development course? What are the advantages and limitations of each?
- 9 Plan a reading group that you could form in your school. What would be its goals? How would it operate? What would you read? How would you make use of what you learned from the article or materials you read?
- 10 Develop a year-long staff development programme for your school or institution. What would be its goals? Who would participate in it? What kinds of activities would it make use of?

Appendix:

A teacher's story

Read the account of Virak Chan's professional development below. What prompted his interest in professional development? What benefits did he obtain from it?

Virak Chan, teacher and teacher educator, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

What is your background?

I've been teaching English since 2000. I first started teaching when I was in my second year in a Bachelor-of-Education programme at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). As a beginning English teacher, I was struggling to survive each of my classes daily, and the pay was not very good, either. As I was in a four-year teacher-training programme, I managed to apply a lot of what I learned into my part-time teaching. With my bachelor's degree and two-years of teaching experience, I was offered a full-time teaching position at the Royal University of Phnom Penh upon my graduation. As I taught at university, I learned from my seniors through in-house workshops and presentation, and through independent reading and investigation of my own class.

Since I started my career as an English teacher, I have continued to develop myself professionally. In addition to my Bachelor of Education, majoring in teaching English as a foreign language, I attended a five-month graduate diploma in applied linguistics in Singapore, at the Regional Language Centre, and a two-year 'Master's degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages at San Jose State University in the US. When I took graduate classes, I worked on a number of small-scale research projects as part of requirements for different classes. I managed to develop them further and presented some of them at local and international [conferences]. Also, I joined and conducted research presentations and workshops at local and international conferences, such as the CamTESOL and the RELC conferences. Most importantly, I did a lot of independent reading of journal articles and carried out investigations into my own classes. With all these activities, I developed a better understanding of the English language, the learners and the methodological issues in English learning and teaching, especially the politics involved in English language teaching.

What are some ways in which you think you have changed since you started teaching English?

I think I have changed in two important ways. First, I have moved away from textbook-dependent [teaching] to context-dependent teaching. For instance, I have become independent in terms of deciding the needs of the particular group of students and of the programmes they enrol in. As a teacher, I have harmonized the mismatch between the goals of the textbook [and] the needs of the programme and the students, and I do this with my ability to adapt the textbook and local authentic material, and developing new

ones. The second way I have changed is I have started to concentrate more on students' learning than my own teaching. During the last four or five years of teaching, I have tried to make sure students have the skills in doing independent learning, and they do it beyond the boundary of the classroom schedule. For instance, I have raised awareness among my students about Oxford's proposed learning strategies and given students projects that students need to do individually or in small groups after class hours.

These important changes in my ways of teaching probably come from two sources. One is my pursuing of graduate studies. Of course, during my graduate studies, I took many courses and exchanged thoughts with many lecturers and professors. The most important source of these changes is probably my own professional development. I have done a large amount of literature in ELT, and also I have tested and re-tested ideas in my own classes every year.

How did you move from teaching to management?

After a number of presentations and workshops and the completion of my 'Master's programme, I was then offered a management position as a 'Master's programme coordinator at the English Department of RUPP. In this position, I learned to plan budgets, staff development, student and faculty recruitment and programme policy development; to coordinate visiting lecturers and professors; to oversee the development of MA courses and their contents; and to ensure the overall quality of the programme. As part of my professional development, I have volunteered for the Fulbright Alumni Association of Cambodia and continued to conduct professional development workshops for Cambodian teachers and do presentations for English language learners.

What difficulties does it bring being a non-native English teacher?

As a non-native English teacher in Cambodia, I feel very much exploited by this native/non-native English teacher distinction. Native English teachers are paid much better, with better working conditions in many cases, not because they are more professional, but because they belong to this native English-teacher category. As a more experienced English teacher in Cambodia, I have always strived to raise awareness among learners about this misconception of this native/non-native English teacher dichotomy. I have also developed a belief that instead of relying on foreign textbooks, teachers should frequently adapt them or even replace them with local material. This ability of the non-native English teachers will empower them to demand the same treatment as their native counterparts. I, moreover, feel that the native English teachers should develop themselves continuously, as much as their non-native counterparts.

How do you learn from your own reading and research?

My ability to do critical reading of journal articles and to carry out my own research enables me to make better-informed decisions in my teaching career. For instance, in addition to the regular process model to teaching writing at my institution, I have introduced the genre approach into my own class, with selected genres that I think are useful for my students. Moreover, from a research article that I read, I adapted the use of journal writing in my writing classes. I systematically observed my practices and recorded their

effectiveness, and this observation results in a regular modification to my own practices (i.e. ways of giving feedback, frequency of journal collection and selection of genres.) With my knowledge in this field of study and the result of my own investigation, I sometimes conduct workshops and presentations as part of professional development activities for my colleagues inside and outside my institution.

How useful do you think your formal training has been for your professional development?

I see my five-month graduate diploma courses in Singapore and my two-year MA programme in California as an important step to promotion and better salary, but when it comes to explaining classroom phenomena and doing the teaching, I see my two graduate degrees as an addition to my four-year 'Bachelor's degree back in Cambodia. One important element of my two graduate programmes is the convenient publishing material that is easily available online and at the library. But again, the large amount of reading I did while I was pursuing my graduate degrees only makes sense with my teaching experience before and after the programmes.

How do you think teachers can best improve their teaching?

Teachers need to constantly develop themselves in response to the development of knowledge, the need of individual students and society. In order to pursue their own professionalism and improve their teaching, teachers have three important tasks. First, they keep themselves informed of research developments in the areas of language, learning and teaching. They can do this by extensively reading research articles in different journals, especially the local ones. Second, they consciously and selectively apply the knowledge from their reading and keep records of their successes and failures. And finally, they share these experiences with their colleagues in a workshop or conference so that they can get feedback for their future practices. These three tasks of teachers are ongoing, either consciously and systematically or unconsciously and non-systematically. I personally think that the more consciously and systematically teachers perform the tasks, the more improvement they make to their teaching.

Do you think research is useful to teachers?

I think research is very useful to teachers. The ability to read other people's research critically can help teachers make informed decisions in classrooms. I myself have benefited a lot from reading research articles published in ELT-related journals. I become very conscious of what I do in class with students, and my giving feedback, designing material, social distance with students and other teaching behaviours are guided by own belief system, which is informed by other people's research and my own practices. More importantly, the ability to do research further professionalizes teachers. Action research usually makes teachers become very accountable for all the stakeholders, and they become senior and established in the areas they are working on. Therefore, they also become an inspiration for their students and colleagues in their workplace.

Further reading

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Glossary

Academic Word List

A list of 570 word families that are common to most academic texts. The words do not occur in the 2,000 most frequent words in general English, and are grouped into ten sublists that reflect word frequency and range.

Accuracy

The ability to produce target language that is free of grammatical and other errors.

Achievement test

A type of summative assessment administered at the end of a course or period of learning to determine whether learners have achieved the course outcomes.

Action research

Teacher-conducted classroom research that seeks to clarify and resolve teaching issues and problems.

Action zone

In teaching, the pattern of teacher-student interaction as reflected by those students the teacher actively communicates and interacts with during a lesson.

Active vocabulary (Productive vocabulary)

Those words in a language that a learner can actively use in speech or writing, as opposed to those the learner can understand. The latter is known as passive or receptive vocabulary.

Adjacency pairs

Units of conversation made up of two turns between speakers, and where the first normally anticipates the second, such as *complain – apologize*.

Adjunct instruction

Situations where students are enrolled in linked or concurrently offered content and language classes that are taught by content and language instructors respectively. In the content course the purpose is mastery of the course content, and in the language course, the purpose is second language learning.

Affective factors

In second language learning, emotional factors that may influence language learning and language use, such as shyness, anxiety, enthusiasm or apathy.

Agenda management

In speaking, a speaker's ability to choose the topic, its development and its length.

Alternative assessment

Procedures other than those used in formal tests as a way of better capturing real language ability and to reflect natural conditions for language use.

Analytic scoring

Type of scoring that weighs the individual elements of tasks. See also **Holistic scoring**.

Approach

In teaching, the principles and theoretical framework supporting an instructional design. See also **Method**.

Assessment

Formal and informal procedures for determining the success of instruction.

Assessment for learning

Assessment used to promote the quality of learning in a course.

Assimilation

The process by which a speech sound changes and becomes similar/identical to another sound that precedes or follows it.

Audiolingualism (Audio-lingual method)

A method of language teaching that is based on the development of oral skills through audio input and learner output. It is based on behaviourist principles of learning and involves a great deal of rote learning and repetition, as well as an emphasis on accuracy.

Authentic assessment

Assessment tasks that resemble real uses of language the learner would engage with in real life, such as at school or at work.

Authenticity

The extent to which materials or tasks reflect natural target language use outside the classroom.

Authentic materials

Materials taken from the real world and used for teaching purposes, such as magazines and advertisements.

Authoring tools

Software for the creation of computer-assisted language learning materials.

Automatic processing

The performance of a task without conscious or deliberate processing. See also **Controlled processing**.

Automatic speech recognition (ASR)

Software that recognizes human speech and transcribes it.

Backchannelling

In conversation, the use of expressions such as 'really', 'mm', 'is that right?', 'yeah' etc. and very commonly short rhetorical questions such as 'Do you?', 'Are you?', 'Did you?'.

Backward design

An approach to curriculum development that begins with a specification of learning outcomes as the basis for developing instructional processes and language input.

BANA

An acronym for (English language in) Britain, Australasia, North America.

Behaviourism

A theory of learning based on a view of learning as the strengthening of connections between stimuli and responses and which led to teaching methods that develop habits through repetition and reinforcement.

Blended learning

Learning that involves a mix (or blend) of online and face-to-face instruction.

Bottom-up processing

In listening and reading comprehension, the processing of individual elements of the target language – for example, morphology or phonemes – for the decoding of language input. See also **Top-down processing**.

CALL

See **Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)**

Case study

Information that is collected over time about a learner or a teaching situation.

CEFR

See **Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)**

Central design

An approach to curriculum development that begins with the selection of teaching activities, techniques and methods rather than with the elaboration of a detailed language syllabus or specification of learning outcomes.

Chunk (Routine)

A unit of language that consists of several words that are stored and used as a whole, such as ‘How are you?’, ‘as far as I know’.

Clarification request

When a listener asks the speaker to explain or rephrase something that was misunderstood.

Classroom discourse

The use of language in classrooms and the specific patterns of interaction that typify much classroom talk.

Classroom management

The ways in which both the physical and the affective dimensions of the class are arranged in order to provide an environment that promotes successful teaching and learning.

Climate (Classroom climate)

The atmosphere of a classroom, resulting from the nature of the relationships between the students and the teacher, the kinds of communication that take place between them, the enthusiasm the teacher has for teaching, and his or her skills in managing the learners’ learning.

CLIL

See Content and Language Integrated Learning.

Closure

The part of a lesson in which the teacher brings the lesson to a close.

Cognitivism

In psychology, the study of the mental processes and representations of knowledge in the mind.

Coherence

The logical organization and development of the information in a text that gives it structure and unity.

Cohesion

The grammatical and lexical relationships between (spoken or written) text elements that contribute to the unity of that text.

Collaborative dialogue

The joint construction of knowledge through activities in which the teacher helps learners, or learners help each other.

Collocation

A group of words that often occur together such as *make* the bed, *do* the dishes.

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

Developed by the Council of Europe for the planning of language courses in Europe.

Communication strategies

Techniques learners use to compensate for limitations in their linguistic skills and that enable them to clarify their intentions despite limitations in grammar, vocabulary or discourse skills.

Communicative competence

A person's knowledge of how to use language appropriately as a communicative resource.

Communicative language teaching

An approach to teaching that emphasizes authentic communication and the development of communicative competence.

Communicative syllabus

A syllabus that is built around the skills and knowledge needed to develop communicative competence.

Community of practice

A group of people with common interests and goals and who collaborate in exploring and reviewing workplace practices.

Competence

The implicit system of rules that make up a person's knowledge of a language. This is contrasted with performance, which refer to a person's use of these rules in speech and writing.

Competencies

The knowledge and skills needed to carry out an activity or real world task.

Competency-based language teaching (CBLT)

An approach to teaching that focuses on the development of the skills or competencies needed in different domains. Often the focus is on very specific needs of particular groups of students.

Complexity

The extent to which target language production reflects grammatically complex structures.

Comprehension check

Strategies a speaker or teacher uses to make sure the listener has understood.

Computer adaptive testing (CAT)

A form of testing whereby item selection is determined by test-takers' performance on preceding items.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

The use of a computer in the teaching and learning of a second language. The term is often used to include technologies other than computers as well.

Computer-mediated communication (CMC)

Forms of communication that make use of the computer or other technologies. CMC can be synchronous (real-time), such as chatting, or asynchronous, such as email or tweets.

Concordancer

Software used to investigate **corpora**.

Confirmation check

Strategies listeners use to make sure they have understood what the speaker means, such as by repeating part of a message.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

The teaching of subject matter in English. CLIL operates on a continuum from language instruction informed by the content of the subject matter (for example, by including technical terms or text types common in that field), to subject matter instruction that takes account of the fact that the students are learners of English, for example by simplifying the language used.

Content-based instruction (CBI)

Instruction that is organized around content (rather than grammar) and that helps learners to acquire the language needed to attend subject classes (e.g. in maths or science). See also **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**.

Content knowledge (of teaching)

The language-teaching-specific knowledge that ESL/ELT teachers have. It includes disciplinary knowledge (for example, knowledge about language acquisition) and pedagogical knowledge (for example, knowledge of curriculum development or classroom management).

Content words

Words that carry the main meaning of sentences. See also **Function words**.

Contrastive analysis hypothesis

A hypothesis that stated that languages that are similar to the learner's first language are easier to acquire than those where there are significant differences.

Controlled processing

Processing that involves conscious effort and attention when performing a task. See also **Automatic processing**.

Convergent questions

Questions that have a single, correct answer. See also **Divergent questions**.

Corpus (plural: **corpora**)

A (usually large) collection of language samples from a specific domain (such as newspapers or scientific articles). Corpora can be of written or spoken, native speaker or learner language.

Corpus-based materials

Textbooks and other language-teaching materials that accurately reflect language use as evidenced through corpus linguistics.

Corpus-informed materials

Textbooks and other language-teaching materials that take into account findings from corpus linguistics but may use adapted features of language for pedagogic reasons.

Corpus linguistics

The study of language with the use of **corpora**.

Cosmopolitan English

A unique form of English that some believe has developed in some European cities as a means of communication between people who have no other shared language.

Co-text

Those texts that occur together with or prior to a text and that influence the meaning of a text.

Creative-construction hypothesis

The theory that second language learning does not depend on language transfer but involves a process in which learners develop their grammatical competence through abstracting rules and principles from the input they receive.

Criterion-referenced test

A language test in which the test-taker's performance is measured against a standard (or criterion).

Critical incident

An unplanned and unanticipated event that occurs during a lesson and that serves to trigger insights about some aspect of teaching and learning.

Critical period hypothesis

The theory that there was a critical period for second language learning (before puberty) and that once learners had passed this period, changes in the brain and cognitive processes made language learning more difficult.

Critical reading

Reacting critically to what one reads through relating it to one's values, beliefs, standards, etc.

Curriculum

The goals and means of a language programme, as well as its underlying philosophy.

Decoding

The process by which a listener extracts sounds, words and meanings from the rapidly flowing stream of speech.

Deductive learning

Learning that results from exposure to explicit rules about the target language. Also referred to as 'grammar first'. See also **Inductive learning**.

Diagnostic test

A language test that provides detailed information about learners' needs and gaps in their knowledge that can be used in planning instruction.

Dialogic interaction

See **Collaborative dialogue**.

Dicto-comp

Activities where the teacher reads a passage several times and learners try to reconstruct it from memory.

Digital natives

A term used to denote learners who have grown up with computers, the internet and social media, and are naturally comfortable using technology. The term 'digital immigrants' is used to describe those who grew up before digital technology became widely available.

Direct method

An oral-based teaching method that primarily uses the target language for instruction and encourages learners to produce the target language from the start in carefully structured exchanges.

Discourse

Language that is the result of communication and that often consists of sequences of utterances that are related in some way.

Discourse analysis

The study of how utterances and sentences function as spoken and written texts and how such texts reflect their functions and the contexts of their use.

Discourse community

A group of people with shared common goals and shared understanding of the kinds of discourse they use to achieve them, such as teachers, lawyers, and football players.

Discrete-point test

A type of test that measures knowledge of individual language items.

Display questions

Questions that require learners to demonstrate what they have learned.

Distance learning

Education whereby the learners and the sources for learning (teachers or materials) are separated by time, distance or both. Distance learning can be wholly or partly online.

Divergent questions

Questions that have more than one possible answer. See also **Convergent questions**.

Dogme

An approach to teaching that, instead of a pre-planned syllabus, is built around conversational interaction between the teacher and learners and among learners themselves.

EFL

See **English as a Foreign Language**

EIL (English as an International Language)

See **English as a Lingua Franca**

ELF

See **English as a Lingua Franca**

Elision

The omission of a sound that would normally be pronounced in a word.

Ellipsis

Leaving out words or phrases from sentences because they are understood or have been previously mentioned, such as the pronoun *I* in *I went to the door and [I] opened it*.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Traditionally this term is used to describe the use of English in countries where it is not an official language. See also **English as a Second Language (ESL)**.

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

English used as a means of communication between speakers of different languages.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

- 1) Traditionally, the use of English by non-native speakers in countries where it is an official language.
 - 2) English in countries where it is widely used but is not the first language.
- Both uses of the term have been criticized for not accurately reflecting complex language situations, and for suggesting an inferior status for such forms of English.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

A teaching approach that focuses on the language needed by learners in different academic or professional contexts.

E-portfolio

See **Portfolio**

ESL

See **English as a Second Language (ESL)**

Explicit learning

Learning that is done consciously and with the express intention to learn.

Extensive reading

Reading of longer texts, usually for pleasure and usually done outside of class. See also **Intensive reading**.

Extrinsic motivation

Having a utilitarian or pragmatic reason for learning a second language. See also **Intrinsic motivation**.

Face validity

The degree to which a test appears to measure the knowledge or abilities it aims to measure, based on the subjective judgement of an observer.

Factual recount

A text that reports on an event.

Feedback

Information received on the performance of a task. In teaching, comments or information that learners receive on their success on learning tasks, either from the teacher or other persons.

Field dependence

A learning approach in which a learner tends to look at the whole of a learning task containing many items and has difficulty in studying an item when it occurs within a field of other items. This is contrasted with a field-independent approach, in which the learner is able to identify or focus on particular items and is not distracted by other items in the background or context.

Fillers

Expressions speakers use to create a delay or hesitation during conversation to enable them to carry on, such as 'well', 'I mean', 'uhm'.

Fluency

The extent to which target language production is continuous, without causing comprehension difficulties or a breakdown of communication.

Focus on form

Brief attention to grammatical aspects of the language during otherwise meaning-oriented activities.

Formative assessment

Assessment used during a course of instruction, for the purpose of improving learners' learning.

Forward design

An approach to curriculum development that begins with the identification of the language input needed by the participants in the course, followed by the selection of appropriate teaching activities, techniques and methods, and finally the setting of learning outcomes.

Fossilization

The phenomenon whereby learners stop progressing in their language development.

Functions

The acts of communication that are realized in conversation, such as offers, requests, suggestions, complaints, apologies, agreeing, disagreeing, accusing, denying and so on.

Function words

Words that express grammatical relationships such as *to*, *at*, *in*, *the*, *of*. See also **Content words**.

General Service List (GSL)

A list of the 2,000 most useful words for English language learners, compiled in 1953 by Michael West.

Genre

Socially recognized ways of using language for specific purposes in such domains as business, medicine, literature.

Genre-based teaching (Text-based teaching)

An approach that focuses on developing understanding and use of the genres and text-types students need to master in their different contexts of learning.

Global language teaching method

A method (or approach) that has been designed to be used in any part of the world.

Gradation

The sequencing of learning items in a course and the principles that account for such a sequence.

Graded readers

Books developed for language learners in which the language has been controlled by difficulty, in terms of vocabulary, sentence length, grammar and discourse features.

Grammar-Translation Method

A method of teaching that emphasizes grammatical knowledge and translation to and from the target language. The focus is mainly on the development of reading and writing skills.

Grouping arrangements

The ways in which learners are grouped for different classroom activities. This can include whole-class, pair, small-groups and individual work, as well as other arrangements such as the way furniture and learning resources are placed.

High-stakes tests

Tests that have an important impact on people's lives, such as university entrance tests or tests as a requirement for citizenship.

Holistic scoring

Type of scoring that gives a single score to performance on a language task. See also **Analytic scoring**.

Identity

A person's sense of themselves as a discrete separate individual, including their self-image and their awareness of self.

Immersion education

The use of a foreign language to teach school subjects, such as the use of French as a medium of instruction for English-speaking students in Canada.

Implicit learning

Learning without awareness of what is being learned.

Improvisational performance

Teaching that results from teachers' interactive decisions during a lesson and that reflects a creative interaction between plans, student responses, and teachers' on-the-spot decisions.

Individual professionalism

See **Personal professionalism**.

Inductive learning

Learning that results from exposure to language input and learners working out rules and regularities of the language by themselves. Also referred to as 'grammar last'. See also **Deductive learning**.

Inferencing

Arriving at ideas, judgements or hypotheses on the basis of other ideas, judgements or hypotheses.

Information-gap activities

Pair or group-based classroom activities in which students have different information and must communicate to obtain the information they need.

Input

In language learning, language which a learner hears or receives and from which he or she can learn.

Input hypothesis

The theory that exposure to comprehensible input which contains structures that are slightly in advance of a learner's current level of competence is the necessary and sufficient condition for second language learning to occur.

Institutional professionalism

In a teaching institution, the provision of opportunities to attain national, local or institutional standards for teaching English.

Instrumental motivation

In second language learning, having a primarily practical reason for learning a language, such as to pass a test or get a promotion. See also **Integrative motivation**.

Integrative motivation

In second language learning, a positive attitude towards the target language and culture and a desire to interact with it and assume some of its values. See also **Instrumental motivation**.

Integrative test

A type of test that requires the test-taker to use several different skills at the same time.

Intensive reading

Reading for specific information, usually of short texts. See also **Extensive reading**.

Interaction (Language learning as an interactive process)

A view of language learning as a process in which interaction between learners and other users of the language plays a key role.

Interactive decisions

In teaching, unplanned decisions a teacher makes during the course of a lesson and which often influence the effectiveness or outcomes of a lesson.

Interactive listening

Listening that involves interaction with the speaker(s).

Interactive whiteboards (IWB)

An interactive display that connects to a computer and a projector.

Intercultural communicative competence

The ability to communicate with speakers from different cultural backgrounds.

Interlanguage

The type of language produced by second language learners who are in the process of learning a new language, and which has its own rules.

Intonation

Variations in pitch in speaking.

Intrinsic motivation

Learning something because of the pleasure derived from the activity. See also **Extrinsic motivation**.

Keyword method

A method of vocabulary learning whereby the learner associates a new word with another word in their first language and then forms a mental image of it.

Language acquisition device

A hypothesized innate cognitive mechanism that learners make use of in abstracting rules and principles as they learn a second language.

Language aptitude

The theory that some people have a special aptitude for second language learning, and are better able to recognize grammatical relations, master pronunciation, and learn new words more easily.

Language transfer

The positive or negative effect one language has on the acquisition of another.

Learner autonomy

In teaching, the principle that learners should assume a maximum amount of responsibility for their own learning.

Learner-centred approaches

Approaches in education and language teaching that emphasize the importance of the role of the learner, their experiences and beliefs, and the development of skills for learning.

Learner training (Strategy training)

Activities that are used to help learners master the use of learning strategies.

Learning Management System (LMS)

Software designed to facilitate the administration and delivery of learning materials and activities online, including tools for monitoring and evaluating learning.

Learning strategies

Conscious approaches and techniques that learners use for learning the target language. Cognitive strategies involve mental processes such as memorization. Metacognitive strategies involve thinking about the learning process such as planning and organizing one's learning. Affective strategies involve learners regulating their feelings about learning and using the language. Social strategies involve learning through interacting with other speakers.

Learning style

A learner's preferred way of learning, such as through reading as opposed to listening or through individual learning as opposed to collaborative learning.

Lesson

A planned and connected set of activities in which content is presented in a sequence that seeks to maximize learning opportunities.

Lexical chunk

A number of words, for example an expression, that are learned as a single unit.

Lexis

Another word for vocabulary.

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

Used in the United States to refer to a language minority student in an English-speaking country, whose level of English is not at the level of native-speakers or advanced-level users of English.

Lingua franca

A language that is used for communication between different groups of people, each speaking a different language. English often serves this function.

Linguistic imperialism

A term used to describe the phenomenon whereby a language is used to gain or maintain dominance of some societies over others.

Linking

The blending together of words in fluent speech, such as when a final consonant joins the beginning of the next word if the word begins with a vowel.

Literacy

The ability to read and write in a language.

Long-term memory

See **Short-term memory**

Mainstreaming courses

Courses for learners of English that prepare them for mainstream classes in primary or secondary schools.

Method

An instructional design for teaching a language that reflects a specific theory of language and language learning and that is specific in terms of objectives, teacher and learner roles, and classroom activities. See also **Approach**.

Methodology

In language teaching, the study of the practices and procedures used and the principles and beliefs that underlie them.

Microskills

Individual skills that make up a more complex skill or activity. Thus *discriminating among the distinctive sounds of English* is one of the microskills involved in listening.

Micro-teaching (Peer teaching)

A teacher-training procedure in which different teaching skills are practised under carefully controlled conditions, often involving a student-teacher teaching part of a lesson to his or her classmates.

Modification of input

The modification of language by one speaker when communicating with another speaker of lower proficiency. This can be in the form of simplification, extension or through a range of other means.

Module

A module is a self-contained and independent learning sequence with its own learning outcomes.

Motivation

The learner's attitude, desire, interest and willingness to invest effort in learning a second language.

Multiliteracy

The different forms in which literacy can be accomplished, such as through texts, technology and multimedia.

Multi-word expressions

Expressions made up of two or more words, the meaning of which cannot be understood from the meaning of the individual words, such as ‘make up your mind’.

Narrative

A text that tells a story or that entertains.

Nativespeakerism

The belief that native speakers have superior knowledge and understandings related to English language teaching and that denigrates the knowledge and understandings of teachers who are non-native speakers of English.

Needs analysis

The process of identifying and prioritizing the needs for learning English and the gaps in learners’ knowledge and skills.

Negotiation of meaning

The resolution of a breakdown in communication between two or more speakers. It has been shown to help learners notice aspects of the target language, or gaps in their own knowledge.

New Englishes

A term used to describe forms of English that have developed in countries where English has not traditionally been a first language but where it is widely used, such as Nigerian or Singapore English.

Non-interactive listening

Listening that does not involve interaction with the speaker(s). Examples include listening to the radio, watching TV or attending a lecture.

Norm-referenced test

A language test in which the performance of test-takers is compared against other test-takers.

Noticing

Conscious awareness of an aspect of the language input.

Noticing hypothesis

The theory that learners need to notice some feature of the input they receive in order for them to begin the process of acquiring it.

Objectives

Statements that describe the outcomes of learning.

One-way listening

See **Non-interactive listening**.

Oral approach

See **Situational language teaching**.

Outcomes-based materials

Textbooks that are organized around a series of outcomes, or ‘can do statements’ as in courses linked to the **Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)**.

Overgeneralization

The process of extending the use of a form to an inappropriate context by analogy.

Pace

The speed at which a lesson progresses.

Pacing

The extent to which a lesson maintains its momentum and communicates a sense of development.

Paragraph pattern approach

An approach to the teaching of writing that focuses on the different functional or organizational elements in different types of texts.

Pedagogical content knowledge

Specialized knowledge related to teaching and learning that teachers make use of when they teach.

Pedagogical reasoning skills

Teachers' specialized thinking skills; their ability to draw on theories and principles as well as their own experiences of learning and teaching.

Peer assessment

A type of informal, formative assessment, during which two or more learners collaborate to give each other feedback on their progress.

Peer observation

One teacher watching another teacher's lesson in order to gain an understanding of some aspect of teaching, learning or classroom interaction.

Performance

A person's actual use of language, for example, in speech or writing, compared with their competence – the implicit system of rules that they make use of.

Performance-based assessment

A type of assessment that seeks to measure student learning based on how well the student can perform on a practical real-world task.

Performance-based learning

The development of language skills as a means of achieving social goals and actions.

Personal Learning Environments

Learner-controlled online repositories of learning materials and activities with an emphasis on social interaction and tools for learners to manage their own learning.

Personal professionalism

Teachers' own views of teaching and the processes by which teachers engage in reflection on their own values, beliefs and practices.

Personal recount

A text that relates a personal experience.

Phonemes

The units of sound that make up the sound system of a language.

Placement test

A test used to place learners in the appropriate course or class within an institution.

Portfolio

A systematic record of learners' work and reflections, used for the purposes of monitoring of progress, authentic assessment, and the development of learner autonomy.

P-P-P cycle

A teaching technique that involves

- 1) *presenting* a new aspect of the language,
- 2) learners *practising* this in a controlled environment
- 3) learners *producing* it in different contexts.

Practice

The performance of activities repeatedly over time, in order to become more proficient in them.

Practitioner knowledge

The knowledge and beliefs teachers develop through their experience of teaching.

Pragmatics

The study of language use in face-to-face interactions and how participants communicate and understand intended meanings, particularly in cross-cultural communication.

Procedural knowledge

Knowledge of how to perform an activity.

Process writing

An approach to the teaching of writing with an emphasis on the writer, the strategies used to produce a piece of writing, and the creative aspect of the writing process.

Productive vocabulary

See **Active vocabulary**

Professionalism

In language teaching, the status of teaching viewed in relation to its functions, their status and the quality and skill of teachers' work.

Proficiency test

A test commonly used to determine a test-taker's level on entrance in a programme.

Programme

All of the courses of study offered in a particular institution or department.

Progress test

A type of informal, formative assessment of the progress learners make in a particular programme, with feedback provided to the learners to help them improve their learning.

Receptive vocabulary

See **Active vocabulary**

Recount

A text that reports something that happened.

Referential questions

Questions that seek real information. See also **Display questions**.

Register

The kind of language that is appropriate in a particular context (e.g. legal language, teacher talk, etc.).

Reliability

The extent to which a test gives consistent results and gives the same results when given on different occasions or when given by different people.

Restructuring

A process of accommodating new linguistic information into one's existing knowledge.

Rhythm

The pattern that the distribution of stressed syllables gives to speech.

Routines

Fixed expressions that have specific functions in conversation such as 'Nice to meet you' and 'I don't get it'.

Scaffolding

The support that a learner receives from other speakers in understanding or using language.

Scanning

Reading to locate a particular piece of information without necessarily understanding the text as a whole.

Schema

A mental model or framework that organizes information in the mind and represents generalized knowledge about events, situations, objects, actions and feelings.

Scripts

Schemas that include predictable sequences of activities or events.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

The study of how languages other than one's first language are learned.

Segmental level

The vowel and consonant system of a language, as compared with the suprasegmental level that refers to features stretching over more than one segment, such as intonation and stress.

Self-assessment

Activities in which learners complete an evaluation of their own performance, usually soon after they have completed the activity.

Self-directedness

The ability of learners to guide their own learning.

Sentence combining

Activities in which learners try to combine two or more sentences into a more complex single sentence, as a way of developing a better grasp of sentence grammar.

Sentence grammar

The system of rules used to create sentences, including knowledge of parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses and syntactic structures used to create grammatically well-formed sentences in English.

Sequencing

The order in which

- 1) language will be presented to learners
- 2) the order in which activities will be used in class.

Sheltered subject matter instruction

Instructional contexts where learners study content through a second language but the class is taught by a content instructor rather than a language instructor. Instruction is sheltered because learners are given special assistance to help them understand the content of the course.

Short-term memory

That part of the memory where information is held for a short time while it is being processed, as opposed to long-term memory, where information is stored more permanently.

Simplification

A way for teachers to reduce the complexity of language input, and a way for learners to express complex thoughts with limited language resources.

Situatedness

The close relationship between teaching and learning and the contexts in which they occur.

Situational language teaching

Also known as the 'Structural-situational Approach' or the 'Oral Approach', a teaching method that primarily uses the target language for instruction and emphasizes the use of spoken language linked to situations to introduce and practise new vocabulary or grammar.

Skill-based learning

A view of learning that places emphasis on the development of skills that are learned through practice.

Skimming

Reading a text quickly to gain a general understanding of its main points.

Small talk

Communication that primarily serves the purpose of social interaction.

Sociocultural theory

A theory of learning that places emphasis on the gradual internalization of external, socially mediated knowledge.

Spaced repetition

The exposure to new language, such as vocabulary, a number of times over a period of time. When the amount of time between exposures increases, it is called 'Spaced learning' (also known as the 'Leitner system').

Speech act

An utterance as a functional unit in communication, such as a request, a complaint, or an apology. These are also known as functions in language teaching.

Speech community

A specific group of people who share at least one speech variety.

Stakeholder

Anyone who has a recognized right to comment on and have input to a curriculum, test, language course or language policy.

Standardized test

A test which has been developed from tryouts and experimentation to ensure that it is reliable and valid and in which the directions, conditions of administration and scoring are clearly defined and fixed for all examinees, administrations and forms.

Standards (Benchmarks)

General descriptors of intended competencies programmes (are expected to) deliver at different levels.

Standards-based assessment

The use of tests to assess learners' performance in relation to a set of standards.

Stretched output

The use of classroom activities that encourage and support learners in producing more complex syntactic structures.

Summative assessment

Assessment used at the end of a course or period of learning in order to measure what students have learned, both individually and as a group.

Suprasegmental level

See **Segmental level**

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) practice

The practice of intensive reading skills in class, whereby learners choose, or are assigned, reading materials that they read silently, and at their own pace.

Syllabus

Description of the contents of a course and the order in which they are to be taught.

Syllabus design

That branch of applied linguistics that deals with the development of syllabuses for language courses.

Task

Language-learning activities in which the primary focus is on meaning, that have a real-world connection, and that have non-linguistic outcomes.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT)

Language instruction that uses tasks to engage learners in authentic communicative activities.

Teacher beliefs

The accumulation of teachers' experiences and knowledge internalized as a set of generally stable convictions about the nature of (good) learning and teaching.

Teacher development

The longer-term facilitation of teachers' deeper understanding of the knowledge base of language teaching, of the teaching context and of himself or herself as a teacher, as well as an ability to critically question one's own teaching practice.

Teacher identity

The dynamic and differing social and cultural roles teacher-learners enact through their interactions with their students during the process of learning.

Teacher learning

The knowledge that results from the processes of teacher development.

Teacher training

The development of a repertoire of teaching skills, acquired through observing experienced teachers and practice-teaching in a controlled setting.

Teaching journal

An ongoing account of observations, reflections and other thoughts about teaching, which serves as a source of discussion, reflection and evaluation.

Teaching portfolio

A set of documents and other items assembled by a teacher to provide an account of a teacher's philosophy and practice.

Technical vocabulary

Words which are most common in a particular subject area.

Technology in Language Learning and Teaching (TLLT)

The use of any form of technology in the teaching and learning of a second language.

Tertiary, Secondary or Primary settings (TESEP)

Referring to language instruction in these settings.

Test

A form of assessment designed to measure a student's learning at a specific point in time.

Test specifications

A description of what a test will consist of, what skills will be included, what kind of and how many items and tasks it will include, how much time will be allocated to each item, and how it will be scored.

Text

The units of communication that people use in spoken or written discourse such as narratives, descriptions and reports.

Text-based teaching

Text-based teaching involves explicit teaching of the structure of different text types and an instructional strategy in which the teacher introduces the text and its purpose and features, and guides learners through the production of texts through the process of scaffolding.

Text grammar

The system of rules used to create extended discourse and which provides for the organization of texts.

Text-to-speech (TTS)

Software that electronically reads text aloud.

Theme-based language instruction

The organization of a course around a theme or topic such as the environment or travel, rather than around a language syllabus.

Theorizing from practice

The development of a personal system of knowledge, beliefs and understandings, drawn from the practical experience of teaching.

TLLT

See **Technology in Language Learning and Teaching (TLLT)**

Top-down processing

The use of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of a message. Whereas bottom-up processing goes from language to meaning, top-down processing goes from meaning to language. See also Bottom-up processing.

Training gap

The difference between the starting level of a group of learners and the target level they seek to reach in a course.

Transactions

An interaction that focuses on getting something done rather than maintaining social interaction.

Transfer

Effects from the first language when learning another. This can be positive (for example, where a word has a similar meaning in both languages) or negative (for example, when learners need to acquire a linguistic feature that is not present in their first language).

Turn-taking

Exchanges during oral or interactive written communication (e.g. chat) and the ability to provide opportunities for another person to take a turn in speaking as well as recognizing when another speaker is seeking to take a turn.

Two-way listening.

See **Interactive listening**.

Unit

A series of integrated lessons that are grouped together and that lead towards a culminating task or activity.

Universal grammar

A theory of L1 language learning proposed by Noam Chomsky that suggests learners have an innate and genetic ability for language.

Validity

A test has validity if it measures what it is supposed to measure and nothing else.

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

An online system designed to support learning and teaching through online repositories of learning materials, activities, classes and courses.

Vocabulary control

An aspect of syllabus design that deals with developing vocabulary targets for language learning.

Voice quality

The general articulatory characteristics used by speakers of a language.

Washback effect

The effect a test has on teaching and learning.

Willingness to communicate (WTC)

The extent to which a learner is willing to call upon his or her language knowledge and actively participate in communication.

Zone of proximal development

A construct that represents the relative difference between what learners can do on their own and what they can do with the help of others.

About the author

Jack Richards is an applied linguist, teacher educator and textbook author, who has had an active career in the Asia-Pacific region (Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Hawaii). He has held senior positions in universities in his native New Zealand, and in Hawaii and Hong Kong, and is currently based for much of the year in Sydney, Australia. He teaches part of each year at the Regional Language Centre in Singapore and is also an honorary professor in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney and in the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland.

Professor Richards has written many books and articles on language teaching methodology and teacher training, including *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd edition 2014) as well as many widely used classroom texts, including the best-selling series *Interchange*, and *Four Corners*.

Professor Richards is active in philanthropy and supports scholarship programmes for language teachers, musicians and artists as well as commissions for composers. He is a patron of the Dame Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation, the Tairāwhiti Museum in Gisborne, New Zealand, the Toihokura programme for young Māori artists in New Zealand and sponsors the Composer in Residence Program at Victoria University, Wellington. He also hosts a series of summer concerts at his New Zealand residence in support of the Gisborne International Music Competition.

He also has active interests in the decorative arts and has major collections of textiles and Lalique glass. In 2014 the Jack C Richards Decorative Arts Gallery was opened in the Tairāwhiti Museum, in Gisborne, New Zealand. In 2011 he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature by Victoria University, Wellington, in recognition of his support for English language education and the arts and in 2014 received an award for patronage by the Arts Foundation of New Zealand.

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