

THE FOUNDATIONS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Paul Lennon



The Foundations of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

An introductory textbook that assumes no prior knowledge of linguistics or second language acquisition, this book presents a comprehensive overview of the theoretical foundations, methods and practices of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) for pre-service teachers. Lennon covers the theoretical bases for TEFL and addresses second language-acquisition research, past and present EFL teaching methodology, as well as psychological and social approaches to individual language-learner variation. Further chapters provide extensive yet accessible coverage on essential foundational topics, including chapters on pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, literature and testing. Offering a socio-cultural approach in which the teacher is seen as a facilitator and supporter of students' self-directed learning, this text provides the prospective teacher with the knowledge and skills to be an effective educator in the EFL classroom.

The targeted EFL focus makes this book ideal for pre-service teachers and for teacher training programmes around the world. Each chapter includes a Food for Thought section with questions for reflection and a Further Reading list.

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The Foundations of Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Preface

This is an introductory book about Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). It aims to place the practice of TEFL on firm theoretical foundations as provided by linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, social psychology and the history of language-teaching methodology. It is primarily intended for use in TEFL training courses in universities and colleges. No prior knowledge of linguistics, language-acquisition research, social psychology or language-teaching methodology is assumed. All that is assumed is knowledge of basic traditional grammatical terminology. The book is suitable for use in both pre-service and in-service courses, although teacher trainers will use it in different ways according to whether they are working with trainee teachers, novice teachers or experienced teachers. Inexperienced trainees will clearly require more support from their trainers than will experienced teachers. The book can also profitably be used for self-study.

At the end of each chapter there is a Food for Thought section with questions for critical reflection. Some of these are suitable for self-study; some are marked as group tasks. A small number of questions are intended especially for practising teachers, who are asked to draw on their teaching experience, but most questions are aimed at novice or trainee teachers and do not presuppose teaching experience. In some cases the reader is asked to draw on his or her experience as a language *learner*. Group tasks and questions are generally so designed that the group as a whole will benefit from the pooling of individual contributions from group members, whether experienced, practising teachers, novice teachers or trainee teachers, since experience of both language teaching and language learning is always diverse, and trainee teachers may be inexperienced teachers but they are usually experienced language learners.

Only those who have never stood before a class at all may well wonder what all the fuss is about in this book, as I myself would once have done. Surely you just go in there and teach them, don't you? This is one of the reasons for devoting a chapter (Chapter 2) to language-teaching methods

of the past and present, namely to demonstrate how very different language teaching can be and has been over the years. What most of us regard as 'the way' to teach is, ironically enough, probably more influenced by the way we ourselves were taught than by anything we learned in our formal teacher training. At the very least, any student who is using this book as a course book should make sure that he or she has at least observed – and far better actually taught – a few classes before the course starts or while the course is running. Similarly, teacher trainers using this book will find that their trainees will benefit far more from it, and be more motivated to read it, if they have done even just a few hours' teaching before the course starts.

Each chapter in the book is reasonably self-contained and can be read of and for itself, but the book's overall approach only becomes clear when it is read as a whole and in the order in which it was written. The first three chapters provide the theoretical bases upon which good foreign language-teaching practice is grounded, and the teaching approach advocated in the book emerges from these chapters. It is a socio-cultural approach in which the teacher is seen as a learning facilitator, and it is these introductory chapters which enable the reader to grasp the book's underlying rationale. Generally speaking, then, unless readers/course participants already have a firm grounding in the subject matter of the first three chapters, it would be inadvisable to omit them. One might be tempted to think that by plunging in at Chapter 4 one is getting into the nitty gritty of classroom teaching from the start. However, it is the foundations established in Chapters 1 to 3 which underpin the discussion of teaching approaches, procedures and techniques in subsequent chapters, and reference is often made back to the early chapters.

Chapter 1 reviews aspects of first and second language-acquisition research most relevant for language teaching, especially the effects of age and setting. It also explains the construct of language-learner language, sketching out the developmental processes of automatisation and restructuring, and outlining the individual learning and communication strategies learners employ, including negotiation of meaning in social interaction.

Chapter 2 critically and selectively reviews the chequered history of language-teaching methodology. The idea is not to recommend outmoded methods but to help readers perceive what the strengths and weaknesses of individual methods were and to take stock of the present state of affairs, sometimes referred to as the post-methods era. Brief mention is made of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which relies to a greater or lesser extent on English being acquired through the learning of another subject or subjects in the English medium, with or without some focussed language teaching as well.

Chapter 3 presents a synopsis of some cognitive, social and psychological differences among individual learners which may influence their preferred learning style, their motivation and their language-learning achievement. Part of the thesis of this book is that there is not a single best way to teach English, but that the challenge is to find suitable approaches, techniques and materials for specific groups of learners and, ultimately, each individual learner. One size does not fit all.

Chapter 4 takes up the idea of the EFL teacher as a learning facilitator and makes the transition from principles to practice. The teacher is seen as having various tools available to exploit the classroom setting's full potential as a language-learning environment and offset its disadvantages as a language-acquisition environment compared to 'real-world' settings where English is used. These tools include the syllabus, needs analysis, teaching materials, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the orchestration of classroom interaction to facilitate learning. Each is considered separately. Practical guidance on how to react to spoken error in the classroom is provided within the context of a socio-cultural approach to classroom learning, which emphasises the importance of an environment of constructive support for the learner which is furnished by the teacher and classmates. In subsequent chapters it is assumed readers are familiar with the matters dealt with in Chapter 4.

Chapters 5 to 7 are devoted to the three traditional levels of description of language, namely, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. Each is treated separately and is assigned its own chapter. In each case, basic linguistic descriptive information is first provided and then teaching approaches, including references to materials and teaching techniques, are put forward.

Chapters 8 and 9 look at English teaching from the traditional didactic perspective of the 'four skills', namely, listening and speaking (Chapter 8) and reading and writing (Chapter 9). These two chapters are closely connected. The differences between the written and spoken modes and their implications for language teaching are made clear. Each individual skill is first analysed and described with special focus on genre, style and register differences within a functional-pragmatic approach to written and spoken communication. Attention is given to the individual phases of lessons which focus on listening, speaking, reading and writing, respectively, with a three-phase approach to lesson planning being elaborated. Practical advice on tasks, activities and techniques is given and sample materials are referred to or presented and worked through.

In presenting and discussing teaching techniques and materials, care is taken to differentiate whenever necessary according to age level (primary school to adult) and proficiency level (beginner to advanced) of learners. The default case, where no age or proficiency level is specified, is the intermediate-level adolescent or young adult learner. The focus is on general English courses rather than English for Specific Purposes (ESP),

but ESP is referred to at various points. Most of the materials, activities and games described are well-established, well-tried ones and are part of the stock-in-trade of many EFL teachers. In many cases published sources for teaching ideas and materials are referred to. These references are intended as suggestions only and do not pretend to be exhaustive.

The teaching ideas advocated are not intended to be provocative, experimental or even new. Rather, the ideas are chosen because they are based on firm theoretical foundations and have enjoyed widespread success in many teaching contexts. I myself have used many of the ideas in various teaching situations with different learner groups. It has also been my privilege to observe many successful trial lessons given by trainee EFL teachers and when I expressly recommend a certain classroom technique, it is often one that I have seen work well in lessons I have observed. Getting a certain procedural detail right or wrong can make all the difference, and when I caution against adopting a certain classroom procedure, this is sometimes because I once made this very mistake in my own teaching.

To the book's emphasis on interaction, cooperation and self-direction may be added an emphasis on intercultural learning, which finds expression in a whole chapter (Chapter 10) on the use of literature in the English Language classroom. The focus is on using short poems in class, using short novels as class readers and on doing project work based on literature. Suitable sample poems are suggested for children and adults at various proficiency levels and clear guidelines on how to use them provided. Detailed advice on how to select and use a class reader and how to introduce learners to keeping a reading log is given. The chapter concludes with practical advice on implementing project work.

Much of what is said in Chapter 10 applies to extensive reading in general, not just literature. The section on project work and its implications for furthering learner self-direction and attaining the ultimate goal of learner autonomy is central to the book's thesis. Project work is, of course, not limited to literary projects and ideas for non-literary, internet-based project work are touched on in Chapter 4. What is said there should be read in conjunction with what is said in Chapter 10. Thus, Chapter 10 is central to the book's thesis and not peripheral.

The final chapter is an introduction to the theory and practice of language testing. It is deliberately pitched at trainee teachers who have no experience whatsoever of language testing. It is hoped that it will awaken an interest in language testing which can be further pursued as a practising teacher. It explains some different purposes for testing and different types of test, as well as giving examples of some well-known testing techniques. Test evaluation criteria are provided, as is practical advice on administering written and oral tests, respectively. Finally, some alternatives and supplements to traditional testing are presented. The chapter stresses that language testing is an integral part of language

learning, is important for building (and not destroying!) learner motivation, delivers feedback on progress to learners and teachers and provides input to future course planning. It would therefore be a pity if this chapter were omitted. Testing has become an important part of language teaching in many, probably most, contexts and trainee teachers need a grounding in the basics.

In writing this book I have worked hard to steer a difficult course between the Scylla of overloading trainee teachers with too much theory, which they would be unable to transfer to their daily lives in the classroom, and the Charybdis of giving them a 'thirty-ready-to-teach-lessons-that-always-work' book, which would run the risk of encouraging them to take over ready-made lesson plans wholesale without reflection, without understanding their underlying principles and without considering their suitability for a particular learner group. My aim has been, rather, to provide trainees with a firm theoretical foundation on which to base their teaching so that they can plan their own lessons with full cognisance of the wider classroom learning environment in which they are working, teach with a critical eye as to how learning is progressing in real time, reflect on the impact of their teaching and modify it accordingly for the future.

Language learners and their needs will continue to change in the future and the trainee teachers of today will need to adapt their teaching to different situational demands over many years to come. How those demands will have changed in 20, 30 or 40 years cannot be predicted. What can be done is to provide trainee teachers with professional background knowledge and to sensitise them to relevant aspects of the environment so that they can adapt successfully to changing situations and enjoy doing so. This will make for career satisfaction.

Acknowledgement

The passage from *Bank Shot* by Donald. E. Westlake on pages 244–245 is reprinted by permission of mysteriouspress.com.

1 Language Acquisition and Language Learning

Settings

First Language Acquisition Settings

Long ago the Danish linguist Otto Jespersen (1922: 40) noted the stark contrast between the almost universal and rather uniform success of children acquiring English as their mother tongue compared to the ‘defective and inexact command’ of the language often achieved by foreign language learners, whose success is also subject to tremendous individual variation. Children produce their first word at about the age of 12 months. By the age of about 18 months most children have an active vocabulary of perhaps 50 words, that is, words they can use, not just understand (Crystal 1986: 93; Saxton 2017: 156). By 24 months children have a command of several hundred words and by the age of six they can at least understand perhaps 10,000 words (Bloom and Markson 1998: 68) or even 14,000 words (Clark 1993: 13).

However, the key to acquiring a language is the acquisition of its syntax; in other words knowing how to combine words to form utterances. Otherwise all one can do is to name things. Although there is variation in the rate (speed) of acquisition of syntax, all children seem to follow more or less the same path (route) (Brown 1973: 272–275). The route remains the same because it is the relative complexity of individual structures which determines the order in which they are acquired regardless of individual differences in children and the exposure they receive to language. Clark and Clark (1977: 295) gave examples of typical utterances by children aged between 12 months and two years eight months. These range from one-word utterances (‘More’ at age 15 months), to two-word utterances (‘More read’ at age 20 months), to what is sometimes called ‘telegraphic speech’ (‘Where go car?’ at age two years one month) and finally to the production of simple sentences (‘What he can ride in?’, or even ‘I want to open it’ at age two years eight months). Some children are much quicker than others at moving through these stages, but, broadly speaking, one-year-olds start with single words and before they

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are two years old have progressed to two-word utterances. Telegraphic speech, marked by reduced syntax, is characteristic of two-year-olds and by the time they are three, children will be producing simple sentences, some of which may be fully acceptable in the adult language although others such as ‘What he can ride in?’ will still be grammatically deviant (Clark and Clark 1977; Crystal 1986; Saxton 2017).

Just being exposed to language, for example by overhearing the conversations of others, listening to the radio or watching TV, is not enough to acquire a language (Saxton 2017: 95–96). Children can pick up some vocabulary from overheard language or TV but they cannot acquire syntax in this way without interpersonal interaction (Saxton 2017: 96). Language acquisition is intimately linked to the child’s own social interactive needs from the very start (Bloom and Tinker 2001). Even before babies utter their first words at about 12 months of age, people talk to them as if they understood what is being said, and babies do understand some words before they can say their first words. Between the ages of six months and one year children develop the ability to engage in ‘joint attention’, that is, ‘the simultaneous engagement of two or more individuals in mental focus on a single external object of attention’ (Pence Turnbull and Justice 2017: 137). An example would be a parent holding up a toy for a child to look at, or looking at pictures with a child. Joint attention seems to be important for early word learning (Adamson and Chance 1998: 28).

Once they start to speak, children are trying to produce meaningful utterances rather than just reeling off isolated words (Clark and Clark 1977: 314–316; Elliot 1984: 57; Pence Turnbull and Justice 2017: 180–181). Thus, ‘more’ may mean ‘I want some more’ and ‘no’ may mean ‘I don’t want to go to bed, thank you very much.’ Toddlers try to communicate even though they cannot make all the sounds of the language, do not know the right word and cannot produce full sentences (Clark and Clark 1977: 295, 397–401, 492–496; Saxton 2017: 151–156; 240–244). Child language represents a systematically simplified linguistic system at the phonological, lexical and syntactic levels. At the phonological level, for example, because the voiced velar stop /g/ is more difficult to make than the voiced alveolar stop /d/, /d/ may be substituted for /g/ by two-year-olds, so that ‘go’ becomes ‘doe’ and ‘garden’ becomes ‘darden’ (see Pence Turnbull and Justice 2017: 166–167 on phonological simplification). At the lexical level, ‘garden’ may be used for gardens, parks and all open countryside as well (lexical overextension, see Pence Turnbull and Justice 2017: 179). At the syntactic level, ‘grammatical words’ such as articles and prepositions will be omitted so that ‘telegraphic speech’ will be produced (see Pence Turnbull and Justice 2017: 173). A combination of phonological, lexical and syntactic reduction might result in ‘doe darden’ for ‘I want to go to the park.’

Since it is often not clear to adults what the child wants to say, children are constantly being asked to restate. Adults go to great efforts to try to understand what the child wants to express and frequently ask the child questions to find out what it means. Such questions are termed ‘clarification questions’ (Demetras et al. 1986). They are also found in conversations with foreign language learners (Lightbown and Spada 2013 140; Sheen and Ellis 2011). Brown and Hanlon (1970) found that adults are more interested in understanding what the child wants to say than in correcting its errors and tend to correct only factual errors explicitly. However, factual corrections from the adult’s perspective may in some cases be language corrections from the child’s point of view, as in, ‘No, that’s a purple sweater, not a blue one’ (example from Saxton 2017: 104). Saxton (2017: 110–111) also suggests that clarification questions may sometimes be posed when a child makes a grammatical error.

Adults modify their speech style for children so that ‘child-directed speech’ forms a special variety or register of language (Saxton 2017: 88, 112–116; Pence Turnbull and Justice 2017: 48–49). One feature of this register is repetition of the child’s preceding utterance before the adult moves on with new information. This constitutes approval of what the child has said both factually and linguistically and helps to keep the conversation on track. If the child’s last utterance was deviant, the adult tends to repeat it in part but modify it or, in the case of telegraphic utterances, expand it so that it is an acceptable adult language utterance. These repetitions with variation are termed ‘recasts’. In this way, adults keep the conversation going while expanding the syntax of the child’s telegraphic utterances, improving morphology and making lexical improvements as they go along rather than always interrupting and explicitly correcting the child. ‘Recasts’, like clarification questions, function as implicit corrective feedback to the child (Demetras et al. 1986; Saxton 2017: 102–107).

Whether all this is sufficient to explain how children acquire the language is unclear. After all, *some* parents just say, ‘Shut up and eat your chips.’ Yet these children also acquire English. The nativist school of thought, associated with the American linguist Noam Chomsky, maintains that the progress in language acquisition which children make in the first few years of their lives is so rapid that they cannot be starting from scratch, cannot be a *tabula rasa*, but must have some sort of biological predisposition to acquire grammar; a sort of genetically established blueprint of the common or universal grammatical rules or principles which all languages obey. This is what is meant by universal grammar (Chomsky 1965: 6–9, 30–37 and see Saxton 2017, Chapters 8–10; Aitchison 2008, Chapters 3–7 for critical discussion). The blueprint would have to be for universal grammar rather than the grammar of any specific language because children will acquire whatever language (or

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languages) they are exposed to in infancy, as countless examples of internationally adopted children show.

The fascinating thing about first language acquisition is that it proceeds incidentally and in step with cognitive development (Saville-Troike and Barto 2017: 19). This is why the term ‘acquisition’ is used rather than ‘learning’. Children ‘pick up’ their first language in the first few years of life provided people talk to them and they talk back. They do not have to learn their mother tongue deliberately, nor do they get any instruction in it. They are not taught it by their mother, father, siblings and playmates in the way that a teacher teaches a foreign language (Lenneberg 1967: 125; Aitchison 2008: 71; Saxton 2017: 214–215). Even the most devoted parent does not say, ‘I am going to sit down with three-year-old Mary for two hours this afternoon to teach her some new vocabulary, revise the present simple and continuous tenses and practise the “th” sounds with her.’ Yet by the age of five or six children can carry on conversations with other children and even with adults, provided the adults make some concessions to them (Pence Turnbull and Justice 2017: 61, 211–213).

Whereas children acquire or pick up the skills of listening and speaking incidentally, they do have to be taught how to read and write. This usually starts in primary school, and the primary school years are marked by further massive vocabulary expansion, perhaps on average six new words per day between the ages of six and eight years(!) (Bloom and Markson 1998: 68; Saxton 2017: 160–161). However, in the early school years children also develop a better understanding of words they already know, for example ‘ask’ versus ‘tell’, and they start to use various clause-linking words such as ‘anyway’, ‘otherwise’ and ‘actually’ (Crystal 1986: 180–182). In writing, they progress from at first just stringing sentences together by ‘and’ to gradually producing complex sentences with a main clause and a subordinate clause linked by subordinating conjunctions (Hunt 1965, 1970). A further development is that they begin to command a variety of different speech styles and adapt their speech to situation, learning that you talk to teachers differently from the way you talk to other children and that you write differently from the way you talk (Crystal 1986: 188–189; Lightbown and Spada 2013: 14). Metalinguistic awareness (awareness of how language works) also starts to develop. Dawning metalinguistic awareness is manifested in the ability to play with language (Crystal 1986: 185–188, 1998). This is responsible for those corny language jokes, which children find so hilarious (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 13). When my nephew was about seven, he said, ‘I’d tell you a joke about a broken pencil, only it has no point.’

The neurologist Eric Lenneberg (1967: 142–179) suggested there is a ‘critical period’ for acquisition of the native language (or languages) which closes off at puberty at the latest. Lenneberg noted that the mentally retarded can make slow but steady progress in language

acquisition until puberty, but then make no further progress. They seem to run out of time. He cited two further sources of evidence to support the critical period hypothesis. The first source is documented cases of various unfortunate children who were for whatever reason deprived of people to talk to them from infancy, with the result that they did not learn to speak. Such children find it difficult to acquire language in later childhood, even with specialist instruction (see Saxton 2017: 62–73; Lightbown and Spada 2013: 22–23; Saville-Troike and Barto 2017: 88–89). The second sort of evidence comes from clinical data on patients who have suffered language loss because of brain injury. Young children who suffer brain injury involving language loss can re-acquire language relatively quickly, presumably by using other areas of the brain. However, due to progressive loss of brain plasticity, this process becomes increasingly more difficult, slower and less complete the older the child is when injury occurs, and after puberty complete recovery may apparently often be virtually impossible.

Bilingual Settings

It is quite possible under appropriate conditions for children to grow up simultaneously acquiring two or even three languages from birth as if each were the native language (Romaine 1995; Baker and Wright 2017: 88–98; Brown 2014: 66; Paradis 2009: 123). This is simultaneous bilingualism. The two languages develop synchronously from infancy in keeping with cognitive development. For this to work, the children need to have adequate exposure to each language and appropriate people to speak to in each language. As in monolingual settings, personal interaction is necessary. Patterson (2002) found that the vocabulary of bilingual toddlers aged 21–27 months was significantly related to being read to in each language but not to watching TV. It is also important that the two languages are kept apart for the child and not mixed. This is ensured, for example, by one parent speaking only one language to the child and the other parent speaking only the other language ('the one parent, one language principle'), although there are other successful paths to bilingualism (see Romaine 1995: 183–185; Baker and Wright 2017: 91–93). In the early years the languages may be acquired rather more slowly than if only one language were involved (Brown 2014: 67). For further discussion of simultaneous bilingualism, see Serratrice (2013) and Montrul (2008: 94–97).

If acquisition of a second language begins after the age of three years, this is no longer referred to as simultaneous bilingualism but as 'consecutive (or sequential) bilingualism' (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 30; Baker and Wright 2017: 3, 88, 109, 432). The older the child is when the second language is first introduced, the more likely it is that the child will retain a foreign accent in the second language. Oyama (1976), for

example, conducted a study of 60 Italian immigrants to the USA. Native speakers were asked to rate the subjects' accents. It was found that number of years spent in the USA had no effect on accent, but the younger subjects were on arrival, the less marked their accent was. According to Paradis (2009: 110), phonology (accent) may actually be affected from the age of five or six years onwards.

Presence or absence of a foreign accent may not be a good guide to completeness of language acquisition as a whole. There are indeed some famous examples of people who were introduced to English very late, retained a foreign accent but became consummate masters of the language. The English novelist Joseph Conrad (originally Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski), for instance, a native speaker of Polish who acquired his English at sea after he joined the French(!) navy at the age of 16 and then the British merchant navy at the age of 19, retained a distinct Polish accent in his English until the end of his life. The German-born former American Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, who emigrated to the USA when he was 15, also retains a recognisable German accent. It seems in fact that, for second language acquisition, there are a series of sensitive periods for various aspects of language or, to put it another way, different aspects of language are differentially age-sensitive (Seliger 1978). Phonology (accent) is more age-sensitive than grammar, and grammar more age-sensitive than vocabulary, which can continue to be acquired throughout life (Taylor 1978; Paradis 2009).

This is not to say that a nativelike accent cannot be acquired by hard work in later childhood and beyond, at least by some people. Bongaerts et al. (1995) found that a panel of four native speakers was unable to identify the pronunciation of a small group of specially chosen Dutch university teachers of English with excellent pronunciation as sounding non-native compared to a control group of native speakers. Yet the Dutch subjects had all started learning English at age 12 at school and none of them had visited an English-speaking country before the age of 15.

In a pioneering study by Patkowski (1980) native speakers were asked to judge transcriptions of conversations held with 67 highly educated immigrants to the USA, all of whom had been resident for at least five years. Thus, the phonological element was removed. It was found that those who were six years or younger on arrival in the USA were generally judged to be indistinguishable or barely distinguishable from Americans who had grown up in the USA speaking English from the start. For those subjects who immigrated between the ages of six and sixteen, the older the child was when it immigrated, the more likely it was that its English was not native-like even after a number of years living in the USA. Those who immigrated after the age of about 16 were generally recognisable as not being native speakers of English, even after many years of residence in the USA. Other studies of US immigrants of various language backgrounds broadly

support these findings (Johnson and Newport 1989; DeKeyser 2000; Chiswick and Miller 2008). DeKeyser (2012: 447–454) reviews various studies of the relationship between immigrants' age of arrival in their new country and their later proficiency in the second language.

However, whereas immigration at an early age virtually guarantees nativelike acquisition, late immigration does not exclude this as a possibility, particularly if accent is left out of account. The Patkowski (1980) study found a lot of individual variation in attainment, with a small minority of the late immigrants indeed achieving nativelike or near-nativelike mastery. Just what this means is debatable. One would expect a truly biological barrier to operate across the board with no exceptions, so it seems likely that the barriers to complete acquisition in later childhood and adulthood are social and affective as well as biological (Herschensohn 2007: 173–182; Montrul 2008). It is also possible that at least some age-related biological handicaps can be compensated for by using general cognitive abilities, at least by some people (Selinker 1972; Krashen 1982a; Paradis 2009).

Singleton and Muñoz (2011) argue that a wide range of cognitive, social and cultural variables interact, including to what extent immigrants continue to be exposed to the first language or not. It may be that it is actually the firm establishment of the native language which is the main obstacle to nativelike acquisition of a second language (Paradis 2009: 133–136; Montrul 2008: 22, 262–268). If exposure to the first language ceases when exposure to the second language begins, as in the case of international adoptees, for example, then attrition (loss) of the first language may be dramatic and the second language takes over as the new first language. This is referred to as 'sequential monolingualism' (see Higby and Obler 2015: 647).

Classroom Settings

Classroom settings are necessarily impoverished acquisition environments. To compensate for the limited quantitative and qualitative exposure to the language available in the classroom, and to take advantage of the developing cognitive abilities of the older child, language teaching often involves three components in various weightings:

- explaining how the language works (instruction)
- providing the learner with opportunities for using the language (practice)
- providing feedback on learner performance (especially error correction)

The higher level of ultimate achievement which younger starters are likely to attain relative to older starters in naturalistic environments does not necessarily apply to classroom learners. Younger children are

better at implicit acquisition than older children, but acquisition requires massive amounts of exposure not available in the classroom (Paradis 2009). Older children, on the other hand, are better (faster) than younger children at explicit learning of languages (and other school subjects) because of their greater cognitive maturity, but their ability to implicitly acquire is declining in the school years. In the long term the age at which the child started to learn the foreign language does not seem to be particularly significant for attainment in the educational system (see Singleton and Muñoz 2011; Pfenninger and Singleton 2017).

Vocabulary is the aspect of language which seems to be least age-sensitive. Nature seems to have recognised that our language equipment must include a facility for updating lexis throughout our lives (Libben and Goral 2015: 641; Jarema and Libben 2007: 3). This means that foreign language learners can over many years continue to acquire vocabulary and in some cases even catch up with or surpass monolingual native speakers, particularly in certain areas of specialist vocabulary.

Language-Learning Error

Contrastive versus Non-Contrastive Error

Errors which learners produce when speaking or writing in a foreign language have received much attention from language teaching theorists. Lado (1957: vii) argued that by analysing the points of difference between the native language and culture and the language and culture to be learned (contrastive analysis) one would be able to predict the difficulties learners would encounter. It seems reasonable to assume that error would be likely to occur at these points of difference. However, whereas contrastive analysis tends to predict phonological (pronunciation) error well, for grammar, vocabulary and pragmatics (utterance meaning) it is a less reliable predictor (Brown 2014: 257). Beyond the phonological level, it seems that the influence of the first language is by no means the only factor influencing error. There are certain errors in English which speakers of many different first languages tend to make, for example in the tense system or in preposition choice. Such errors are termed non-contrastive or developmental errors in contradistinction to contrastive errors, which are attributable to negative interference from the mother tongue (Richards 1974). Some errors, however, may be influenced by both developmental and contrastive factors (Selinker et al. 1975). There are other influences on error too, including the unfortunate effects of imperfect teaching (Selinker 1972; Brown 2014: 261). For a review of studies on contrastive and non-contrastive errors, see Falla Wood (2017).

Overt versus Covert Error

A quite different distinction is that between ‘overt’ error and ‘covert’ error (Corder 1971). Overt error involves formal incorrectness as in, *‘She live in England.’ (A preceding asterisk (*) marks a formally unacceptable word, phrase or sentence.) Covert error results when learners say something which is formally acceptable in English but does not mean what they meant to say, as in, ‘If this is your first visit to our country, you are welcome to it’ (notice reportedly seen in a hotel). Identifying covert error can be very difficult because you can never be sure about what someone really meant to say. However, even overt error is a very elusive phenomenon. This is partly because there are two broad approaches to the identification of error. One is based on codified rules as found in grammar books and dictionaries. The other is based on native-speaker judgements. This is sometimes called the difference between correctness criteria and acceptability criteria. There are problems with both approaches and there seems to be a borderline area of infelicitous utterances. These infelicities may be of two sorts: either not correct but acceptable (‘not right, but you can say it’) or, conversely, correct but not acceptable (‘right but you don’t say it’) (Azevedo 1980).

Global versus Local Error

Burt and Kiparsky (1974) drew a helpful distinction for describing and understanding grammatical error. They identified ‘local’ and ‘global’ grammatical errors. Local grammatical errors include errors of verb and noun morphology, article use, preposition choice, concord (agreement), tense choice and many more. Such errors are relatively easy to pinpoint and easy to correct. They often violate a specific grammar rule and occur within a single clause. By contrast, global errors are difficult to pinpoint and more difficult to correct because they occur at the clause or sentence level. It is global errors which tend to seriously impede communication, involving, as they do, sentence connectors, tense continuity across clauses, word order, sentence structure, co-ordination and subordination. When global errors occur in writing, we teachers just tend to put those wavy lines under the whole sentence instead of correcting them, so that the learner is not helped at all. Sometimes we may write something cryptic in angry red ink, such as ‘Expression!’ or ‘Syntax!’ or ‘Not clear!’ or ‘Meaning?’ There is evidence that native speakers who are not teachers tend to regard global errors that disturb communication as the serious errors, whereas non-native-speaker teachers tend to focus on local formal accuracy criteria, with native-speaker teachers occupying a middle ground (Hughes and Lascaratou 1982; Davies 1983).

Language-Learner Language

In 1967, the Edinburgh applied linguist Pit Corder published perhaps *the* seminal article for our modern understanding of foreign language learning. It was tellingly entitled ‘The significance of learners’ errors’ and suggested that there is system in a learner’s errors. Corder (1967) viewed the foreign language learner as being engaged on a voyage of linguistic discovery involving testing out hypotheses about the way the language works. He suggested learners may be following a sort of ‘inbuilt syllabus’, the ordering of which may be quite distinct from that of the external syllabus they are ostensibly following. From this perspective, learners have to go through the process of making errors as part of their hypothesis testing. They have to proceed by trial and error. If learners do not make errors, they will not get any better. Learners learn from their errors. Corder (1967) suggested that learners’ errors will define what he termed their ‘transitional competence’, a term which alludes to Chomsky’s famous distinction between ‘competence’ and ‘performance’ (Chomsky 1965: 4). ‘Competence’ refers to the native speaker’s internalised language system in contradistinction to ‘performance’, which is the language a speaker actually produces with all its surface imperfections.

In summary, according to Corder:

- Errors are a necessary part of linguistic development and represent the discrepancy between the learner’s transitional competence and the target language (language to be learned).
- The learner’s inbuilt syllabus may determine the order in which the grammar is acquired, and studying learners’ errors may supply clues to this order.
- A distinction can be drawn between ‘errors’ (of competence) and ‘mistakes’ (that is, performance slips or lapses). The latter are unsystematic and therefore do not provide data on transitional competence.
- An analysis of learners errors can function as a window on the learner’s transitional competence and help the teacher to plan future teaching (error analysis).

However, error does not tell the whole story about the learner’s problems with the language since language deficit does not necessarily show up as error. The most obvious example is that learners may avoid structures which they are unsure of. Schachter (1974) found that learners who did not have relative clauses in their native language tended to avoid them in written work and use alternative structures in English, whereas learners who did have relative clauses in their mother tongue tended to use them more and hence made more mistakes.

The idea of transitional competence was taken up and developed by Selinker (1972), who coined the term ‘interlanguage’ for what is nowadays termed ‘learner language’. He suggested that learners develop a simplified linguistic system in order to communicate. This system is permeable (open to outside influences), dynamic, (developing) and systematic (regular correspondences between forms and meanings) (Selinker 1972; Selinker et al. 1975; Tarone et al. 1976). Schumann (1978) compared learner language to pidgin forms of languages, which are also simplified systems for basic communicative purposes. Most learners seem, however, to stop developing in the direction of the target language at some point, at least in certain aspects of their language – pronunciation being the most obvious one. Selinker (1972) coined the term ‘fossilisation’ for such a state. Fossilised interlanguage has lost its permeability and dynamism but retains its systematicity (see Brown 2014: 264–266; Han and Odlin 2006; Han 2012).

No two learners will have identical learner languages, for each learner forges his or her own language development along a path unique to that learner. This route is influenced by external factors (the learner’s individual language-learning experience) as well as internal factors (age, motivation and personality). Even within a single learner the learner language will vary according to linguistic and non-linguistic context, although context will not explain all the variation found, so that some variation would appear to be non-systematic. This non-systematic variation will include performance slips or mistakes (with reference to the learner’s usual language use), but also free variability among some forms (Ellis 1985: 76). Thus, although learner language is ‘systematic’ and errors are not random, the system may be difficult to detect.

The idea of ‘variable rules’ was introduced by Elaine Tarone to account for contextual variation in language-learner speech. She argued that production in the foreign language will vary systematically according to task and proposed her ‘continuum paradigm’, in which a language learner’s speech styles may be ordered along a continuum of how much attention is paid to speech, with what she called the ‘vernacular style’ (colloquial speech) showing the most regular patterns, while other styles show more variation (Tarone 1988). This implies that if researchers, teachers or testers want to get a true picture of the learner language, then they should observe natural conversation. However, if the learners know they are being observed, then the naturalness may be affected since the presence of the observer will result in attention being paid to speech and very likely the learner will focus on trying to be correct. This is the ‘observer’s paradox’ (Labov 1972/1978: 209–210). Writing produced in highly formal situations, such as examinations, is also likely to be a very poor reflection of the learner’s underlying competence, since the learner has time to reflect, correct and edit. Homework is even less reliable as a guide to the true state of the learner language since additional external sources such as dictionaries can be used and these will influence the language produced.

The Monitor Model of Classroom Language Learning

The idea of variation in language-learner language was taken up by Krashen (1981, 1982b), who distinguished between ‘monitored’ and ‘unmonitored’ production. This distinction formed the basis of his Monitor Model. Krashen (1981, 1982b) argues that language acquisition is an unconscious process which will only occur if learners are exposed to language input which is neither too easy nor too difficult. This ideal input should be at a level which, although just beyond what learners could produce themselves, is nevertheless understandable for them in context. Such input is termed ‘comprehensible input’ at the ‘*i+1* level’. Anything which is consciously learned about the language, especially language rules, does not contribute to the unconscious process of language acquisition. The Monitor Model maintains, in fact, that classroom learners are building up two separate knowledge systems: an unconscious or acquired system and a conscious or learned system. It hinges on the idea that there are no links between the two systems, conscious learning or knowledge about the language being available only as a monitor which can edit or make changes to what the ‘acquired system’ produces. This can be done either just before production, involving hesitation while the change in plan is made, or after production, involving self-correction (Krashen 1982b: 15).

For learners to be able to monitor their speech effectively, two conditions have to be satisfied: they have to be free from time pressure and their focus of attention has to be on formal correctness rather than on communication. The theory also holds that learners differ individually in terms of how much they use the monitor, there being ‘over-users’ and ‘under-users’ (Krashen 1978). The ‘optimal monitor-user’ would monitor appropriately according to the specific communicative situation and whether priority is to be given to accuracy or to fluency. Furthermore, older children and adults will be more likely to use the monitor than young children so as to compensate for their diminishing ability to acquire naturalistically with increasing age and to take advantage of their greater cognitive abilities.

However, Krashen (1982a) argues that the main barriers to language acquisition after puberty may be not so much biological as affective. The minority of adult learners who do successfully acquire a second language very effectively (Selinker 1972) may owe their success to having overcome the inhibitions which tend to block naturalistic acquisition after puberty. In this way they may somehow reactivate the original acquisition path. Krashen refers to this as ‘lowering the affective filter’. The affective filter (or barrier) is assumed to be lowered in low-anxiety situations and raised in face-threatening, high-anxiety situations. Individuals themselves differ in their anxiety thresholds.

The teaching implications of monitor theory for classroom language teaching are that learners should be provided with appropriate exposure to the language (comprehensible input at the $i+1$ level) in a low-anxiety situation rather than being supplied with knowledge about the language. Krashen and Terrell (1983/1998) suggested various classroom activities to promote such exposure. For adults and adolescents rather than children, however, monitor theory holds that such an approach might profitably be supplemented with formal teaching since older learners can more effectively use the monitor.

The Monitor Model has remained controversial, especially its contention that 'learning' cannot become 'acquisition'. It has also been objected that the distinction between 'conscious' and 'unconscious' as the defining distinction between 'learning' and 'acquisition' is not helpful since consciousness is in any case a continuum not a dichotomy (McLaughlin 1990a; Searle 1992). The distinction between 'learning' and 'acquisition' seems to correspond to the distinction between 'declarative knowledge' and 'procedural knowledge' in cognitive science, although Krashen himself does not use the terms. Declarative knowledge is factual knowledge ('knowing that ... ') and procedural knowledge is skill ('knowing how to ... '). The Monitor Model appears to adopt an extreme non-interface position on the relationship between the two sorts of knowledge. Scholars who hold an interface position would argue that explanations, for example of grammar, vocabulary or how to make the 'th' sounds, are generally helpful for foreign language learners and that what is learned consciously in the classroom can by dint of practice become part of the acquired language system and be available for spontaneous use. For critical appraisal of the Monitor Model and discussion of the interface versus the non-interface positions, see Ellis (1985: 215–247), McLaughlin et al. (1983), McLaughlin (1987: 133–153), Brown (2014: 288–293), Saville-Troike and Barto (2017: 47–48, 78–81), Lightbown and Spada (2013: 106–107) and Paradis (2009).

Automatisation

A distinction is drawn in cognitive science between two modes of cognitive processing: 'controlled' and 'automatic'. Controlled processing is involved in the early stages of mastering a skill but with practice processing becomes progressively automatised. Complex skills such as carrying on a conversation, driving a car or playing tennis involve a hierarchical series of sub-tasks. Human beings are limited-capacity information processors, so that in using language, as in driving a car or playing tennis, they are able to focus attention on only a limited number of things at a time, and this focussed attention may be at a greater or lesser level of consciousness. The process of language acquisition may thus be regarded as proceeding stepwise or cyclically, with focus

constantly switching to new aspects of the language over weeks or months, with some items being more in focus than others at any particular point in time. In the early stages of learning English, even pronouncing the sounds may be a painstaking process requiring much effort and concentration. Beginning learners who have problems with the 'th' sounds, for example, may need to concentrate on putting their tongue in the correct position on their upper teeth and expelling just enough air to make an acceptable sound.

At lower-intermediate levels of proficiency, although pronunciation may now have become partly automatised, learners may have to focus attention on making grammatical choices while speaking, and lexical choice may also involve much slow searching for words. These are controlled processes. As learners become more proficient, however, phonology, grammar and much lexical choice may become largely automatic and production can proceed in larger phrasal units rather than word by word (automatic processing). This is because, with increased practice, individual sub-components of the task are bundled together into modules and performance is speeded up because each sub-component does not have to be focussed on separately any more. The automatisisation of lower-level processes means that learners have more attentional capacity available while speaking to concentrate on higher-order aspects of production, such as discourse planning, attention to using an appropriate style, use of idiomatic language and more varied and complex syntax. They can also focus attention on their interlocutor. Only if enough attentional capacity is available will they be able to notice the discrepancies between aspects of their learner-English and the English of their interlocutors and then modify their own language accordingly.

At the neurological level, it is assumed that learning to perform a sub-task such as pronouncing the 'th' sounds, changing gear or shifting grip on the tennis racquet for a backhand stroke involves activating a particular set of neural impulses in the brain to form a circuit across the synaptic nodes which join nerve cells. The more often the same neural pattern is activated (practice), the more established the pathways become, rather like the difference between treading a path through undergrowth for the first time and treading a well-trodden path. As performers become better with practice at a complex skill such as speaking a foreign language, driving a car or playing tennis, many lower-level skills, such as pronunciation, changing gear or shifting one's grip on the racquet for a backhand stroke, become progressively automatised.

Schneider and Shiffrin (1977: 51) defined controlled processing as:

... a temporary activation of nodes in a sequence that is not yet learned. It is relatively easy to set up, modify and utilise in new situations. It requires attention, uses up short-term capacity, and is often serial in nature.

(Schneider and Shiffrin 1977: 51)

Automatic processing, by contrast:

... is triggered by appropriate inputs and then operates independently of the subject's control. Automatic sequences do not require attention, though they may attract it if training is appropriate, and they do not use up short-term capacity.

(Ibid.)

Speech production necessarily involves an optimal blend of controlled and automatic processes, correctly adapted to situation. Whereas excessive reliance on controlled processes makes for hesitant, non-fluent, effortful production, too much automatised, sometimes called 'false fluency', is not ideal either. It results in over-reliance on clichés, in lack of originality and flexibility and what is produced may be perceived by the listener as shallow and superficial patter.

Restructuring

Language acquisition involves not just automatised but also restructuring of the learner language to bring it closer to the target language (McLaughlin 1990b; Gass and Selinker 2008: 230–238). Automatised involves improving fluency and restructuring involves improving language correctness. There is a trade-off relationship between the two, for the more highly automatised deviant language sub-systems become – for example non-nativelike pronunciation of 'th', deviant past-tense forms or overextension of word meanings – the more difficult it is to restructure them. The initial stages of restructuring involve controlled processes, which are effortful and slow down production. As well as sounding less fluent, learners may also appear to be backsliding (Selinker 1972). That is to say, new errors may be introduced as the system is being reorganised and before restructuring is complete. This pattern is termed U-shaped behaviour (McLaughlin 1990b; Altarriba and Basnight-Brown 2013: 126).

Hakuta (1976) showed in a now famous case-study that in restructuring their internal grammars learners are driven by two conflicting tendencies. One is to make their grammar internally consistent and the other is to make it externally consistent, that is, to adapt it to the language they hear around them. The subject of the study was a five-year-old Japanese girl called Uguisu who was acquiring English naturalistically in the United States. The study started five months after she had arrived in the USA and lasted for 15 months. One of the structures the study focussed on was embedded 'how to' clauses. By the third month of the study Uguisu was producing embedded 'how to' clauses with near 100% accuracy. Then they declined to zero accuracy. However, from the 11th to the 13th month of the study 50% accuracy was achieved: a remarkable example of U-shaped behaviour.

It was possible to identify a number of stages in Uguisu's acquisition of the structure. In the first stage, 'I know how to' + infinitive was learned as a 'chunk' or memorised pattern for a small number of specific verbs, for example 'I know how to ride a bike', 'I know how to swim.' In the second stage, the pattern was extended to other verbs, such as 'show' and 'tell' ('I show you how to ...', 'I tell you how to ...'). In the third stage, the infinitive element in the pattern was erroneously replaced by an interrogative structure introduced by an interrogative adverb and with inversion of subject and verb as in, *'I know how do you write this.'

Hakuta suggests this backsliding at stage three occurred because Uguisu was (presumably unconsciously) motivated by the need to achieve internal consistency with her other interrogative embedded sentences, which at this stage consisted of sentence + interrogative structure as in, 'I know where do you live.' He predicted that in time she would have restructured her deviant 'how' embedded clauses appropriately, but unfortunately the study had to be concluded before this had happened. However, the other interrogative embeddings were progressing to the norms of English at the end of the study (that is, with no inversion in the embedding).

Connectionism

A related but distinct theoretical approach to language acquisition within cognitive theory is that of connectionism. Connectionism provides a theory of how words, phrases and whole utterances may be linked in the mind. It builds on the idea of neural pathways becoming progressively more firmly established by repeated use, but adds a sociolinguistic component to the psycholinguistic one by additionally stressing the importance of the specific contexts in which 'chunks' of language are experienced and used. In other words, words, phrases or even utterances are stored with a tag on their remembered contexts. This includes both the linguistic context and the extralinguistic or social context: the remembered social context may include who the speaker was, who the addressee was and in what setting the chunk was heard. This is why it is easier to remember language experienced in a memorable context. The same applies *quid pro quo* to language met in reading.

A connectionist approach to language acquisition thus sees multiple or branching neural interconnections becoming established in the mind. These link remembered 'chunks' of language not only intralinguistically (sound, meaning and grammatical links), but also extralinguistically (similar contexts of use). Intralinguistic links involve linguistic memory, while extralinguistic links tap into episodic memory, or memory of our own personal experience. Remembered context then forges links between words, phrases and utterances in memory so that one linguistic element activates others from shared

contexts in a chain-like fashion ('spreading activation'). Connectionism elegantly accounts for the fact that such links in the mind will be, on the one hand, idiosyncratic to each individual's linguistic and cultural experience but also shared by members of the speech community. It also accounts elegantly for the fact that language experienced in real-life contexts is more easily retained than language learned out of context. The clear implication is that languages are best acquired by using them.

Language-Learning Strategies

The Good Language Learner

Language-learning processes operate largely outside the learner's conscious control. Language-learning strategies, by contrast, are 'activities consciously chosen by learners for the purpose of regulating their own language learning' (Griffiths 2008: 87). Whereas language-acquisition processes are universal, biologically determined and inevitable, language-learning strategies are individual, part of cognitively directed problem-solving behaviour and optional. The learner also has to be suitably motivated in order to employ them. There seems to be a link between success in language learning and the employment of appropriate language-learning strategies (Rubin 1975; Stern 1975; Naiman et al. 1978; Griffiths 2008; Chen et al. 2020). Studies of successful language learners in mixed environments where both tuition and exposure to speakers of English are available indicate that these individuals tend to employ the following strategies:

- They focus on language both as a formal system and a means of communication.
- Both inside and outside the classroom they actively involve themselves in speaking so that they can learn the language by using it.
- They do not expect to understand everything but this does not prevent them from participating.
- They employ inferencing skills to follow the drift of what is being said.
- When they are speaking, they try to paraphrase their way through lexical gaps they may experience rather than letting communication fail.
- They are sensitive to feedback and try to learn from their mistakes but are not afraid of taking risks and losing face by making mistakes.
- According to the communicative situation, they place more or less emphasis on fluency versus formal correctness, at times experimenting with their language, at other times playing safe.

- They are not only responsive to corrective feedback but are also sensitive to how their interlocutors react emotionally to what they say, that is they pay attention to socio-affective feedback.
- They are flexible in choosing an appropriate strategy for the appropriate task and situation.

(Rubin and Thompson 1994; Griffiths 2008; Oxford 2011: 15)

Strategies of Young Children in Naturalistic Environments

In a now famous study of four Mexican children aged five to eight years who were acquiring English naturalistically in mainstream school classes in California, Wong Fillmore (1976) identified cognitive and social strategies which the children adopted. Cognitive strategies 'enable the learner to figure out how the new language is structured, to interpret meanings in it and to begin expressing themselves when using it' (Wong Fillmore 1976: 633). Social strategies 'have to do with finding ways to receive input on which to base the language learning and on making efficient use of the social setting in which language is used as an aid in that learning' (ibid.). Five cognitive and three social strategies were identified, which Wong Fillmore couched in the form of commands as follows:

Cognitive strategies

- Assume that what people are saying is directly relevant to the situation at hand or what you are experiencing (metastrategy: guess).
- Get some expressions you understand and start talking.
- Look for recurring parts in the formulae you know.
- Make the most of what you have (overextension of word meaning).
- Work on big things and save the details for later.

Social strategies

- Join a group and act as if you understand what is going on even if you do not.
- Give the impression – with a few well-chosen words – that you can speak the language (formulae).
- Count on your friends for help (interaction, negotiation of meaning).

(Wong Fillmore 1976: 633)

Strategies of Classroom Learners

Pioneering work by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) found that classroom foreign language learners also adopt a strategic approach. It was possible to identify metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies are global strategic approaches which help to organise

learning. They include advance planning, monitoring and reviewing, and can be applied to a variety of tasks to impart structure to task performance. Cognitive strategies, by contrast, are used for a particular learning task. Among them are some well-known study techniques such as note-taking or using a dictionary. Socio-affective strategies involve various forms of cooperative learning as well as consulting the teacher for help and indulging in self-talk to reduce task anxiety (O'Malley and Chamot 1990: 119–120, 126). Oxford (2011: 241–262) discusses specific strategies for listening, reading and writing as well as for learning vocabulary and grammar.

Self-Regulation, Autonomy, Motivation and Identity

Learning strategies and especially socio-affective strategies have been linked to the self-regulation of learning, the development of learner autonomy and the maintenance of long-term self-motivation (Dörnyei 2005: 188–195; Ushioda 2003, 2008; Johnson 2018: 144–145; Oxford 2011: 7–42; Chen et al. 2020). The idea of self-regulation, not just of language learning but of all purposeful human activity, was developed within social psychology. According to one definition, 'Self-regulation refers to self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of personal goals' (Zimmermann 2000: 14). The cycle consists of three phases: forethought, performance and self-reflection (ibid.: 16).

By learner autonomy is meant 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Holec 1980: 3). Initially, learners will require teacher support, which can gradually be withdrawn as they become increasingly self-directed (Holec 1980: 9, 29). Holec identified five areas in which learners should gradually take charge:

- learning goals
- learning content and progression
- learning methods and techniques
- monitoring of learning progress
- evaluation of learning achievement

(Holec 1980: 4)

Good learners differ from bad language learners less in the specific strategies they use and more in their ability to apply strategies appropriately to the task at hand in a flexible and eclectic manner (Reiss 1983; Norton and Toohey 2001; Griffiths 2008; Johnson 2018: 134–145; Chen et al. 2020). Strategy use is highly individual and one should be cautious about regarding some strategies as inherently better than others for all learners. In particular, learners from different cultures may have different strategy preferences (Press 1996; Johnson 2005). Good language learners

tend, in fact, to be not only good strategy users but also to be autonomous learners (Little 1999: 13).

Teachers can help learners develop autonomy, maintain motivation and ‘self-regulate’ their learning by giving them choices to make in their learning, varying classroom activities, setting them classroom tasks with clearly defined goals and discussing appropriate strategies (Dörnyei 2001: 71–86). Learners can benefit from some instruction in how to employ specific strategies for specific tasks, for example vocabulary learning, but they also need to be given space to develop their own personal strategic techniques (Moir and Nation 2008). To make this possible, it is important to create a low-anxiety learning environment conducive to the development of self-confidence (Dörnyei 2001: 86–116). In this way learners can find out what works best for them and ultimately develop a sense of their own learner identity, their ‘L2 self’ (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009) and of the imagined English language community to which they wish to belong (Norton 2013: 8; Noels and Giles 2013; Norton and Toohey 2011).

Communication Strategies and Negotiation of Meaning

When learners encounter communication difficulties while speaking, they may employ communication strategies to express what they want to say in a makeshift way. Gass and Selinker (2008: 285) define communication strategy as ‘a deliberate attempt to express meaning when faced with difficulty in the second language’. The following taxonomy is based on Faerch and Kasper (1983). For other classifications see, for example, Poulisse (1987) and Brown (2014: 129):

1. Using the native language or another language. This includes:
 - switching to the native language or another foreign language (code switching)
 - inserting a native language (or another foreign language) word
 - anglicising a native language (or another foreign language) word to make it sound English
2. Using one’s available English language resources. This includes:
 - overgeneralising a grammatical pattern (‘I suggested him to go’ on the model of ‘ask’)
 - overextending a word’s meaning (‘house’ for ‘kennel’)
 - paraphrasing (‘false hair’ for ‘wig’)
 - coining a word (‘meat-man’ for ‘butcher’)
 - giving examples (‘tables, chairs and sofas’ for ‘furniture’)
 - restructuring syntax (for example, abandoning a passive sentence and using an active sentence)

3. Cooperative strategies of appeal to the interlocutor. These include:
 - pausing and looking at the interlocutor in a mute appeal for help
 - pausing and asking the interlocutor to supply a missing word ('What's the word?')
 - pausing and explicitly discussing the problem with the interlocutor ('negotiation of meaning')
4. Paralinguistic strategies of gesture, mime and facial expression (for example, yawning to indicate the word 'tired')
5. Retrieval strategies for a word that is on the tip of one's tongue. These include:
 - pausing until the word comes
 - saying words which sound similar
 - saying words of related meaning
 - saying translations of the word from other languages

Some learners are better than others at choosing the best strategy for the particular communication problem at hand. They possess 'strategic competence', which may be distinct from formal proficiency (Canale and Swain 1980). Learners who regularly code switch in the classroom may find it difficult to use English-based strategies when they have to communicate with English speakers outside the classroom (Haastруп and Phillipson 1983). By contrast, learners who can employ communication strategies effectively, especially cooperative strategies, will not only communicate better but will also learn more effectively through communication, particularly at points where communication threatens to break down and 'negotiation of meaning' takes place. At these points a skilled interlocutor may provide the word, phrase or structure a learner is struggling to find, or may correct the learner. It is believed that learning is particularly likely to occur in such situations of joint focus on a problem (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 114–115; Mackey et al. 2012.). It is when learners experience problems in trying to communicate that they become aware of their own language deficits. In this way, even if they do not receive helpful input from their interlocutor, they will at least become aware of their problem and can learn from their own output. This is what is meant by the 'output hypothesis' (Swain 1985; Swain 1995, 2005; Swain and Lapkin 1995).

Socio-Cultural Theory and Interactive Language Learning

The idea of learning by means of cooperative communicative interaction is at the heart of the socio-cultural approach to language learning (see Lantolf 2000; Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Brown 2014: 12–15). The approach is based on the work of the Russian educationalist Lev

Vygotsky (1896–1934), whose work was not available in translation in the West until long after his death. Vygotsky was not concerned with language teaching but with general primary school education, which he saw as proceeding through cooperation between the novice (child) and the expert (teacher). Vygotsky (1978: 86) coined the term ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD) to refer to the child’s potential for achievement under conditions of optimum support. He defined the ZPD 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 under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

(Vygotsky 1978: 86)

It was found that children of the same proficiency level might well vary in the extent of their ZPD. Vygotsky argued that it was this variation in ZPD rather than variation in starting level of proficiency which determined potential development (Vygotsky 1986: 187). The progress the child makes educationally will be determined by the extent of its ZPD, its ability and readiness to engage in effective interaction and the quantity and quality of interactional support available to it (see Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 263–290; Lantolf and Poehner 2008: 14–17, 2013: 142–143).

The term ‘scaffolding’ (Wood et al. 1976: 96) is nowadays used to refer to such support, although Vygotsky himself did not use the term. With reference to language learning, one important form of verbal scaffolding consists of the way proficient speakers (experts) in conversation with learners (novices) may employ various rhetorical devices such as paraphrase, explanation, repetition and comprehension checks to support the learner (see Saville-Troike and Barto 2017: 115–116, 119–120). Scaffolding can also be provided by peers supporting one another in collaborative activities such as peer editing, peer correction and peer feedback on written work. This constitutes a form of mutual or reciprocal scaffolding. If learners pool their knowledge in the production of a piece of collaborative writing, for example, they are able to achieve more than they could individually. They may all be at a similar level of proficiency but they will have different strengths and weaknesses in the language and so can help one another. The idea of scaffolding may be extended still further to include, for example, visual aids (Gibbons 2015; Baker and Wright 2017: 287–290). The common factor is that the emphasis is never on reducing the goal to be achieved but on supporting the learner’s efforts to achieve the goal.

Socio-cultural approaches to language learning also place emphasis on the importance of introspection, self-talk and self-regulation (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 72–79; 179–207). This builds on Vygotsky’s conviction

that language helps us to regulate our thought processes and grapple with the problems of the world (Lantolf and Poehner 2013: 138–142). Vygotsky noted that children indulge in private or egocentric speech as a means of self-regulation as they talk their way through tasks and he regarded this as the precursor to adult inner speech. At a certain stage of cognitive development, egocentric speech, according to Vygotsky (1986: 87), ‘turns inward’ and becomes inner speech (see also Saville-Troike and Barto 2017: 121–123).

Food for Thought

- Q. 1. Is there anything you have learned in this chapter about (a) first language acquisition and (b) bilingual acquisition in naturalistic settings which you think language teachers should know? If so, say what and why.
- Q. 2. What do think is the greatest advantage that young language learners (before puberty) have over older language learners (after puberty) and what assets do post-puberty language learners have that young language learners lack?
- Q. 3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of classroom language learning compared to naturalistic acquisition?
- Q. 4. Do you think foreign languages should be taught just like other school subjects, or should attempts be made to make classroom foreign language learning as much like naturalistic acquisition as possible?
- Q. 5. Imagine you are a teacher of an intermediate class and your learners still produce *‘he come’, *‘she play’, etc. How would second language acquisition theory explain that?
- Q. 6. (Group task for practising teachers) Can you think of some developmental errors and some contrastive errors your learners make? Do they make any errors that seem to combine elements of both types of influence? Which of the three types do you think are most common among your learners? Are there differences in the proportions according to whether the first language is close to or far removed from English? Are there differences between child and adult learners?
- Q. 7. (Group task) The Monitor Model holds that in order for optimal acquisition to occur, the language that the learner is exposed to must be comprehensible and just beyond the learner’s current productive language level (comprehensible input at the $i+1$ level). Do you think anything else is necessary?
- Q. 8. (Group task) What language-learning strategies have members of the group themselves used, perhaps for vocabulary learning, grammar learning, writing, listening, reading or speaking in a foreign language? Try to group these into metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective categories.

- Q. 9. Look back at the taxonomy of communication strategies (CS). Which of the strategies listed do you find most effective and which least effective, both for achieving communicative goals and promoting further language acquisition? Can you think of any classroom activities which could be done to encourage learners to use CS and how would you get them to use the effective ones rather than the ineffective ones?
- Q. 10. (Group task) What are the similarities and differences between the $i+1$ level of input in the input hypothesis of Steven Krashen and the zone of proximal development (ZPD) of Lev Vygotsky?

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2 Language Teaching Methods

The Grammar-Translation Method

In Europe, throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, right up to the seventeenth century, Latin was the language used for international scholarship and cultural exchange. Renaissance scholars such as Sir Thomas More and Erasmus corresponded in Latin. Only from the seventeenth century onwards did the use of Latin as a *lingua franca* slowly decline as French progressively took over as the European *lingua franca*. Even so, Latin remained the language of scholarship and was a central component of the education of the European aristocracy and the expanding middle class throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. The grammar schools in Britain were so called because they taught Latin grammar, not English grammar.

It was not until the nineteenth century that the teaching of modern foreign languages started to attract the interest of educators and philologists in Britain and other European countries, notably France and Germany, on a large scale. As foreign languages became part of the school curriculum, it was natural that the method which had long been used for the teaching of Latin and Greek was applied to teaching modern languages. This method is now known as the Grammar-Translation Method. The first Grammar-Translation course books for teaching French and English appeared in Germany at the very end of the eighteenth century (Howatt with Widdowson 2004: 152) and the method was almost universally used in school teaching from the mid-nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century for both the classical languages and modern languages. It is still in use in many places today, particularly, but not only, for teaching Latin and Greek. Great emphasis is placed on accurate and close translation. The focus is on literacy rather than on oral/aural skills, which is justifiable for Latin and Greek, which are 'dead' languages in the sense that they do not possess a surviving community of native speakers, namely Romans or Ancient Greeks, with whom one might need to converse. The method was also unproblematic for modern languages provided one did not have to converse with native speakers.

In short, in the Grammar-Translation Method:

- The mother tongue was the language of instruction.
- Great emphasis was placed on starting to read and translate authentic texts as soon as possible.
- Translation was done both from the native language into the foreign language and vice versa.
- At first contrived (invented) sentences were translated and at later stages authentic texts were used.
- The overall goal was not only to be able to read, write and translate, but also to benefit intellectually from the mental discipline involved in mastering the language.
- Grammar was taught deductively, that is, by means of rules and example sentences.
- Vocabulary was encountered in authentic texts and rote-learned with mother tongue translations.

See Richards and Rodgers (2014: 6–7), Howatt with Widdowson (2004: 151–165), Cook (2001: 201–205) and Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 13–23).

The Direct Method

In many ways the Direct Method was the complete reversal of the Grammar-Translation Method. It aimed at enabling adults, many of whom had already had some experience of learning a foreign language at school, to develop oral conversational skills useful for transactions with speakers of the foreign language in everyday life. It was never used in the state secondary school system and was not intended to be, but with some modifications it remained the basis of language teaching in many private language schools in Europe right up to the 1970s. It was born in the late nineteenth century as international contacts for leisure and business purposes grew and the inadequacies of the Grammar-Translation Method for those who needed to acquire conversation skills became increasingly apparent. In particular, those who had learned by the Grammar-Translation Method were often at a loss for words when confronted with a native speaker, unused as they were to listening to natural spontaneous speech spoken at normal pace, or to speaking the language themselves.

The Direct Method is sometimes called the Berlitz Method in allusion to the Berlitz private language schools founded by Maximilian Berlitz, who as a young German immigrant to the United States opened his first language school in Providence, Rhode Island in 1878. Although Berlitz did not invent the method, he popularised it on both sides of the Atlantic. The first Berlitz School in Germany opened in Berlin in 1888,

and by 1914 there were nearly 200 Berlitz schools altogether, including 27 in Britain (Howatt with Widdowson 2004: 222).

Tuition by the Direct Method took place in small groups or on a one-to-one basis, was orally based and was steered by the teacher, who asked a series of more or less scripted questions to which the learners responded. In addition to answering questions, learners sometimes had to repeat sentences said by the teacher and perform actions as a response to teacher directives. The Direct Method teacher was a very different animal from the foreign language teacher in the secondary school system. He or she was usually a native speaker of the language to be learned (the target language), not a trained language teacher, preferably not a speaker of the learner's native language and in any case not allowed to use the learners' native language in class.

Grammar was not taught explicitly but was to be acquired implicitly by the carefully planned sequences of teacher questions which introduced grammatical structures according to a pre-set plan. Learners responded to these questions with the help of initial prompts or even model answers provided by the teacher. However, a translation of the teacher's question was never provided. Vocabulary was also introduced implicitly and was explained, demonstrated, exemplified or illustrated by the teacher but never translated. The teacher used language which was at least partly understandable from context. In particular, great use was made of everyday objects and pictures as well as gesture, facial expression, demonstration and mime to make the meaning clear. The emphasis was overwhelmingly on oral/aural skills with very little reading or writing. There were course books which summarised each session, but these were mainly intended to be looked at after the material had first been introduced orally.

In short, in the Direct Method:

- The target language was the language of instruction.
- The aim was to be able to understand and converse with native speakers.
- The teacher was usually a native speaker and not a trained teacher.
- The emphasis was on everyday language.
- Grammar was not explicitly taught.
- Vocabulary was not introduced by translation but by demonstration, mime, pictures and *realia*.
- Emphasis was placed on grammatical and phonological accuracy, with grammar and pronunciation mistakes being corrected (but not explained) by the teacher and the corrected version being repeated by the learner.

See Richards and Rodgers (2014: 11–14), Howatt with Widdowson (2004: 217–228), Jin and Cortazzi (2011: 563–567) and Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 25–34).

The Audiolingual Method

The next major innovation in language teaching was the Audiolingual Method, which was developed in the United States in the 1950s. Its origins go back, however, to the need in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War to provide military personnel with foreign language interviewing skills so as to deal with displaced persons, refugees and prisoners of war. The Audiolingual Method, claimed to be the first scientific method of language teaching, based as it was on a behaviourist view of learning and a structuralist view of language. Structuralist linguistics, as expounded by the great American structuralist linguist Leonard Bloomfield (Bloomfield 1933), viewed grammar not so much as a system of abstract rules but as sets of recurring sentence patterns in language use. This was an ethnographic approach to grammar, employed by linguists investigating languages which had no written records, for example the Native American languages. In their field work ethnographers enlisted the help of a number of native speakers of the language and proceeded by observing recurring patterns in speech and inferring the meaning of sentences by comparing a sentence whose meaning was known to a sentence similar in form whose meaning was unknown. This approach to grammar as recurrent sentence patterns was taken up for language teaching by Charles Fries (Fries 1945), who emphasised that the sounds of a language must be mastered first, then the syntactic structures, with vocabulary being held down to a minimum. Finally, vocabulary could be expanded by inserting relevant new words into structures which had already been mastered (a 'slot-and-filler' view of language):

Often 'substitute frames' furnish a simple device for the introduction or the practice of new words. Such 'frames' are sentences of the same pattern and general context, in one part of which it is possible to substitute a variety of words of the same class all of them fitting the context.

(Fries 1945: 55)

The syllabus for Audiolingual courses was therefore grammatically based, but the traditional grammatical categories of Latin and Greek grammars, which the Grammar-Translation Method used, were abandoned in favour of sentence-length structures or patterns. Selection and grading of structures was based on contrastive analysis, that is to say the comparison of the language to be learned (target language) and the native language. Contrastive analysis focussed on the grammatical systems of the two languages so as to identify points of difference between them, for example the Saxon genitive in English ('my aunt's pen') versus the prepositional construction for possession in French (*la plume de ma tante*). The target language structures to be concentrated on were those which differed most from the structures used in the native language to

express the same idea. Contrastive analysis was also applied to the sound systems of the two languages (phonology), to identify sounds which did not occur in the native language, and to the vocabulary (lexis) so as to identify 'false friends', that is, words which sound similar in the two languages but have different meanings, for example 'circulation' (English) and *circulation* (French), which means 'traffic'. However the main focus was on grammatical structures (syntax).

The scholar most closely associated with Audiolingual Language Teaching is Robert Lado, who studied under Fries at Michigan. It was he who combined structuralism with insights from behaviourist psychology, which sees human learning as being largely explainable in terms of stimulus and response. Lado (1964: 36–37) enunciated five theoretical principles, which he called 'laws of learning' which underlie Audiolingual Language Teaching, here reproduced verbatim:

- 'the fundamental law of contiguity': when two experiences have occurred together, the return of one will recall or reinstate the other.
- 'law of exercise': other things being equal, the more frequently a response is practised, the better it is learned and the longer it is remembered. Contrariwise, when a response is not practised, it tends to be forgotten.
- 'law of intensity': other things being equal, the more intensely a response is practised, the better it is learned and the longer it will be remembered.
- 'law of assimilation': each new stimulating condition tends to elicit the response which has been connected with similar stimulating conditions in the past.
- 'law of effect': other things being equal, when a response is accompanied or followed by a satisfying state of affairs, that response is reinforced. When a response is accompanied or followed by an annoying state of affairs, it is avoided.

(Lado 1964: 36–37)

In the Audiolingual Method, emphasis was on listening and speaking but in a highly programmatic way. Typically, an Audiolingual lesson might begin with the class listening to a model dialogue contrived to introduce a particular structure (for example, the instrumental structure, using 'with', as in 'I stir my tea with a teaspoon'). The example sentence or sentences would then be repeated several times by the class, following the teacher's model, first in chorus, then individually. Next, a whole set of different examples of the same structure but with different lexis (for example, 'I clean my teeth with a toothbrush') would be repeated (pattern drills). After that, learners might be directed, on the basis of a model example such as 'Do I stir my tea with a teaspoon?' to make the sentences they had been repeating into questions (manipulation drills).

The final step might be chain drills, in which one student asks another, 'Do you stir your tea with a teaspoon?' This student might reply, 'Yes, I stir my tea with a teaspoon.' Then on the basis of a cue (stimulus) such as 'open, door, key' this student might ask the next student, 'Do you open your door with a key?', and so it would go on right around the class. Further refinements might include a cued chain drill for questions which expect a negative answer such as 'stir your tea/toothbrush' so that one learner asks, 'Do you stir your tea with a toothbrush?' and the next learner answers, 'No, I stir my tea with a teaspoon.' New structures could then be introduced using the same lexis, for example 'What do you clean your teeth with?' and new chain drills created.

The main focus was on learning structures and learners generally had to work within the narrow range of vocabulary already introduced rather than choose new vocabulary not yet practised since mistakes could arise in this way. Just enough vocabulary was introduced to practise the structure in question. If learners did make mistakes, they were immediately corrected by the teacher and required to repeat the sentence correctly. Sometimes the whole class was required to repeat the sentence to make certain that they did not pick up the error which a single learner had made. The entire lesson was highly teacher-centred with the learner's role being to respond correctly to teacher stimuli. The military origins of the method have been mentioned and it is reminiscent of the parade ground in some respects. With the advent of language laboratories in the 1960s, audiolingual material could be recorded and learners could work through the exercises systematically, receiving feedback for each utterance they made.

In stark contrast to the Grammar-Translation Method, learners did very little reading or writing. However, like the Grammar-Translation Method, the Audiolingual Method failed to meet the needs of learners when they had to converse spontaneously with native speakers. Learners tended to remember the sentences they had practised in class, which usually turned out to be communicatively useless in the real world: 'I stir my tea with a teaspoon' is an authentic example from a course book I had to use many years ago. For real-world language use, students had usually never learned enough vocabulary to be able to fill in the slots appropriately in the underlying structures. Even if they did have the requisite vocabulary stored, the task of retrieving the words and the relevant sentence frame and then inserting the words into the frame under time pressure, for example while buying a ticket at a busy major railway station, was insurmountable.

Furthermore, learners rarely practised speaking more than one sentence at a time so that they were unable to cope with speaking even a few sentences fluently at a stretch. The insistence on correct pronunciation and grammar meant that progress was slow and learners lacked

confidence in their own abilities. A further drawback of the Audiolingual Method was that classes tended to be either terribly boring or terribly stressful. They might be boring because of all the repetitions, corrections and lack of freedom to be original plus the sheer inanity of repeating sentences with no scrap of relevance to any meaningful reality. They might be stressful because – to avoid boredom themselves and to keep things moving – teachers often adopted a no-nonsense, slightly bullying stance ('hurry-up now', 'answer right away'). This could be most unsettling for anxious learners and quite stressful even for those learners who started out well-motivated and self-confident.

However, although now largely discredited, the Audiolingual Method has not died out completely and there has been a renewed interest in the role of rote learning, imitation and repetition in language learning in recent years (see Scrivener 2011: 169–174; Harmer 2015: 234–235; Ur 2012: 82–83).

In short, in the Audiolingual Method:

- The goal was automatic, unconscious mastery of the language.
- The native language was banned in the classroom because language mastery was equated with habit formation and the habits established in and by the native language were held to interfere with the learning of the new language (negative interference).
- Learners were expected to respond immediately to stimuli and were deliberately not given time to think about their responses.
- Error occurrence was to be prevented and, if errors occurred, they were to be immediately corrected by the teacher and then the correct form was to be repeated by the learner.
- Learners first listened to a new structure and then practised saying it.
- Grammar was not taught explicitly, but rather learners were expected to grasp the grammar intuitively by means of examples.
- Correct pronunciation was insisted on from the start.
- Vocabulary was in the early stages to be kept to a minimum until the main structures had been mastered.
- Drilling, that is repetition and repetition with variation, of structures characterised Audiolingual Language Teaching.

See Richards and Rodgers (2014: 58–80), Johnson (2018: 151–155), Jin and Cortazzi (2011: 567–568), Cook (2001: 206–211), Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 35–50).

Situational Language Teaching (SLT)

The Audiolingual Method was never as popular in Britain as it was in the United States. For British EFL teaching from 1960 onwards, Situational Language Teaching (SLT) was the dominant method employed. An SLT lesson consisted of three phases: 'Presentation', 'Practice' and

'Production'. Frisby (1957: 136) justified this PPP lesson structure by arguing that language learning involved first reception of new material, then fixing it in memory and finally using it in actual practice until its use became habitual. SLT differed from the Audiolingual Method in aiming to achieve balanced competence in all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, any new structure or vocabulary item taught was first to be introduced orally and its pronunciation mastered before it was introduced in written form. As Pittman put it:

The learner has to *hear* the new material. He has to practise saying that material until he knows it; and then, and only then, he may *read* it or *write* it.

(Pittman 1967: 147)

SLT also placed great weight on the rigorous selection and grading of structures and vocabulary with the simple being introduced before the complex, the frequent before the infrequent and the more useful before the less useful.

Structures were to be introduced in situations (Pittman 1967: 148–157). One way of doing this was by demonstration, using the classroom surroundings. The present progressive, for example, could be taught by the teacher opening and closing the window and saying, 'I am opening the window' and 'I am closing the window.' However, many structures cannot be taught using just the immediate environment of the classroom, and so the SLT textbook was an important feature of the method, as well as various visual materials such as wall-charts, flashcards, pictures and drawings. SLT textbooks were specially written with scenes, stories and illustrations to convey each structure. The idea was that the situation should make the meaning clear without explicit grammatical explanation (inductive learning). Each new structure was introduced within a particular situation in a short text which told a story in a clearly defined setting. This could be a picnic excursion, a house on fire, a bank robbery or a visit to the circus. The texts were often accompanied by a picture or pictures to further contextualise the language. The texts were, however, highly contrived and chosen not for their thematic content but to serve as mere vehicles to transport structures and vocabulary. They have been much criticised since for their artificiality. But to write these texts was a daunting task. They had to display the new structures in sufficient variety for inductive learning of grammar to be possible, and they could not include structures deemed too advanced to be encountered at a particular stage. They also had to use the limited range of vocabulary already known and could only introduce a limited number of new words, and these words had to be of general service to learners. It was also very difficult to select and grade vocabulary and at the same time fulfil the lexical demands of the chosen topic.

In SLT textbooks the text and pictures constituted the raw material for the Presentation phase. This was followed by rather mechanical questions, substitution drills and other exercises (Practice phase) and then a final section which involved freer work, often written work, based on the text (Production phase). The lesson was generally highly teacher-centred and learners performed under close teacher control. Only in the final Production phase was more freedom allowed and this phase might involve interactive group work of various sorts.

In short, the main features of SLT were:

- All four skills were covered but priority was placed on oral language.
- Teaching took place in the target language.
- The syllabus was organised according to structures.
- Structures and vocabulary were rigorously selected and graded.
- New structures and vocabulary were introduced and practised in situations.
- Structures were taught inductively.
- Vocabulary was introduced so as to illustrate the structures in the specific situation.
- Vocabulary was selected and graded to ensure a basic service vocabulary became established.
- In practice there were often conflicts between structural and lexical selection and grading.
- Through repetition and rehearsal error was to be avoided (practice-makes-perfect principle).
- Specially written short texts were used to introduce structures difficult to demonstrate in the classroom.
- Each text had its own special setting, but taken as a whole the texts sometimes formed a fictional narrative with recurring characters.

See Richards and Rodgers (2014: 44–57), Howatt with Widdowson (2004: 249–250) and Cook (2001: 224–228).

Total Physical Response (TPR)

By the late 1960s the idea became popular, on the analogy of the child acquiring its first language, of not forcing beginners to speak from the very first lesson but to give them a ‘silent period’ in which they could first just listen. In this respect, an interesting innovation in language teaching was Total Physical Response (TPR), developed by James Asher, a Californian psychologist (Asher 1969, 2009). TPR set out to link language to action, supposedly in the way children acquire their mother tongue (Asher 2009: 2.17–19; 3.2). According to Asher, there are three guiding principles of TPR, which are here reproduced verbatim:

- Understanding the spoken language should be developed in advance of speaking.
- Understanding should be developed through movements of the student's body.
- Do not attempt to force speaking from students. As students internalise a cognitive map of the target language through understanding what is heard, there will be a point of readiness to speak. The individual will spontaneously begin to produce utterances.

(Asher 2009: 2.4)

In TPR the teacher gives commands which are carried out by the whole class ('Put your hands on your knees') or individuals ('Peter, give your pen to Mary'). The commands which shape TPR lessons are planned in advance down to the last detail. They come thick and fast and are executed promptly in a fun atmosphere. The idea is that internalisation of language takes place more effectively in this way because motor activity occurs not just in the language-specific areas of the brain but also in those involved in performing the relevant action so that a neural link between language and action is established. This is what is meant by 'kinaesthetic learning' (Asher 2009: 3.19). Asher contends that TPR involves both hemispheres of the brain (see Asher 2009: 2.19–29; 3.4–7).

Grammar is not explicitly taught. The transition from the imperative to other grammatical structures is made by nesting these within imperatives. For example, the past tense might be introduced as follows:

Josephine, if Abner ran to the blackboard, run after him and hit him with your book.

(Asher 2009: 3–43)

According to Asher (2009: 2.4), 'most of the grammatical structures of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned through the skilful use of the imperative by the instructor' (see also Asher 2009: 3.37). Asher (2009: 3–44) suggests 12–36 new words can be introduced in a one-hour lesson. This seems a lot by modern standards, but only receptive, not productive, knowledge is required initially. Learners are expected to recognise and respond to novel combinations of items which have already been introduced in isolation, for example, 'Sit on the table' when 'Walk to the table' and 'Sit on the chair' are already known (Asher 2009: 3–46). After perhaps 10–20 hours of instruction in this manner, learners are encouraged to take over the teacher's role and speak themselves (Asher 2009: 3.45; 4.18). In TPR students are thus not 'pushed' to speak before they feel ready to do so. Initially, learners' pronunciation mistakes are not corrected until students are 'ready to accept corrections' (Asher 2009: 3.35). After 10–12 hours of

TPR, reading may be introduced but ‘the reading content is confined to utterances students have thoroughly internalised through the imperative’ (Asher 2009: 3.25).

TPR was a radical departure from conventional language-teaching wisdom of the time in not recommending blanket error correction. It was Asher’s contention that inaccuracies are not important in the early stages of speaking, based on the analogy of the child’s first efforts to speak its mother tongue. After about 120 hours of teacher-centred instruction, conversational dialogues are introduced. Other classroom activities include role-play and slide presentations (to introduce vocabulary). There is no course book and initially hardly any materials. At later stages classroom objects and then pictures, slides, *realia*, word charts and student and teacher kits are introduced (Richards and Rodgers 2014: 283). Error correction is kept to a minimum even in the later stages, and reading and writing are introduced late. TPR is not well suited to coping with abstract language, indirect language, the hypothetical, the conditional and modality. Asher’s suggestion is to use pictures and words written on cards (Asher 2009: 3.22–24). He also suggests TPR can be used as a supplement to a course rather than the guiding principle of a course (op. cit.: 3.18–19).

In short, in TPR:

- The emphasis is on making learning an enjoyable experience in a relaxed atmosphere.
- The lesson is organised around directives and action-responses rather than repetition and drills.
- In its early stages TPR is highly teacher-centred but becomes learner-centred later as learners take over the role of giving directives and, still later, engaging in dialogues.
- Error correction is kept to a minimum.

See Richards and Rodgers (2014: 277–288), Asher (1969, 2009) and Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011:103–114).

Community Language Learning (CLL)

Community Language Learning (CLL) was one of a number of alternative, humanistic methods of language teaching which grew out of discontent with the Grammar-Translation and Audiolingual Methods. Humanistic education can trace its origins back to Rousseau’s educational treatise *Émile* (1762/2009), which inspired early twentieth-century reforming educators in Europe such as Montessori, Pestalozzi and Rudolf Steiner. Developed by Charles Curran (Curran 1972, 1976), a counsellor and professor of psychology, CLL seeks to develop the personality of the learner as a whole rather than merely imparting

knowledge and skills; it emphasises personalised learning and stresses the importance of affective and motivational aspects (Curran 1972: 26–27; 1976: 2–3, 22–23, 35–41).

The idea behind CLL is the encounter group in counselling and psychotherapy (Rogers 1970) and Curran was much influenced by Carl Rogers. The language class becomes an encounter, and the teacher, as ‘knower’, strives to help learners to become knowers without violating their individuality. ‘Community’ refers to the learner group. CLL places emphasis on learning as a social process. Only if the learners develop into a community in which mutual trust replaces initial anxiety and hostility will learning take place (Curran 1972: 28–36; 1976: 5, 22–25). The group sits in a circle, with the teacher being outside the circle. The learners decide on the topic to talk about and one starts talking. In the case of complete beginners, the speaker will say a sentence in the native language. The teacher, who commands the learner’s native language or has an assistant who does, will translate *sotto voce* in chunks into English and the learner will repeat each chunk out loud to the class. Another learner will then continue in the native language. What learners say in the target language will be recorded. After about 15 minutes the class will listen to the recording played back to them.

If learners are not complete beginners, a learner starts by talking in English about the topic agreed on by the group as best he or she can. The teacher renders any non-English parts of the narrative into English and the learner may incorporate these into the narrative, but will not be forced to. At a later stage of development the teacher may provide corrective feedback. At even later stages, as the group starts to feel more secure, collaborative narratives may be created, with the whole group offering corrections and suggestions for stylistic improvement. To round off each session, the teacher may record a monologue of the final spoken text. Learners may listen to the recorded monologue outside class and may transcribe it. Such transcriptions replace a course book, since no course materials are used (see Curran 1972: 145–157).

In practice, CLL seems to be used more with adults than children, especially adults of low proficiency who all have the same native language and are striving to achieve basic conversational fluency. Like TPR, it can also be used as a supplementary technique rather than as a complete method. For more on CLL, see Curran (1972, 1976), Richards and Rodgers (2014: 303–316) and Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 85–101).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1970s represented a major paradigm shift, the influence of which persists to this day. Current approaches to language teaching are refinements and further developments of the communicative approach rather than further

paradigm shifts. CLT grew out of dissatisfaction with traditional language teaching, was not motivated by a single all-embracing theory of language or language learning and was a macro-level approach to language teaching rather than a detailed, clearly laid out method at the micro-level of classroom procedures. It revolutionised language teaching by placing the major focus on the meaning of utterances in a situational context (pragmatic meaning).

Pragmatics was the level of language which up to that time had been largely neglected in language teaching. By the 1970s, however, it had become clear that many learners, especially adults, who had achieved a reasonable pronunciation, commanded the basic structures and had a sizeable vocabulary, were unable to engage successfully in conversational 'small talk' in English-speaking environments. They often experienced an inability to apply their formal knowledge of grammar and vocabulary effectively in real-life situations. They had trouble understanding longer stretches of natural, fluent colloquial speech delivered at normal conversational speed because they had been used to a teacher who spoke to them in idealised, slowly spoken, single sentences. They often did not understand the idiomatic turns of phrase used by native speakers in real-world situations either.

The goal of CLT was the achievement of 'communicative competence', a term used by Hymes (1972), who argued that linguistic competence in the sense used by Chomsky did not do justice to the abilities of a proficient speaker of a language. To communicate effectively, not only command of the formal system but also of socio-linguistic skills ('rules of use') was required. He emphasised that not only must a learner know whether and to what extent utterances are formally 'possible' (linguistically correct), but also whether they are 'feasible' (not stylistically awkward), 'appropriate' (suitable in context) and 'performed' (actually used).

Before the advent of CLT, language teaching had tended to focus mainly on the descriptive and narrative functions of language to the neglect of other functions, especially the phatic function (the use of language for purposes of social bonding). Phatic language became an important component of CLT, influenced by the work of John Firth (Firth 1950, 1951) and his student Michael Halliday (Halliday 1973). CLT also drew on work in pragmatics by the language philosophers John Austin (Austin 1962) and John Searle (Searle 1969). Austin's book was tellingly entitled *How to Do Things with Words*. It introduced the idea of the speech act, which was further developed by Searle. In this perspective, apart from the literal or propositional meaning of an utterance (its 'locutionary force'), two other aspects were of interest. The first was the effect the speaker intended the utterance to have on the listener ('illocutionary force'), and the second was the effect it actually did have on the listener ('perlocutionary force'). Of particular interest for CLT were 'indirect speech acts', in which there was a discrepancy between syntactic form and utterance function. An example would be a conditional

sentence functioning as a threat, as in, 'If you do that again, I'll break your neck.' Another example would be an interrogative sentence functioning as a request as in, 'Could you pass me the butter.' In many cases the speaker's functional intention can only be understood in context, and is often indicated by tone of voice.

In CLT less emphasis was placed on error correction and explanations and more emphasis on using the language to communicate. This was in line with the ideas expressed in Corder's (1967) paper, 'The Significance of Learners' Errors', which was discussed in Chapter 1. It will be recalled that Corder saw the language learner as retracing the path of the child acquiring its first language, perhaps even following a biologically predetermined 'inbuilt syllabus', but also employing cognitive skills in an active process of hypothesis-testing to explore the parameters of the target language (see also Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak 2012: 32–34).

The focus in the early days of CLT was on the spoken rather than the written language. A CLT lesson might, for example, involve a simulation or role-play in which groups of learners choose a package holiday from a number of possibilities available in brochures or, nowadays, on the internet. Their task might be to agree on the best solution for them personally, perhaps within a stated budget and with other constraints. According to Johnson and Johnson (1998), the success of a communicative activity can be assessed post hoc by asking five questions, as follows:

- Was language used to successfully transmit meaning?
- Was the language situationally and socio-linguistically appropriate?
- Did the task successfully stimulate cognitive processing?
- Did learners indulge in the right level of risk taking?
- Did learners have the opportunity to practise using the language freely?

The communicative revolution, as it is sometimes called, also influenced syllabus design. In this respect one may distinguish between 'strong' and 'weak' forms of CLT (Howatt 1984: 279; Littlewood 2011; Richards and Rodgers 2014: 84–87). In its most radical form CLT abandoned the idea of a syllabus altogether. Less radical forms strove to replace the traditional grammatical syllabus with a 'notional-functional syllabus', based on notions such as 'time', 'place' and 'the hypothetical' and functions such as 'describing', 'narrating', 'apologising' and 'complaining' (Wilkins 1976). However, it proved difficult to base selection and grading of language material on notions and functions and so the grammar-based syllabus was often retained but was supplemented by a functional/notional strand. Strong forms of CLT also abolished the traditional, rigidly sequenced course book of earlier times and replaced it with a course book which was little more than a resource pool of materials.

Weaker forms of CLT retained a sequenced course book, organised so as to cover both grammatical and notional/functional factors, but included in addition quasi-authentic material. De-contextualised grammar and vocabulary exercises now gave way to, or at least were supplemented by, communicative activities such as role-play, simulation and group problem-solving activities, for example information-gap tasks and jigsaw tasks. The teaching of writing was also later incorporated into the weak communicative approach. Emphasis was placed on the conventional language of various ‘communicative’ written genres, such as letters, reports, newspaper articles and, more recently, e-mails and blogs; in other words, on register (see Halliday 1978: 31–35).

CLT was not without its problems for teachers and learners, however. One of the problems encountered by teachers whose pupils all spoke the same mother tongue was that there was no real reason to communicate in the foreign language in the classroom. Even in classes of learners with various first languages, it is difficult to create opportunities for authentic communication so that CLT classes tend to take on an element of make-believe and ‘pretending’. As Littlewood (2011: 553) remarks, ‘Students are sometimes given a steady diet of “planning a party” that will never take place or “giving directions to the station” on the map of a non-existent town.’ Not all learners are prepared to suspend disbelief as required by these techniques.

In short:

- CLT grew out of disillusionment with traditional grammar-based teaching and grammar-based syllabuses.
- Its focus was on language in use in specific situations (the hitherto neglected area of pragmatics).
- The emphasis was on communication and learner involvement.
- The idea was to create situations in the classroom in which language would be used naturally, the classroom would become a microcosm of the real world and naturalistic language acquisition would thus occur.
- The learner was viewed as an explorer of the language, an experimenter with the language and a negotiator in the language.
- The teacher was a facilitator of learning who provided input and managed classroom activities rather than explaining the language system, drilling syntactic structures and correcting errors of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary.
- The important thing was for learners to get their intended meaning across rather than to produce formally correct utterances.
- Strong forms of CLT banned error correction, grammatical explanation and use of the mother tongue from the classroom.
- In weaker forms of CLT, errors were selectively corrected, often at the end of communicative activities so as not to disturb fluency, and

grammatical explanations in the mother tongue or in the target language were permitted.

See Richards and Rodgers (2014: 83–115), Howatt with Widdowson (2004: 326–349), Brown (2014: 205–236), Johnson (2018: 155–166), Cook (2001: 211–220), Littlewood (2011) and Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 115–130).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is a further development of CLT. By the 1990s efforts were being made to organise language teaching around tasks which were performed by learners working together in small groups of two to six or eight persons. The emphasis was on successfully completing the task. This usually involved arriving at a decision and often involved producing a physical product of some sort (a report, a written recommendation, a brochure, a set of instructions or guidelines, for example). Both ‘authentic’ or ‘real-world tasks’ and ‘pedagogical tasks’ were deemed to be suitable for TBLT (Ellis 2003: 339, 347, 351). According to Ellis (2003: 6), authentic or real-world tasks ‘correspond to some real-world activity’. Real-world tasks are those which learners might have to perform outside the classroom, for example asking for and giving directions, booking a hotel room, filling in various sorts of forms. Pedagogical tasks include games, competitions and project work of various sorts (see Legutke and Thomas 1991). Howatt with Widdowson (2004: 366–367) justified the inclusion of pedagogical tasks by arguing that the important thing is that the tasks engage learners’ imagination so that learners are concentrating not so much on language learning as on the activity itself. In this way language learning occurs incidentally.

TBLT involves learner empowerment. This means that the teacher needs to release control and let learners work in small groups or pairs not just for a few minutes at a time, as in CLT, but for almost the whole lesson after a short initial phase in which the task is set up and explained by the teacher. Attention is also paid to social forms of working, especially to seating patterns, and the traditional pattern of rows of learners facing a teacher at the front is abandoned. Instead, learners may sit around tables in groups of perhaps four to six, or sit in a horseshoe pattern, with the open part of the horseshoe being left for the teacher to sit in. In particular, however, movement becomes a feature of the classroom, with learners moving from one group to another, seeking information or seeking a class member who possesses specific information needed to complete the task. Furthermore, the working groups are likely to be fluid and to change in composition according to the requirements of each individual task. This social dimension of TBLT

provided the stimulus for further developments in language-teaching methodology, especially Cooperative Language Learning and Self-Directed Language Learning (SDLL), both of which will be discussed below.

In short, in TBLT:

- The teacher may initially introduce a task, provide materials and set an overall plan or timeline for the lesson before learners divide into groups and work more or less autonomously.
- After this preparatory phase, learners may plan, then perform and finally reflect on the activity. The three phases (plan, perform, reflect) are often performed cooperatively in groups, under the general guidance of the teacher who may circulate from group to group to monitor performance and progress and respond to any learner questions or appeals for help.
- The teacher is available to facilitate accomplishment of the task, which learners nevertheless perform in as autonomous a fashion as possible.
- The learner is expected to take on an active and cooperative role in all three phases of the lesson: planning, performance and reflection.
- Traditional forms of assessment, especially traditional written examinations, are often replaced by peer assessment and self-assessment, project work and portfolio work.

For more on TBLT see Ellis (2003), Nunan (2004), Willis and Willis (2007), East (2012), Richards and Rodgers (2014: 174–199), Brown (2014: 237–238), Johnson (2018: 167–172) and Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 149–163).

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL)

Cooperative Language Learning differs only in emphasis from TBLT in that it places the focus firmly on cooperation rather than task completion. Tasks need not necessarily end in the achievement of a goal. Cooperative forms of learning are underpinned by socio-cultural theory, in particular the work of the Russian educationalist Vygotsky (1978, 1986), discussed in Chapter 1. It was at first thought that the insights of Vygotsky were of little relevance for classroom language teaching because they assumed a one-to-one adult–child or novice–expert situation, whereas in the language classroom there is only one expert (the teacher) available for a whole class of novices. However, modern applications of Vygotsky’s ideas include the idea of peer support, in which learners mutually support one another in pairs or groups. In this way the group achieves more than any of the individual members could alone.

Like TBLT, CLL involves learners working in small groups. The implementation of group work in CLL, as in TBLT, may pose problems, at least initially, and there are certain pitfalls which can be avoided:

- Firstly, the aims of any specific piece of group work should be made explicit by the teacher (or in self-directed project work by the learners themselves) (Dam 1994: 509).
- Secondly, for classes who have no experience of group work the teacher may have to set up a framework within which the group work is performed. This may include assigning specific roles to certain group members, for example a secretary to keep a written record, a timekeeper, a referee and a 'language watchdog' to record and/or prevent language switch.
- Thirdly, inexperienced young learners will need fundamental guidance about techniques of negotiation and cooperation within the group.
- Fourthly, the teacher should make sure that inflexible group structures based on cliques do not develop. It must be ensured that group membership changes over time, and this may require teacher intervention. Personality clashes within groups should also be avoided if possible (Dam 1994: 511).

In short, in Cooperative Language Learning:

- The emphasis is on social interaction, the exchange of information and the social benefits of discussion.
- Learners find out about one another's opinions, points of view, personal histories, likes and dislikes.
- Where the teacher has some freedom to determine the syllabus or course content, then learner interests and areas of subject competence can be built in to the teaching schedule.
- Where factual and linguistic knowledge are involved, some learners may be factually more knowledgeable and others better at the language, so that interaction results in mutual benefits.

See Richards and Rodgers (2014: 244–258) and Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 186–190).

Self-Directed Language Learning (SDLL)

Self-Directed Language Learning is a further development of CLL and is not to be confused with self-study or working in isolation. The ultimate aim is learner autonomy, but the autonomous learner is a social learner. The emphasis in SDLL is therefore on social learning under the guidance of the teacher, who provides necessary support, which is gradually withdrawn over time. This shift in emphasis towards learner self-direction is sometimes referred to as learner empowerment. The aim is to produce learners who can continue to learn on their own after formal language education has finished. For this to occur, individuals must, under the

guidance of the teacher, develop increasing awareness of how they learn best, what their preferred learning styles are and how they can apply particular learning strategies in certain situations to enhance their learning. They should, however, ‘learn how to learn’ English implicitly through the learning process itself rather than through explicit instruction (see *Self-regulation, Autonomy, Motivation and Identity* in Chapter 1).

It is advisable to introduce a measure of self-direction in the early stages of language learning since it is extremely difficult to wean advanced learners away from dependence on their teacher after years of teacher-directed learning (Robinson 1981). Much depends on giving learners the right amount of choice at the right time. There is a scale of choice types through which learners should progress:

- At the lowest levels learners can be offered a restricted number of choices about which task to do or how to organise a task, for example whether to do a specific task as group work or in pairs or individually (see Pinter 2017: 111–126).
- At a slightly higher level learners can also decide how tasks should be divided up among the class and whether certain tasks should be done in a particular order, or done in class or as homework.
- At still-higher levels of development learners will be able to make informed choices about materials and techniques.
- Very advanced and experienced learners may be able to make choices about teaching and learning methods and approaches.
- The very highest level of choice concerns the negotiation of the course content with the class (the negotiated syllabus). This is unlikely to happen in school courses, but is a possibility in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses for specific professional groups with special needs (see Savage and Storer 2001).

Part of learner autonomy consists of the ability to assess one’s own progress. This can be developed through the introduction of peer assessment and self-assessment. These are not intended to necessarily replace, but rather to supplement teacher assessment. In assessing their own spoken and written productions as well as those of their peers, learners will gain insights which would not otherwise be available to them. Peer assessment of written work can be introduced successfully in secondary school (see Bärenfänger 2012).

There is also an important intercultural aspect to self-directed learning. For this reason SDLL should never be imposed wholesale on learners without considering how well the approach chimes in with their own educational and cultural background. In cultures which place a high value on teacher authority, rote learning, imitation and closely guided practice, the facilitating teaching style of SDLL may have to be arrived at in easy stages. Learners who view the teacher as a language guru, who

have been used to a hierarchical mode of teaching and/or have an authority-oriented learning style may see their own role as essentially passive, may not like working in groups and may prefer the more traditional teacher-fronted style to which they are accustomed (see Sonaiya 2002: 106; Smith 2003: 260). More generally, self-directed classrooms may at first sight seem rather chaotic, noise levels may be higher and there will be much more movement of learners compared to the traditional classroom. Some learners may prefer a more disciplined classroom. Learners who prefer to work alone or to consult the teacher can be offered these options within the framework of choices available, at least on occasion.

One way of getting learners started on the road to self-direction and autonomy is to gradually introduce an element of peer presentation. This involves learners, either singly, in pairs or in small groups, preparing short presentations which they deliver to the class on some topic they are especially interested in and possess expertise or special knowledge about – perhaps an unusual hobby, or a period spent living abroad. Adult learners can teach the class a little bit about their profession or job. Another possibility is to introduce an element of peer teaching. To start with, one or more learners can take over the teacher's role for a small part of a lesson. Learners can also be encouraged, where appropriate, to bring in their own materials (Worgan 2010).

Finally, for the teacher, too, things may not be easy. Some teachers may find it difficult to adapt to the role of facilitator in SDLL. One problem is that, as part of learning to become autonomous, learners will make mistakes. It can be very difficult for the teacher to accept 'wrong choices' which learners may make concerning techniques or materials. Learner choices must be accepted and should not be overruled by the teacher. Particularly in the early stages, the teacher should ensure that the options available are all acceptable. For example, if learners are to choose one of four pop songs to work on, then these must all be didactically suitable.

In short, in SDLL:

- The ultimate goal is complete learner autonomy.
- The emphasis is on developing the ability to self-direct learning in social contexts.
- The teacher supplies support which is progressively withdrawn as learners become more autonomous.
- Learners first make limited choices concerning task sequencing, then select materials and methods and ultimately decide on learning goals and course design.
- Peer teaching, peer presentations, peer assessment and self-assessment may be used.

- Authentic materials are often used and selected afresh for each learner group and task.

See Richards and Rodgers (2014: 331–334), Pinter (2017: 111–126), Benson (2011) and Dam (1994).

Competence-Based Language Teaching (CBLT)

Competence-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) defines language proficiency in terms of what the learner can do with the language; that is to say, as skill mastery rather than formal mastery. CBLT assumes that language learning can be regarded as the development of a set of inter-related skills, which range from simple to complex, with simpler skills nesting within other more complex skills. More complex skills will build on simpler skills in certain structured ways. Skills will cluster together to form modules, and skills within a particular module will be closely linked, and there will also be links between modules which share certain sub-skills. Language proficiency in this view constitutes mastery of a network of interrelated elements which can be recombined afresh to meet new communicative needs. For example, writing e-mails combines various elements of letter-writing skills with elements of the spoken mode as well as some elements specific to e-mails. This results in the specific language or register of e-mail writing.

According to Halliday (1978: 33–35), register is determined by the ‘context of situation’, which in turn comprises three components, namely ‘field’, ‘tenor’ and ‘mode’:

- ‘Field’ refers to the physical and psychological setting of the communication.
- ‘Tenor’ refers to the participants and the role relations between or among them.
- ‘Mode’ refers to whether speech or writing is involved and more detailed choices within the spoken or written channels.

(adapted from Halliday 1978: 33)

Concerning mode, nowadays one must also consider various electronic forms, such as e-mailing, chatting, text messaging and Skyping, which straddle the traditional divide between speech and writing to form a ‘mode continuum’ (Gibbons 2015). ‘Field’, ‘tenor’ and ‘mode’, subsumed under the term ‘context of situation’, will define the appropriate register for any particular act of language communication.

In CBLT the content of the course becomes largely identical with the skill-based proficiency goals set. In other words, in the classroom learners work directly on the skills which they are aiming to master. The relevant skill goals might include reading the headlines of a newspaper,

understanding written assembly instructions, tactfully declining an invitation, writing a letter of recommendation or giving an after-dinner speech, depending on the course and the needs of its learners. In the case of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, for example for computer technicians, librarians or police officers, it may be possible to define goals quite precisely by surveying learners in advance about the language skills they will require. This is referred to as ‘needs analysis’ (Munby 1978; Huhta et al. 2013). More will be said about needs analysis in Chapter 4.

In many school classes, however, it is not possible to predict learners’ future English language needs precisely, so that goals can only be formulated in general terms. This situation is sometimes termed TENOR (Teaching English for No Obvious Reason). Even in ESP courses, needs analysis can sometimes be tricky. It is generally easier to define the required skills for lower-level technical staff than for higher-status professionals such as engineers, managerial staff and administrators, who may need to indulge in a wide variety of linguistic activities outside the narrow confines of their specialist knowledge, including encouraging personnel, disciplining staff, interacting socially with colleagues and entertaining customers or visitors.

CBLT is an output-based, rather than an input-based, approach to language teaching. It is the skills learners will hopefully possess at the end of the course (output) which are set out in advance in the syllabus, not the language content to be taught (input). The focus on output skills in CBLT means that the syllabus has to be so designed that progress is made in modular fashion from less complex to more complex communicative tasks, but also from core to peripheral tasks in terms of the needs of the specific group of learners at hand. The focus on output skills also influences how learners are assessed. Continuous or ongoing assessment is often employed in CBLT, with both success in performing the task, as well as the language used, being assessed. CBLT is closely associated with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) developed by the Council of Europe. The CEFR sets competence-based, benchmark standards of proficiency in languages (see Richards and Rodgers 2014: 165–168).

CBLT has a good track record and has been very successful in many ESP programmes all over the world. It has also been successfully employed in language programmes for adult immigrants, for example the Australian Migrant Education Programme (Richards and Rodgers 2014: 160). Its adherents claim that learners respond positively to learning practical communication skills, which they perceive as relevant for their future lives. Further, learners know at each stage in the course exactly what they have achieved and can chart their own progress. In this regard the use of portfolios in which learners record in ongoing fashion the language skills they have acquired fits in well with the modular approach and with continuous assessment.

The implementation of CBLT is, however, not without its problems, especially in TENOR situations. Firstly, there is no one-to-one match between structures and functions in language. Rather, it is in the nature of language that structures have multiple functions, and different structures can often be used to express the same speech act but with differences in register, style or politeness. Thus, it is difficult to define a bundle of structures which learners must learn in order to perform any given task. A second, related, problem is specifying the level of complexity required of learners in performing a given task. This problem becomes less critical if a cyclical syllabus, rather than a traditional linear syllabus, is adopted. In a cyclical syllabus learners return to functions such as apologising, refusing and objecting at increasingly sophisticated levels of elaboration during the course of their language-learning careers. A third and more fundamental criticism of CBLT is that no definitive list of functional competences exists and it is unlikely that anyone could produce such a list. The most serious and most fundamental criticism of all, however, is that it is doubtful whether complex linguistic skills can legitimately be approached in such a reductionist fashion, there being no research-based evidence that the sum of the constituent tasks actually does equal the complexity of the whole task.

To summarise, in CBLT:

- The goal is skill mastery.
- The course goals are made explicit in advance and are identical with the syllabus.
- Mastery of the course goals can be demonstrated by performance.
- The emphasis is on individualised, student-centred instruction,
- Teaching is task-oriented.
- There is a focus on life-skills for successful functioning in society.
- The course is divided into modules to reflect the tenet that simple skills nest within more complex skills.
- Continuous assessment is often used.

(See Richards and Rodgers 2014: 150–173)

The Post-Methods Era

The search for the ideal, universal and complete language-teaching method has now been largely abandoned. Many successful teachers today practise a principled eclecticism in that they combine elements from various methods, without committing themselves to any single method in its entirety. They recognise that the idea of a single universal method is a pipe dream and that all methods have to be adapted to the specific group of learners in the teaching situation at hand. Furthermore, not only learners but also their teachers have their own preferences, talents and inclinations, which also need to be considered. In order to

practise a principled eclecticism, each teacher needs to develop a theory of what language is, how languages work, how they are acquired naturally and how they are learned in classrooms. Only then can principled decisions be made as to what broad teaching approaches should be adopted. This is infinitely preferable to just mixing and matching techniques and activities from various methods on a rather unprincipled basis.

This brief historical review of methodology has shown that up to the 1970s classroom language teaching tended to focus on grammar and vocabulary and to ignore pragmatics, especially the pragmatics of conversation, which were increasingly in demand by learners. As these deficits became apparent, there was a paradigm shift in language-teaching theory from the late 1970s onwards. The new approach became known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Further developments in methodology within the new paradigm included Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Cooperative Language Learning (CLL). The attempt was made within these approaches to model classroom language learning on naturalistic acquisition and to move away from teaching languages like any other academic subject. This in turn involved downplaying formal, cognitively based teaching, especially explanations of grammar and blanket correction of errors. The emphasis was placed on interaction, conversation and language use rather than on explicitly informing learners about the system of the language.

However, at the level of classroom practice, the changes in methodology described in this chapter found their way into classrooms only gradually so that there was always a discrepancy between the state of the art in ELT methodology and what actually went on in classrooms. New methods were not necessarily applied universally, immediately or in undiluted form and old methods were not abandoned overnight. Today, within one institution, different teachers ostensibly teaching to the same syllabus and using the same materials often teach in quite different ways. Even course books that espouse a particular approach may be used by teachers, whether deliberately or unknowingly, quite differently from the way they were intended to be used. This is not surprising since teachers develop their own preferred teaching styles and find they are better suited to teaching within some approaches than within others. Trainee teachers remain in many ways surprisingly impervious to the methodological input they receive during their professional training; later, as practising teachers their particular brand of teaching often draws on the way they themselves were taught at school and on what they have picked up informally from colleagues as much as on what they learned about teaching methodology at university.

Methodology theorists were often over-enthusiastic about new methods which subsequently failed to live up to initial expectations. Furthermore,

there was a tendency for ELT methodology to develop in zig-zag fashion, with each new method representing an overcorrection of the previous one. In this respect, the unwillingness of teachers to immediately jump on every new methodological bandwagon may well have shielded language learners from some of the worst excrescences of methodology theory. The grass-roots language teacher's tendency towards compromise and eclecticism has actually proved to be in tune with the more differentiated picture of language learning which has emerged more recently. The teaching method employed may well be less important than interesting content, the presence of intrinsic learner motivation and a good working relationship between teacher and learners, as well as a mutual conviction of the efficacy of what they are doing.

The history of language-teaching methodology suggests that foreign languages are, ironically enough, often best learned incidentally, when the focus is not on the language as something to be learned but as a communicative tool. A special case of such incidental language learning is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), in which learners study an academic subject such as history, economics, geography or biology through the medium of a foreign language such as English. CLIL falls outside the purview of this survey of language-teaching methodology since it requires teachers trained in both the foreign language and the academic subject in question and is not a methodological option for most mainstream language teachers. For more on CLIL, which takes various forms according to the educational system in which it operates in different parts of the world, see Coyle et al. (2010) and Baker and Wright (2017) in the 'Further Reading' section.

Food for Thought

- Q. 1. There is some controversy about whether languages can be taught in much the same way as other academic school subjects or not. What do you think?
- Q. 2. Do you see the role of the language teacher mainly as an explainer of the language, a demonstrator of the language, or as a facilitator who provides opportunities for practice in using the language (learning by doing)? Do you think there are other major or minor roles for the language teacher to play?
- Q. 3. Can you match some of the language-teaching methods mentioned in this chapter to the role views of the teacher mentioned in Question 2?
- Q. 4. Some people hold that the personality of the teacher is more important than the teaching method. What do you think and why? Which of the methods presented in the chapter are most dependent on the personality of the teacher and which are least dependent on

the teacher's personality? Can the teacher's personality transcend the method adopted?

- Q. 5. The search for the single best language-teaching method has now been largely abandoned. One size does not fit everybody and there is more interest nowadays in matching teaching to learners. Take some of the methods discussed in the chapter and consider what sort of learners might be most suited or least suited to them. Consider factors such as age, socio-cultural and geographical background, motivation, goals and proficiency level.

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3 Individual Learner Differences

Aptitude for Language Learning

The MLAT

Some people are better than others at learning foreign languages. They learn more quickly and apparently more easily than their peers. Like intelligence, language-learning aptitude is taken to be a fixed internal factor which cannot be developed but remains constant throughout life for an individual relative to others of the same age. Special tests have been developed which measure how well-suited to classroom language learning an individual is. The most famous one is the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT), developed at Harvard University during a five-year research project with 5,000 participants. It seeks to measure 'how well, relative to other individuals, an individual can learn a foreign language in a given amount of time and under given conditions' (Carroll and Sapon 1959). The MLAT assumes that language-learning aptitude consists of four components:

1. phonetic coding ability: an ability to identify distinct sounds, to form associations between those sounds and symbols representing them, and to retain these associations;
2. grammatical sensitivity: the ability to recognise the grammatical functions of words (or other linguistic entities) in sentence structures;
3. rote-learning ability for foreign language materials: the ability to learn associations between sounds and meanings rapidly and efficiently, and to retain these associations; and
4. inductive language-learning ability: the ability to infer or induce the rules governing a set of language materials, given samples of language materials that permit such inferences.

(Carroll 1981: 105)

The MLAT is administered by the Second Language Testing Foundation Inc. (SLTF), a non-profit-making organisation which charges institutions for using the test. Example questions are supplied online by SLTF (<http://lltf.net/mlat-sample-items>). Versions of the MLAT are also available in languages other than English. It is important to bear in mind that the MLAT is not testing ability in English or whatever language it is set in, but ability to learn other languages in general.

In its standard form the MLAT requires 60–70 minutes of test time and consists of a battery of five tests, as follows:

- Part One (43 items), ‘Number Learning’, aims to test inductive ability. Sample numbers from an invented language are presented orally to learners, who then have to recognise novel numbers.

Example: The test takers hear ‘ba’ is one, ‘baba’ is two, ‘dee’ is three, ‘tu’ is 20, ‘ti’ is 30, ‘tu-ba’ is 21, and so on, and have to recognise novel numbers such as ‘ti-ba’, ‘ti-dee’, ‘tu-dee’.

- Part Two (30 items), ‘Phonetic Script’, aims to test phonetic coding ability. Test takers see five sets of four syllables written down and spelt ‘phonetically’, and then hear the syllables pronounced.

Example:	bot	but	bok	buk
	bok	buk	bov	bof
	geet	gut	beet	but
	beek	bev	but	buv
	geeb	geet	buf	but

The task involves then hearing just one of the four syllables from each set and matching it to its written ‘phonetic’ representation.

- Part Three (50 items), ‘Spelling Clues’, aims to test phonetic coding ability and inductive ability. However, this test part is done under time pressure, so success also depends on ability to work quickly and on knowledge of English vocabulary (or the vocabulary of whichever language is used for the test). Test takers see a word which is inaccurately spelt and they have to match it to one of four (correctly spelt) words, three of which are distractors and one of which is a near synonym of the source word.

Example:	PREZNS (stimulus word).
Instruction:	Match with one of the following: ‘kings’ ‘explanations’ ‘dates’ ‘gifts’ ‘forecasts’

- Part Four (45 items), ‘Words in Sentences’, aims to test grammatical sensitivity – without using grammatical terminology – and inductive ability. Test takers are shown a model sentence with a word capitalised and a test sentence with five words underlined. They have to identify the word which performs the same grammatical function as the capitalised word in the model sentence.

Example: MARY is happy (model sentence).

From the look on your face, I can tell that you must have had a bad day.

- Part Five (24 items), 'Paired Associates', aims to test rote memory for vocabulary. An element of working under time pressure is also involved. Learners are given a set of 24 words from an unknown or invented language and their English translation equivalents.

Example:	Maya	English
	cʔon	gun
	siʔ	wood
	kʔab	hand
	kab	juice
	bat	axe

(19 more words and translation equivalents)

Test takers are given two minutes to memorise the list. The vocabulary is then tested by means of multiple-choice. Test takers have to match a word to its English translation, with one correct solution and three distractors being offered for choice.

Example:	bat	A. animal
		B. stick
		C. jump
		D. axe
		E. stone

There is also an elementary version of the test available, the MLAT-E, which is intended for young learners aged roughly 9 to 12 years. It differs from the standard MLAT in that it has only four parts. Part Five, the 'Paired Associates' test for rote memory has been dropped for some reason. Sample questions from the MLAT-E are available online from SLTF (<http://lltf.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/MLAT-E-Sample-Items.pdf>).

The MLAT is more effective in identifying those few individuals who will find it very difficult to learn languages than in spotting those few highly gifted individuals at the other end of the scale. It has been widely used in the United States and Canada by employers in the private and public sectors, including the armed services, the civil service and the diplomatic service, to select suitable learners for language courses and to weed out unsuitable candidates from the start. The MLAT is also used by some educational institutions for admission to degree courses in foreign languages. Thanks to its modular structure, the MLAT produces differentiated aptitude profiles. For this reason it is sometimes used diagnostically to tailor language courses to the specific strengths and weaknesses of a particular group of learners.

There is a relationship between how people score on language aptitude tests and how they score on intelligence tests. However, the

MLAT is a better predictor of language-learning aptitude than performance on intelligence tests, although three of the four components tested in the MLAT, namely grammatical sensitivity, inductive ability and rote-memory ability seem to be quite closely related to general intelligence. The fourth component, namely phonetic coding ability, seems not to be closely related to intelligence. This in turn suggests that phonological aptitude may be distinct from lexical and grammatical aptitude. In other words, foreign accent is not necessarily a good guide to a learner's overall proficiency (as was mentioned in Chapter 1).

Those who have a good musical ear may be at an advantage in acquiring the phonology of a foreign language after the critical or sensitive period for nativelike acquisition has closed off. A study by Sleve and Miyake (2006) found that musical ability (perception and production of note and pitch changes) predicted phonological ability in English as a foreign language (production and perception of phonemes). However, musical ability did not predict grammatical or lexical competence. The subjects were 50 Japanese native speakers who had all come to the USA after the age of 11 years and lived there for at least six months. Half of them were students and the others were either employed locally or were the spouses of people who were working or studying in the USA. Most of them had first learned their English in school before coming to the USA.

The MLAT does not seek to predict ultimate attainment but rather how quickly an individual will learn a language in the classroom, particularly in the initial stages. Ultimate attainment will be influenced by additional internal factors such as interest in learning the language, attitudes to the language and its speakers and both intensity of motivation and the specific nature of the learner's motivation. A host of external factors, including the quality of instruction received and opportunities to interact with speakers of the language outside the classroom will also be influential. Carroll (1973) expressed the relationship between aptitude and other factors influencing success in language learning as follows:

In brief ... if aptitude is reflected in how much time an individual needs to learn something under optimal conditions of motivation, opportunity to learn and quality of instruction, the role of aptitude can be either increased or decreased when these other conditions are varied.

(Carroll 1973: 6)

In the teaching environments for which it was developed, before the advent of CLT, the MLAT generally produced correlations of 0.4 and 0.6 between aptitude and subsequent achievement tests in a foreign

language (Carroll 1981: 93, 96). This means that between 16% and 36% of the variation in language test scores in a sample of learners is accounted for by variation among learners' MLAT score (see Carroll 1981: 96–97 for further discussion of how to interpret the correlations). However, Ehrman and Oxford (1995) still obtained correlations of 0.51 for the MLAT with end-of-course proficiency ratings in reading and in speaking for learners taught according to communicative methodology. The subjects were 352 highly educated adult learners of various languages at the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State. The authors conclude that 'the MLAT may be addressing learning abilities that are independent of methodology' (Ehrman and Oxford 1995: 78). Aptitude was a better predictor of success than all the other factors included in the study: learning strategies, learning styles, personality, motivation and anxiety.

For further discussion of the MLAT, see Johnson (2018: 110–117).

The LAB

Another successful and widely used aptitude test is the Language Aptitude Battery (LAB), developed by Paul Pimsleur and designed for use in schools from the end of grade 6 to grade 12 (Pimsleur 1966). The battery, which takes 50–60 minutes to administer, consists of six parts, as follows:

- Part One, 'Grade Point Average' asks test takers to report their scores in their other academic subjects.
- Part Two, 'Interest in Foreign Language Learning', aims to measure the extent of learners' self-assessed interest in learning the foreign language.
- Part Three, 'Vocabulary as an Indicator of Verbal Intelligence' is a multiple-choice English vocabulary test based on matching one of four words, for example 'weak', 'sickly', 'strong', 'vigilant' to a source word, for example 'vigorous'.
- Part Four, 'Language Analysis', seeks to test 'ability to reason logically in terms of foreign language materials'. It uses an unknown or invented language, and on the basis of example sentences learners have to work out the grammar and answer multiple-choice questions in which they choose the correct translation of an English sentence into the unknown language from four possibilities.
- Part Five, 'Sound Discrimination', tests the 'ability to learn phonetic distinctions and to recognise them in different contexts'.
- Part Six ('Sound/Symbol Association') tests the 'ability to associate a sound with its written symbol'.

The LAB thus differs most markedly from the MLAT in its first two parts, which have no parallels in the MLAT. Concerning the remaining four parts, the LAB focuses more on auditory factors and less on memory factors (which the MLAT-E also downplays).

Concerning ‘Grade Point Average’, there is indeed some evidence that a general academic intelligence factor as well as academic study skills may strongly influence foreign-language learning success in traditional classrooms. In a study by Saffron (1988), for example, it was found that for secondary school children learning French at intermediate level in the English Midlands the best predictors of achievement on the end-of-year written exam were scores on a verbal reasoning test (in English) and exam results in other subjects, with history being the strongest predictor among school subjects. It may indeed well be the case that in formal classroom settings successful learners are just using the same cognitive abilities they successfully employ for other school subjects.

Concerning ‘Interest in Foreign Language Learning’, it is not surprising that this variable should improve the predictive power of the LAB. However, there are good reasons for excluding this variable from measures of aptitude and including it rather as an attitudinal measure. Unlike intelligence and aptitude, interest in learning the language can and does change over time and can be influenced by the teacher, other persons and external circumstances. It is clearly not a fixed, internal factor.

The CANAL-F Test

The CANAL-F test (Cognitive Ability for Novelty in Acquisition of Language – Foreign) (Grigorenko et al. 2000) was constructed in the light of developments in communicative language teaching and language-acquisition theory (see Dörnyei 2005: 50–53; Skehan 2012: 389–390). It uses an artificially constructed language called Ursula as the basis for testing ability to acquire vocabulary, comprehend extended texts, infer grammatical rules from text and also make semantic inferences at the clause, sentence and discourse levels. The underlying idea is that it is the ability to cope with novelty and ambiguity which is decisive in determining language-learning aptitude. The test assumes that there are five knowledge acquisition processes:

- selective encoding (focussing on relevant information for the task)
- accidental encoding (understanding background contextual information)
- selective comparison (relating already learned information to the new task)
- selective transfer (applying already learned rules or patterns to the new task)
- selective combination (synthesising disparate items of learned information)

Aptitude for Language Learning and First Language Acquisition

Carroll (1973) speculated that individuals may differ in the rate and extent to which the ability to acquire a first language in childhood subsequently declines after puberty and that these differences in fact constitute differences in language-learning aptitude. There is some empirical support for this idea. Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam (2008), for example, studied over 100 immigrants to Sweden. Their first language was Spanish and they had achieved virtually native-speaker levels in Swedish as judged by Swedes. They were given an aptitude test and it was found that for those who arrived in Sweden before the age of 12, aptitude scores varied across the spectrum, while those who had arrived after the age of 12 all scored very highly on the aptitude test. These findings fit in with the hypothesis that early immigration virtually guarantees nativelike acquisition of the new language while for late immigrants (after puberty) high language-learning aptitude is required to achieve nativelike or near-native proficiency. (Compare this finding with the results of Patkowski's 1980 study of Cuban immigrants to the USA, discussed in Chapter 1.)

However, an alternative view is that foreign-language learning aptitude reflects differences in first language acquisition aptitude. For although first language acquisition is uniformly successful, there are differences in the rate (speed) at which children acquire their mother tongue (see Chapter 1). Evidence for a link between first language acquisition and foreign-language learning aptitude is forthcoming from a study of 53 children whose first language development was closely monitored in infancy (aged 39–60 months) as part of the Bristol Language Project (Wells 1985). When these children were aged about 15 years, they were tested for foreign-language learning aptitude. Some significant correlations between certain aspects of first language rate of development and foreign-language aptitude scores were found. These correlations were sometimes as high as 0.4 to 0.5, which means the variations in first language rate of progress accounted for 16–25% of the variation in aptitude scores (Skehan 1986: 101). (See also Skehan 1989: 31–34, 2012: 388.)

Motivation

Goal-Driven Behaviour

Traditional psychological approaches to human motivation held that human beings have 'drives' which move them to achieve 'goals' in order to satisfy 'needs'. Maslow (1970: 35–58) suggested there is actually a five-tier hierarchy of needs. Lower-level needs are physiological in nature and higher-level needs psychological in nature. Lower-level needs generally

have to be satisfied first and higher-level needs tend only to emerge when lower-level needs are already at least partly satisfied. At the lowest level are basic physiological needs such as food and shelter. Then come safety needs, such as freedom from fear and the need for structure and order. Then there are social needs, which Maslow calls 'belongingness and love needs' (Maslow op. cit.: 43). The penultimate level in the hierarchy is occupied by the need for esteem, both in the sense of self-esteem and of being held in esteem by others, and finally, at the apex of Maslow's hierarchy, stands the need for personal fulfilment, 'doing one's own thing', as we would say today. Maslow termed this 'self-actualisation'. Unlike lower-level motivation, which is 'deficiency-driven' (lack of food, shelter, love, for example), self-actualising motivation is 'growth-driven' (*idem*: 162), the goal being to 'grow towards full humanness' (*idem*: 104). Those who have self-actualising motivation tend to be autonomous, 'dependent for their own development and continued growth on their own potentialities and latent resources' (*idem*: 162). It may even be possible for individuals with well-established self-actualising motivation to forego, at least to some extent, gratification of some lower-level needs (*idem*: 103). An example might be burning the midnight oil and thus foregoing sleep when one is engrossed in one's work.

Motivation to learn English may operate at various levels in the needs hierarchy. Survival English courses for immigrants may well address lower-level needs. On the other hand, foreign-language learning motivation in schools would normally relate to esteem and self-actualisation needs, which only emerge when lower-level needs are satisfied. Thus, a child who is not getting a breakfast on cold winter mornings is unlikely to be interested in the English lesson in the second period and more likely to be longing for the bell for break to sound so that it can get something to eat (a basic physiological need). Similarly, a child whose parents are breaking up and violently quarrelling at home will probably experience a lack of fulfilment of safety and social needs and be in no state to concentrate on learning English. Again, an adult learner who has just lost his or her job or who has just been evicted by the landlord will also be more concerned with satisfying safety and shelter needs than in learning English. However, for something as complex as language learning, motivation may be multifaceted. A child's motivation for learning English at school may derive partly from its wish to please its parents (need for love), partly from its wish to be seen as successful (esteem) and partly from enjoyment of achievement (self-actualisation).

Social-Psychological Approaches

Gardner (1985: 50) suggested that not only will motivated language learners work hard towards achieving their goal but will also, if questioned, say that they have a desire to learn the language and have

favourable attitudes towards learning it. In questionnaire-based studies, mainly of schoolchildren learning French in Canada and the USA, Gardner and his associates found that positive attitudes to the foreign language and its speakers as well as to foreign languages and foreigners in general tend to go hand in hand with success in learning a foreign language and can counterbalance deficits in language-learning aptitude (see Gardner 2010 for a review). Two broad attitudinal orientations, an 'integrative' and an 'instrumental' orientation were identified. According to Gardner and Lambert (1972: 3), an integrative orientation involves 'wishing to learn more about the other cultural community ... to the point of eventually being accepted as a member of that other group', while an instrumental orientation is concerned with 'the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement, such as getting ahead in one's occupation'.

These two orientations are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive (Gardner 1985: 51–52). Nevertheless, it was found in a series of studies in schools that an integrative orientation to the foreign-language community, meaning an openness to the community, a desire to know more about it, to emulate some of its characteristics and in some sense to belong to it, did seem to be more conducive to high levels of motivation than a purely instrumental orientation. This was true to varying degrees for schoolchildren learning French in Montreal, in Louisiana, in Connecticut and in Maine. However, in a study conducted among schoolchildren learning English in the Philippines, a predominantly instrumental orientation to the language coupled with strong parental support could be identified and seemed to be effective (Gardner and Lambert 1972). Gardner (1985: 133–134) draws attention to the element of 'emotional involvement with the other community' in an integrative orientation, which may be lacking in an instrumental orientation, and adds that in the case of an integrative orientation, 'with proficiency in the language comes the possibility of changes in self-identity' (*idem*: 134).

Nowadays, for many learners identification with a geographically identifiable native-speaker target community has become less relevant, and is often replaced by the international community of users of English as a global language. It is, however, still possible to have either an instrumental or an integrative orientation to this global community. In other words, the important psychological element of identification in integrative motivation can still be a motivating factor for learners without direct access to a community of native speakers of English. In this regard Dörnyei (2005: 93–108) suggests redefining the idea of integrative orientation within the psychological framework of 'possible selves', including the 'ideal self' (Markus and Nurius 1986). The learner's 'ideal L2 self' may include being part of the global community of English users (see also Ushioda 2006: 150; Ushioda and Dörnyei 2012: 400–401, 404–405; Dörnyei and Ushioda

2009). Dewaele (2013: 629–631) cites an unpublished study by Young (2007) in which open-mindedness and cultural empathy were apparently found to be good predictors of language-learning achievement.

In schools where there is little direct access to a community of native speakers, language learners may combine instrumental and integrative orientations. In their study of learners of English aged 16–17 years in Hungarian schools Clément et al. (1994) isolated three factors which were important for optimum motivation. These were:

- an integrative orientation (which did not exclude recognition of instrumental value)
- self-confidence in using the language (associated with low anxiety levels)
- positive attitudes to the classroom learning environment (including the teacher, the other learners, teaching materials and classroom activities)

A similar picture emerges from a study by Chambers (1994) of children aged 10–17 years learning German at a school in North Yorkshire. Although motivation was low among the 10–11 year-olds, who were just starting to learn German, those who had been learning the language for a few years were much more enthusiastic. The reason they gave was their positive experience with their teacher, whom they said was helpful, made the subject fun and emphasised its usefulness. These learners seemed to combine instrumental and integrative orientations. All age groups defined a ‘good’ subject as being useful in the career market, as being interesting, as having a good teacher and as yielding good marks in tests. Unimportant in deciding whether a subject was ‘good’ or not, on the other hand, was the amount of homework required and the potential to ‘mess around’ in class. In contrast to the older learners, the 10–11 year-olds were not able to distinguish between subjects they enjoyed and those they perceived as useful. For them the fun element was very important. The older learners, however, were able to state that they chose German for three reasons, namely enjoyment, career usefulness and the social possibilities it afforded them. The oldest group (16–17 year-olds) were also starting to show interest in the German way of life.

Cognitive Approaches

Social-psychological approaches to language-learning motivation may be contrasted with cognitive approaches. Cognitive approaches are often applied to the learning of academic subjects in general, not just foreign languages, in educational settings. They maintain that individuals have

limited time and energy at their disposal and therefore have to make choices about distributing time and energy across various goals. Learning English is only one possible goal among many, including perhaps other academic subjects, career goals and family and social commitments. Learners' levels of commitment to learning English will be influenced by how important they think the goal is and their expectations of success for the effort expended. This commitment may fluctuate over time as initial expectations are either confirmed or disconfirmed by experience. Perceived success relative to the learner's own goals enhances motivation levels and perceived failure lowers motivation levels. This results in the virtuous circle of the good learner and the vicious circle of the poor learner: good learners perceive themselves as succeeding, which boosts their motivation; this helps them to go on succeeding, which boosts their motivation still further. Poor learners perceive themselves as failing, which lowers their motivation, which leads to greater failure, which lowers their motivation still more (compare Nuttall 1996: 127; Johnson 2018: 120).

But what makes a goal more or less important? In this regard Deci and Ryan (1985) distinguished between 'intrinsic motivation' and 'extrinsic motivation'. Intrinsic motivation is self-determined, while extrinsic motivation is other-determined. Both may co-exist. For example, you may be reading a novel both for enjoyment (intrinsic motivation) and also because it is on the exam curriculum (extrinsic motivation). In this case there is congruence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. But in a specific learning situation there may be a mismatch between the intrinsic goals of the learner and the extrinsic goals of the syllabus or the curriculum. Thus, a learner's intrinsic goal may be conversational ability in the language, but the extrinsic goal of the course may be for him to be able to translate simple texts and write business letters.

Intrinsic motivation may be positive (achieving personal satisfaction) or negative (avoiding personal dissatisfaction) in orientation. Similarly, extrinsic motivation may be positive (receiving rewards) or negative (avoiding punishment) in orientation. Particularly in the case of young learners it may not always be easy for the teacher to decide whether motivation is extrinsic or intrinsic. Children may appear to be intrinsically motivated, in that they are enthusiastic in class and work hard at home too. However, in reality they may be extrinsically motivated by their parents. The extrinsic motivation may take the form of promises of presents or monetary rewards if they get good marks (other-imposed extrinsic motivation). More subtly, the children may simply want to please their parents (self-imposed extrinsic motivation). This may work well at primary school since up to a certain age children cannot necessarily distinguish between their own goals and the goals which adults whom they love or respect impose on them. However, unless they come to enjoy learning English for its own sake (intrinsic motivation),

they will at some point in secondary school rebel against learning English just because their parents want them to. Concerning material rewards (other-imposed extrinsic motivation), the stakes need to be constantly raised if the effect is not to wear off. Even teacher-imposed external motivation in the form of incentives such as gold stars for good work, which may seem to be effective in the short to medium-term, may be ineffective in the long term, since they do not necessarily help to develop intrinsic enjoyment of learning. Without this, at some time in the future the incentives will no longer work.

Process Approaches

Motivation to learn a language is a dynamic process in a constant state of flux (Ushioda 1996, 2001; Dörnyei 2001a, 2001b, 2005). It is helpful to distinguish between initial or starting motivation and continuing motivation. The latter is needed for persistence and perseverance (Dörnyei 2005: 83). As Williams and Burden (1997: 121) put it:

It is important to emphasise here that motivation is more than simply arousing interest. It also involves sustaining that interest and investing time and energy into putting in the necessary effort to achieve certain goals.

(Williams and Burden 1997: 121)

This distinction will apply at the micro-level to any given language-learning task, but it also applies at the macro-level to an entire language course and to the whole language-learning process itself, extending over years, perhaps even a lifetime. It is initial motivation that drives individuals to overcome inertia and invest energy in a purposeful, goal-oriented way, but the real problem for learners of English tends to be maintaining motivation over time after the initial novelty has worn off.

Motivation is likely to change both in intensity (quantitative change) and in nature (qualitative change) during a learner's language-learning career, as Chambers' 1994 study, discussed above, indicated. Only if the *quality* of motivation develops over the years, will *levels* of motivation remain high or rise. In the early stages of learning a language children's motivation is most likely to be mainly intrinsic (enjoyment) but there may be extrinsic elements such as wanting to please parents or the teacher. Later, additional extrinsic motivators may operate, including passing exams and getting on in one's job. The balance between an instrumental and integrative orientation may shift over time, too (see Johnson 2018: 122).

The dynamic nature of motivation means that for classroom teaching purposes it is helpful to distinguish among three types of motivation which nest one within the other. 'Backdrop motivation' is

a learner's underlying type and intensity of motivation to learn the language; 'task motivation' refers to how appealing a particular sort of language-learning task or activity is to a particular learner; 'state motivation' refers to the learner's mental and emotional state at a particular moment in time while performing a language-learning task, and it may fluctuate during performance of the task. State motivation is influenced by backdrop motivation, task motivation and how the learner currently perceives the ongoing task or activity, especially concerning its level of 'perceived challenge', an idea which will be taken up later in discussion of anxiety.

Tasks which learners like doing for their own sake will be motivating (intrinsic motivation), and feelings of enjoyment experienced while and after doing the task will also have positive motivational effects for the future. This means that state motivation feeds back into task and backdrop motivation. Ongoing feedback from the learning environment, including the reactions of fellow learners and the teacher, especially teacher praise and censure, also influences state motivation and feeds back into task and backdrop motivation. Task outcomes, whether extrinsic (test results) or intrinsic (personal feelings of success or failure) will likewise feed back into task and backdrop motivation, which will be boosted or dampened accordingly.

Demotivation and Amotivation

Unfortunately, the teacher may inherit demotivated learners (Ushioda 2003; Dörnyei 2001b: 141–155). For example, some learners may have initially been enthusiastic about learning English but their expectations of progress may have been quite unrealistic. After some weeks or months or years they may start to perceive learning English as a daunting task and motivation may drop: they become demotivated. The demotivated learner has often been adversely influenced by repeated negative learning experiences in the classroom, often by negative comparisons with other learners' performance. Traditional grading systems, which produce ranking lists and marks based on comparisons across learners, contribute greatly to this process of demotivating all but the highest-scoring learners.

What can be done for such learners? One approach is to direct their attention to the progress they have made and away from comparison with other learners. They should be encouraged to keep a learning log to record their own progress. It may help them to go back to listening or reading comprehension tasks they did some weeks or months previously, do them again and experience how they now understand more. They can compare their two performances, reflect on the experience and record their comments and scores in their learning log. For such learners, the marking of written work should in general de-emphasise comparison

with others and emphasise comparison with the learner's own previous performance. Feedback to learners on written work and also on speaking should not only involve correcting mistakes (negative feedback) but should also involve praise for positive language features (positive feedback). Marking systems should be transparent and should reward positive features and not just penalise error. The provision of suitable support (scaffolding) for both spoken and written tasks to prevent learner breakdown is also important (Gibbons 2015).

Learners who are amotivated rather than demotivated pose a different problem for the teacher. Unlike demotivated learners, amotivated learners have not lost their motivation along the way. Rather they quite simply lack any motivation to learn English at all (Deci and Ryan 1985; Noels et al. 2000). However, it is not always easy to distinguish the two groups of learners at first sight. For this reason it is important with any new class to sound out learners' attitudes and discover their reasons for learning English. The following features tend to characterise amotivated learners:

- They are not looking forward to learning the language as an enjoyable experience (lack of intrinsic motivation).
- They do not have any incentives to learn from their families or employers (lack of extrinsic motivation).
- They are not interested in social interaction with the speakers of the target language or in the target culture (lack of integrative motivation).
- They see no relevance of the language to their future lives (lack of instrumental motivation).

What can be done for these learners? Young amotivated learners in schools may benefit from focusing on authentic uses of English in thematic areas which are close to their own interests, for example in sport, fashion, music, dance, food and drink. Especially effective is the presentation of their idols in sport, music or fashion speaking English on video clips. This is better than pointing out to them the relevance of English for their future life as an adult, something which seems a long way away when you are 12. School-exchange programmes, native-speaker guests, viewing authentic TV or films, reading English youth magazines and organising e-mail exchanges or chat groups may also all help in the longer term. It is, furthermore, often valuable to talk to learners directly about their language-learning beliefs. Learners may believe, among other strange things:

- that they should only speak when they are sure they will not make a mistake
- that they should never write a sentence if they think it might have a mistake in it
- that every single English word has a one-word translation equivalent in their own language

Learner Attributions for Success and Failure

Learners may ascribe their success or failure in language-learning tasks, especially tests and examinations, to various causes. Attribution theory seeks to systematically describe these attribution patterns (see Weiner 1986: 44–51; 1992: 248–253). Distinctions are drawn between attributions to causes which are perceived as internal versus external, stable versus unstable and controllable versus uncontrollable. Attributions which are perceived as being within the learner's control, such as effort expended, are more likely to maintain or enhance motivation than those which are perceived as being outside the learner's control, such as aptitude or luck. Most successful language learners have effort attributions for success and failure. Effort is an internal, unstable and controllable attribution. Learners should be encouraged to adopt effort attributions. Unsuccessful and poorly motivated learners may attribute success and failure to external, unstable, uncontrollable factors, such as task difficulty, mood, help or hindrance from friends or family and teacher bias (Weiner 1986: 46–47; 1992: 250). Attributions such as teacher bias and help or hindrance from friends or family may be perceived by learners as uncontrollable *by the learner* but controllable *by others* so that in the case of failure these parties may be blamed by the learner (Weiner 1992: 251).

Learners may also have different attributions for success and failure. Some undesirable mixed patterns which occur include:

- attributing success to effort and failure to lack of aptitude. As long as they perceive themselves as making progress, such learners will persist. However, they are too easily discouraged by setbacks such as a poor exam result.
- attributing success to good luck and failure to lack of aptitude. Such learners will see no reason to put in effort to learning the language and will almost inevitably give up (drop out) as soon as their early success becomes marred by disappointment.
- attributing success to aptitude and failure to bad luck. Such learners perhaps were good at languages in the early stages without trying very hard, and as demands become greater with requirements for more effort, their results deteriorate. However, instead of realising that effort is now required, they attribute their failure to external, unstable and uncontrollable circumstances (bad luck). To an outsider they always seem to be making excuses.

Feedback to the learner, such as examination marks and teacher comments on performance, will affect learners' motivation differently according to their attribution patterns. Thus, if the learner attributes success to external, unstable and uncontrollable factors such as the good mood of

the teacher/examiner, easy questions or generous marking, then a good mark will not necessarily act as a motivator. Similarly, a poor mark will not motivate a learner to try harder next time if the learner does not attribute failure to lack of effort. The learner may regard the disappointing mark as bad luck (an external, unstable, uncontrollable attribution), personal malice on the part of the teacher (an external, unstable, attribution, controllable only by the teacher, not by the learner) or even as confirmation that he or she has no ability (an internal, stable, uncontrollable attribution). All these attributions are likely to result in effort being reduced for the future rather than being increased.

But where do learners' attribution patterns come from? Different patterns of attribution will reflect both differences among learners in past experience and in personality. Repeated experiences of perceived failure in the educational system may in extreme cases result in the phenomenon of 'learned helplessness' (Abramson et al. 1978): a fatalistic stance in which individuals see themselves as being at the mercy of external forces and unable to influence either their own lives or their environment (external, stable, uncontrollable attributions).

For more on learners' attribution patterns see Ushioda (2001: 114), Williams and Burden (1999), Williams et al. (2001), Peacock (2010), Sahinkarakas (2011).

Personality

The Four Humours

There is no ideal language-learning personality, or at least no such personality profile has been identified. It is, rather, the case that different personalities may be suited to learning languages in different ways. A good starting point for thinking about personality is the classical Greek taxonomy of the four humours, namely phlegmatic, sanguine, choleric and melancholic. The phlegmatic personality tends to be slow to take action, calm, unemotional and resistant to change. The sanguine personality tends to be optimistic, impulsive, cheerful, confident and excitable. The choleric personality is short-tempered, impetuous, ambitious and dominant. The melancholic personality is inclined to be reflective, self-searching, depressive and demanding.

The Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

Modern psychology has developed personality tests based on more sophisticated taxonomies, the most popular of which is the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). This involves four macro-variables expressed as scales or continua. The end points of each scale represent personality extremes, with most people occupying intermediate positions

on the scale. Certain language-learning advantages and disadvantages can be assumed for a tendency towards either end of a scale, and maybe those persons in the middle can combine the best of both worlds. The four scales are:

- **extroversion versus introversion**
Extroverts derive satisfaction from the regard of others while introverts derive satisfaction from personal fulfilment. At the risk of stereotyping, it may be said that extroverts tend to be talkative, outgoing and to value social interaction, while introverts tend to be reserved, to be 'loners' and value observation and contemplation. Extroverts will tend to be more willing to interact in conversation and to take risks than will introverts. On the other hand, introverts are well-suited to private study, cognitive problem-solving and individual project work, whereas extroverts prefer group work, group presentations and co-operative learning.
- **sensing versus intuition**
The 'sensing–intuition' distinction reflects the contrast between those who focus on detail, facts and the literal as opposed to those who prefer larger conceptual thinking and interconnections at the figurative level. The 'sensing' personality will focus on the details of the language and observe closely differences between his or her own output and that of more proficient speakers, which the 'intuitive' personality will tend not to do so, but will, on the other hand, be more suited to inferring meaning from context, working with figurative language and creating mental models of the language.
- **thinking versus feeling**
The 'thinking–feeling' distinction is intended to encapsulate the difference between those who rely on reasoning and those who rely on emotions. The 'thinking' learner will favour an analytic approach to language learning but may be too focussed on being completely in control at all times and therefore possibly anxiety-prone, whereas the 'feeling' learner will bond well with teachers and fellow learners and may have a strong integrative orientation in contrast to the 'thinking' learner, who may possibly be more instrumentally oriented. On the other hand, the 'feeling' learner will be easily put off by poor bonding among the class or with the teacher.
- **judging versus perceiving**
The 'judging–perceiving' distinction concerns the difference between those who like to work within firm guidelines, do not like loose ends or unresolved problems, and those who prefer to leave their options open, improvise and adapt spontaneously to new situations. Those inclined to 'judging' will tend to work systematically through exercises and complete clearly defined language tasks to their own satisfaction, while the 'perceivers' will

prefer to work with open-ended tasks and will shine when it comes to adapting to new language forms, unaccustomed registers, accents and situations. On the other hand, they may be more inconsistent language learners in the long term and be easily distracted.

For more on personality and language learning, see Brown (2014: 156–157), Dörnyei (2005: 18–20), Johnson (2018: 128–133), Dewaele (2013: 626–631).

As mentioned at the outset of this section, there are no simple correspondences between a specific personality profile and the good or bad language learner. In fact, personality profiles based on the MBTI or other well-known personality tests rarely account for more than 15% of foreign-language success, and sometimes studies find no relationships or even relationships opposite to those expected (see Dörnyei 2005: 24–30). This applies even to dimensions such as introversion–extroversion, where one might expect extroverts to be better language learners. In fact, research results are mixed (see Dewaele 2013: 626–628).

Part of the problem is that macro-scales subsume a large number of primary characteristics relevant to language learning, such as anxiety, risk-taking, inhibition, sensitivity to rejection, self-esteem, self-efficacy, willingness to communicate (WTC), tolerance of ambiguity and empathy. They are thus not fine-grained enough to identify relevant micro-features, especially as the effects of some primary personality factors may affect language-learning success not directly but indirectly by influencing motivation (compare Dörnyei 2005: 20–24). Another factor that tends to obscure the effects of primary psychological variables in correlation studies is that it is not always the case that the relationship between a personality trait and language-learning success is linear and incremental. Some personality factors, such as risk-taking, require an optimum rather than a maximum level for successful language learning. Some of these primary psycho-emotional characteristics will now be considered. Since anxiety is by far the most important of these, it will be considered first and in most detail.

Anxiety

Anxiety is an important primary personality characteristic. Anxious personalities experience feelings of tension and apprehension which tend to be vague and all-pervasive rather than having a clearly identified source. However, there is a distinction between anxiety as a relatively stable component of personality ('trait anxiety') and anxiety in a particular situation ('state anxiety'), which even normally non-anxious individuals may experience under certain circumstances (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991; Dörnyei 2005: 198; Brown 2014: 150–152). If learners continually experience 'state anxiety' performing a certain task, such as

reading out loud, then 'task anxiety' results. That is to say, when the same task or situation is encountered again, previously experienced feelings of anxiety are triggered before one even starts to perform the task. The term 'language-learning anxiety' refers to feelings of tension and apprehension specifically associated with the language-learning classroom. It affects language achievement, language performance and language-learning motivation and is probably the single most serious inhibitor of language learning in classrooms (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994: 284–285).

The anxious language learner experiences feelings of apprehension, excessive self-evaluation, worry over potential failure, concern over the opinion of others and physiological responses such as increased heart rate and sweating (Gardner and MacIntyre 1993: 5). At the core of language-learning anxiety is a form of severe cognitive interference, since attention is divided between task-related cognition and distracting, self-related, derogatory cognitions ('I can't do this,' 'I'm making a fool of myself in front of everyone') (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994: 285). Anxiety differs from prototypical fear, for example of dogs, rats or someone aiming a loaded sawn-off shotgun at you, in that the anxious person finds it difficult to explain exactly what he or she is anxious about; anxiety is, rather, a dread of undefined consequences, particularly of negative social evaluation. This social evaluation element explains why anxiety is often highest in a real or perceived test situation (test anxiety) as well as in situations of speaking before the class (stage fright). Excessive self-consciousness and fear of negative social evaluation is often a problem associated with adolescence, and language-learning anxiety levels are usually higher after puberty than before.

Anxiety affects the ability to take in information (input level), to process and retain it (processing level) and the ability to produce language (output level), so that the language-learning process itself is impaired (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994). Output is affected because the ability to access stored lexical information, to construct sentences and to manage discourse planning are all negatively affected. Pronunciation may also be negatively affected. In communicative situations, each level feeds into the next, compounding the problem and in severe cases leading to complete communicative breakdown, with oral test situations being particularly likely to provoke anxiety. In severe cases learners may afterwards report that they felt they were 'standing beside themselves', unable to influence their own behaviour. The negative feelings experienced also contribute to lowering motivation for the future.

In general, anxiety levels rise as arousal levels rise as a function of perceived task challenge. If a task is perceived as too easy or too difficult then the learner will be in a state of under-arousal or over-arousal, respectively and motivation and task performance will be negatively affected (Dörnyei 2005: 198–199). It is therefore important to keep anxiety

levels low in the classroom, while maintaining an atmosphere of task challenge. Optimum perceived task challenge results in optimum arousal levels and at these levels slight anxiety is experienced, for example before a test one is well prepared for. This is 'facilitating anxiety' and it is likely to have a positive effect on task performance (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994: 285; Johnson 2018: 145, note 1). Increasing levels of anxiety beyond this threshold, however, quickly become 'debilitating anxiety', which has massively negative effects on task performance.

What can be done to help anxious learners? It is of paramount importance to give them ample time to perform tasks. Under no circumstances should they be rushed. They will generally find reading, writing and listening tasks less stressful than speaking tasks. Speaking to the whole class will be most stressful and speaking to the teacher will be more stressful than speaking to a peer, especially a sympathetic, friendly peer. They will be happier in situations where they are not being assessed or evaluated (Horwitz et al. 1986: 127). Online correction while they are speaking will be extremely anxiety-provoking and the anxious learner will often not be able to take in the correction anyway, much less process it and remember it. For some learners anxiety may be limited to certain sorts of speaking task, such as speaking in front of the whole class. Speaking tasks should therefore be very carefully chosen for anxiety-prone learners. It is essential that they experience a sense of achievement. Particularly beneficial will be allowing them to speak about something which chimes in with their own personal experience, interests and hobbies or on some matter about which they possess specialist knowledge.

For anxious, as for demotivated learners, comparisons among learners should be avoided and competition among individual learners should be replaced by cooperation among individuals within groups. The element of competition should be restricted to competition among groups (team competition). In this way the positive, motivating aspects of competition may be retained but the negative anxiety-provoking aspects eliminated. A tolerant attitude to error should be encouraged and it should be explained to learners that only by making mistakes can they learn. For this reason teachers should refrain from correcting mistakes as much as possible with anxious learners, and when they do this it should be done in a warm, friendly and helpful manner, never censoriously. On the other hand, teachers should be wary of too obviously giving all the easy questions to anxious learners and of being exaggeratedly accepting of poor performance from anxious learners, as they may interpret this as pity, which will only raise their anxiety levels still further. The class as a whole may also notice this special treatment, which is not desirable.

Tests are a particular source of anxiety for many learners, and teachers should try to de-mystify tests in various ways. One way is to cultivate transparency about tests, so that learners know what the test's purpose is and what is expected of them as well as what knowledge and skills are to

be tested. Anxiety levels will also be lowered if learners are informed in advance about the form the test will take, when it will take place and what its consequences will be. Where possible, learners should be involved in the negotiation of the final mark by incorporating some measure of self-assessment or peer assessment. Rather than just being given a mark, learners should be given a report which shows where their strengths and weaknesses lie, perhaps including marks for different sub-sections of the test. A talk with each learner individually and in private may be beneficial. All this takes teacher time and effort, of course. But it may well be worth it in the long term.

Not only are some individuals more anxious than others, but some classes are more anxious than others. A teacher may normally expect anxiety levels to be at their highest in the early stages of a course with a new class, and to come down as the course progresses and the learners and teacher get to know one another and bonding develops. In this regard, special efforts should be made in the early stages of a course to ensure that learners' communication experiences in English are favourable. However, a teacher may take over a new class which has inherited language-learning anxiety as a result of prior negative experiences. In such circumstances it may be very difficult to decondition the learned response. A teacher who takes over such a class must be prepared to work slowly and painstakingly over many months.

The problem of anxiety is compounded for the teacher by the fact that it is not always easy to recognise the anxious learner. Anxiety is not to be confused with shyness. Anxious learners do not necessarily appear to be shy, and not all learners who do appear to be shy are anxious learners. Anxious learners may exhibit any of a number of rather different behaviour profiles. Some anxious learners tend to write little and say even less, to be slow to learn, to be hesitant speakers and be unwilling to self-correct when a mistake is pointed out to them. Other anxious learners tend to be too dependent on the teacher and tend to focus too much on not making mistakes rather than on expressing ideas. Others again may appear to be uncooperative, unwilling to talk, introverted, or even aggressive. In some cases, anxious learners may become disruptive. Occasionally, anxious learners may play the clown to deflect attention away from their perceived deficits and change the agenda of the classroom so that they can excel in a subversive role. A quite different form of behaviour is exhibited by other anxious learners, who concentrate intensely in class, hang on the teacher's every word, carry out instructions to the letter and devote excessive attention to the minutiae of their written work, while still tending to adopt low-risk-taking behaviour by avoiding difficult topics and tasks, not volunteering to speak unless absolutely certain of themselves, being linguistically uninventive or imprecise in expression (reduction strategies) and thinking carefully and for a long time before saying anything.

Risk-Taking, Inhibition and Sensitivity to Rejection

Johnson (2018: 232–233) suggests that the ability to take risks is part of ‘strategic competence’ (Canale and Swain 1980, mentioned in Chapter 1). Anxiety tends to be negatively associated with risk-taking, or to put it another way, self-confident people are more likely to take risks. However, not all low-risk-takers are anxious individuals. So risk-taking is a distinct personality trait. Individuals vary along a scale of willingness to take risks, but an optimal rather than a maximum level is conducive to successful language learning. Very-low-risk-takers will be handicapped in learning a foreign language because they will be unwilling to experiment in production and try out things they are not sure about. But very high risk-takers will also not be ideal language learners since they tend not to plan what to say nor to monitor their speech. They will tend to be insensitive to feedback and will not seek out feedback nor will they be interested in trying to learn from their mistakes (see Brown 2014: 149–150).

Inhibition involves not being prepared to risk losing face (‘ego protection’). It is related to anxiety and negatively related to risk-taking (Brown 2014: 147–149).

Sensitivity to rejection is related to anxiety and inhibition and negatively related to risk-taking. Learners who are sensitive to rejection need much positive feedback and encouragement and should be shielded from situations where there is a risk of undue censure by others.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

Negatively related to anxiety and related to risk-taking, but distinct from it, is ‘willingness to communicate’ (WTC) (MacIntyre 2007; Dörnyei 2005: 207–211; Brown 2014: 146–147). WTC refers to the extent to which learners, either in the classroom or in the foreign-language community, are prepared to speak even though it is not absolutely necessary to do so. It seems that high levels of WTC may be important for continuing acquisition beyond ‘good enough to get by’ levels.

Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy

Learners who are highly sensitive to rejection will tend to have low self-esteem. Self-esteem means an attitude of approval towards oneself. High levels of self-esteem make it possible for learners to cope with the inevitable setbacks of language learning and to persist with learning and not lose motivation (see Dörnyei 2005: 211–214; Brown 2014: 144–145).

Closely related to self-esteem is self-efficacy, that is, the belief in one’s ability to perform a specific task (Brown 2014: 145–146). It is possible for learners who have generally low levels of self-esteem (‘I am not much good at anything’) to be nevertheless confident of their abilities in one

particular domain, for example pronunciation or rote memorisation ('I'm good at this').

Tolerance of Ambiguity

Learner personalities differ in other ways which are relevant for language learning. These include tolerance of ambiguity, that is, to what extent one needs to have uncertainty resolved immediately ('closure-oriented' personalities) and to what extent one can proceed with the next stage of a procedure, such as listening or reading, while keeping a number of options open until more information becomes available to clear up the uncertainty ('open' personalities). Discovery-based teaching approaches will be suited to 'open' learners and highly structured teaching which proceeds in steps will appeal to 'closure-oriented' learners. Closure-oriented learners find it difficult to keep on reading after encountering a word they do not know. They also are sometimes dissatisfied until they have a definite translation of a new word into their own language. Open learners may, however, misunderstand utterances or texts because they settle for a vague meaning and may thus miss the point. As with risk-taking, an optimum rather than a maximum level is best suited to language learning (see Brown 2014: 117–118; Johnson 2018: 130–131).

Empathy

Empathy is another relevant personality variable. Empathy is the ability to put oneself in someone else's shoes, to experience a situation from another perspective (see Brown 2014: 153–154). Language learning is a social activity and empathetic learners will respond well to role-play activities, to drama-based approaches and to pronunciation work in specific situations.

Cognitive Style

Cognitive style refers to the way in which an individual typically tends to approach problems of all sorts in life (Wyss 2002: 1; Dörnyei 2005: 121–122, 124–125; Brown 2014: 113–114). Various components of cognitive style have been developed heuristically. These components are usually expressed as two end points of a scale. Individuals can be placed at various points along the scale. Various researchers have created their own taxonomies of cognitive style components, and unfortunately there is no definitive taxonomy and much overlap from catalogue to catalogue. However, certain well-established components of cognitive style seem relevant for language learning.

Field-Independent versus Field-Dependent Styles

The most well-known of these is the ‘field-independent’ versus ‘field-dependent’ scale (Brown 2014: 114–115; Dörnyei 2005: 136–139; Wyss 2002; Johnson 2018: 131–132; Ehrman and Leaver 2003: 396–397). This is the difference between those who are able to isolate the components of a coherent whole and those who find it difficult to decompose the whole into its constituent parts. Those who can find hidden objects in a picture, or make out forms within an ink blot, or see faces in wallpaper patterns are said to be field-independent. However, the field-independent learner’s ability to focus on detail may well mean that he or she is insensitive to the wider context, while the field-dependent learner’s inability to focus on detail may also imply that he or she is highly aware of the wider context. The price for field-independence may be field-insensitivity and the payout for field-dependence may be ‘field-sensitivity’.

Field-independent learners will respond well to teaching approaches which isolate specific elements of the language, deal with pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary separately and focus on individual sounds, specific grammar points and the meaning of single words (a ‘bottom-up’ approach). However, in text-based work they may tend to shut out context and so not be able to cope with polysemous words, pragmatic meaning and secondary, indirect meaning, including irony, implication and allusion (field-insensitivity). Field-dependent learners, on the other hand, will respond well to teaching approaches which deal with language holistically in texts and which focus on the pronunciation of whole utterances, the meaning of multi-word chunks and on identifying larger syntactic patterns rather than morphological details (a ‘top-down’ approach). In text-based work they are likely to be skilled at invoking context to infer the meaning of a polysemous word, pragmatic meaning and various forms of indirect language (field-sensitivity).

Most language learners will be at neither extreme of the scale so they will combine elements of both poles with a tendency towards one or the other. Very good language learners may somehow strike the perfect balance and be able to combine field-sensitivity with field-independence according to the demands of the specific language-learning task.

Deductive versus Inductive Reasoning Styles

Some people tend to reason deductively, that is, they tend to set up general principles or rules and then see if the concrete examples conform to those rules or principles. Others tend to reason inductively, that is, they tend to assemble examples and then work out general rules or principles which explain those examples (Ehrman and Leaver 2003: 398–399). In other words, deductive reasoners like to

proceed from rules to examples, whereas inductive reasoners like to infer rules from examples. This has obvious relevance for grammar teaching. Deductive reasoners will prefer traditional grammar teaching, which presents rules and then gives isolated examples to illustrate the rule. A preference for deductive reasoning often goes hand in hand with field-independence. Inductive reasoners, on the other hand, will prefer text-based grammar teaching, which encourages learners to infer underlying grammatical rules from examples in texts. A preference for inductive reasoning often goes hand in hand with field-dependence (see Brown 2014: 97–98).

Global versus Particular Reception Styles

‘Global’ language learners tend to react to the general impression of language they hear or read, while ‘particular’ learners tend to focus on detail (Ehrman and Leaver 2003: 398). Field-independent learners tend to be ‘particular’ and field-dependent learners tend to be ‘global’. The global learner prefers extensive reading, for example of novels, to intensive reading and is not distracted by partial non-comprehension, caused for example by unknown vocabulary. The ‘particular’ reader prefers reading closely rather than reading for gist and is well-suited to close reading, of lyrical poems, for example. He or she may like to stop at the end of each paragraph and look up unknown words.

Sharpening versus Levelling Memory Styles

‘Sharpeners’ prefer to note distinctions between similar entities for example, between near synonyms such ‘pretty’, ‘beautiful’ and ‘handsome’, or between dark ‘l’ and light ‘l’, while ‘levellers’ tend to group similar elements together under a single heading and blur distinctions, so as to simplify the learning task. (See Chapter 5 for the difference between dark and light ‘l’.) This helps them to get on in the language more quickly, but it may make their language inaccurate, for example if they use ‘pretty’, ‘beautiful’ and ‘handsome’ interchangeably or do not distinguish between dark and light ‘l’. Ehrman and Leaver (2003: 401) explain the difference between levelling-sharpening and global-particular as follows:

Levelling lumps information and reduces distinctions, whereas global learning seeks the underlying meaning and overall pattern of an experience. Sharpening seeks significant distinctions, whereas particular learning focuses on specifics without necessarily making distinctions of category.

Ehrman and Leaver (2003: 401)

Impulsive versus Reflective Response Styles

In speaking or writing, impulsive learners tend to think that the first word that spontaneously comes to mind is likely to be correct, whereas reflective learners prefer to think twice or try to recall rules rather than relying on their intuition (Ehrman and Leaver 2003:402). Impulsive learners may therefore be more fluent than reflective learners, but may make more 'careless mistakes'. In other terms, impulsivity may be associated with under-monitoring and reflectivity with over-monitoring.

Random versus Sequential Processing Styles

'Random' learners do not like to work to a pre-imposed plan, whereas 'sequential' learners do (Ehrman and Leaver 2003: 398). Thus, sequential learners like to work within a clearly defined syllabus, have clear lesson plans and like to do written work according to a set of guidelines. Random learners, by contrast, like to have freedom to adapt in response to changing circumstances in an ongoing fashion. They are better at unscripted language tasks, such as conversation.

Synthesising versus Analytic Styles

Synthesising learners like putting parts together to form a whole, whereas analytic learners prefer to dissect in order to isolate key components (Ehrman and Leaver 2003: 399). Field-independence tends to be associated with a propensity for analysis and field-dependence with a propensity for synthesis.

Language-Learning Style***Style Preferences***

By learning style is meant 'an individual's natural, habitual and preferred way(s) of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills' (Reid 1995: viii). An individual's preferred language-learning style may differ from his or her preferred way of learning other subjects. Differences among individuals in language-learning style will be influenced by cognitive style and personality differences, as well as training, experience, culturally transmitted beliefs, age and cultural background.

Teachers quickly become aware of language-learning style preferences among their learners. They notice that:

- some prefer to work alone, others in cooperation with their fellows
- some prefer to work in the aural-oral mode, others in the written mode

- some prefer to work with a textbook, others with authentic materials
- some prefer highly structured activities, others freer activities
- some prefer teacher explanation, others prefer discovery techniques
- some prefer to plan activities in advance, others like to improvise
- some prefer teacher-led activities, others prefer to work autonomously
- some prefer detailed teacher feedback and correction, others do not
- some prefer teacher assessment, others prefer peer assessment or self-assessment

There is no single best language-learning style for all learners. However, language-learning styles are dynamic and should develop in the course of the years in keeping with a learner's personality, inclinations, abilities and learning opportunities, including the style of teaching encountered.

Style Stretching

If learners are offered a wide choice of learning activities to perform, this will enable each individual learner to choose tasks appropriate to his or her language-learning style. However, learners should also be encouraged to operate on occasion outside the comfort zone of their own preferred, and possibly restricted, learning style ('style stretching'). Taking a learning-style test can help learners to raise their awareness of the wide variety of learning styles that exist and encourage them to explore new styles previously unknown to them. Well-known learning-style tests are Joy Reid's 'Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire', Rebecca Oxford's 'Style Analysis Survey', D. A. Kolb's 'Learning Style Inventory' and Cohen, Oxford and Chi's 'Learning Style Survey'. These are all available online.

Style Mismatches

According to Ehrman (1996: 50), 'Learning style mismatches are at the root of many learning difficulties.' Problems may arise if there is a clash between a learner's preferred learning style and the teacher's preferred teaching style or with the stipulations of the syllabus (Dörnyei 2005: 155). Indeed this may sometimes be a delicate matter, particularly where cultural differences are involved. Learners from cultures where education is more traditional, where the teacher is a figure of authority and where teaching practices are far more autocratic may be alienated by open approaches to teaching with an emphasis on autonomy and discovery procedures, for instance.

Sometimes learners may have picked up misguided beliefs about language learning. They may try to apply these ideas uncritically even though they do not suit their own personality, abilities and inclinations.

In such cases it may be part of the teacher's job to wean the learner away from false ideas about how to learn. A possible scenario is a learner who has been taught that rote learning is the only way to acquire vocabulary, believes this, and thus tries to apply vocabulary rote-learning strategies even though he or she may have a weak memory for rote learning but great ability to retain vocabulary encountered incidentally in reading.

Food for Thought

- Q. 1. Are there any individual learner differences you regard as important in determining success in English as a Foreign Language which have not been mentioned in the chapter?
- Q. 2. The distinctions between intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, on the one hand, and instrumental versus integrative motivational orientations, on the other hand, are two different distinctions made by different researchers in different contexts. How would you explain the interplay between the two distinctions?
- Q. 3. (Group task) From the group's experience as language learners, what are some likely attributions for success and failure of good language learners and poor language learners, respectively?
- Q. 4. Why do you think learners often attribute success and failure to different causes?
- Q. 5. Can you see any problems which may arise if there is a mismatch between the learner's attributions and the teacher's assumptions of what the learner's attributions are?
- Q. 6. Complete a sample Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and, while you are doing it, consider to what extent it is functioning well in your own case. After completion, reflect on your experience and critically evaluate the test. A version of the test is available online at:
www.lusd.org/cms/lib6/CA01001399/Centricity/Domain/711/THE%20MYERS-BRIGGS.pdf
- Q. 7. (Group task) Can you think of steps other than those suggested in the chapter which teachers can take to control anxiety levels in the classroom?
- Q. 8. (Group task) Look back at the description of extroverts versus introverts. What sort of course design might suit introverts and what sort of course design might suit extroverts?

Further Reading

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4 Facilitating Classroom Learning

The Orchestration of Classroom Interaction

In Chapter 1, learning English in a classroom setting was contrasted with acquiring English naturalistically in an English-speaking community. It was said that the classroom was an acquisition-poor environment compared to being surrounded by the language and its speakers all day, every day. However, the great advantage of learning English in the classroom compared to trying to pick it up naturalistically is the availability of a professionally trained teacher who orchestrates classroom interaction so as to promote acquisition, provides guidance, feedback and explanation where necessary as well as encouragement and perhaps sometimes censure. This chapter will first focus on four resources available to the English teacher, namely the syllabus, needs analysis, teaching material and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Then the focus will switch to classroom interaction itself, and particular attention will be paid to teacher and learner classroom roles, to input modification and interactional modification, to learner cooperation and self-direction as well as to provision of feedback to learners. Finally, some rules of thumb for teachers will be offered.

The Syllabus

What Is a Syllabus?

Most classroom teaching takes place within the framework of a syllabus. This may be set by the institution, by an external examining body or by the education ministry. The syllabus writer traditionally asks three questions:

- What are the goals of the course? (goal-setting)
- Which elements of the language must be covered in order to achieve those goals? (selection)
- In what order must these language elements be covered? (sequencing)

Nowadays the syllabus is often available online, and is likely to be scrutinised not only by teachers and learners but also by parents, employers and members of other educational institutions. As a publicly available document, it makes for transparency, provides supportive guidelines for teachers and can protect teachers from unfounded criticism. On the other hand, the syllabus is a document which is imposed on the teacher from above and can, under certain circumstances, be constrictive. Some syllabuses are more prescriptive than others. Some may lay down the language content to be taught, others may merely specify end-of-course goals and give teachers considerable freedom on how they achieve those goals. Some syllabuses may specify a course book or other materials that have to be used, whilst others allow teachers freedom in the choice of materials. Some syllabuses may specify points in the course at which tests have to be conducted, while others may not. Some syllabuses may be aimed at preparation for a final examination (an examination syllabus).

The more prescriptive a syllabus is, the more constrictive it will be but the more support it will provide for teachers in terms of methods to be adopted, materials to be used and the selection and sequencing of lesson content over weeks, months and even years. The less prescriptive a syllabus is, the more freedom teachers have to select their own materials and to use methods they think fit. On the other hand, teachers may feel that a syllabus which specifies only broad goals but leaves options open at the level of selection and sequencing does not offer them the support they need. An example might be a syllabus that specifies ‘negotiation skills’ as a goal but neither specifies the level of competence to be aimed at, nor indicates the vocabulary and structures to be introduced, or the topics, settings and participator roles to be practised.

A syllabus does not necessarily entail a particular teaching method or approach, but in fact certain methods are closely associated with particular sorts of syllabus (Ur 2012: 185–190; Richards 2013: 11). The contents page of the course book, if there is one, will reflect the syllabus (Johnson 2018: 192). Some major syllabus types will now be briefly described.

The Grammatical Syllabus

This is the traditional syllabus, closely associated with the Grammar-Translation Method and, in the guise of the structural syllabus, with the Audiolingual Method. These methods were discussed in Chapter 2. Many syllabuses today are to a greater or lesser extent still based on grammatical selection and sequencing, although goals are unlikely to be formulated solely in grammatical terms any longer (see Richards 2001: 153–154; Ur 2012: 186–187; Johnson 2018: 194–199; Long 2015:

207–208). In a strict grammatical syllabus the course was divided into units, each of which dealt with a selected grammatical structure or item in a pre-determined sequence. Criteria for selection and sequencing might include frequency, difficulty, usefulness, learnability and authenticity (Richards 2013: 6), the two main criteria being frequency and difficulty. In other words, frequent structures were to be taught before less frequent structures and simple structures before complex structures.

However, the twin criteria of frequency and complexity are not in themselves straightforward. Concerning frequency, some words of low general frequency may occur frequently in the classroom environment ('board-duster', for example). Concerning complexity, some grammar items, the modal verbs for example, may be formally simple but functionally complex (see Johnson 2018: 196–197). Furthermore, progress from the simple to the complex and from the most frequently occurring to the least frequently occurring items is not always identical. A very obvious example is irregular versus regular verbs. Clearly, regular verbs are formally simpler and therefore easier to learn than irregular verbs, but it is precisely the most frequently used verbs which are the irregular ones. The two most frequently occurring verbs are 'be' and 'have', and these are both irregular. Usually they are taught first, so that the frequency criterion is rightly given priority over the complexity criterion. However, just how many, if any, other irregular verbs should be introduced before regular verbs are introduced is a decision each syllabus designer has to make.

A related problem is how strictly the sequencing principles of frequency and complexity should be adhered to anyway. Too strict an adherence means that all the bits of the grammar not yet 'covered' at any point in time have to be excluded from classroom language and course-book texts. This means that authentic texts cannot be used until very late and the language of the contrived texts in the course book will tend to be oversimplified and unnatural. For instance, a syllabus I once had to work with taught beginners to say 'Have you a book?' This was done because the much more frequent forms 'Do you have ...' and 'Have you got ...' were more complex and were therefore to be taught later. However, 'Have you a book?' sounds unnatural to many speakers, who reserve subject-verb inversion with 'have' for its use as an auxiliary verb, as in 'Have you seen Peter?' The result was teaching-induced unnaturalness in the resultant learner language (see discussion of Selinker 1972 in Chapter 1).

The Lexical-Grammatical Syllabus

The lexical-grammatical syllabus is a refinement of the grammatical syllabus. It includes as an addendum a list of words to be covered at each stage of the course or for each unit of the course book (see Richards 2001: 154). The Direct Method, for example, was often based on strict

selection and sequencing of both grammatical structures and lexis. The usual criterion invoked for selection and sequencing of vocabulary is frequency of occurrence. However, this is not always unproblematic. The most frequently occurring colour words, for instance, are the primary colours and these are usually taught to beginners first. However, a non-primary colour, such as ‘pink’, may be easier for learners to pronounce and write than the primary colour ‘yellow’, and might also be relevant to the learners for affective reasons, for instance being a favourite dress colour. Learners in fact often want to know from the start what their favourite dress colours are in English, and these may be mauve, pink and lilac, for some learners, or beige, fawn and grey for others. Some learners may want to know the colours of their favourite football team, which may not always be primary colours either. Such learner preferences have to be taken into account because they will influence intrinsic motivation, which was discussed in Chapter 3.

The Situational Syllabus

The situational syllabus is associated with Situational Language Teaching (see Chapter 2). The course book plays a key role since this is often organised around a series of lessons, each of which has a particular setting, for example, ‘At the Bank’ (see Richards 2001: 156–157; Ur 2012: 188; Long 2015: 212–214). The central element of each lesson is often a reading passage or a printed dialogue. The idea is that the language to be taught in each situational unit is suggested by the situation, for example, ‘I would like to open an account’ for an ‘At the Bank’ unit. The situation also specifies certain word fields, for example the ‘money’ word field for ‘At the Bank’. However, for general English courses rather than ESP courses, principled criteria for which situations to choose in the first place tend to remain vague.

The Topic-Based Syllabus

The topic-based syllabus is a variation on the situational syllabus (see Richards 2001: 157–159). Topics for young learners might include ‘the family’, ‘pets’, ‘the weather’ and ‘hobbies’, to name just a few. Topic-based syllabuses are well-suited to ESP courses since topics can be selected which are relevant for the learners’ current or future professional needs. This can be done by means of ‘needs analysis’ (see below). It is in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), where a school subject is taught in English by a qualified subject-teacher, that the topic-based syllabus finds its fullest expression. Here the syllabus for the content subject replaces the language syllabus (see Long 2015: 214–215).

The Notional-Functional Syllabus

The notional-functional syllabus (Wilkins 1976), mentioned in Chapter 2, is associated with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and is an attempt to rely on functions and notions to structure a syllabus rather than grammar, lexis, situations or topics. Functions might include ‘promising’, ‘agreeing and disagreeing’, ‘suggesting’ and ‘objecting’. Notions might include ‘place’, ‘direction’, ‘distance’, ‘duration’ and ‘comparison’ (see Richards 2001: 37–38; Johnson 2018: 199–207; Ur 2012: 188–189; Long 2015: 208–210). Such a syllabus is sometimes described as ‘analytic’ in contrast to grammatical and lexical-grammatical syllabuses, which are ‘synthetic’. Ur (2012: 185) explains the difference as follows:

Synthetic syllabuses provide a set of isolated language items (grammatical structures or lexical items, for example). The learner is asked to learn these separately and then combine them to create or understand meaningful phrases or sentences in order to deal with language in context. Analytic syllabuses work the other way round. They describe communicative abilities, tasks or functions (conveying simple information, for example, or understanding the main points of a text). These can then be analysed, and the required words or structures are taught as an outcome rather than a starting point.

However, as already mentioned in Chapter 2, it has proved difficult to specify a definitive list of functions or notions, let alone select and sequence them in a principled manner. Functions just seem to proliferate the more you think about them. Van Ek and Trim (1998: 27–47) listed 132 functions in their Threshold Level Syllabus. These were divided into six categories: ‘imparting and seeking factual information’ (5 functions), ‘expressing and finding out attitudes’ (57 functions), ‘deciding on courses of action’ (14 functions), ‘socialising’ (12 functions), ‘structuring discourse’ (28 functions) and ‘communication repair’ (16 functions). There has thus understandably been reluctance in syllabus design to abandon grammatical principles of selection and sequencing.

The Output-Based Syllabus

The output-based syllabus is sometimes called ‘the competence-based syllabus’ or ‘the standards-based syllabus’ (see Richards 2001: 159; Ur 2012: 189–190). It is closely associated with Competence-Based Language Teaching (CBLT), discussed in Chapter 2, since it specifies task-related proficiency goals to be achieved rather than language to be learned, for example, ‘introducing oneself’, ‘asking for directions’, ‘going shopping’, ‘making a travel booking by telephone’, ‘understanding an academic lecture’, ‘writing a business report’. These are often formulated as ‘I

can ...' statements and describe outcomes of learning rather than providing information on teaching input. Syllabuses based on proficiency benchmarks such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (see Council of Europe 2001: 231–257) or the Michigan English Language Proficiency Standards (MELPS) are output-based.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), discussed in Chapter 2, is also linked to the output-based syllabus since often the tasks specified as output goals by the syllabus become identical with the task-based activities done in the classroom. This works particularly well for ESP courses. In other words, the output-based syllabus solves the problem of selection and sequencing of tasks in TBLT (Richards 2013). The snag with output-based syllabuses, however, is that they do not specify for teachers the required grammar and vocabulary required for mastery of desired outcomes (Ur 2012: 189–190). They may also be vague about the level of proficiency to be aimed at or the level of task complexity required.

The Multi-Track Syllabus

Many modern syllabuses are multi-track or 'integrated' syllabuses (see Richards 2001: 164–165; Ur 2012: 190; Johnson 2018: 207–208; Long 2015: 222–223). They seek to take into account grammar, vocabulary, communicative functions, topics and output goals. For example, the global course goals may be expressed in output terms; the internal structure of the course (and textbook) may be organised around topic-based units; the required language input (grammar, vocabulary notions and functions) is then packaged into the individual topic-based units. This involves syllabus writers in intricate, demanding and creative work, matching desired output behaviour to grammar, vocabulary, functions and notions, which have to be packaged into each chosen topic. The key to successful modern syllabus design is without doubt flexibility within an underlying systematic approach.

Course books which are based on a multi-track syllabus often design their Table of Contents with four or five columns, one for the topic of the unit, one for its grammatical focus, one for the vocabulary focussed on and one for the notions/functions dealt with. They may in addition specify the desired output competences for each unit (see Ur 2012: 190; Johnson 2018: 193–194; 207–208). However, usually one track will be primary and the others subsidiary. Often the primary structuring principle is to be found in the grammar/structures column (Harmer 2015: 212; Johnson 2018: 208).

The Cyclical Syllabus

Traditional grammatical and lexical-grammatical syllabuses tended to be essentially linear in structure: once a grammatical item had been covered

in the syllabus, or an item of vocabulary introduced, it was assumed it had been mastered. The only concession to the fact that learning is neither linear nor instantaneous was the inclusion of revision units in the syllabus and the course book at various points. In the cyclical syllabus, sometimes called ‘the spiral syllabus’, by contrast, learners return over and over again to elements they have already encountered so as to build on them, refine them and develop them to higher levels of complexity in new settings, registers, genres and styles (see Bruner 1977: 13, 52–54; Richards 2001: 13–14, 151). An example would be advanced learners returning to the modal verbs to explore additional modal meanings and functions.

This list of syllabus types is by no means exhaustive. For mention of some further types of syllabus, including the lexical syllabus, the procedural syllabus and the process syllabus, see Long (2015: 210–212, 216–221).

Needs Analysis

In English for Special Purposes (ESP) courses there is sometimes no syllabus set out in advance and the content of the course has to be decided on by the teacher or course designer and tailored to the specific needs of the learner group in question (see Richards 2001: 51–89; Huhta et al. 2013; Johnson 2018: 199–203). This means that a needs-analysis survey must be conducted in advance of the course before goals can be set, the content of the course planned and teaching materials decided on. Needs analysis involves eliciting from learners information about the purposes for which they use English, in which contexts of use they feel secure and in which contexts they feel they have deficits.

Needs analysis may be carried out in a number of ways (see Richards 2001: 60–63; Huhta et al. 2013: 16–32). Which way is chosen will depend in part on the time available for conducting the analysis and evaluating its results, the technical and human resources available as well as the number of course participants and their availability before the course starts. In the absence of a course designer, the course teacher will be responsible for conducting the analysis. There are a number of well-tried techniques:

- The prospective learners may be observed in their professional or everyday lives.
- They may be interviewed.
- They may be asked to complete a needs analysis questionnaire.
- A survey of teachers who have previously taught the learners may be conducted.
- A survey of colleagues, employers or customers of the learners may be conducted.

In general, the best procedure is to start with a structured questionnaire, which should have two sections. In the first section learners should say for what purposes they use the language in their daily lives or work environment according to a set of categories provided. For each category learners should indicate how often they use the language on a four-point or five-point scale from 'never' to 'very frequently'. These categories will include receptive versus productive uses, written versus spoken uses and can be subdivided still further, for example into formal and informal uses. Further information can be obtained about whether English is used for conversation, for oral presentations, for telephoning, for skyping and for e-mailing. Uses will vary greatly according to the specific group, and all the possible uses cannot be covered in a single questionnaire. Thus, shrewd guesses as to possible uses need to be made and these options included. For example, library staff may need to *explain* the cataloguing system to new readers, to *handle complaints* and to *advise* readers on how to find a book, among other needs. The final question should be an open-ended question in which respondents can state any other uses of English they have which have not been mentioned.

In the second section of the questionnaire learners should be given the opportunity to say where they experience difficulties or deficits when they are using English. This section should also consist of structured items with the final item being an open-ended item. The structured items should cover elements which can be specifically targeted in class, for instance fluency, lack of specialist vocabulary, lack of discourse-linking vocabulary, grammatical uncertainty, spelling problems, small-talk problems and perhaps also affective elements such as anxiety. However, it is usually not effective to ask direct questions about affective matters, but more effective to ask the respondents to recall their feelings in specific situations. The items are thus best presented as statements which have to be marked as true or false or marked on a four-point or five-point frequency scale. An example statement to probe anxiety in telephone use might be:

When I am talking in English on the telephone, I always/often/sometimes/rarely/never feel nervous.

If the results of the questionnaire survey are unclear or surprising, then follow-up interviews of certain respondents can be conducted. These are best done as individual interviews rather than group interviews, since certain dominant individuals may influence others in the group. Interviews can be short (just a few minutes) and should be semi-structured. That is, on the basis of the questionnaire results, certain pre-scripted questions should be asked (structured part), but the interviewer should be prepared to ask unscripted follow-up questions so as to probe certain areas in more depth (unstructured part). In cases where the teacher has

no prior knowledge or experience of the special uses of English for the group in question, and is therefore unable to specify categories for a questionnaire, then it may be advisable to replace the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with a small number of in-depth, unstructured interviews of selected learners, who can be asked to talk freely about the uses to which they put English in their daily lives.

A quite different teaching situation concerning learner needs occurs in Survival English (SE) courses, where the learners are often recent adult immigrants with little or no knowledge of English. They have to learn as quickly as possible how to cope in an English-speaking country whose culture may be fully alien to them. Such learners may have limited education and lack literacy skills in their native language. Added to this, various bureaucratic procedures in the new country may be quite unfamiliar to them and have no counterpart in their home country. Sometimes these learners may be poor and socially disadvantaged; they may not know anyone who speaks English and who knows the culture, so that they have no competent person to rely on for help. They may experience culture shock, depression or feelings of aggression. In such cases, goals need to be defined in highly specific, situation-bound terms (for example how to apply for official documents, how to explain pains one has in a specific part of the body at the doctor's, how to go shopping). However, rather than assuming that certain needs exist and no others, the teacher should first spend a lot of time trying to find out about the specific linguistic and social problems of the learners by getting them to tell their stories. In cases of very low English proficiency and in the absence of another language as *lingua franca*, then recourse should be made to mediation in the manner of Community Language Learning by any available individuals who speak both English and the learners' native language (see Chapter 2).

Teaching Materials

Sometimes teaching materials are specified by the institution or by the syllabus, often in the form of a course book; sometimes teachers have complete freedom to choose their own materials; sometimes they may have partial freedom: for example, they may be able to supplement a course book with materials of their own choice or materials they have developed themselves. Teaching materials can be broadly divided into a number of broad classes:

- didactic (contrived) materials
Didactic materials are defined as those designed specifically for language teaching. They include written materials such as course books, graded readers specially written for learners, grammar books for learners and learners' dictionaries, lists of irregular verbs,

vocabulary lists and flash cards. They also include visual materials, such as picture-story sequences and course-book illustrations. Didactic listening materials include scripted audio recordings specially made to accompany a course book as well as recordings of individual sounds and words for pronunciation practice.

- authentic materials

Authentic materials are defined as those designed for purposes unconnected with language teaching. They include written genres such as novels, poems and newspaper articles, as well as grammar books and dictionaries not written for foreign learners. Authentic visual materials might include the teacher's or the learners' holiday photos. Also included are audio and video recordings of songs, recitations, speeches and TV programmes, as well as feature films and documentaries, demonstrations from YouTube and even recordings of animal sounds or of household things like a kettle boiling. Comic strips, cartoons and advertisements combine text and pictures, which makes them very productive.

- pseudo-authentic materials

These are materials written especially for teaching purposes which masquerade as authentic materials. They include everything from pseudo nursery rhymes written for teaching English to dialogues of fictitious conversations produced by a textbook author to illustrate, for example, giving directions or inviting someone to a party. Model business letters with fictitious English-sounding addresses and correspondents also belong to this group. Also included are scripted audio recordings and specially shot videos for a language course. These written and spoken texts are supposed to sound real or at least natural, but they never do, of course.

- semi-authentic materials

Semi-authentic materials are professionally produced, 'doctored' authentic materials. They include, for example, edited, simplified and abridged versions of authentic texts, sometimes with vocabulary glosses, footnotes and explanations.

- teacher-produced hybrid materials

These are typically teacher adaptations of didactic materials to fit a particular learner group in a particular situation, for example a course-book text supplemented with a new task thought up by the teacher or with an authentic picture from the internet, perhaps to replace unsuitable original material. Sometimes course-book material designed for a global market may for cultural reasons *have* to be modified to make it suitable for the specific local class being taught (Thornbury 2013; Richards 2001: 260–261).

Richards (2001: 252–254) discusses the pros and cons of using authentic versus contrived materials. With specific reference to text-based materials, didactic texts are necessarily unnatural texts. They tend to select

vocabulary and grammar to match what learners have already ‘covered’, to use short sentences without connectors so that their discourse structure is unnatural, and, in the case of spoken contrived texts, the pace is often slowed down considerably, which inevitably disrupts natural stress and intonation patterns. In the early stages of learning this is the price that has to be paid so as to ensure comprehensibility. However, it is advisable to introduce some selected authentic texts (written and oral) as soon as possible from lower-intermediate level onwards. Apart from the linguistic and didactic advantages of exposure to natural language, there are motivational advantages. Learners tend to perceive authentic texts as ‘the real thing’, find them more motivating than contrived texts of the same difficulty level and invest more effort in working with them provided the materials are in themselves varied and interesting (see Peacock 1997; Sample 2015). Complete comprehension does not have to be aimed at, and the criterion should be whether learners can understand enough to feel a sense of achievement.

Distinct from teaching materials are *realia*, which are often used as props for a task to be performed in the classroom. They include artefacts from the target culture such as grocery products, coins and banknotes (for shopping tasks), documents such as a passport or driving licence (for tasks dealing with administration), but also items of clothing which are specific to the target culture, such as a policeman’s helmet, or sports equipment which is culture specific, such as a baseball bat or cricket bat (for tasks dealing with sport). They can help to make a role-play or simulation come alive and raise motivation levels.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Online Resources

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 199–200) emphasise that ICT represents both additional provision of resources for language learning as well as an enhancement of the learning experience by opening up new opportunities for learner autonomy. If used appropriately, ICT can make learning English more efficient, more enjoyable, more educationally rewarding and can ultimately enhance motivation to learn English. An approach to language teaching which incorporates ICT is particularly well-suited to TBLT and Co-operative Language Learning (both discussed in Chapter 2).

As with traditional teaching materials, online materials can be broadly divided into authentic and didactic resources. Authentic online material comprises resources not specifically produced for language learning. Didactic online resources include online exercises, tasks, tests and graphic material produced for language learners, either as a supplement to a course book or independent of any course. They also include online dictionaries and grammar explanations. There are various English-

teaching websites which offer complete lesson plans and materials. In some cases corrective feedback and marking may be provided automatically and the teacher can access this feedback and track learners' progress. A further refinement is 'adaptive learning', whereby the software itself tracks ongoing learner progress and level of achievement so as to provide feedback as to which task or exercise should be done next (see Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 200; Harmer 2015: 195–196; Dudeney and Hockly 2007: 117–119). The challenge for teachers is how to integrate online resources into their teaching to didactic advantage rather than just using them because they are there. A sure recipe for disaster is just to hunt the internet for a lesson plan and materials which someone has uploaded, to download it and try to use it in class without any planning or preparation. But of course, you would not do that.

The incorporation of ICT into classroom language teaching is referred to as 'blended learning'. Online learning can be combined with classroom contact teaching in three ways:

- Learners can prepare for a class by using online sources and the class might then consist of learner presentations, discussion and evaluation of the online sources.
- Learners can do online work as a follow-up to a class in the form of homework. This might involve accessing supplementary authentic material on the internet or performing additional language tasks from online didactic resources.
- Learners may be asked to access either authentic online material or didactic online material such as exercises, tasks, grammar information or dictionary entries at certain points in a lesson, either as a planned structural element of the lesson or as problems crop up (see Harmer 2015: 204–206).

Some of the beneficial uses of ICT in the EFL classroom include the following (adapted from Stanley 2013: 1):

- A vast store of information of all sorts, including information about English, can be accessed.
- Almost all varieties imaginable of spoken and written English can be accessed.
- An almost unlimited choice of authentic English texts to read, view or listen to is available.
- A great range of graphic, picture and photographic material is available.
- A great variety of EFL teaching materials, tasks, exercises and tests for all levels is available.
- Opportunities for communication with people all over the world exist.

- Quick and efficient production, editing and publishing of written, spoken and multimedia texts, with opportunities for collaborative authorship, is possible.
- A community of English language users/learners within and beyond the classroom can be created.
- Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) help to manage and organise learning.
- Opportunities for practice in speaking, listening, reading and writing with specific-task focus are available.

Presentation Software

Presentation software such as ‘PowerPoint’, ‘Keynote’, ‘Impress’, ‘Presentations’ and ‘Prezi’ enables teachers and learners to do multimedia presentations which incorporate text, pictures, graphics, video and sound (Harmer 2015: 201; Scrivener 2011: 337). Online software such as Popplet (www.popplet.com) allows the creation and presentation of mind maps and there are online materials pools such as ‘LearningApps’ (learningapps.org), which allow teachers and learners to present and adapt materials easily and attractively, work with these online individually or collaboratively and share them with others (see Grimm et al. 2015: 257–260). Initially, creation and presentation will be done by the teacher but the emphasis should be on encouraging learners to progressively take over responsibility themselves and to collaborate on making presentations, performing tasks and creating and adapting their own learning materials. Scrivener (2011: 338–339) suggests various sorts of topics on which learners may present. In this way learners become increasingly autonomous and may eventually decide on the content of the course in collaboration with and under the advice of the teacher so that a ‘negotiated syllabus’ is developed (Clarke 1991).

Here are five ‘Dos’ and three ‘Don’ts’ for using presentation software and training learners in how to use it (see also Scrivener 2011: 338–339):

DO’S

- Do vary the format and style of presentations rather than always working with a fixed format.
- Do make your presentations interactive by having blanks in the slides for the audience to complete at various points.
- Do use options for concealing text and for reading words one at a time and synchronise this with challenging learners to guess what comes next.
- Do use the animated text option for presenting grammar, so as to show changes in word order and addition of inflections, for example in question and negative forms and in transformations from active to passive sentences

- Do use carefully chosen pictures rather than lengthy explanations for presenting new vocabulary.

DON'TS

- Don't allow the slides to be a complete written version of the presentation but rather a form of scaffolding in word and image to be fleshed out by talk.
- Don't read out a presentation from slides, as this will make it difficult for you to be flexible and respond to questions.
- Don't overload slides with clipart images which do not add anything to the message.

Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)

A VLE, sometimes called a Learning Management System (LMS), is provided by platforms such as 'Blackboard', 'Canvas' and 'Moodle', which combine the functions of e-mail, wikis and blogs as well as other features such as forums and chat rooms. Stanley (2013: 17) recommends student blogs for written homework, a 'latest news' forum and also forums for learners to ask questions and receive teacher feedback. Class blogs, where all class members have posting rights, encourage a sense of learner community but student blogs and tutor blogs may also be employed, with restricted posting rights. A wiki can be used as the class website and texts, tasks, exercises and links to websites can be uploaded to it (Ur 2012: 240–241). A VLE can be used to manage either a classroom contact course or an online course. Learners can see course content, including links to websites or files and can do exercises and tests online. Via tracking facilities, the course teacher can see who has logged in when and what activities learners have done. Some exercises and tests can be automatically marked and the results made available to the learner, while the teacher can also assess other work and provide the learner with feedback. This can all be done so that each learner can view only his or her mark, thus ensuring privacy (Dudeney and Hockly 2007: 137–138, 153–154; Ur 2012: 240–241).

Online Tools

Various tools may be used either within a VLE or without one.

E-mail and Blogs

E-mail or blog exchanges with other classes at home or abroad may be organised (Dudeney and Hockly 2007: 67–70; Stanley 2013: 34; Scrivener 2011: 340–341). Harmer (2015: 202), however, cautions that learners tend to lose interest in responding to one another's blogs unless they are given

direction and new impetus from time to time. Stanley (2013: 33) suggests introducing 'mystery guests' whose identity learners have to guess. Dudeney and Hockly (2007: 86–93) offer detailed advice on setting up audio and video blogs.

Wikis

Wikis can be used for collaborative writing, interactive editing of written tasks, for online discussion and for posting videos (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 202; Ur 2012: 240). This encourages social interaction via writing (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011: 201). Dudeney and Hockly (2007: 96–98) describe a simple collaborative writing activity using a wiki in which pairs of learners write a brief description of a famous person, but deliberately make humorous factual mistakes, which other learners have to spot and correct.

Audio and Video Files

YouTube (www.youtube.com) and other sites offer a wide range of materials for listening and viewing. These include both authentic materials not produced for language learners and didactic materials specially produced for language learning. Relevant sites mentioned by Kiliçkaya (2018: 1363) include English Language Listening Lab Online (www.ello.org), ESL lab (esl-lab.com), ESL bits (www.esl-bits.net), Teacher Tube (www.teachertube.com), Breaking News English (www.breakingnewsenglish.com). Real English (www.real-english.com) offers a vast store of authentic audio and video material in English for listening practice in or out of class. There are other useful sites for authentic listening and viewing. Kiliçkaya (2018: 1363) mentions Voscreen (www.voscreen.com), a website which enables learners to view short video clips from diverse sources.

This great repertoire of audio and video material can function within the framework of blended learning to individualise the traditional listening comprehension class. For example, working in small groups, learners can listen to a podcast or view a video out of class and draft comprehension questions for it (Walker and White 2013: 34). They can then present the video to the class, who have to answer the questions. For pronunciation practice rather than listening practice a wide range of native and non-native varieties of English can also be found. A relevant website is www.audio-lingua.eu (Kiliçkaya 2018: 1363).

Learners can also produce their own podcasts using software such as 'Audacity' (Dudeney and Hockly 2007: 98–102; Walker and White 2013: 36). A number of sites are available which enable learners to listen to messages from classmates and the teacher, but also to record themselves, for example, giving a short talk to fulfil an assignment. Kiliçkaya (2018: 1364) suggests this facility is valuable for anxious or shy learners who can

prepare their talk in advance and do not have to perform before their classmates. Relevant sites are Audioboo (<http://audioboo.fm>), Vocaroo (www.vocaroo.com) and Voxopop (www.voxopop.com).

Children's songs and rhymes available in abundance on YouTube can be used in class for young learners to sing along with and/or for listening comprehension. One can usually find the written text of the song, a rendition of the song – often with subtitles – and even a visual track which can be helpful for comprehension and for raising the appeal of the video. For example, 'Ten Green Bottles' is available with accompanying animated graphics so that a bottle falls off the wall each time at the appropriate point in the song. This can be used to promote prediction skills while listening. Concerning poetry rather than songs, various websites provide readings of poems, often by professional actors, sometimes even by the poet in person. Supplementary material about the poem and the poet is also often easily accessible.

Sites such as YouTube are also invaluable for language-teaching purposes for the countless videos of instructions posted by ordinary people on how to operate various devices. These constitute examples of speech accompanied by action. Often, the instructions or descriptions are supported by action or by diagrams or pictures. This means that learners can infer the meaning of words or phrases from the actions and from their background knowledge of the topic.

Online Poster Walls

Online poster walls such as 'Padlet' (padlet.com) (see Harmer 2015: 202) and 'Glogster' (edu.glogster.com) (see Grimm et al. 2015: 259; Stanley 2013: 36, 47) enable learners to post their own comments as well as pictures and videos. Scrivener (2011: 341) suggests online poster walls can be used for collecting birthday greetings, brainstorming ideas or collecting feedback on a suggestion. Word-cloud creators, such as 'Tagxedo' (www.tagxedo.com), 'Wordle' (wordle.net) and 'Worditout' (worditout.com), display words in a text as a graphic illustration of their relative frequencies and can be used for brainstorming a short text in a pre-reading activity (see Grimm et al. 2015: 258–259; Scrivener 2011: 345–346; Stanley 2013: 101).

Video Communication Platforms

'Skype', 'FaceTime' or 'AdobeConnect' can be used for learner–learner communication but also for teacher–learner communication and for individual tutoring. They can also be used for presentations by guest speakers with the possibility for interaction between speaker and audience (see Harmer 2015: 195). Dudeney and Hockly (2007: 71–85) offer detailed suggestions for setting up a chat session with another class.

Multimedia Text-creation Software

Multimedia storytelling is one of many activities which can be performed collaboratively. Learners can write stories which they illustrate with photos from the internet using the 'Flickr' website (www.flickr.com). The Microsoft software programme 'Photo Story 3' enables learners to add pictures, recorded voice and background music to their stories (see Cheung and Lee 2013). The site 'Storybird' (storybird.com) allows learners to use pictures to make stories, 'Toondoo' (www.toondoo.com) enables the creation of comic strips and 'Voki' (www.voki.com) makes it possible to create avatars ('vokis') which speak the words that learners type in (see Harmer 2015: 202–203).

Webinars

Other useful resources for advanced classes are online seminars or lectures (webinars). These can be viewed in real time, and viewers can communicate with other viewers via a chat box or text box. They are also often recorded so that they can be viewed at any time afterwards, for example the TED Talks, for advanced learners (see Scrivener 2011: 343; Harmer 2015: 206–207). Stanley (2013: 106) makes suggestions for how a class can organise their own reading-for-pleasure webinar using virtual classroom software such as 'Wiz-IQ' (www.wiziq.com).

Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms offer possibilities for learners to cooperate outside the classroom in activities such as discussing a topic, making suggestions about a project or producing a piece of writing. Learners can post to a public social network page such as the British Council 'Learn English' pages for adults, teenagers and children, respectively (see Hockly and Dudeney 2014: 48). Teachers can also liaise with their learners outside the classroom on homework tasks (see Harmer 2015: 202).

Virtual Worlds

Virtual worlds such as 'Second Life' provide simulated reality within which task-based learning can be done. Assuming another identity may help learners to overcome anxiety and express themselves more freely than they would otherwise have done. (See Harmer 2015: 195; Scrivener 2011: 347–348; Stanley 2013: 158–159; Dudeney and Hockly 2007: 154–156).

Online Dictionaries, Corpora and Concordance Programmes

Online dictionaries and apps for mobile devices are a great advance over traditional print dictionaries and first-generation electronic dictionaries.

They are supplemented by the availability of various online corpora of spoken and written English and, when used with a concordance programme, are particularly useful for researching the collocation possibilities of a word. Stanley (2013: 53–59) has a number of suggestions for using concordance programmes as a basis from which to teach synonyms, antonyms, polysemy and collocation (see also Dudeney and Hockly 2007: 103–112). Kiliçkaya (2018: 1362) provides the internet addresses of some major English dictionaries available online and notes two great advantages of electronic and online dictionaries over conventional print dictionaries. The first is that learners can listen to the pronunciation of words and the second is that examples of the word in use are available. However, even without a concordance programme, just typing an unknown word or phrase into a search engine is sometimes good enough. This usually generates lots of examples which help make clear what the word or phrase means (see Harmer 2015: 203).

Internet Research

Learners can be sent on internet searches in the form of a ‘treasure hunt’ in which they have to answer a series of information questions. Sometimes one question can lead to another so that the answer to the previous question is necessary to proceed to the next. Learners may need training in how to use keywords effectively (see Dudeney and Hockly 2007:32–34; Scrivener 2011: 342–345).

Dudeney (2007) suggested various activities based on accessing information. Many of these have been part of the stock-in-trade of CLT for many years, but are enhanced by the possibility of quickly accessing information online, editing documents, adding pictures and printing out material. The activities suggested include accessing song texts and photos of the singer from the internet, using the ‘Time’ website of 20th-century celebrities. Using the same site, celebrities can be invited to a virtual dinner party. Other useful websites for creating tasks include weather websites and the Yahoo headlines site. ‘Crayon’ can be used to create a newspaper (Dudeney 2007: 49–58, 94–95). Another activity involves writing a film review based on reviews available online (Dudeney 2007: 58). Learners can also design a holiday tour for various profiles of tourist or plan their own holiday (Dudeney 2007: 61–62, 82). They can decide to see a particular film, do some virtual shopping, search for an apartment, design a holiday poster or view luxury apartments or houses (Dudeney 2007: 83–94, 104–105). One just has to find appropriate internet sites. However, Littlewood’s (2011: 553) criticism, mentioned in Chapter 2 when discussing CLT, of make-believe activities of the ‘planning a party that will never take place’ variety remains valid, regardless of whether they are internet supported or not.

Much more promising for more advanced learners working within a topic-based syllabus are internet-based research projects (see Dudeney and Hockly 2007: 44–61). For example, a textbook unit for advanced learners on The Spanish Armada can be greatly enhanced in the spirit of ‘blended learning’ if, after having read the textbook passage, learners are invited to work collaboratively outside class, find out why the invasion attempt failed and then report back in the next class and present their findings. They will find quite different reasons advanced by historians of different persuasions on the internet. A conflict can be engineered by asking some groups to focus on the British War Museum’s version, others on history schoolbook versions in Britain, others on the Spanish viewpoint. Such research can be combined with writing a timeline for the event in question using timeline software such as ‘X Timeline’ (see Stanley 2013: 141–142). Another possible topic for research within a course about the American Wild West might be the shoot-out at the OK Corral in Tombstone, Arizona, immortalised in several Westerns, which often pay scant attention to the geographical and historical facts. Learners can find out how it really was.

Electronic portfolios constitute a possibility for learners to collect and present work they have done in various internet-based projects over a whole course or school year, and they can also be used for course assessment. They differ from traditional portfolios only in the respect that they are stored electronically and can include video and audio material, blogs and websites as well as documents (see Dudeney and Hockly 2007: 119–122).

Hand-Held Devices

Hockly and Dudeney (2014: 29–30) list various sorts of apps for hand-held devices which can be profitably used for teaching and learning English. Some of the simpler activities are based mainly on the text or note-taking function of mobile devices. These include various dictation activities, online notice boards, word clouds, following celebrities on Twitter, text messaging, emoticon conversations and mind mapping (Hockly and Dudeney 2014: 41–55).

At a slightly greater level of complexity are activities which involve taking photos as a basis for language use, for example close-ups taken from unusual angles of everyday objects, treasure hunts, making a picture dictionary with ‘Flickr’, using photo-manipulation data to make an alternative life story, making a story based on a series of random pictures, making a photo collage to put in a time capsule and annotating photos, to name only some possibilities mentioned by Hockly and Dudeney (2014: 58–68). Even the conversation class about what learners did at the weekend can be enlivened by asking learners to bring in pictures they have taken of what they did (Jarvis 2015).

At a still-higher level of complexity are activities suggested by Hockly and Dudeney (2014: 69–81) which require learners to make audio recordings. One activity is to record sounds from everyday life, such a kettle boiling and use these as the basis for various sorts of quiz (*idem*: 72). Another activity involves using a voice search engine to find out information about famous inventions as quickly as possible (*idem*: 73). Yet another activity involves using a speech-to-text/dictation app to practise pronunciation (*idem*: 74).

Even more complex are activities involving video-recording. Hockly and Dudeney (2014: 83) suggest that learners can, for example, create a silent video tour of their own home: They can then present this in class, providing a spoken commentary. This can provide the basis for various spoken activities. Afterwards, using an audio voiceover app, they can record their commentaries and upload the video to a class blog or wiki page so that the videos are available for the whole class. A more ambitious variation would be for learners to produce a video guide to their own town (*idem*: 88). Other activities include writing subtitles to a film with a non-English soundtrack using Bombay TV (www.grapheine.com/bombaytv) (*idem*: 85) and producing a multimedia trailer for a book using a video-production app such as Animoto (*idem*: 92).

Classroom Interaction

Teacher and Learner Classroom Roles

As already mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the classroom is an acquisition-poor environment in which opportunities for varied exposure and communicative interaction are both quantitatively and qualitatively limited. Classroom teaching therefore aims to compensate for these deficits with a series of pedagogical interventions. These include the syllabus itself, needs analysis, teaching materials and ICT. However, the major instrument of intervention is the teacher in the classroom, who fulfils at least the following six roles:

- a provider of language knowledge
- a language model
- a facilitator of ‘learning by doing’
- a provider of feedback (positive and negative)
- a link to the target language culture
- a motivator

The emphasis given to each of these roles varies according to the teaching method or approach adopted, the learner group, the age of the learners, their proficiency level, their learning goals and their type and intensity of motivation. The teacher’s role also has to be adjusted to the

learning environment represented by the school, the educational system and the wider cultural background of the learners (see Scrivener 2011: 13–19; Ur 2012: 16–18). However, in all teaching environments learners must be provided with three opportunities:

- to receive explanations about the language
- to practise listening to, speaking, reading and writing the language
- to develop both accuracy and fluency in speech and writing

Learners themselves have to take advantage of these opportunities and also seek out additional learning opportunities outside the classroom. They cannot be spoon-fed into acquiring English. All learners therefore have to develop self-direction and the ultimate goal must be learner autonomy. The self-directed classroom learner is to a greater or lesser extent:

- an explorer of the language
- a gatherer of information about the language
- a builder and tester of hypotheses about the language
- a language experimenter in conversation with fellow learners
- an initiator, manager and regulator of language practice activities
- a solver of communication problems which arise in conversation
- an evaluator of language which is encountered in speech or writing
- an explainer of the language to fellow learners

Input Modification and Interactional Modification

When speaking to learners of limited proficiency, people tend, quite naturally, to modify their language in certain predictable ways. Skilled teachers are good at tuning the degree of language modification to the particular group of learners. The goal is to modify speech sufficiently so as to ease comprehension and thus promote learning while keeping the language as natural as possible. Saville-Troike and Barto (2017: 112–114) mention a number of techniques, including the following:

- regular and repetitive syntax
- simple morphological structure
- simple vocabulary
- clearly defined pauses at clause and phrase boundaries
- speech rate slowed down slightly
- careful articulation
- a level of loudness just slightly above that of normal speech
- slightly stronger than normal stress on key words
- topicalisation (topic mentioned first, followed by a comment as in, ‘Vienna, it is a nice city.’)
- full forms such as ‘I will’ rather than contractions such as ‘I’ll’.

Saville-Troike and Barto (2017: 115) also identify techniques of ‘interactional modification’. These involve devices such as paraphrase, repetition, expansion and elaboration. Unlike input modification, interactional modification does not make for unnatural language at the phonological, grammatical and lexical levels. This makes it a more useful teaching tool. For example, a teacher can retrace and modify an utterance he or she has already produced if it seems that the learner has not understood, as in the following (invented) exchange:

Teacher: It will be an adventure.

Learner: at venture? (*request for clarification*)

The teacher can respond in various ways, using discourse-modification tools. If one does not work, others can be tried.

- Repetition
An adventure
- Paraphrase
It will be an exciting holiday.
- Expansion and elaboration
It will be very exciting, a big challenge. There is a mountain to climb and you can go canoeing and hang-gliding.

These basic strategies can also be used where discourse modification is made prophylactically, as in the following (also invented) example:

Teacher: It will be an adventure, an adventure (*repetition*), an exciting adventure (*repetition with expansion*), yes, a big challenge (*paraphrase*), a really exciting holiday (*re-paraphrase*). There will be lots of exciting things to do, like mountain climbing, canoeing and hang-gliding (*expansion and elaboration*).

Assuming the learners are following the gist of the discourse, the teacher may continue in the same fashion, anticipating the next problem and adopting the same strategy:

Teacher: You can go hang-gliding if you dare, if you dare (*repetition*), if you are a brave and daring person (*repetition with variation*). Hang-gliding (*repetition*) is only for brave and daring people (*paraphrase/repetition*).

As part of their development in the direction of autonomy, learners should be encouraged to make requests for clarification when they do not understand either the teacher or another learner. When communicating with other learners, they should also be prepared, if necessary, to

modify their original utterance if this is not understood by their interlocutor. This is important training for future real-world communication, including future communication with less proficient speakers of English than themselves.

Learner Cooperation and Self-Direction

For young beginning learners a considerable measure of teacher direction is required, but training in how to learn autonomously should be introduced as soon as possible (see Pinter 2017: 111–126). Learner cooperation, self-direction and ultimately autonomy can be encouraged by:

- clearly structured lessons, for example the three-phase lesson structure of ‘plan’, ‘perform’ and ‘reflect’ (PPR)
- building-in certain ritual practices, for example having a language watchdog, timekeeper, co-ordinator and secretary in the ‘perform’ phase. Rituals, however, should not be overdone, lest they impart an unwanted rigidity to classes and they are best set up in cooperation with the learners.
- including choices for learners at various points in the lesson, such as with whom they work, which material they use, which method they employ to perform a task, whether they do a certain task in class or at home
- encouraging learners to modify and re-use materials as a springboard for further activities (see Ur 2012: 203–209). This may entail expansion, reduction, transformation into another mode, change of writer perspective or re-contextualisation. Materials may be pooled and montages may be made from various source materials for a new task or activity, initially under the close guidance of the teacher, but later in self-directed fashion.

Provision of Feedback on Error

For language learners there is always a discrepancy between cognitive and linguistic development. This means that learners frequently want to express ideas which they can easily express in their native language but for which they lack the linguistic means in the foreign language. This may lead them into error of various sorts, and this is good. Learners need to make errors in order to test out hypotheses about the language and actually learn from their errors, as was said in Chapter 1. However, this does not mean that all errors have to be corrected. Firstly, if one attempted to do this, much time for learners to speak would be lost, communication would be severely disrupted and learners would in any case be unable to learn from the corrections because of cognitive

overload. In addition, continual error correction might well be demotivating. When language learners talk to native speakers in natural speech situations, not many learner errors are corrected, precisely because this would mean continually interrupting learners. Native speakers tend usually to correct factual error. They are also quite likely to correct irrelevant utterances, for example if a learner gives an answer which is not the answer to the question asked. Vocabulary error is much less likely to be corrected and syntactic error is rarely corrected. Errors of omission of grammatical morphemes are very rarely corrected in naturalistic language use, probably because they do not usually impede understanding (Chun et al. 1982).

Errors occur on a spectrum from errors of competence at one extreme to performance slips at the other, as was said in Chapter 1. Errors of competence represent gaps or inaccuracies in the learner's knowledge of English – wrong ideas about the language, as it were. Performance slips are quite different. The learner knows what is right, but the wrong thing 'comes out' by mistake, due to incomplete automatization. However, an error such as *'childs' (for 'children') may be a competence error for a beginner but a performance slip for an advanced learner. In the latter case, correction is unnecessary and may serve only to distract and even embarrass the learner. At the other extreme, correction of competence errors which involve language far beyond the learner's current level of proficiency is unlikely to be effective either. However, many errors learners produce are strung out at various points along the spectrum from competence error to performance slip. This middle ground represents more or less unstable elements of the language which are as yet not firmly established in competence. It is these middle-ground errors on which error correction should focus. (For a review of various ideas on which errors to correct, some of them different from those put forward here, see Sheen and Ellis 2011: 599–600.)

Learners can benefit most from correction of those middle-ground errors about which they are already uncertain and suspect there may be something wrong with what they have just said. As part of their development towards autonomy, learners should themselves gradually become able to actively seek out support from the teacher when they encounter difficulty while speaking, so that the teacher becomes less an error corrector and more a prompter and provider of scaffolding. In cases where learners have been considering which of two forms to use, for instance, they may show their uncertainty by tone of voice, for example giving a rising intonation to a word, to imply, 'Is that right?' or make a mute appeal to the teacher by hesitating and using an appropriate facial expression. In such cases of mute appeal, what the learner has said may actually be fully acceptable. In this case he or she will nevertheless benefit from brief positive feedback, even if this is just in the form of an

approving nod. Positive teacher feedback (praise), for instance for an idiomatic turn of phrase, is in general immensely important not only for the speaker but also for the whole class, who are likely to pay attention to and perhaps take in the positive language feature. However, such praise can become inflationary and should not be overdone.

The more pressure learners are under, the more errors they will make. The more cognitively demanding the speaking task as a whole is, the less surplus attentional capacity will be available for issues of correctness and the likelihood of error will be greater. In a given speech situation the learner may be focussing simultaneously on getting the past tense form of a verb correct, choosing the right preposition and thinking about how to formulate the following clause, so that due to cognitive overload, error occurs. Furthermore, factors internal to the learner, including level of arousal, attitude to the interlocutor as well as anxiety levels, will also influence available attentional capacity and the likelihood of error occurring. Anxiety was discussed in Chapter 3, and in situations where learners are in a state of high anxiety, error correction should in any case be abandoned altogether (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994).

To summarise: online classroom correction of oral error is a delicate art and wholesale error correction has the potential to do a lot of damage, particularly if performed insensitively. Error correction may be counterproductive for the following reasons:

- Learners may not need the correction if it refers to a performance slip.
- The correction may be too far above the learner's current competence so that he or she is not yet ready to integrate it into his or her learner language.
- In any case, the learner may be focussed on what he or she is trying to say and may not take in, understand or remember the correction due to lack of free attentional capacity.
- Learners may become embarrassed by correction and their anxiety levels may rise so that free attentional capacity is further reduced.
- The learner may misunderstand the correction, for example if the learner incorrectly pronounces the word 'iron' with an intervocalic 'r' and is corrected, then he or she may in future also pronounce 'irony' without an intervocalic 'r', thus introducing a new error.
- Sometimes the correction itself may be mistaken, that is, does not correspond with what the learner wanted to say, so that the learner will be confused.
- Learners may be distracted from what they are trying to say, their planning interrupted, and they may not be able to proceed.

- Interruptions reduce the chance of learners to talk at length and thus gain essential practice in planning longer stretches of speech (Holley and King 1974).
- Learners may adopt risk-reducing behaviour and in future say only what they are sure is correct.

However, not all errors will necessarily disappear by themselves so that appropriate error correction in the classroom is valuable (Swain 2000: 99; Swain and Lapkin 1989; Sheen and Ellis 2011: 606; Keck and Kim 2014: 152). In particular, efforts must be made to ensure that a classroom pidgin does not develop, involving formal and functional simplification as well as transfer from the first language. Therefore, each language course needs to strike its own individual balance between accuracy and fluency work. Since trade-offs operate between accuracy and fluency in any given task, it may well be preferable to separate fluency-based work and accuracy-based work in class, with the main emphasis being on the former.

Error correction may be explicit or implicit. Explicit correction involves direct teacher intervention and may be accompanied by an explanation and/or a request for the learner to repeat a correct version of the erroneous part of the utterance. In fluency-based sessions implicit correction is often preferable: the teacher waits until the learner's turn to speak is over and then takes up the conversation, apparently in natural fashion, and integrates into his or her utterance a corrected 'recast' of the erroneous portion of the learner's utterance (Lyster and Ranta 1997; Lightbown and Spada 2013: 139–143; Keck and Kim 2014: 152–1557). Loewen (2012: 25) cites many studies which find that recasts are the most common form of classroom correction. This is obviously a more economical and less intrusive procedure than direct correction, and it is additionally less face-threatening. For the procedure to be effective, however, learners may need to be sensitised to recognising recasts as indirect feedback on error since there is always the danger that learners may either not notice the recast or interpret it as mere stylistic variation (see also Saville-Troike and Barto 2017: 117).

For accuracy-based sessions, by contrast, explicit correction may well be appropriate. There are a number of techniques available:

- The teacher says the correct version either immediately or at the end of the utterance.
- The teacher says the correct version and asks the learner to repeat it.
- The teacher prefaces the correction by a comment such as, 'No, you can't say that, you must say ...'
- The teacher tries to elicit the correct version, possibly giving various clues to the correct form ('you must use the past tense', 'no, it's an irregular verb').
- The teacher appeals to the whole class to supply the correct version.

- The teacher not only corrects the error but adds a brief explanation.
- The teacher not only corrects the error but tries to elicit an explanation either from the learner or from the whole class, perhaps supplying clues.
- The teacher records a selection of errors made during the activity and then afterwards either corrects them explicitly or tries to elicit the corrections from the class. Explanations may also be given by the teacher or elicited from the class.

Note 1: The advantage of elicitation procedures is that the cognitive activity involved in retrieving the correct version and/or explaining why it is correct helps the learner to retain it better.

Note 2: Concerning direct correction of pronunciation in accuracy-based sessions, it is important that learners repeat the correct form. Merely hearing the correct pronunciation is no guarantee that the correction will be incorporated into production since the neuromuscular articulatory skill may not be available and will need practising. However, if a learner cannot say the word correctly at, say, the third attempt, then one should move on, rather than persisting too long and possibly embarrassing him or her.

Note 3: Concerning grammatical and lexical mistakes, a brief explanation given immediately can be useful for the learner, but longer explanations should be postponed to the end of the activity or even to a special form-focussed teaching session.

Note 4: If the technique of eliciting an explanation is adopted, one should acknowledge the partial validity of incomplete explanations given by learners and then supplement them or build on them rather than just dismissing or ignoring them, which can be demotivating.

For further discussion of error-correction techniques, see Sheen and Ellis (2011: 594), Loewen (2012: 25–26) and Lightbown and Spada (2013: 139–145).

Some Rules of Thumb for Classroom Interaction

To conclude this section, here are some rules of thumb for managing classroom interaction, which you might like to reflect on and discuss with one another:

DO'S

- Do give learners ample time to respond to a question.
- Do rephrase the question if there is no response after a certain time.
- Do always acknowledge the truth value of a learner's utterance first of all, even if it is error-ridden.
- Do expand the learner's utterance to make it acceptable if a student is struggling.
- Do prompt the student with cues.

- Do give students practice in speaking at a stretch so that they can practise discourse planning.
- Do be flexible and tolerant of learner answers that are not exactly your own model answer.
- Do incorporate vocabulary and structures which students themselves have just produced into your own discourse and into the language of the lesson.

DON'TS

- Don't be afraid of silence while learners are thinking.
- Don't necessarily make the student repeat your correction of grammar or lexis.
- Don't give lengthy explanations which disrupt the conversation.
- Don't interrupt students unless absolutely necessary.
- Don't correct surface morphological errors in cases when you will only be telling the learner what he or she already knows anyway.
- Don't react to error by just shaking your head or saying, 'No.' (This is potentially anxiety-provoking for the learner, who will realise he or she has done something wrong, but will not know what.)
- Don't react to error by saying 'Again.' This is highly ambiguous and could from the learner's point of view mean either 'It is wrong' or 'Speak more clearly', for instance.

Food for Thought

- Q. 1. Look at the Table of Contents of some course books and decide which of the syllabus types mentioned in the chapter underlies the course book. If it is a multi-track syllabus, look at some of the units and see if you can decide which strand is the primary one.
- Q. 2. Imagine you are to teach a class of ten-year-old children in a European country who are just about to start learning English for two one-hour lessons per week at school. What rough goals would you set for the first month of teaching? (There is no official syllabus available yet.)
- Q. 3. In her study of classroom interaction in Hong Kong, Amy Tsui found teachers sometimes tended not to give learners enough time to think before responding to a question, for example in a reading-comprehension lesson. Teachers tended to be intolerant of silence. One of the teachers in the study said:

to me silence is the result of [the] teacher's inertia; when silence occurs, it means [the] teacher is not making the lesson productive enough for students to learn ...

(Tsui 1995: 86)

What would you say to this teacher? Think back to Chapter 2. From what you learned there, can you think of any language-teaching method and theory of language learning which might underlie the ideas expressed by the teacher?

- Q. 4. ‘Like you baseball?’ is an example of an error in question formation that learners at a certain stage of development sometimes make. What has the learner erroneously assumed about question formation in English? How might you react to the error in:

- a) a classroom conversation session (fluency-based)?
- b) an accuracy-based grammar practice session?

- Q. 5. (Group task) Read Cheung and Lee (2013), who offer guidance and advice on using ‘Photo Story 3’ for getting learners to perform digital storytelling. Access either ‘Photo Story 3’ and/or some of the other sites mentioned for multimedia text-creation software (or any others you know). Decide on a suitable learner group, specifying age and proficiency level, set goals and plan a digital storytelling lesson. Try it out by doing it yourselves and discuss any problems which arise. Consider how well it fulfils the goals you have set.

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5 Pronunciation

Whose Pronunciation?

The sounds, especially the vowel sounds, of a language inevitably change over time. Evidence of this is that the rhymes used by Elizabethan poets sometimes do not work today. Even in more recent times there have been noticeable changes. If you listen to BBC radio news or sports broadcasts of the 1950s or earlier and compare them with their modern counterparts, you will notice that pronunciation has changed. Traditionally, the pronunciation target for foreign learners of British English was ‘Received Pronunciation’ (RP). The term was used by the British phonetician Daniel Jones to describe the target pronunciation of his *English Pronouncing Dictionary* (EPD), which was actually his own pronunciation:

I call it Received Pronunciation (abbreviation RP), for want of a better term. I wish it to be clearly understood, however, that RP means ‘widely understood pronunciation’.

(Jones 1926: viii)

The term RP was not invented by Jones, and in the first edition (1917) of the EPD he had called his pronunciation model ‘Public School Pronunciation’ (PSP). Just why he abandoned the term PSP in favour of RP for the second edition is unclear. What he meant by ‘widely understood’ is also unclear. However, Jones’s target pronunciation of RP/PSP was in fact the accent used by, but not laid down by, the BBC (founded 1922). It was just that the broadcasters were recruited from the public schools (Abercrombie 1991: 48–49). It is true that the RP accent would have been more widely understood in Britain than any regional accent would have been. However, it is worth remembering what George Bernard Shaw, himself an Irishman, wrote about English accents at this time:

It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him.

(*Pygmalion*, 1916, Preface)

Early *Watch with Mother* broadcasts of the 1950s and 1960s, available on YouTube, show how RP used to sound. These early broadcasts were initially only receivable in the Home Counties, the heartland of RP, and only by those socially privileged enough to own a TV. RP was never the way most British or even most English people spoke. Even in 1926, RP/PSP was used by only a small, privileged minority of British speakers, so that it was always socially marked and associated with the affluent south-east of Britain, although there were RP speakers all over England, and of course public schools all over Britain where RP was spoken. Nor was RP ever something monolithic (Abercrombie 1991: 48–49). There was social variation within RP, the RP of the aristocracy being different from the RP of the educated middle class. As time went on and class barriers became less rigid, RP became more open to outside influences. The aspiring lower middle class, especially those from the south-east of England, found it easy to modify their regional speech in the direction of RP when interacting with RP speakers. Such speakers nevertheless retained some features of their primary regional pronunciation (see Cruttenden 2014: 76–78).

Since the 1960s RP has become increasingly influenced by other accents (see Cruttenden 2014: 83–85 for a detailed description) and these developments have been accompanied by more tolerant attitudes to regional varieties of pronunciation, although the broad urban dialects still carry a social stigma. Tolerance of variation in pronunciation has been closely linked to changes in the social class structure of Britain. As the traditional class barriers to power and influence have been increasingly eroded, although not erased, a new privileged class has grown massively in influence. This class is drawn from pop culture, the New Economy, fashion, entertainment and sport and has produced new social role models in music, sport, film, TV and the digital world who are not speakers of RP but of other varieties. The term ‘Estuary English’ is sometimes used to refer to ‘some people in public life who ... now find it acceptable to speak with some characteristics of the London area ... such as glottal stops, which in earlier times would have caused comment or disapproval’ (Roach 2009: 4). American pronunciation has also been influential. Cruttenden (2014: 86) notes that a ‘mid-Atlantic’ accent is common in pop stars.

Dissatisfaction with the label RP as the target pronunciation for foreign learners was expressed by Windsor-Lewis (1972). He suggested the term ‘General British’ (GB) on the analogy of ‘General American’

(GA) for a target pronunciation of British English relatively unmarked both socially and regionally. Gradually the term GB has come to be preferred to RP. It represents a target which is in keeping with changes in English pronunciation since the 1960s. Cruttenden (2014: 80–81) and Carley et al. (2018: 6) use the term GB instead of RP as the target pronunciation for foreign learners. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2011: R45) defines GB as being based on the pronunciation of younger speakers of RP and ‘a range of similar accents which are not strongly regional’.

Cruttenden (2014: 80–81) uses the term Conspicuous General British (CGB) to denote the now rather old-fashioned RP spoken for example by the older Royals, including Prince Charles, in contrast to the more modern pronunciation of, for instance, Prince Harry. Younger speakers of GB may incorporate various features of regional English, especially south-east regional and London English into their GB speech. There is thus a fluid boundary between GB and those speakers of a regional variety of English who approximate to RP. Cruttenden (2014: 81–82) calls this variety Regional General British (RGB). He further identifies a number of other standards in Britain, including Standard Scottish English (SSE), London English, Estuary English (EE), Multicultural London English (MLE) and General Northern English (GNE) (Cruttenden 2014: 88–92).

Describing the Sounds of English

The Phonemes of English

The set of contrasting sounds a language employs to express meaning comprises its phonemes (see Cruttenden 2014: 43–49; Roach 2009: 2–3; Collins et al. 2019: 12–16). Each language uses a limited set of phonemes and no two languages use the same set. The set of phonemes each language possesses is a subset of all the sounds which the languages of the world use, which in turn is a subset of all the vocal noises human beings are capable of. Some very exotic sounds are used as phonemes in some languages. Some languages use clicks, for example, which are not language sounds at all in English. Thus, the ‘tut-tut’ sound (a dental click,) which in English is a paralinguistic, not a linguistic, expression of annoyance or disapproval, is used as a phoneme in some African languages. And the lateral click (a click with one side of the tongue against the roof of the mouth), which is an alternative to ‘gee-up’ by some English speakers when talking to horses, is also used in some languages as a phoneme (Cruttenden 2014: 34).

The sounds of language do not of themselves mean anything. They combine to form words or word-parts which have meaning. English,

like all languages, has a fixed inventory of distinctive sound contrasts, for example, the vowel contrasts in the words ‘bed’ and ‘bad’ or the final consonant contrasts in ‘bad’ and ‘bat’. Such pairs of words which differ only in respect of one sound are called ‘minimal pairs’ (Roach 2009: 51–53; Cruttenden 2014: 43; Collins et al. 2019: 12).

There are generally agreed to be 44 phonemes in GB English, comprising 20 vowels and 24 consonants (Roach 2009: 34). Since there are more phonemes than letters of the alphabet, some additional symbols have to be used for a phonemic transcription. Furthermore, there is no consistent correspondence in English between sounds and the letters of the alphabet used to represent them in writing (see Collins et al. 2019: 98–110). This is particularly true of the vowels. At school many of us learned that there are five vowels: ‘a’, ‘e’, ‘i’, ‘o’ and ‘u’. In fact, this is not a list of the vowel sounds at all. It is a list of the five letters of the alphabet which are used to represent vowel sounds in writing and never used to represent consonant sounds. It does not, for example, include the letter ‘y’, which is sometimes used to represent the vowel /ɪ/ (as in ‘lynch’), the diphthong /aɪ/ as in /dye/ and the second element of the diphthong /eɪ/ as in ‘day’. The letter ‘y’ nicely illustrates how poor a guide English spelling is to pronunciation because ‘y’ can also be used to represent the sound /j/, as in ‘yes’.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show the transcriptions for the GB English vowel and consonant phonemes, respectively, following Cruttenden (2014).

Table 5.1 Transcriptions for the 20 GB vowels

Monophthongs	Diphthongs
• /ɪ/ as in ‘bid’ • /i:/ as in ‘bead’ • /e/ as in ‘bed’ • /ɛ:/ as in ‘hair’ • /a/ as in ‘bat’ • /ɑ:/ as in ‘bar’ • /ɒ/ as in bottom (first vowel) • /ɔ:/ as in ‘bore’ • /ʊ/ as in ‘put’ • /u:/ as in ‘boot’ • /ʌ/ as in ‘bud’ • /ɜ:/ as in ‘fur’ • /ə/ as in ‘bottom’ (second vowel)	• /eɪ/ as in ‘page’/ • /aɪ/ as in ‘five’ • /ɔɪ/ as in ‘join’ • /əʊ/ as in ‘home’ • /aʊ/ as in ‘now’ • /ɪə/ as in ‘near’ • /ʊə/ as in ‘dour’

Note 1: As Table 5.1 shows, vowels may be subdivided into monophthongs (simple or pure vowels), for example /e/ in ‘bed’ or /a/ in ‘bat’, and diphthongs (glides between two simple vowels), for example /eɪ/ in ‘pay’. Diphthongs start with the first vowel shown in the transcription and move in the direction of the second vowel shown (see Roach 2009: 17–18). Monophthongs may be either short, for example /ɪ/ in ‘bid’ or long, for example /i:/ in ‘bead’. The notation (:) means that a vowel is ‘long’ rather than ‘short’ (see Roach 2009: 13–14, 16–17; Cruttenden 2014: 38, 100–102).

Note 2: Older speakers of GB and speakers of CGB (RP) may well have a diphthong /eə/ instead of a monophthong /ɛ:/ in words like ‘hair’ (Cruttenden 2014: 118; Collins et al.: 2019: 94; Lorenz 2012: 51; Carley et al. 2018: 175).

Note 3: The symbol /æ/ was traditionally used for transcription of the vowel sound in words like ‘bat’ in RP. Cruttenden (2014: 84) prefers the symbol /a/ since this vowel has evolved in GB to a more open vowel with the jaw lowered, more like the vowel used in the north of England. The older RP vowel, which was closer to /e/, tends now to be restricted to older speakers of GB and speakers of CGB (see also Collins et al. 2019: 92).

Allophones

The phoneme is an abstraction and is never said (realised) twice in exactly the same way, even by the same speaker. There are many reasons for this, including whether one is speaking with one’s mouth full or not but also, for example, how carefully one is speaking or to whom one is speaking. Apart from variations of this sort, however, the realisation of a phoneme will tend to vary systematically and consistently according to the sounds it immediately follows and precedes within words and at

Table 5.2 Transcriptions for the 24 GB consonants

• /p/ as in ‘pen’	• /s/ as in ‘so’
• /b/ as in ‘bad’	• /z/ as in ‘zoo’
• /t/ as in ‘tea’	• /ʃ/ as in ‘she’
• /d/ as in ‘dig’	• /ʒ/ as in/vision/(middle consonant)
• /k/ as in ‘cat’	• /h/ as in ‘how’
• /g/ as in ‘got’	• /m/ as in ‘man’
• /tʃ/ as in ‘chin’	• /n/ as in ‘no’
• /dʒ/ as in ‘June’	• /ŋ/ as in ‘sing’ (final consonant)
• /f/ as in ‘fall’	• /l/ as in ‘leg’
• /v/ as in ‘voice’	• /r/ as in ‘red’
• /θ/ as in ‘thin’	• /j/ as in ‘yes’
• /ð/ as in ‘then’	• /w/ as in ‘wet’

word boundaries, that is to say, in different phonetic environments. Different realisations of a phoneme which are clearly describable and can be categorised systematically are termed allophones of that phoneme (see Cruttenden 2014: 46, 308–310; Roach 2009: 33; Carr 1999: 39; Collins et al. 2019: 13–14, 112–114; Carley et al. 2018: 2–3).

A nice example of allophones is provided by the two different ‘l’ sounds in the word ‘little’. If you say the word ‘little’ slowly and concentrate on where your tongue is for each ‘l’, you will probably feel the difference. In the first ‘l’ (light ‘l’) the tip of your tongue is probably pressed against your alveolar ridge, the hard boney ridge behind your front teeth, and the front part of the tongue is arched up high towards the front part of the roof of your mouth (hard palate). Light ‘l’ is a palatised ‘l’. In the second ‘l’ (dark ‘l’) the back part of your tongue arches up and back towards the back of the roof of your mouth (soft palate or velum). For this reason dark ‘l’ is sometimes called a velarised ‘l’. This is a systematic difference: dark ‘l’ occurs word-finally after a vowel (as in ‘doll’), syllabically (as in the second ‘l’ in ‘little’) and after a vowel and before a consonant (as in ‘salt’). Light ‘l’ occurs word-initially (as in the first ‘l’ in ‘little’), in word-initial clusters (as in ‘blow’) and word-medially (as in ‘silly’). See Cruttenden (2014: 217–222) and Carley et al. (2018: 30).

The difference between the two ‘l’ sounds does not carry any meaning distinction. It is not a phonemic distinction but an allophonic distinction. Dark ‘l’ and light ‘l’ are allophones of the /l/ phoneme in English. This means that if you substitute a dark ‘l’ for a light ‘l’ or vice versa in any English word you will never produce a different word. The pronunciation may sound unusual or it may sound as if you are speaking with a regional accent: Yorkshire, if you put dark ‘l’s’ at the beginning of words (the way people from Leeds say the name of their city) or Irish, if you put a light ‘l’ at the end of the word (try to say ‘the little people’ with an Irish accent).

The test of whether two sound differences are phonemic or merely allophonic is the ‘minimal pairs test’. This means, if one can find two different words which differ only in respect of the two sounds in question, then the difference is phonemic, as in the examples of ‘bed’ and ‘bad’ and ‘bad’ and ‘bat’ already given. Problems arise for learners when a phonemic distinction in English does not exist in their native language. Thus, /r/ and /l/ are phonemes in English as shown by the minimal pair ‘red’ and ‘led’. In some Asian languages, Japanese, for example, there is no phonemic distinction similar to the English /r/ and /l/ phonemic distinction (Cruttenden 2014: 228). It is therefore difficult for speakers of these languages to keep /r/ and /l/ distinct when they speak English, especially if they have to say something like ‘red and yellow lorries’. Similarly, they may find it difficult to distinguish between the two sounds when listening to speech.

In general, unless words are said very carefully, there is a tendency for one sound to take on features of an adjacent sound (assimilation) or even to be omitted (elision), so that ‘grandpa’ may become ‘granpa’ or ‘grampa’ (see

Cruttenden 2014: 256–258, 308–318; Roach 2009: 110–115; Carley et al. 2018: 296–301). This also happens across word boundaries in fluent, rapid speech, particularly in set phrases, which may be said as if they were one word, so that ‘good morning’ becomes ‘goomorning’. Some elisions and assimilations may be frowned upon as ‘careless speech’ in some circles, as in ‘gimme’ for ‘give me’ or ‘wanna’ for ‘want to’. However, it is in the nature of things that in fluent, natural speech words run into one another. There are not clear spaces between them as there are in writing. This leads to various rather corny jokes such as, ‘Where’s your grammar?’ ‘She’s gone to the pictures with my grandad.’ And (heard at the seaside), ‘A yacht, a yacht!’ ‘No, just pleasantly warm, thank you.’

Producing the Sounds of English

The evolution of our speech organs has placed us at a great advantage over other species, for example apes and chimps, for the transmission of vocal language. The whole area from the larynx to the lips is involved in making speech sounds. This area is called the vocal tract and is shown in Figure 5.1.

Speech and Breathing

Since we have to draw breath while speaking, speech is uttered in short rhythmic bursts adapted to the breathing cycle. In breathing out, air is forcibly expelled from the lungs through the windpipe across the larynx into the throat (pharynx) and out of the mouth. Speech sounds are made by modifying the airstream that we expel in breathing out and allowing our vocal chords to

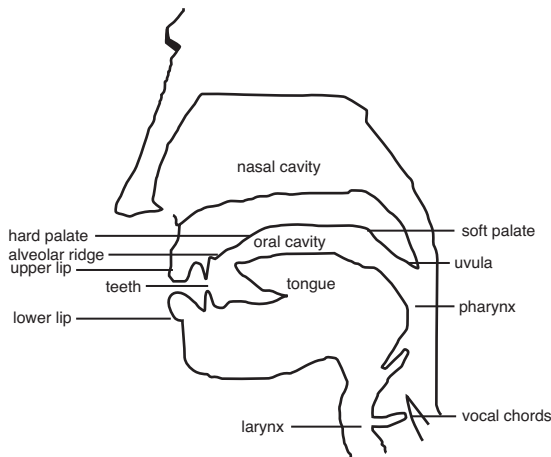


Figure 5.1 The organs of speech

vibrate intermittently. This produces the vowels and the voiced consonants such as /b/ and /d/ versus the unvoiced consonants such as /p/ and /t/. The difference between a vowel and a consonant is that for a consonant the airstream is obstructed at some point between the pharynx and the lips by two speech organs coming together and being released (the articulators), whereas for a vowel this obstruction followed by release is lacking. A further modification occurs for nasal sounds: in English /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/, in that for them air is additionally allowed to pass out through the nose (nasal cavity).

Voicing

The vocal chords, which produce voicing, are located in the larynx (see Figure 5.1). From the outside, the larynx, sometimes called the voice box, is visible as the Adam's apple and when people are speaking, you can see it moving around. Voicing is produced by opening or closing the vocal chords, which are two bony cartilages, rather like curtains, situated on either side of the larynx. They can be progressively tensed or relaxed. When completely relaxed or open, the air passes noiselessly through a gap between them (the glottis) but when tensed or partly closed, they will vibrate in the stream of air and produce a vowel sound which will go on until it is necessary to draw breath. If learners put their finger and thumb on either side of their Adam's apple, they can feel the vocal chords vibrate when voicing is in progress and stop vibrating when voicing stops. If you get laryngitis, your vocal chords start to seize up and will not vibrate, so that first of all you become hoarse, then you can only whisper and finally you can say nothing at all. The same thing happens if you talk too much and start to lose your voice. (See also Cruttenden 2014: 9–12; Roach 2009: 22–25; Collins et al. 2019: 32–36; Carley et al. 2018: 10–11.)

The Monophthongs

Vowels are, by definition, always voiced (Cruttenden 2014: 28; Carr 1999: 20). The air is allowed to pass from the windpipe, through the vocal tract and out of the mouth unimpeded while the partly closed vocal chords are vibrating. Differences among vowels are determined by a number of features, especially:

- the raising or lowering of the tongue in the mouth, from low to mid to high
- the protrusion or retraction of the tongue in the mouth from front to central to back
- the length of the vowel (long or short)
- degree of lip rounding or lip spreading (a secondary feature in English)
- whether the vowel is oral or nasal (but English has no nasal vowels)

All English vowels can be described along these dimensions and any two vowels in English will differ along one or more of these dimensions.

Note 1: For low vowels the lower jaw tends to be dropped so that these vowels are sometimes also termed ‘lax’ or ‘open’. High vowels involve greater muscular tension to get the tongue close to the roof of the mouth and so they are sometimes called ‘tense’ or ‘close’ vowels.

Note 2: Lip rounding only occurs in the back vowels in GB, namely, /ʊ, u, ɔ, ɒ/. It is a characteristic of GB English that it does not have front rounded vowels, unlike French or German. Lip rounding is only a secondary feature distinguishing pairs of phonemes in English. To appreciate the difference between a vowel with and without lip rounding, consider the words ‘look’, in which the /ʊ/ vowel is rounded, and ‘luck’, in which the /ʌ/ vowel is not rounded. If you say the two words quickly one after another, you can feel not only your tongue moving backwards and forwards but your lips rounding (pursing) for ‘look’ and spreading for ‘luck’. However the main difference between /ʊ/ and /ʌ/ is the position of the tongue, which is higher and further back in ‘look’ than in ‘luck’.

The positions of the 13 GB monophthongs are shown in Figure 5.2. The trapeze diagram is a stylised representation of the mouth in lateral cross-section, with the front of the mouth being on the left and the back of the mouth being on the right. The position of the symbols represents the highest point of the tongue for each vowel. The two dots after some symbols indicate a long vowel. The trapeze reflects the fact that there is more perceived room available in the front of the mouth than in the back of the mouth. This is partly because we have better neuro-muscular control of the tongue in the front of the mouth.

The vowels may be briefly described as follows:

The high-front vowels /ɪ/ and /i:/

In English we have a short high-front vowel, /ɪ/ as in ‘sit’, and a long counterpart vowel /i:/ as in ‘seat’. If you say the long vowel in ‘seat’, you can feel your tongue pushing upwards and forwards in your mouth; if you then go into the short vowel in ‘sit’, you may feel your tongue retracting slightly. This is because there is a slight positional difference between the two vowels, with the short vowel being slightly lower and not so far forward (less tense and close). Some non-native speakers whose native language does not have a long and a short high-fronted vowel so close together find it difficult to distinguish them. In particular, they tend to make the short vowel /ɪ/ too long and too tense so that it can be confused with /i:/. Many speakers of GB tend to slightly diphthongise /i:/ and this is a tip which can sometimes help learners to keep the two vowels apart.

The mid-front vowels /e/ and /ɛ:/

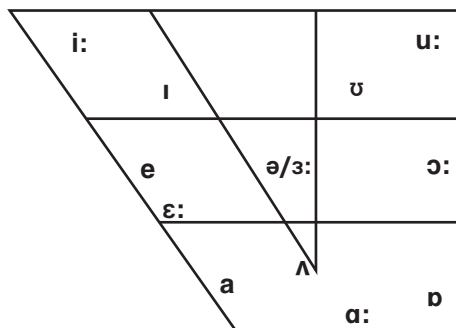


Figure 5.2 The GB monophthongs

We have a short, mid-front vowel /e/ as in ‘set’. If you say, ‘seat’, ‘sit’, ‘set’, you can feel your tongue dropping and lower jaw probably falling a little as well. The long, mid-front vowel /ɛ:/ as in ‘hair’ is just slightly lower than the /e/ vowel. It is also distinguished from it by length. Cruttenden (2014: 119) notes that all the words with /ɛ:/ have a following ‘r’ in the spelling, which is not pronounced. He suggests that learners aim to produce a lengthened version of /e/, opening the mouth more as well. Older speakers of GB and speakers of CGB English may diphthongise /ɛ:/ to /eə/.

The short, low-front vowel /a/

We have a short, low-front vowel /a/ as in ‘sat’. If you say ‘seat’, ‘sit’, ‘set’, ‘sat’, you should feel your tongue continuing to drop and your mouth opening wider. Older speakers of GB and speakers of CGB will have a vowel for /a/ which is somewhat higher and closer to /e/. Speakers with different pronunciations may occasionally misunderstand each other, and might ask, for example, ‘Did you say your name was Jan or Jenn?’ Learners may have similar problems (see Cruttenden 2014: 119–120). Sometimes there may also be confusion with /ʌ/ (see below).

The short, low-central vowel /ʌ/

If you now, after saying ‘sat’, concentrate on slightly retracting your tongue, bunching it backwards just a little, you may start to make a /ʌ/ vowel as in ‘sup’. This is a short, low-central vowel, actually rather close to the /a/ vowel. Although individual speakers keep their own realisations apart, listeners unused to a particular accent, can sometimes have trouble distinguishing the two sounds, and may ask, ‘Did you say cup or cap?’ Foreign learners hearing a new word like ‘palpable’ or ‘culpable’ for the first time may not be sure which vowel it has (see Cruttenden 2014: 121–122).

The mid-central vowels /ə/ and /ɜ:/

Things are actually very crowded in the centre of the mouth, because we also have a long and a short mid-central vowel. Both vowels occur in the word ‘certain’, long /ɜ:/ in the first syllable and short /ə/ in the second syllable. The short vowel /ə/ always occurs in unstressed positions in words. If you just do nothing with your tongue and simply vocalise then you will hit these two vowels, which are mainly distinguished from each other by length rather than position. They should not usually be problematic for learners.

The high-back vowels /ʊ/ and /u:/

English also has a short and a long high-back vowel to match the short /ɪ/ and long /i:/ high-front vowels. These are short /ʊ/ as in ‘soot’ and long /u:/ as in ‘suit’. The short vowel is slightly lower and more central than the long vowel, analogous to /ɪ/ and /i:/. If you go back to saying /i:/ and just pull your tongue back and try to get it even higher in the back of your mouth, arching it up to do so, and at the same time rounding your lips, then you should make the /u:/ sound. Repeat several times ‘seat’, ‘suit’ to get the feel of this. If you then say ‘suit’, ‘soot’, you will notice the difference in vowel length, and you may also notice that you probably relax your tongue and lower it just a little for ‘soot’. Both the /ʊ/ in ‘soot’ and the /u:/ in suit have lip rounding. Collins et al. (2019) report a tendency for /ʊ/ and /u:/ to have moved further forward in the mouth in recent years than I have shown them.

The long, mid-back vowel /ɔ:/

To partly match the short, mid-front vowel /e/, English has a long, mid-back vowel, /ɔ:/ as in ‘saw’. You can get to it by going from /e/ in ‘bet’ to /ɜ:/ in ‘Bert’ to /ɔ:/ in ‘bought’. You should feel how your tongue progressively retracts and bunches up as you do so. You will also notice that the vowel in ‘bet’ is short while the vowels in ‘Bert’ and ‘bought’ are long. The /ɔ:/ in ‘bought’ has ‘medium lip rounding’ (Cruttenden 2014: 128) unlike the /e/ in ‘bet’ and the /ɜ:/ in ‘Bert’.

The low-back vowels /ɒ/ and /ɑ:/

We have a match for the short, low-front vowel /a/, as in ‘pat’ with the short, low-back vowel /ɒ/ as in ‘pot’. We also have a long, low-back vowel /ɑ:/ as in ‘part’. The short /ɒ/ in ‘pot’ has ‘slight open lip rounding’ (Cruttenden 2014: 126) unlike the long /ɑ:/ in ‘part’. Older speakers of GB and speakers of CGB will have a more retracted position for /ɑ:/ than shown in Figure 5.2 (see Cruttenden 2014: 124).

For description of the GB simple vowels see also Cruttenden (2014: 110–139), Roach (2009: 13–17), Collins et al. (2019: 89–96) and Carley et al. (2018: 146–177).

The Diphthongs

In Figure 5.3 the seven diphthongs are shown. These are /eɪ/ as in ‘page’, /aɪ/ as in ‘five’, /əʊ/ as in ‘home’, /aʊ/ as in ‘now’, /ɔɪ/ as in ‘join’, /ɪə/ as in ‘near’ and /ʊə/ as in ‘cruel’ and ‘dour’. The two last-mentioned diphthongs with the second element /ə/ are termed ‘centring diphthongs’. In traditional descriptions of RP there was a third centring diphthong, namely /eə/ in words like ‘hair’. This pronunciation is now less common, with the vowel being increasingly monophthongised to /ɛ:/, as already mentioned. The centring diphthong /ʊə/ also seems to be disappearing in word-final position in frequent words such as ‘poor’, ‘moor’, ‘you’re’. In such words it is often replaced by /ɔ:/. Do you personally distinguish in pronunciation between ‘poor’ and ‘paw’, ‘moor’ and ‘more’, ‘you’re’ and ‘your’? However, in less frequent words such as ‘dour’ and words where it is preceded by /j/, as in ‘lure’ and ‘cure’ or followed by a consonant, as in ‘cruel’ and ‘cruet’ the diphthong is still obligatory (see Cruttenden 2014: 332; Carley et al. 2018: 145).

The overall length of the diphthongs is similar to that of the long vowels. The first vowel indicates that the glide starts in the region of that vowel and moves in the direction of the second vowel. Roach (2009: 17) makes the point that the first element is generally much longer and stronger than the second element. It is best for learners to think of themselves as gliding towards the second element but not quite getting there. They should not be told to make the first vowel and then the second because this will mean that they do not tail off in the appropriate way. Individuals vary in the way they make their diphthongs, and there is great regional variation within Britain and in the varieties of English in the world.

Many learners tend to monophthongise their diphthongs and can be helped by being shown the direction of the glide on a diagram such as

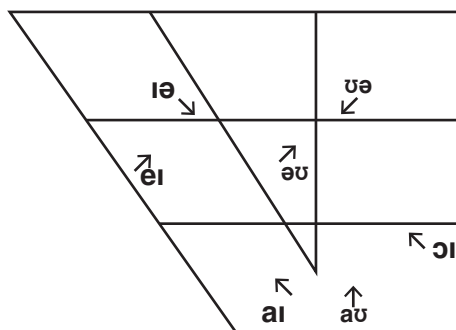


Figure 5.3 The GB diphthongs

Figure 5.3 while they listen to the teacher or a recorded voice saying the sound. They can then try to produce it themselves. Exaggerating the glide of diphthongs should be avoided, however, as this may sound like CGB. In Figure 5.3 the arrows just show the starting point and direction of the glide, not where it finishes. In most cases, however, this will be well short of the second vowel shown in the transcription. Learners should not think they have to finish up saying the second vowel at the end of the glide.

For descriptions of the GB diphthongs see also Cruttenden (2014: 140–156), Roach (2009: 17–18) and Collins et al. (2019: 96–98).

The Consonants

The consonants of English can be categorised according to the following features:

- place of articulation (bilabial, alveolar, velar etc.). This refers to the point in the vocal tract between the larynx and the lips where the air flow is interrupted.
- manner of articulation (stop, fricative, affricate etc.). This refers to the way in which the air is impeded by the speech organs, in particular with regard to how complete the closure is.
- presence or absence of voicing (voiceless versus voiced). This refers to whether or not the consonant is produced when the vocal chords are in open position (voiceless) or are partly closed and thus vibrate (voiced).
- presence or absence of nasality (oral versus nasal). This refers to whether or not a consonant is made while the velum is lowered so that air can enter the nasal cavity and resonate (nasality).

Table 5.3 presents a categorisation of the GB English consonants along these four dimensions.

The following descriptions may serve as support for learners in cases where their pronunciation of a particular consonant phoneme could be confused with another consonant phoneme. Description of how to make the sound (articulatory description) is, however, always best accompanied by providing an acoustic model of the target sound by saying it in a word and contrasting it with another word which differs from it only in terms of the sound in question (minimal pairs), for example ‘bat’ and ‘bad’ for /t/ and /d/.

The (oral) stops /p, b, t, d, k, g/

The air is stopped completely for a moment and then suddenly allowed to escape with a little explosion. In English the oral stops are /p, b, t, d, k, g/, as in ‘**p**at’, ‘**b**at’, ‘**t**ap’, ‘**d**ad’, ‘**c**at’ and ‘**g**et’. These six consonants in fact

Table 5.3 Categorisation of the GB consonants

		<i>voiceless</i>	<i>voiced</i>
Stops	bilabial	/p/	/b/
	alveolar	/t/	/d/
	velar	/k/	/g/
Nasal Stops	bilabial		/m/
	alveolar		/n/
	velar		/ŋ/
Fricatives	labio-dental	/f/	/v/
	dental	/θ/	/ð/
	alveolar	/s/	/z/
	post-alveolar	/ʃ/	/ʒ/
	glottal	/h/	
Affricates	post-alveolar	/tʃ/	/dʒ/
Lateral	alveolar		/l/
Approximants	post-alveolar		/ɹ/
	palatal		/j/
	labial-velar		/w/

consist of a voiceless–voiced pair at three points of articulation: the lips, the alveolar ridge and the velum.

The place of articulation is at the lips for /p/ and /b/, which are called bilabial stops because they are made by pressing the lips together and then releasing them suddenly.

With /t/ and /d/ it is the tip of the tongue pressing on the hard bony alveolar ridge immediately behind the upper teeth which makes the stop (alveolar stop).

For the velar consonants /k/ and /g/ the place of articulation is much further back and the sound is achieved by pressing the back part of the tongue up against the back of the roof of the mouth (the soft palate or velum) and then releasing the pressure suddenly.

At the beginning of a word the important difference in sound between voiceless /p, t, k/, on the one hand, and voiced /b, d, g/, on the other, is the presence of aspiration for the voiceless sounds and its absence for the voiced sounds. By aspiration is meant that there is a hesitation between the release of the articulators for /p, t, k/ and the beginning of voicing for the following vowel (voice onset time). During this time air escapes through the vocal chords making a breathy /h/ sound between the consonant and the onset of the following vowel. In the case of /b, d, g/ the release is weaker and voicing starts at about the same time as the release or even just before it. If learners do not

aspirate their initial voiceless plosives, listeners take the sound to be the corresponding voiced sound (see Roach 2009: 27–28; Cruttenden 2014: 163–166; Carley et al. 2018: 16–18).

The nasal stops /m, n, ŋ/

In addition, English has three voiced nasal stops /m, n, ŋ/, as in ‘mat’, ‘not’, ‘song’, at the same three points of articulation as the oral stops. This means there is a three-way contrast at each point of articulation: voiceless stop, voiced stop and nasal stop.

The bilabial, nasal plosive /m/ corresponds to the bilabial, voiced, (oral) plosive /b/, in that the lips are closed.

The alveolar nasal /n/ corresponds to the alveolar, voiced, (oral) plosive /d/.

The velar nasal /ŋ/ corresponds to the velar, voiced, (oral) plosive /g/.

The nasals differ from the corresponding oral consonants in that when oral closure is made with the lips for /m/, the tongue and alveolar ridge for /n/, or tongue and velum for /ŋ/, instead of the back of the soft palate (the velum) being raised to close off the nasal cavity, for these three nasal consonants it is lowered so that the sound resonates not just in the oral cavity but also in the nasal cavity. This gives these three sounds their characteristic nasal quality.

If learners say /b/ and then /m/ alternately, they will see that they close and release their lips in exactly the same way. And they should be able to feel a tickling in their nose when they say /m/, which is not present when they say /b/. If they actually place their thumb and forefinger on either side of their nose, they should even be able to feel the vibration when they say /m/. They can do the same exercise for /d/ and /n/, this time noting that their tongue is in exactly the same position for both sounds. The same is true of /g/ and /ŋ/.

Learners may find it more difficult to make the /ŋ/ sound than /m/ and /n/. This is because /ŋ/ does not occur at the beginning of words in English. For more on /ŋ/ see Roach (2009: 46–48) and Cruttenden (2014: 215–217).

Whereas the oral plosives cannot be prolonged, the nasals can be prolonged until you run out of breath, just like vowels. This is because the air coming up from the lungs is expelled gradually through the nose rather than suddenly through the mouth. Learners can prove this to themselves by making a long drawn out nasal consonant, for example /m/, and suddenly gripping their nostrils hard between thumb and forefinger as they would to stifle a sneeze. The sound will stop completely.

The fricatives /f, v, ɸ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, h/

If the air is merely impeded but not completely stopped at the point of articulation and allowed to escape gradually under constriction so that there is friction, a fricative sound is produced. The English fricatives are /f, v, ɸ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, h/, as in ‘fat’, ‘vat’, ‘thigh’, ‘thy’, ‘sat’, ‘zoo’,

'shop', 'treasure' and 'hat'. The first eight of these nine fricatives represent voiceless–voiced pairs at four points of articulation, namely the lips/teeth (labio-dental), the teeth (dental), the alveolar ridge (alveolar) and just behind the alveolar ridge (post-alveolar). We do not have bilabial or velar fricatives in English.

The labio-dental fricatives /f/ and /v/ are made by allowing the air to escape gradually between the lower lip and the upper front teeth.

To make the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, the tip of the tongue lightly touches the bottom and back of the upper teeth so that air can be pressed through the teeth and around the tongue.

For the alveolar fricatives /s/ and /z/ the tongue tip is brought a little further back so that the air is forced between it and the alveolar ridge.

For the post-alveolar fricatives /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ the tongue is pulled even further back just behind the alveolar ridge where the roof of the mouth (hard palate) begins.

The ninth consonant, the voiceless glottal fricative /h/, is the one made furthest back in the mouth. It occurs only at the beginning of syllables before a vowel. It does not have a voiced equivalent and is something of an odd man out among the fricatives. Air is expelled forcibly from the lungs before voicing begins for the following vowel and thus friction occurs as the air passes through the glottis. Cruttenden (2014: 207) describes /h/ as 'a strong, voiceless onset to the vowel in question'. The /h/ sound does not occur in the broad form of most British regional accents, and even speakers of GB and CGB, when talking informally and rapidly, tend to 'drop their aitches'.

If learners sigh or pant, they will make a sound very like /h/. This is a good tip for French learners of English. But they should not overdo it.

The affricates /tʃ, dʒ/

Affricates are a third class of consonant, and are formed by making a stop followed by a fricative. In English these comprise the voiceless–voiced post-alveolar pair /tʃ/, as in 'churn' and /dʒ/, as in 'journey'. The unvoiced /tʃ/ occurs as the first and last sound in 'church' and its voiced counterpart /dʒ/, as the first sound of 'jerk' and the last sound in 'dirge'. The /tʃ/ sound actually starts as an unvoiced alveolar stop /t/, but instead of the tongue being quickly and cleanly withdrawn from the alveolar ridge, it is just slightly withdrawn (lowered and retracted) to make /ʃ/. Similarly the /dʒ/ sound starts as a /d/ and glides into a /ʒ/.

One could more economically exclude these two affricates from the inventory of phonemes and regard them as phoneme combinations, particularly as there are other consonant combinations in English which are not given phoneme status. The reason for treating them as phonemes in their own right has something to do with subjective impressions of what is one sound and what are two sounds. Speakers are not normally aware of the fact that /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are decomposable

into two sounds but they are aware of this for other consonant clusters such as /tr/, /sl/ or /dr/.

The lateral /l/

Laterals are another class of consonant, of which we only have one in English, namely /l/, as in 'lap'. In laterals a partial closure is made between two articulators and air is allowed to escape from the side. For English /l/, closure is made between the tip of the tongue and the alveolar ridge, and either the front of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate (for light 'l') or the back of the tongue raised towards the velum (for dark 'l') The sides of the tongue are pressed up against the roof of the mouth but air is allowed to escape from one or both sides. Voicing occurs and there is little friction involved.

The post-alveolar approximant /r/

The /r/ phoneme, as in 'rat' in GB pronunciation, is described by Cruttenden (2014: 222) as a 'post-alveolar approximant'. It is quite different from the various 'r'-sounds in American English, Scottish English, West Country English and Indian English. It is sometimes termed a 'frictionless continuant' because no contact is made between the tongue and the inside of the mouth, but the raising of the tongue changes the path of the airstream just sufficiently for us to distinguish the sound and regard it as a consonant rather than a vowel, even though it does not fulfil the articulatory definition of a consonant (contact between two articulators).

To make /r/, the tip of the tongue lunges towards but does not quite touch the alveolar ridge, while the sides of the back of the tongue are held against the upper back teeth. According to Cruttenden (2014: 224),

'[T]he central part of the tongue is lowered ... so that the effect ... is one of hollowing and slight retroflexion of the tip ... The air stream is thus allowed to escape freely, without friction, over the central part of the tongue.'

The unrounded palatal approximant /j/ and rounded labial-velar approximant /w/

These two sounds may be described as semi-vowels. Cruttenden (2014: 228) defines a semi-vowel as 'a rapid vocalic glide on to a syllabic sound of greater steady duration'. There is therefore no contact between articulators in these sounds. In English there are two semi-vowels: the unrounded palatal approximant /j/, as in 'yes' and the rounded labial-velar approximant /w/ as in 'win'. Although these sounds are phonetically vowels, they are counted as consonants for functional and perceptual reasons, namely because they alternate with

vowels to form syllables in the way consonants do, and we thus perceive them as consonants.

For /j/ the rapid vocalic glide starts from the vowel position /i:/. The lips tend to be spread.

For /w/ the rapid vocalic glide starts from the vowel position /u:/. The lips are rounded.

The glottal stop /ʔ/

The glottal stop is not a phoneme of English but it occurs frequently in GB as an allophonic variant of /t/ at the end of words, as in /gɒʔ/ for /gɒt/ or between vowels, for example in words such as ‘forgotten’. This can cause comprehension problems for learners.

The glottal stop is made by suddenly and forcibly closing the vocal chords completely for an instant and then releasing them suddenly so as to abruptly cut off a preceding vowel.

In various regional varieties of British English, /ʔ/ is very frequent. Popular London speech is closely associated with glottal stops, which are used to replace not just /t/, but also /p/ and /k/ at the end of words so that word pairs like ‘right’ and ‘ripe’ and ‘rake’ and ‘rate’ may not be distinguishable. This can cause further problems of comprehension for learners in phrases like a ‘cup of tea and a piece of cake’, which becomes /ʔkəʔti:nəpi:səkeiʔ/.

Over the last 30 years the glottal stop has become more and more frequent in high-status speakers of GB, including the ‘young Royals’. This seems to be a socio-linguistic influence of south-east English and London regional speech, as increasingly spoken by many influential people in show business, fashion, the arts and commerce in the London area (Estuary English).

For descriptions of the GB consonants see also Cruttenden (2014: 161–237), Roach (2009: 26–30, 39–55), Collins et al. (2019: 63–78) and Carley et al. (2018: 34–94).

Stress, Rhythm and Intonation

Stress

Consideration has to be given both to word stress patterns and utterance stress patterns.

Word Stress Patterns

The relevant unit for stress is the syllable. Stress refers to the degree of respiratory and muscular energy with which a speaker produces a syllable in relation to neighbouring syllables. Words of two syllables have one stressed and one unstressed syllable. In words of more than

two syllables there will be one syllable which receives primary stress, while other syllables may receive secondary (weaker) stress or be unstressed. In transcription a stressed syllable is shown by a stress mark (ˈ) placed before the syllable. A stressed syllable is perceived by the listener as being louder and at a different pitch, often at a higher pitch, than unstressed syllables or perceived as shifting in pitch, as in the second, stressed syllable in /a'round/ (Roach 2009: 75). There also tend to be differences in vowel length and vowel quality between stressed and unstressed syllables, with vowels in unstressed syllables tending to be shortened and often to collapse towards the short central 'schwa' vowel /ə/, which occurs only in unstressed syllables, as in the first vowel of /pə'tato/ and /a'round/. However, other vowels are found in unstressed syllables, for example /ɪ/, as in /'devil/, /ʊ/, as in /'input/, /əʊ/, as in /'photo/ and /ʌ/, as in /'hiccough/ (see Roach 2009: 73–74; Collins et al. 2019: 130–132; Cruttenden 2014: 242–244).

Generally, the first syllable of a two-syllable or three-syllable word is the stressed syllable, as in /'happy/, /'happiness'/. However, there are many exceptions. In particular, borrowed words may maintain the stress pattern of their source language. Thus, /hə'tel/, /de'sire/, /re'port/, /de'ssert/, which are all of French origin, retain their French stress pattern with the stress on the second syllable. The word 'potato', transcribed /pə'teɪtəʊ/, maintains its Spanish stress patterning, with primary stress on the middle syllable. If you say 'potato', however, you will notice that there is secondary stress on the final syllable, while the first syllable is unstressed. For words of four syllables or more there is a tendency for the primary stress to be placed on the last-but-two syllable, as in /seren'dipity/ and /com'municate/ (Collins et al. 2019: 132–133; Cruttenden 2014: 248; Roach 2009: 74–79).

When a monosyllabic word is said in isolation, as in reading out a list, its syllable receives stress, whereas in connected speech it may or may not be stressed, according to its importance in the utterance. The stress pattern of words of more than one syllable, on the other hand, is generally fixed in the sense that it does not usually change in connected speech (Collins et al. 2019: 132). But never say never, and for some exceptions, where stress-shift may occur in connected speech, see Roach (2009: 86).

In some cases a word has two different stress patterns to mark the difference between its different functions as two parts of speech. When a word can be used as both a noun and a verb, as in the case of 'present', then the noun, /'prezənt/, usually has stress on the first syllable and the verb, /prə'zent/, has the stress on the second syllable. When a word can be used as an adjective and a verb, as in the case of 'perfect', then the adjective, /'pɜ:fəkt/, has the stress on the first syllable and the verb, /pə'fekt/, has the stress on the second syllable.

Compound nouns usually have stress on the first element, for example /'blackbird/ versus /'black 'bird/ and /'greenhouse/ versus /'green 'house/. However, some compounds are not written as one word but

nevertheless are treated as one word for stress placement, for example, /'running shoes/, where 'running' is a gerund (verbal noun). Running shoes are shoes for running in, not shoes which run, which would be /'running 'shoes/ stressed like /'running 'water/ (water which runs). In this case 'running' is a present participle used as an adjective (example from Wells 2006: 101).

Unfortunately for learners, however, some compound nouns do not conform to the principle of stress on the first element, but are 'end-stressed', that is they have their primary stress on the second element with a secondary stress (not shown in the following examples) on the first element. These include compounds where the first element names a material or ingredient (paper 'bag, apple 'pie etc. in contradistinction to 'paper clip, 'apple tree). Other compound nouns which receive stress on a syllable in the second word include the names of people (Jim 'Peters), names of institutions such as schools, hotels etc. (The King's 'Head, Eton 'College), compounds in which the first element is a time location (afternoon 'tea, April 'showers, summer 'holiday, Easter va'cation) and compounds which specify a place, typically road names etc. (Oxford 'Road, Trafalgar 'Square, New 'York). However, if the place is a 'street' rather than a 'road', then the first element is stressed ('Oxford Street). For more examples and discussion see Collins et al. (2019: 133–135); Lorenz (2012: 102–103) and Wells (2006: 100–102).

Adding a suffix to a word may well affect its stress pattern, for example /'lemon/ versus /lemon'ade/, /'engine/ versus /engin'eer/. See Collins et al. (2019: 133), Lorenz (2012: 104–107), Gut (2009: 89–93) and Cruttenden (2014: 248–255).

Utterance stress patterns

As already mentioned, in connected speech words of two or more syllables generally maintain their stress pattern while monosyllabic words may be stressed or unstressed. In connected speech stress or prominence is given to those monosyllabic words which are important. Generally speaking, these are lexical words (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) rather than grammatical words, as illustrated by the following example from Collins et al. (2019: 136):

I've 'heard that 'Jack and 'Jane 'spent their 'holidays in Ja'maica.

If you just say the words that receive stress, you get the message. If you just say the words which are unstressed, you do not get the message. There are in fact about 40 monosyllabic grammatical words which have two possible pronunciations. Firstly, they have a 'strong form', sometimes called the citation form, used when the word is said in isolation, is said in a list, is spoken in a declamatory formal manner or is stressed for special emphasis in connected speech. Secondly, they have a 'weak form', in which their vowel is reduced, often to /ə/ or /ɪ/. This is the form normally used in

connected speech unless the speech style is slow, formal and declamatory or the word is to be specially emphasised. Examples, with the strong form given first, include ‘than’ /ðan/ and /ðən/; ‘at’ /at/ and /ət/; ‘were’ /wɜ:/ and /wə/; ‘can’ /kan/ and /kən/. Carley et al. (2018: 235) note, however, that a small number of grammatical words do not take a weak form, for example, ‘in’, ‘if’, ‘it’, ‘on’ and ‘they’.

The more rapid and informal speech is, the more complete the collapse of the strong-form vowel towards /ə/ or /ɪ/ is likely to be, and in very rapid, informal speech the vowel virtually disappears. This gradation is illustrated by the following three ways of saying ‘can’ in ‘I can come’:

- (a) ‘ai ‘kæn ‘kʌm (b) ‘ai kən ‘kʌm (c) ‘aikənɔm

In the first case, which suggests slow and very deliberate speech, each syllable is given even stress. In the second case, which is more natural in conversation, ‘can’ is unstressed and in the third case, which suggests more rapid speech, the whole utterance is given the stress pattern of a three-syllable word, with primary stress on the first syllable, the second syllable unstressed and secondary stress on the final syllable (not shown in the example).

Within the pattern of stressed syllables contrasting with unstressed syllables speakers can impart special emphasis within an utterance by giving special stress to a certain syllable. For example, in the above case, if ‘I’ is given very strong stress, this implies, ‘I, unlike certain others, can come.’ If ‘can’ is given very strong stress, this implies ‘I can come but I don’t want to’ (or ‘don’t have to’). If ‘come’ is given very strong stress, then the implication may be, ‘I am willing to turn up but not willing to do anything.’ Note also that whichever word is stressed, the stressed vowel will also most likely be lengthened for added effect. Learners may need practice in doing this.

For lists of weak forms and discussion see Lorenz (2012: 54–56), Collins et al. (2019: 21–25), Gut (2009: 85–88), Cruttenden (2014: 273–277) and Carley et al. (2018: 235–237).

Rhythm

The patterning of stressed and unstressed syllables produces rhythm because, although the number of unstressed syllables between stressed syllables varies, the stressed syllables are, or at least seem to be, uttered at regular intervals of time. If there are many unstressed syllables between the stressed syllables, then speakers appear to skip over them by shortening their vowels (Collins et al. 2019: 136–138). Stressed syllables thus tend to be longer than unstressed syllables. In this respect English is a ‘stress-timed’ language. If you were to speak by saying each word just as you would if you said it in isolation, your speech would sound very unnatural, the way aliens from outer space were supposed to speak in old films, or the way

early computer-generated speech sounded. Moreover, there would be no variation in pitch, a feature not mentioned so far.

On rhythm see also Lorenz (2012: 113–115), Roach (2009: 107–110) and Cruttenden (2014: 271–273).

Intonation

Pitch refers to how high or low on the scale a stressed syllable is said, relative to the pitch range of the particular speaker, and whether a movement of pitch occurs on the syllable. In fact there are recognisable and systematic movements of pitch in connected speech. This is what is meant by intonation. Intonation patterns differ not only in different languages but also in different English accents. This makes the underlying melody of, for instance, Welsh, Scottish, Liverpool or Birmingham English recognisable (Collins et al. 2019: 141–142). The following brief description refers to GB pronunciation.

Speech is produced in short units variously called intonation units, tone units, tone groups or intonation phrases. These units correspond roughly to information units and vary in length from a single word to a short phrase, clause or short utterance. Speakers tend to pause at intonation unit boundaries to draw breath and perhaps to think ahead and plan the next unit. Each intonation unit has its own intonation pattern or tune, sometimes called its intonation contour.

Whether reading a text, making a speech, or participating in a conversation, speakers repeatedly have three decisions to make:

- how to divide what they say into intonation units (tonality)
- which of the stressed (accented) syllables in each intonation unit to give pitch prominence to (tonicity)
- which pitch movement to choose for each intonation unit (tone)

The choices made tend to influence meaning in various ways.

Concerning tonality, the sentence ‘We don’t know who she is’ could be said as one tone unit, but could also be said as two tone units, either with the boundary after ‘we’, after ‘don’t’ or after ‘know’. It could also be said as three tone units, with boundaries after ‘we’ and ‘know’ to impart different emphases.

Concerning tonicity, intonation units are structured as follows:

PRE-HEAD (optional) + HEAD (optional) + NUCLEUS + TAIL (optional)

Only the nucleus is obligatory. It consists of a stressed syllable and usually occurs towards the end of the unit. The nucleus, or ‘tonic syllable’, as it is sometimes called, is given a noticeable pitch movement so as to make it particularly prominent. It is also normally perceived as

being louder and longer than any other stressed syllables surrounding it. For the listener, the word in which the nucleus occurs is thus highlighted as the most important word in the intonation unit. The nucleus may be preceded by a head containing one or more stressed syllables. The first of these (or the only one) is termed the ‘onset’ of the head. The head continues up to and including the syllable before the nucleus (tonic syllable). Any unstressed syllables before the onset of the head are termed the pre-head. Any syllables following the tonic syllable constitute the tail. They tend to decrease in loudness and to follow the direction of the pitch movement on the tonic syllable. They are by definition unstressed (Wells 2006: 6–10; Collins et al. 2019: 142–154).

The following utterance could be said in more than one way, but would probably be said as two intonation units. The break between intonation units is shown by the vertical line (|). The onset syllable of the head is shown by ('). The nucleus or tonic syllable is shown in **bold** type.

'Send rein**forcements** | we're 'going to ad**vance**

The first intonation unit consists of head ('send rein-'), nucleus ('-force-') and tail (-ments'). The second intonation unit consists of pre-head ('we're'), head ('going to ad-') and nucleus ('-vance'). The onset of the head in the first intonation unit is 'send' and in the second intonation unit the onset is 'go-'.

Concerning tone, often the onset is at a high pitch (as it most likely would be for both intonation units in the above example). The head is often said at a slightly falling pitch, with a rise just before the tonic syllable (nucleus). Often the pitch movement on the tonic syllable (the nuclear tone) is a falling one. Falls tends to signal finality (Collins et al. 2019: 156). Rising tones signify open-endedness (Wells 2006: 9–10). They may be used in an introductory clause to imply, 'Wait-for-it, there's more to come.' In the above 'send reinforcements' example, both intonation units could be said with falling intonation on the nucleus, but it would be possible instead to have a rise in the first intonation unit. This would make it clear that 'we're going to advance' is the reason for the request for reinforcements.

The most basic distinction is between falling and rising tones on the tonic syllable, but falls may be subdivided into those which fall from high- to low-pitch levels (high falls) and those which fall from mid- to low-pitch levels (low falls). Rises, which are much less common, may be subdivided into low rises (from low to mid-pitch level) and the less common high rise (from mid- to high-pitch level). Also important, although much less common again, are two complex tones: the fall-rise and rise-fall. The fall-rise moves from high, to low, to mid-pitch levels. The fall-rise is the tone which is often used to imply something which is not explicitly stated (Wells 2006: 10). The rise-fall moves from mid-, to high-, to low-pitch levels. It is the least common nuclear tone and like the rise indicates lack of completion (Wells 2006: 10; Collins et al. 2019: 146).

Intonation patterns may be said to have at least the following possible functions, according to Wells (2006: 11–12):

- a focussing function
They highlight the most important information.
- an attitudinal function
They may indicate the speaker's attitude to what is being said, for example boredom, interest, seriousness, disbelief, doubt, irony and sarcasm (Wells 2006: 11).
- a grammatical function
They can show whether an utterance is to be taken as a question, statement, request or command, for example. Attitudinal and grammatical meanings are often intertwined. Thus, the usual intonation pattern for statements, commands and 'wh-' questions is falling intonation, which implies finality, while rising intonation, which implies open-endedness, is often found in 'yes'/'no' questions. However, statements said with a rising intonation may imply disbelief or incredulity. Collins et al. (2019: 158–159) note that commands said with rising intonation are typically softened into requests and 'wh-' questions said with rising intonation are more friendly and obliging (as in 'What can I do to **help** you?').
- a discourse function
They can show the relationship between clauses, as in the 'send reinforcements, we're going to advance' example, where the intonation pattern chosen can show that there is an implicit causal relationship between the two clauses.
- a psychological function
They make speech easier to understand, to produce and to remember.
- an indexical function
They may help to mark the social or professional status of the speaker in terms of dominance relations.

On intonation see also Lorenz (2012: 111–117), Gut (2009: 104–135), Cruttenden (2014: 277–301) and Roach (2009: 119–160).

Classroom Pronunciation Practice

Practice of Sounds in Single Words

If there are phoneme contrasts which are problematic for the learner, then these must be focussed on as a first priority. Usually only a relatively small number of phoneme contrasts will be problematic for a particular learner group. Which phonemes are problematic will depend largely on the learner's first language. It is therefore helpful to have an

understanding of the phoneme inventory of the learner's mother tongue and how this contrasts with English. For the major world languages these contrasts are well described and easily accessible. Collins et al. (2019: 182–207) provide outline descriptions for Spanish, French, Italian, German, Polish and Japanese.

As a general rule, one should first establish whether learners can perceive the difference in sound between two phonemes by playing recordings of minimal pair words to them before working on improving pronunciation. If perception is the problem, then it will be helpful to do minimal pair exercises of the 'ship' or 'sheep' sort in which learners have to make a discriminatory decision. For various exercises see Baker (2006a, 2006b), Hewings (2004: 51–58), Marks (2007: 12–55), Hancock (2012: 12–49) and Carley et al. (2018: 95–131, 197–230).

Once learners can perceive the difference, they will sometimes be able to produce the sounds correctly. If not, then one can adopt an articulatory rather than a perceptual approach and explain to them how the sound is made in terms of place and manner of articulation (see Underhill 2005: 2–47 for detailed explanations and activities). However, some sounds are better suited to being explained in terms of articulation than others. Generally, articulatory explanation:

- will work better for consonants than for vowels
- will work better for plosives, fricatives and affricates than for /r/, /w/ and /j/
- will work better for sounds made in the front of the mouth than for those made in the back of the mouth
- will work better for sounds made with the lips, teeth, alveolar ridge and tip of the tongue than with the rest of the tongue
- will work well for the voiced–voiceless distinction because learners can feel when their vocal chords are vibrating by placing finger and thumb on their Adam's apple
- will work well for nasal sounds because learners can do the finger tests described earlier in this chapter

Vowel sounds are very difficult to explain by describing the position of the tongue verbally. It is far better to provide learners with a vowel diagram so that they can see the position of the problem vowel relative to the vowel sounds they can already make.

Minimal pair exercises can be used by learners to practise producing sounds. Working in groups, each learner can in turn say one word of a suitable minimal pair (for example 'cap' and 'cup') with the other learners in the group trying to identify which word was intended. This can be done as a game with learners being dealt a card from a pack, with one word on each card.

Learners who have trouble making the GB /t/ may not be helped at all by the articulatory explanation given earlier in this chapter because the front part of the tongue appears to make no contact with the alveolar ridge at all for this sound and most of us do not know where it is when we make the sound. By contrast, learners who find it difficult to make sounds with tongue-tip contact will be much helped by an articulatory approach.

Once learners can perceive and produce the phonemic contrasts acceptably, the next step is to discover if they have problems perceiving and producing the allophones of the English phonemes, for example dark and light /l/. A further problem is that learners may carry over allophones from their own language which do not apply to the English phoneme. For example, for German-speaking learners the English voiced plosives /b, d, g/ are generally unproblematic since German has a similar set. However, in word-final position German devoices its voiced plosives, so that they are pronounced as /p, t, k/. German speakers tend to carry this over into English, so that /rip/ and /rib/, /bit/ and /bid/, /rick/ and /rig/ may be indistinguishable in their pronunciation. Sometimes they may not even perceive the sound difference between such words when they hear them, which can lead to comprehension problems.

After individual phonemes and their allophones can be perceived and produced acceptably, the next step is to consider sound combinations, especially consonant clusters, for example / ϕ s/ as in 'cloths' or /ðz/ in 'clothes'. Consonant clusters which occur across word boundaries also have to be considered. For exercises on consonant clusters, see Hewings (2004: 73–78; 2007: 20–25), Marks (2007: 56–63), Hancock (2012: 50–59) and Carley et al. (2018: 276–301).

Most learners can benefit from practice on word stress in words of more than one syllable. For exercises, see Underhill (2005: 51–57, 151–159) and Hewings (2004: 106–141). Hewings (2004: 113–117) also presents some useful activities on the stress pattern contrast between numerals such as /thir'teen/ and /'thirty/. It is the stress difference rather than the suffix itself which mainly distinguishes these pairs for listeners.

Practice of Sounds in Connected Speech

Pronunciation practice in the classroom should not be limited to isolated words, and most pronunciation practice should focus on connected speech. Stress, rhythm and intonation as well as weak forms deserve particular attention. Learners will also benefit from paying attention to the elisions and assimilations that take place in connected speech. By learning how to produce rapid speech themselves, learners will be more easily able to understand rapid speech they are exposed to. For activities and exercises, see Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994: 27–31), Carley et al. (2018: 296–301), Hancock (2012: 72–109), Hewings (2004: 94–98), Hewings (2007: 48–49, 58–69, 84–113) and Marks (2007: 82–89, 98–109).

Ur (2012: 248–50) suggests reciting jazz chants and ‘tongue twisters’. An example tongue twister would be ‘She sells sea shells on the sea shore and the shells that she sells are sea shells to be sure’ in order to provide practice in /s/ versus /ʃ/. Tongue twisters can be recited over and over again at ever-increasing pace for each recitation, first with the entire text displayed for the learners, then with individual words being obliterated one by one until the learners can recite the piece at speed by heart. The teacher can tap out a beat and progressively raise the pace. Later a member of the class can take over this task. Stressed syllables and intonation marks can also be indicated in the text displayed, and then progressively removed. For activities using tongue twisters, limericks, poems, jokes and short authentic texts, see also Hewings (2004: 219–230).

For more advanced learners, carefully chosen snippets of, for example, TV soap operas can be chosen as a basis for showing learners how over-tones such as incredulity, sarcasm, uncertainty or conviction are imparted by phonological features, especially intonation. Learners should be encouraged to imitate the model and then incorporate these features in meaningful contexts into their own speech, for example in role-play. Examples would be ‘What can I do?’ or ‘You’re not going to marry her.’ ‘What can I do’ can be said in various ways to impart a range of emotions from complete indifference to extreme self-commitment. ‘You’re not going to marry her’ can be said variously to imply, for instance, ‘Surely you are not going to marry her’, ‘I forbid you to marry her’ or ‘It has been settled that you are not going to marry her.’ Learners can then be asked to act out in pairs a scene culminating in such a sentence used with a specific intonation. As a follow-up, when learners have mastered the different intonation patterns, a quiz can be done in which the sentence is said by a learner out of context and the class has to guess which meaning is intended.

Food for Thought

Q. 1. Look back at Tables 5.1. and 5.2 and transcribe the words below using the symbols given.

tough	bough	cough	dough	hiccough	thorough
laugh	through	heard	beard	bird	dead
bead	bed	deed	meat	great	threat
suite	straight	bat	debt	moth	mother
both	bother	broth	brother	here	there
dear	fear	bear	pear	does	rose
lose	goose	choose	cork	front	word
ward	font	front	worth	sword	do
go	thwart	cart	lice	rhythm	swat

You probably found the vowel sounds more difficult to transcribe than the consonant sounds because there is a more consistent correspondence between sound and writing for consonants than for vowels. Which do you think are the vowel sounds where there is a reasonably consistent correspondence between spelling and pronunciation, and which are the highly problematic ones? Are monophthongs more problematic than diphthongs or vice versa? Are there any patterns? Could you offer learners any help or advice about letter-to-sound correspondences?

- Q. 2. Imagine you have learners who pronounce 'chess' and 'jazz' in such a way that the two words sound almost the same. First transcribe the two words and describe for yourself the pronunciation problem for each of the three phonemes. Then decide what remedial action you would take with the learners. Act out a brief remedial pronunciation session for 'chess' and 'jazz', with some colleagues playing the part of the learners, and afterwards reflect with your colleagues on how successful the session was.
- Q. 3. (Group task) Consider this utterance (example taken from Wells 2006: 9):

We're planning to fly to Italy.

Say this as one intonation unit and then identify the component parts of pre-head (if present), head (if present), nucleus and tail (if present). If there is a head, mark the onset syllable. Decide what tone you gave to the nucleus and mark this too. Experiment now with other ways of saying the utterance, involving shifting the nucleus and/or shifting the tone placed on the nucleus. See if you can match these to specific contexts. (If you find this difficult, do the exercise the other way around; that is, imagine some situations, say the utterance as you would naturally say it in context, and then decide what intonation patterns you have used.)

Finally, see if you can write two brief dialogues whose contexts demand two different intonation patterns on a particular sentence common to both dialogues. If you have access to learners, try out your dialogues with them. See how well they do before and after you offer any help on how to say the sentence in question.

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6 Grammar

Inflectional Morphology

What Is Inflectional Morphology?

Inflectional morphology refers to how the form of a word may change to express grammatical meaning. In English inflection usually involves adding a suffix (word ending) to the base form, as in ‘give’ (base form), ‘gives’, ‘giving’, ‘given’. But sometimes it involves a vowel change, as in ‘give’ – ‘gave’. Technically, such a vowel change is ‘vowel gradation’ (Crystal 1996: 72) rather than inflection, but I will include it under inflection in this chapter. Inflection never changes the word class of the original word: ‘gives’, ‘gave’, ‘giving’ and ‘given’ are all forms of the verb ‘give’. For more on inflectional morphology see Yule (2017: 75–77).

In comparison to some other languages: Latin, Russian and German, for example, English has a slimmed-down system of inflections. It was not always like this. Old English (c. 700–1100 AD) was much richer than Modern English in inflection. As English developed over the centuries, however, it gradually lost much of its inflectional morphology and came to rely increasingly on word combinations and word order to express grammatical meaning. (See Quirk and Wren 1957: 19–58 for more on Old English inflections.)

In English today, inflection occurs in verbs, nouns and adjectives as well as in personal, possessive, reflexive, relative and interrogative pronouns. There is also the modification of the indefinite article ‘a’ to ‘an’, before nouns beginning with a vowel sound. This is really just a pronunciation modification which is shown in the spelling.

Verb Inflection

In English, verb inflectional morphology marks person and number as well as tense and aspect. The ‘base form’ of the verb is the uninflected form listed in the dictionary (‘play’, ‘give’, ‘be’, ‘have’ etc.). It is always identical with the infinitive (without ‘to’). With the exception of the verb

'to be', it is also the form used for the simple present tense in the first person singular, as in 'I play', 'I give', 'I have' etc.

Third Person Present Singular

In the present tense only the third person singular of the present tense is marked by being assigned the suffix '-s' (as in 'he/she/it plays') or '-es' (as in 'washes'). There is one great exception and one slight exception to this pattern. The verb 'to be' is the great exception and does not follow the pattern at all: 'I am', 'you are' 'he/she/it is', 'we/you/they are'. The verb 'to have' is the slight exception to the pattern in that instead of adding the suffix '-s' to form 'he/she/it *haves', reduction to 'has' occurs.

The pronunciation of '-s' varies according to whether it follows a voiced or voiceless sound. The suffix is pronounced /z/ following a vowel sound, as in 'plays' /pleɪz/, or a voiced consonant, as in 'reads' /riːdz/, or when it is syllabic, as in 'washes' /wɒʃɪz/, shown in writing as '-es'. It is pronounced /s/ following a voiceless consonant as in 'sits' /sɪts/. Most learners can make the necessary distinction in pronunciation with a little practice after it has been pointed out to them.

First and Third Person Singular Past of 'To Be'

In the past tense, verbs have a single form for all persons, singular and plural. This applies even to the verb 'have', which is always 'had' in the past. The verb 'to be' is the great exception: it takes the form 'was' for first and third person singular ('I/he/she/it/was') and 'were' for second person singular ('you were') plus all plural persons ('we, you, they were').

Tense (Present versus Past)

The basic tense distinction in English is between present ('give', 'play') and past ('gave', 'played'). It is marked by inflection of the base form of the verb. The simple present tense form is identical with the base form of the verb apart from the third person singular (see above). The way the past tense is formed varies according to whether the verb is 'regular' or 'irregular'. Regular verbs form their past tense by adding '-ed' to the base form ('play' – 'played'). Irregular verbs depart more or less radically from this scheme and there are a number of different patterns that can be discerned. There are about 170 irregular verbs. These include the two most frequently used verbs, 'to be' and 'to have', and many other verbs of frequent occurrence such as 'bring', 'drink', 'eat', 'give', 'lie', 'put', 'rise', 'send', 'sit', 'sleep', 'stand', 'take' and 'wake'.

Aspect (Progressive versus Perfect)

Most verbs are ‘action verbs’ and English has two verb participles, the progressive participle and the perfect participle, which show whether the action is to be regarded as in progress (progressive aspect) or completed (perfective aspect). (In Latin *perfectum* means ‘completed’.) The progressive participle is formed by adding ‘-ing’ to the base form, regardless of whether the verb is regular or irregular (‘play’ – ‘playing’; ‘give’ – ‘giving’). The perfect participle of regular verbs is identical with the past tense form (‘played’). For irregular verbs there are a number of patterns: for ‘give’ the past participle is ‘given’.

Finite and Non-Finite Verb Forms

The perfect and progressive participles together with the infinitive are non-finite parts of the verb. Unlike the present and past tense forms (‘play’ – ‘played’; ‘give’ – ‘gave’), which are finite forms of the verb, they cannot take a subject (I give but not *I giving’ or *I given). There is one other non-finite part of the verb, namely the gerund. A gerund is a ‘verbal noun’ formed from the base form of the verb by adding ‘-ing’, as in ‘Seeing is believing’. The form of the gerund is always identical in form with the present participle (see Crystal 1996: 155; Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 312–313, 378; Huddleston and Pullum 2005: 32–33; Carter and McCarthy 2006: 905).

Irregular Verb Patterns

To be able to use any irregular (or regular) verb, one needs to know only its base form, past tense form and perfect participle. There are partial patterns of systematicity among irregular verbs. The following seven verb ‘families’ do not pretend to cover all possibilities but may help learners:

1. verbs which form their past tense regularly only to depart from regular inflection in forming the perfect participle (‘swell’, ‘swelled’, ‘swollen’).
2. verbs which repeat the base form for both past tense and perfect participle (‘cut’, ‘cut’, ‘cut’)
3. verbs which change the medial vowel for the past tense and revert to the base form for the perfect participle (‘run’, ‘ran’, ‘run’)
4. verbs which have three different vowels for the three forms (‘sink’, ‘sank’, ‘sunk’)
5. verbs which change both the medial vowel and the final consonant sound to form the past tense and then repeat this form for the perfect participle (‘bring’, ‘brought’, ‘brought’)

6. verbs which change the medial vowel for the past tense and then add '(e)n' to the base form for the perfect participle ('give', 'gave', 'given')
7. verbs which have two alternative forms for both the past tense and perfect participle, one regular and one irregular ('smell', 'smelled' (or 'smelt'), smelled (or 'smelt'))

See Crystal (1996: 73) for a comprehensive classification.

Modal Auxiliary Verbs

All that has been said about verb inflectional morphology so far applies to lexical verbs and does not apply to the nine modal auxiliary verbs, 'can', 'could', 'may', 'might', 'will', 'would', 'shall', 'should' and 'must'. The modal verbs are always either followed by the 'bare' infinitive (base form) of a lexical verb, that is without 'to', as in 'I can help', or, if they stand alone, a following 'bare' infinitive is 'understood' as in, 'Can you help?' 'Yes, I can.' Modal verbs are never inflected. They always use the base form even in the third person singular ('he can', 'she could', 'it may' etc.), nor do they have any non-finite forms (infinitives, participles and gerunds). For example, one cannot say *'to must', *'musting' or *'musted'.

To express the past meaning of 'must' the past tense of 'have to' ('had to') is used. Concerning the other eight modals, in reported speech 'could' functions as the past tense of 'can', 'might' as the past of 'may', 'would' as the past tense of 'will', and 'should' as the past tense of 'shall'. However, in other uses, particularly requests such as, 'Can/could you lend me your bike?' the meaning difference between 'can' and 'could', 'may' and 'might', 'will' and 'would' is often one of tentativeness rather than of 'past' versus 'present' (Crystal 1996: 103).

In addition to the modal verbs there are so-called 'catenative verbs', such as 'appear to', 'seem to', 'have to', 'want to', 'need to', which express modal meaning but generally behave morphologically like lexical verbs except for the fact that, like modal verbs, they have no passive forms (see Carter and McCarthy 2006: 401–403).

On verb inflection generally, see Crystal (1996: 70–77), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 24–40), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 29–39, 273–277) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 405–429).

Noun Inflection

Noun inflection in English is limited to number (singular versus plural) and also to distinguishing the genitive case from the unmarked case. See Crystal (1996: 108–121), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 93–99), Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 340–349) and Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 82, 277–279).

Noun Plural Inflection

The usual way of forming the plural of nouns in writing is by adding the suffix ‘-s’. The way the ‘-s’ is pronounced is influenced by the preceding sound. If the singular ends in a voiceless consonant, it is pronounced /s/, as in ‘cats’; and if it ends in a voiced consonant or a vowel it is pronounced /z/, as in ‘dogs’ and ‘zebras’. If the singular already ends in the sound /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/ or /dʒ/, the suffix is made syllabic because it would otherwise be impossible to pronounce the consonants together. In writing, this is shown as ‘-es’, pronounced /ɪz/, as in ‘races’, ‘mazes’, ‘crashes’, ‘churches’, ‘badges’ (see Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 93–94).

A minor complication is that some very few nouns which end in /f/ change the consonant to its voiced equivalent for the plural and add /z/, as in ‘leaf’, ‘leaves’, rather than *‘leafs’. However, the change is shown in the spelling (Crystal 1996: 114; Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 95).

Seven nouns change their vowel to form the plural: ‘man’ – ‘men’, ‘woman’ – ‘women’, ‘foot’ – ‘feet’, ‘tooth’ – ‘teeth’, ‘mouse’ – ‘mice’, ‘louse’ – ‘lice’ (Crystal 1996: 114; Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 95). It is worth spending a little time on the pronunciation of ‘woman’ – ‘women’ when introducing it to beginners before they ever see the written form. It is a very difficult plural because *both* vowels change: the first, stressed vowel changes from /ʊ/ to /ɪ/ and the second, unstressed vowel changes from /ə/ to /i/: /wʊmən/ – /wɪmɪn/. The spelling is particularly unhelpful for learners.

There are a few difficult words of foreign origin such as ‘appendix’ – ‘appendices’ which maintain the plural of the original language, Latin in this case (Crystal 1996: 115; Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 96–97). There are also a few exceptional plurals such as ‘oxen’, ‘children’, ‘cattle’, which maintain earlier Germanic plural endings. Some very few nouns, such as ‘sheep’, have the same form for both singular and plural (‘one sheep’, ‘two sheep’). There are also some nouns, sometimes called ‘non-count nouns’, which have no plural, such as ‘money’, ‘music’, ‘milk’ and ‘butter’ (Crystal 1996: 112–113). There are also a few problematic nouns from Latin which hover uneasily between the Latinate plural and the regular English plural (Crystal 1996: 115). Do you personally say ‘croci’ or ‘crocuses’, ‘syllabi’ or ‘syllabuses’? (See also Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 97–99).

Noun Genitive Inflection

The genitive case is distinguished from the unmarked case in the singular in both speech and writing (boy – boy’s). In the plural genitive the distinction is made only in writing (boys – boys’). As an alternative to the genitive, the ‘of’ construction can be used, as in ‘the father of the boy’ and ‘the father of the boys’. Thus, English has both an inflectional and a syntactic means of expressing possession. The genitive construction tends to be preferred for

persons and animate nouns and the ‘of’ construction for inanimate nouns (compare ‘John’s foot’ versus ‘the foot of the mountain’) but much depends on the linguistic context of the sentence in which the phrase occurs.

On the genitive, see Crystal (1996: 124–127), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 102–107), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 279–280) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 361).

Adjective Inflection

To form the comparative and superlative forms of one-syllable adjectives, the inflectional suffixes ‘er’ and ‘est’, as in ‘grand’, ‘grander’, ‘grandest’ are added. For adjectives of three or more syllables, ‘more’ and ‘most’ are combined with the adjective, as in ‘beautiful’, ‘more beautiful’, ‘most beautiful’. This latter method is syntactic not inflectional because words are added. Adjectives of two syllables can usually take both forms, but some second syllables, such as ‘-id’ prefer the syntactic form and some, such as ‘-y’ prefer the inflectional form: ‘stupider’ sounds rather odd compared to ‘more stupid’, and ‘prettier’ sounds slightly more natural than ‘more pretty’. There are very few complete exceptions to the system, the most obvious ones being the irregular ‘good’, ‘better’, ‘best’ and ‘bad’, ‘worse’, ‘worst’. However, the adjective ‘old’ has in addition to the regular comparative and superlative forms ‘older’, ‘oldest’ the forms ‘elder’, ‘eldest’, which are used only for family members, as in ‘my elder brother’, ‘my eldest sister’, and are optional rather than obligatory.

On adjective inflection see Crystal (1996: 164–165), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 152–156), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 280–281) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 759–773).

Pronoun Inflection

Personal Pronouns

The personal pronouns ‘I’, ‘we’, ‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘they’ have an objective case, namely, ‘me’, ‘us’, ‘him’, ‘her’, and ‘them’. However, ‘you’ and ‘it’ do not have separate inflected forms for the objective case (see Carter and McCarthy 2006: 376–382). The possessive pronouns, ‘mine’, ‘yours’, ‘his’, ‘hers’, ‘its’ (actually rarely used as a possessive pronoun), ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’ may be seen as genitive forms of the corresponding personal pronouns (see Carter and McCarthy 2006: 382–383). The reflexive pronouns (‘myself’, ‘yourself’, ‘himself’, ‘herself’, ‘itself’, ‘ourselves’, ‘yourselves’, ‘themselves’) represent further inflectional variation on the personal pronouns (see Carter and McCarthy 2006: 384–386 and also Huddleston and Pullum 2005: 105 for an overview in tabular form).

Idiomatic expressions like ‘a friend of mine/yours/his/hers/ours/theirs’ etc. (rather than the unidiomatic and maybe ungrammatical ‘a friend of

me/you/him/her/us/them' etc.) are unusual in that they combine 'of' followed by the genitive case rather than the objective case (Carter and McCarthy 2006: 360). With nouns rather than pronouns, 'of' can be followed by either the objective or the genitive case, as in 'a friend of my uncle' versus 'a friend of my uncle's' (Crystal 1996: 126). Many people perceive a slight meaning difference, however, between the two expressions, the latter meaning 'a friend from among my uncle's friends'.

Relative and Interrogative Pronouns

The relative and interrogative pronoun 'who' (singular and plural), used only to refer to persons, is inflected for the genitive ('whose'). In the objective case 'whom' is an alternative to 'who' as relative pronoun in formal, mostly written contexts, as in 'the lady/ladies who(m) I mentioned/to whom I referred'. However, especially in less formal contexts, the objective relative pronoun may be, and often is, omitted altogether, as in 'the lady/ladies I mentioned', 'the lady/ladies I referred to' (see Crystal 1996: 140–141; Carter and McCarthy 2006: 386–389).

'Whom' as an alternative to 'who' as an interrogative rather than a relative pronoun in the objective case is very formal indeed, as in 'Whom did you mention?' and 'To whom did you refer?'

On pronoun inflection generally, see also Crystal (1996: 146–155), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 111, 114) and Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 102–110).

Syntax

What Is Syntax?

Syntax refers to the way words are combined to form larger units such as phrases, clauses and sentences. Word order is very important for sentence meaning in English because English has lost much of its inflectional noun morphology. There are no inflectional morphemes to show whether a noun is a subject, direct object or an indirect object in a sentence. English is an SVO language, that is to say, in simple declarative sentences (statements consisting of one clause) in English the usual order of elements is subject + verb + object. Thus, in the sentence 'The man bit the dog' the word order makes it clear that the man does the biting and the dog gets bitten even though this is a rather unlikely event. In SVO sentences, grammatical subjects are 'actors' and grammatical objects are 'patients' or 'recipients', that is to say they are acted upon. For more on SVO word order see Crystal (1996: 36–38), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 205), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 65–71) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 778–779).

The Noun Phrase

The subject slot in an SVO sentence has to be filled by a noun phrase (NP). A NP consists minimally of a ‘head’, which must be a noun or pronoun. Word order within the NP is rather fixed. There is a closed set of ‘determiners’ which may precede the NP head:

a/the/my/your, etc./some/this/that dog

Then there is a slot for an open set of ‘premodifiers’, mainly adjectives, the order of which is partly fixed, with colour words, for example, coming close to the following noun:

the famous, old, brown dog

After the head of the NP there is a slot for post-modification, often by a participial phrase (‘lying peacefully’), prepositional phrase (‘in the yard’) or both:

the famous, old, brown dog lying peacefully in the yard

Alternatively, a relative clause may post-modify a NP head:

the famous, old, brown dog which was lying peacefully in the yard

On noun-phrase structure see Crystal (1996: 104–107), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 363–364), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 82–84) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 318–328). On adjective order before nouns see Scrivener (2010: 64–65).

The Verb Phrase

The verb phrase (VP) consists minimally of just a verb, as in ‘slept’, but can also include up to four accompanying auxiliary verbs, all of which proceed the lexical verb (the ‘head’), as in ‘She **may have been being** blackmailed’ (Crystal 1996: 68; Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 41–43; Carter and McCarthy 2006: 395–403). Some grammarians, especially those working within the tradition of transformational generative grammar (TG), extend the term VP to also include any other obligatory elements that follow the verb in the sentence, for example in ‘The dog bit the man’ the VP would then be regarded as ‘bit the man’, which would in turn be subdivided into verb (V) plus NP (see Huddleston and Pullum 2005: 64–65). This definition of the VP corresponds to what was called the ‘predicate’ in traditional grammar. It is not the one adopted here. In this section, three ways in which the form of the VP expresses grammatical meaning will be considered. These are tense, aspect and voice.

Tense

In English there are only two tenses formed by inflection of the verb, namely the simple present tense (Mary **sings** in the choir) and the simple past tense (Mary **sang** in the choir) (Crystal 1996: 92; Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 47–48; Carter and McCarthy 2006: 926). The so-called

‘simple future’ and ‘simple conditional’ tenses in English are actually composite forms made up of the modal auxiliaries ‘will’ and ‘would’, respectively, followed by the base form of the lexical verb (Mary **will/would sing**). For the sake of convenience I will refer to such composite tense forms as ‘tenses’ too. These four tense forms are all unmarked for aspect.

Aspect

‘Aspect’ refers to how verbs show (are marked for) completion (perfective aspect) or lack of completion (progressive aspect) of the action. A further aspect option available is the ‘perfective progressive’, arrived at by combining perfective and progressive aspect marking. There are thus four aspects to the verb: unmarked, perfective, progressive and perfective progressive. The term ‘simple tenses’ is used for tenses which are not marked for progressive aspect (Crystal 1996: 98). Each of the four aspects has four tenses (present, past, future and conditional). This makes 16 tenses in all.

UNMARKED ASPECT

- The four unmarked tenses are simple present (Mary **sings**), past (**sang**), future (**will sing**) and conditional (**would sing**).

PERFECTIVE ASPECT

- The four unmarked tenses can each be marked for perfective aspect by combining the appropriate tense of the ‘have’ with the perfect participle of the lexical verb (**sung**). This produces the simple present perfect (Mary **has sung**), past perfect (**had sung**), future perfect **will have sung** and conditional perfect tenses (**would have sung**).

PROGRESSIVE ASPECT

- The four unmarked tenses can each be marked for progressive aspect by combining the appropriate tense of ‘be’ with the progressive participle of the lexical verb (**singing**). This produces the present progressive (Mary **is singing**), past progressive (**was singing**), future progressive (**will be singing**) and conditional progressive (**would be singing**).

PERFECTIVE PROGRESSIVE ASPECT

- The four unmarked tenses can each be marked for both perfective and progressive aspect by combining the appropriate tense of ‘have’ with the past participle of ‘be’ (**been**) followed by the present

participle of the lexical verb (**singing**). This produces the present perfect progressive (Mary **has been singing**), past perfect progressive (**had been singing**), future perfect progressive (**will have been singing**) and conditional perfect progressive (**would have been singing**).

Voice

The above 16 tenses are all in the active voice. 'Voice' (active or passive) refers to whether the grammatical subject of the sentence is the doer (active voice) or the recipient of the action (passive voice), as in 'she sang a sea shanty' (active) versus 'a sea shanty was sung' (passive). Each of the 16 active voice tense forms has a corresponding passive voice tense form. In the passive as in the active voice there are four aspects: unmarked, perfect, progressive and perfective progressive. Within each aspect there is a present, past, future and conditional tense:

UNMARKED ASPECT IN THE PASSIVE

- The four unmarked passive tenses are formed by combining the appropriate simple tense of 'be' with the perfect participle of the lexical verb (**sung**). This produces the simple present (the sea shanty **is sung**), past (**was sung**), future (**will be sung**) and conditional tenses (**would be sung**) in the passive voice.

PERFECTIVE ASPECT IN THE PASSIVE

- The four perfective passive tenses are formed by combining the appropriate tense of 'have' with the perfect participle of 'be' (**been**) followed by the perfect participle of the lexical verb (**sung**). This produces the present perfect (the sea shanty **has been sung**), past perfect (**had been sung**), future perfect (**will have been sung**) and conditional perfect tenses (**would have been sung**) in the passive voice.

PROGRESSIVE ASPECT IN THE PASSIVE

- The four progressive tenses are formed by combining the appropriate tense of the auxiliary 'be' with the present participle of 'be' (**being**), followed by the perfect participle of the lexical verb (**sung**). This produces the present progressive (the sea shanty **is being sung**), past progressive (**was being sung**), future progressive (**will be being sung**) and conditional tenses (**would be being sung**) in the passive voice.

- The four perfective progressive passive tenses are formed by combining the appropriate tense of the auxiliary 'have' with the perfect participle of 'be' (**been**), followed by the progressive participle of the auxiliary 'be' (**being**), followed by the perfect participle of the lexical verb (**sung**). This produces the present perfect progressive (the sea shanty **has been being sung**), past perfect progressive (**had been being sung**), future perfect progressive (**will have been being sung**) and conditional perfect (**would have been being sung**) tenses in the passive voice.

For more on the active and passive voice see Crystal (1996: 88–91), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 44–46), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 240–246) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 793–802, 929).

Note 1: Order of auxiliary verbs in composite tense forms

When a verb is used in combination with a lexical verb, it is called an 'auxiliary verb'. A distinction is usually made between the nine modal auxiliary verbs, already discussed, and the three 'primary auxiliary verbs', 'be', 'have' and 'do' (Crystal 1996: 69). 'Do' has not yet been mentioned, but it is combined with lexical verbs to form questions and negatives ('I don't dance'; 'does she drive?') and will be dealt with in due course. Unlike the modal auxiliaries, the three primary auxiliaries can also be used as lexical verbs themselves ('they are happy'; 'she has a car'; 'he is doing the washing').

In the active voice up to three, and in the passive voice up to four auxiliaries can occur before the lexical verb, which in one of its forms always occupies the final slot. 'Will' and 'would', if present, always occupy the first slot in the composite tense form. Furthermore, 'will' and 'would' can always be replaced by another modal auxiliary with a corresponding change of meaning. No modal auxiliary can co-occur with another, nor can 'have' and 'had' occur together as auxiliaries. The auxiliary combinations 'am/is/are being' and 'been being' occur only in the passive and only immediately before the perfect participle of the lexical verb ('he may be being followed'; 'she may have been being blackmailed').

Note 2: The distinction between tense and time

The real problem for learners is how to use the tenses appropriately. There is no close correspondence between the tense labels 'past', 'present' and 'future' and the time expressed. Consider 'If I had a hammer ...', 'It is her birthday next Thursday', 'Oil floats on water', 'She is arriving on Wednesday'. In particular, in addition to expressing future meaning 'will' has a variety of modal meanings. In 'boys will be boys' it expresses inevitability; in 'will you please be quiet now' it is an insistent request; in 'she'll be landing in San Francisco at this very moment' it is an assumption. These are all modal rather than temporal meanings of 'will'.

For more on the modal auxiliary verbs, including modal meanings of ‘will’, see Crystal (1996: 102–103), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 60–68), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 54–58) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 638–657).

For more on tense, aspect and time see Crystal (1996: 92–99), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 47–60), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 42–53) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 598–636).

For more on auxiliary verbs see Crystal (1996: 76–81), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 34–40), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 37–42) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 598–636).

Adverbials

Grammarians use the term ‘adverbial’ to cover not only single-word adverbs, as in ‘She handled the package **carefully**’, but also adverb phrases, as in, ‘She handled the package **very carefully indeed**’, a prepositional phrases (PP), as in, ‘She handled the package **with extreme care**’ or even NPs functioning as adverbs, as in ‘She handled packages carefully **that summer**’. The term adverbial thus refers to a functional rather than a structural category. Some verbs demand an adverbial to complete their sense (that is as complement), for example the verb ‘lie’, which requires a *place* adverbial. Thus, *‘The package lay’ is not acceptable but ‘The package lay **on the shelf**’ is. Any sentence, however, can be expanded by the addition of one or more optional adverbials to provide additional information about the verb, especially concerning time, manner, place and frequency. Single-word adverbs of frequency, such as ‘never’, ‘always’, ‘seldom’, ‘rarely’, ‘often’, ‘sometimes’, ‘occasionally’, are usually placed immediately before the verb and after the subject. Other adverbials tend to be placed either at the beginning of the sentence or following the verb. The usual order is manner, place, time.

The following example shows how a sentence can be expanded by adding optional adverbials:

The dog **often** (frequency adverbial) slept **happily** (manner adverbial) **in the yard** (place adverbial) **that summer** (time adverbial).

For more on adverbials see Crystal (1996: 166–179), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 158–187), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 78–80) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 578–596).

Verb Complementation

Verb complementation refers to what elements, if any, are required to complete the meaning of a verb in a simple declarative sentence, that is, a sentence of one clause in the form of a statement. The possibilities are object (O) and complement (C) and various combinations thereof. The term

‘verb complementation’ is, perhaps rather confusingly, used to cover both objects and complements as elements following the verb (see Huddleston and Pullum 2005: 70, 73). Objects may either be direct (accusative case) or indirect (dative case). If there is only one object, then it is direct. Each verb has its own set of complementation possibilities. There are five basic complementation patterns in terms of compulsory elements:

- SV The dog (S) slept (V)
- SVO The dog (S) bit (V) the man (O)
- The dog (S) barked at (V) the man (O)
- SVC The dog (S) was (V) happy (C)
- The dog (S) was (V) an Alsatian (C).
- The dog (S) was (V) in the yard (C)
- SVOO The dog (S) gave (V) the man (O) a lick (O)
- SVOC The dog (S) made (V) the man (O) happy (C)
- The dog (S) made (V) the man (O) a famous figure (C)
- The dog (S) got (V) the man (O) into trouble (C)

See also Crystal (1996: 38), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 204–207), Carter and McCarthy (2006: 527–528) and Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 77–78). Classifications vary slightly from scholar to scholar.

The verb is the pivotal element in a sentence, both semantically and grammatically, and it is the ‘transitivity status’ of the verb which determines which, if any, elements must follow it to complete its meaning and thus complete the sentence (Crystal 1996: 38, 48–51; Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 204–205; Huddleston and Pullum 2005: 63–78; Carter and McCarthy 2006: 504–506).

The following verb-transitivity possibilities exist, and some verbs can be used in more than one way:

- Intransitive verbs (such as ‘sleep’, ‘die’, ‘smile’ and ‘laugh’) require neither an object nor a complement, nor do they permit one. Anything that follows them is an optional adverbial. The sentence pattern is SV (‘the dog slept’).
- Transitive verbs (such as ‘bite’, ‘give’, ‘make’ and ‘find’) can be subdivided into monotransitive, ditransitive and complex transitive verbs:
 1. Monotransitive verbs
Verbs such as ‘bite’ and ‘find’ take one (direct) object. The sentence pattern is SVO (‘the dog bit the man’). This category includes prepositional verbs, which take a prepositional object (‘the dog barked at the man’). (See Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 338–339.)
 2. Ditransitive verbs
Verbs such as ‘give’ take a direct and an indirect object. The indirect object comes before the direct object. The sentence pattern is SVOO (‘the man gave the dog a bone’). (The distinction

between direct and indirect objects corresponds to the difference between the accusative and dative cases in Latin grammar.)

With some, but not all, ditransitive verbs an alternative is to replace the indirect object by a PP introduced by 'to' or 'for' and to place this after the direct object ('the man gave a bone to the dog'). Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 72) analyse this pattern variation as SVOC (see below). With 'give' this option is not available in some non-literal or idiomatic senses (*'the dog gave a lick to him', *'she gave a dressing-down to me').

3. Complex transitive verbs

Verbs such as 'make', 'get' and 'put' take a direct object plus a complement. The sentence pattern is SVOC ('the dog made the man a millionaire'; 'the dog made the man happy'; 'the man put the dog on the table'). The object complement provides additional information about the object, which is necessary to complete the sense. As the above examples show, C can be an NP, an adjective, an adjective phrase (AdjP), or an adverbial – usually a place adverbial. Other possibilities include an infinitive clause with or without 'to' ('the man put the dog to work'; 'the man heard the dog bark') and a participial clause ('the man heard the dog barking').

4. Copular verbs

A small group which includes 'be', 'seem' 'resemble' and 'become' cannot take an object and require a subject complement. The sentence pattern is SVC ('the dog was an Alsatian'; 'the dog seemed happy'; 'the dog lay in the yard'). The distinction between a direct object and a subject complement is that whereas the transitive verb affects or has an effect on the following object, the subject complement refers back to and provides additional information about the subject, which is necessary to complete the sense. As the above examples show, complements may be a NP, an adjective/AdjP or an adverbial – usually a place adverbial.

Note 1: In all sentence patterns, optional adverbials (adverbs and adverb phrases) can be added (Crystal 1996: 61; Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 204; Huddleston and Pullum 2005: 78–80; Carter and McCarthy (2006: 504–529).

Note 2: Many verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively, for example 'approach'. One can say 'the dog (S) approached (V)' and 'the dog (S) approached (V) the man (O)' (see Crystal 1996: 51; Carter and McCarthy 2006: 505–506 for relevant verb lists). For some verbs, such as 'eat', 'drink' and 'smoke', but also 'ring', the difference between transitive (SVO) and intransitive (SV) usage is that in the SV sentence pattern the object is not explicitly stated but is taken for granted (understood), as in, 'You rang (the bell), madam.' Sometimes, however, the intransitive use of a verb is similar in meaning to the passive of the

transitive use, for example, ‘the bell was rung’/‘the bell rang’; ‘the door opened’/‘the door was opened’; ‘dinner was cooking’/‘dinner was being cooked’. See also Carter and McCarthy (2006: 506–507).

Note 3: The copular verbs ‘look’ and ‘appear’ are roughly synonymous as copulas (‘the dog looked/appeared tired’). However, ‘appear’ can also be used intransitively in the sense of ‘become visible’ as in ‘the stars appeared’, and ‘look’ can be used transitively with a prepositional object, as in ‘she looked at me’ or as a complex transitive verb in ‘she (S) looked (V) me (O) in the eye (C)’.

Note 4: Some transitive verbs can be followed by a finite clause, others by an infinitive clause and others by a gerundial clause functioning as direct object of the verb. Sometimes a single verb can take more than one option, as in, ‘She promised (that) she would visit him’ and ‘She promised to visit him’, but not *‘She promised visiting him’. It is difficult for learners to get these choices right and they tend to overextend use of the infinitive option, particularly if their own language does not have a gerund, producing, for example, *‘She considered to visit him’ instead of ‘She considered visiting him’.

For more on verb transitivity see Crystal (1996: 48–59), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 204–206), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 78), Carter and McCarthy (2006: 508–509).

Negative, Interrogative and Imperative Sentences

All the sentences so far mentioned have been positive declarative sentences. The way a simple declarative sentence is transformed into its negative counterpart depends on whether an auxiliary verb is present or not. If an auxiliary verb is already part of the tense, then the word ‘not’ is added immediately after it, as in ‘The game is **not** being played.’ If there is no auxiliary in the declarative sentence (simple present and simple past tenses), then the ‘dummy’ auxiliary ‘do’/‘does’ plus ‘not’ (present tense) and ‘did’ plus ‘not’ (past tense) is added and placed between the subject and the base form of the lexical verb, as in ‘she **does not** play’, ‘she **did not** play’. For more on negation see Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 223–230), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 149–157) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 729–731).

To make declarative sentences interrogative, if an auxiliary is already present, then this is brought to initial position in the sentence (‘fronted’), as in ‘**Is** she playing?’ or ‘**Can** she play?’ Another way of expressing this is to say that the subject and the auxiliary verb are ‘inverted’. In the case of the simple present and simple past tenses, in the absence of an auxiliary, the ‘dummy’ auxiliary ‘do’/‘does’ (present tense) or ‘did’ (past tense) is added and placed in sentence-initial position, as in ‘**Does** she play?’, ‘**Did** she play?’ ‘Do’ used as an auxiliary to form questions and negatives is called a ‘dummy’ auxiliary because it is a place-filler when an auxiliary verb is not

available. 'Do' and 'did' cannot co-occur with an auxiliary in questions (*Does she is playing? or *Does she can play?). Nor can the third person singular '-s' be marked on the lexical verb because it is already marked on the auxiliary. Such 'double marking' is not permitted by the grammar (*Does she plays?). However, in the early stages of mastering questions learners tend to do both these things, especially in writing.

The answer to interrogative sentences ('yes/no' questions) may be elliptical, ending after the first auxiliary or a subsequent auxiliary (so-called short answers). However, it is not acceptable to break off after 'being'. Thus, as an answer to the question 'Is he being good?' *Yes he is being' or *No, he isn't being' is not possible. As an answer to 'May he have been being blackmailed?' 'Yes, he may', 'Yes he may have', 'Yes, he may have been' are all possible, but not *Yes, he may have been being'. Negative interrogative sentences can be arrived at by two routes: either by making the interrogative sentence negative or by making the negative sentence interrogative to produce, for example, 'Is she not playing?' 'Does she not play?' 'Did she not play?' If contracted forms are used, the fronted auxiliary attracts the negative particle in all persons and for all auxiliaries, as in, 'Isn't the game being played?' 'Doesn't she play?' and 'Didn't she play?'

The negative interrogative is not a neutral question but a loaded question, implying expectation of the positive answer. 'Isn't New York the biggest American city?' is tantamount to saying, 'Surely New York is the biggest American city' and expects the answer, 'Yes, it is.' The same implication is expressed by the 'negative tag question' following a positive statement, as in 'New York is the biggest American city, isn't it?' This also expects the positive answer, 'Yes, it is.' By the same token, a 'positive tag question' following a negative statement implies a negative answer. 'San Francisco isn't the biggest American city, is it?' expects the answer, 'No, it isn't.' For more on interrogative sentences see Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 231–237), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 161–168) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 534–537).

In English there are first person, second person and third person imperatives. In second person imperative sentences the verb form used is identical with the base form of the verb as in, 'Listen.' The subject 'you' is 'understood' or taken for granted and can be added for emphasis, insistence or belligerence, as in, 'You listen to me, mate.' Imperatives have a wide range of functional uses, including commands ('Quick march'), instructions ('Light the blue touch paper ...') and warnings ('... and stand well clear'), but also exhortations ('Walk on with hope in your hearts'). In conversation, second person imperatives can sometimes sound brusque or imperious (compare 'Would you like to sit down' with 'Sit down'). There is an emphatic form of the imperative with 'do', which can be inviting ('Do come in'; 'do have another biscuit') or insistent ('Do be quiet'). The second person imperative is negated with 'do not/don't', as in, 'Don't go.'

The first person imperative is formed with 'Let me' (singular)/'Let us/let's' (plural) followed by the base form of the lexical verb. In the singular it can express deliberation as in, 'Let me see.' However, it is also used in appeals as in, 'Let me take you by the hand'. In the plural it can also function as an exhortation, as in 'Let us pray', 'Let us go then you and I' (T. S. Eliot), or a suggestion as in 'Let's have a party', 'Let's dance', 'Let's spend the night together' (The Rolling Stones). Third person imperatives are also formed with 'Let', as in 'Let them eat cake', but are rare and elevated in tone (Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 243). The first person negative imperative can be formed either by negating the verb as in, 'Let me/us not be too hasty' or by using the dummy auxiliary 'do' and negating that, as in, 'Don't let me/us be too hasty.' Negative third person imperatives are rare. See Crystal (1996: 44–45), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 241–243), Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 170–172) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 541–543).

Simple, Compound and Complex Sentences

Simple sentences consist of just one main clause, as in, 'The dog slept.' Sentences may, however, be simple, compound or complex:

- Compound sentences consist of at least two clauses joined by one of the three co-ordinating conjunctions 'and', 'or' and 'but' as in, 'The dog slept but the man worked.' If the subject remains the same from one clause to the next, it may be omitted after the first mention (ellipsis) as in, 'The dog slept and snored.'
- -Complex sentences consist of at least one main clause and at least one subordinate clause. A wide range of subordinating conjunctions such as 'because', 'when', 'where', 'while', 'since', 'as soon as', 'although' and 'despite the fact that' may introduce subordinate clauses.

Since a clause always contains one, and only one, finite verb, the number of clauses in a sentence is identical with the number of finite verbs.

Compound sentences in which main clauses are chained together by 'and' are not necessarily much more difficult to understand than simple sentences. Complex sentences are more difficult, however, and the more subordinate clauses a sentence has, the harder it becomes to understand. Particularly difficult are sentences with 'embedded' subordinate clauses. This occurs when a subordinate clause is inserted within another clause, rather than following or preceding it. Extremely difficult texts often have multiple embedding, in which a subordinate clause is inserted into another subordinate clause, which is already embedded in the main clause.

See Crystal (1996: 192–205), Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 262–291) and Carter and McCarthy (2006: 556–560).

Minor Sentences

Particularly in speech, informal writing and notices and messages, communication sometimes occurs in a sort of syntactic shorthand, for example: 'No milk today', 'Gone to lunch', 'Maybe', 'Difficult to say.' These syntactically incomplete or 'minor' sentences depend on the listener or reader being able to recover the missing elements from context. Thus, the milkman knows that 'No milk today' means, 'Please do not leave any milk today', or words to that effect. For more on minor sentences see Crystal (1996: 34–35).

Approaches to Teaching Grammar

Pros and Cons of Explicit Grammar Teaching

There is a controversy as to whether grammar should be explicitly taught at all (see Thornbury 1999: 14–28; Ur 2011, 2012: 78–79; Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Pawlak 2012: 29–59; Keck and Kim 2014: 146–149). Arguments against the explicit teaching of grammar include the following:

- It is impossible to teach explicitly the grammar of English (or any other language) in its entirety because the grammar has not been fully described.
- Even native speakers are usually quite unable to explain explicitly the grammar which they command implicitly.
- Grammatical rules formulated by pedagogic grammarians are often necessarily inadequate, incomplete and sometimes misleading (see Harmer 2007: 225–227).
- The conscious learning of oversimplified grammar rules may actually blind the learner to noticing the more subtle grammatical regularities of language in input and can lead to fossilisation (see 'Language-Learner Language' in Chapter 1).
- Classroom time is thus better spent on enhancing the quantity and quality of exposure to English and getting learners to interact in the classroom so as to implicitly acquire grammar (see Krashen 1999).
- Learners do not like grammar lessons.

However, the advocates of some measure of explicit (formal) grammar teaching make the following points:

- The massive exposure to input and opportunities for interaction which the child acquiring its native language experiences cannot be even remotely approached in the classroom, which is an acquisition-poor environment relative to that for native-language acquisition (see 'Classroom Settings' in Chapter 1 and further mention at the start of Chapter 4).

- Since naturalistic grammar acquisition is age sensitive, adult naturalistic acquirers tend not to acquire the grammar completely (see ‘Bilingual Settings’ in Chapter 1). Even children in bilingual education programmes without explicit grammar instruction may retain slight grammatical deficits at the end of their schooling (Thornbury 1999: 50; Baker and Wright 2017: 260). Thus, some measure of explicit grammar teaching may be beneficial, even necessary, to counteract these internal (biological) and external (environmental) disadvantages.
- If learners are left to themselves, their learner grammar may fossilise at a level at which they can understand and communicate more or less effectively for their current needs (Swain and Lapkin 1995: 371–372; Thornbury 2005: 31–32).
- Learners do not like bad grammar lessons but they do like good grammar lessons.

For these reasons, with the exception of very young learners, explicit grammar teaching of some sort can be beneficial. The older the learners are and the more academic or intellectual they are, the more they will benefit from grammar teaching of some sort. The teacher’s role is to support learners in their discovery of the grammar, to give learners a leg-up on the grammar ladder in accordance with Vygotskian ideas of scaffolding discussed in Chapter 1, and thus enhance the grammar-acquisition process. However, neither we as teachers nor our learners should have too high expectations of explicit grammar teaching. One cannot expect newly encountered items of grammar to be immediately incorporated into the learner’s internalised system and be available for use. It may require a long and gradual process of experimentation before the item passes from declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge and finally becomes automatised because processes of restructuring will be involved (see Chapter 1).

Acquiring Grammar in the Classroom

Learners need to be provided with more than just focussed grammar lessons, on the one hand, and more than just communicative tasks which ignore necessary grammatical structures, on the other. Keck and Kim (2014: 171–195) provide suggestions for setting up communicative tasks to practise grammar, and suggest that such tasks can be designed along a scale according to the degree of explicit focus on grammatical form and teacher feedback on error. Scrivener (2011: 157–158) suggests learners need:

- wide exposure to English through extensive reading and listening activities
- practice in spotting examples of a particular grammatical feature in specially written texts packed with many examples of that feature

- focus not only on grammatical form, but also on meanings and functions (uses)
- focussed practice of the item with the availability of teacher feedback and correction
- to use grammatical items in natural communicative contexts
- to reflect on grammar items, to record them in written form and to return to them repeatedly over time

But what is the best way to teach grammar? The following approaches are worth considering:

- the deductive approach
- the inductive approach
- the genre approach
- the lexical approach
- the cyclical approach

The Deductive Approach

The deductive approach, which Harmer (2015: 231–235) calls ‘Explain and Practise’ and Scrivener (2011: 159) calls ‘Present–Practise’, is the traditional one. It was used in the Grammar-Translation Method, discussed in Chapter 2, and today is still probably the most widely used approach and is closely associated with ‘The three P’s’ lesson plan: Presentation, Practice, Production (see Harmer 2015: 65–68). The new item of grammar is first introduced and explained with examples (the presentation phase). Next, the learners are given exercises in which the new structure is practised (the practice phase). This phase also serves to provide the teacher with feedback about how well the learners have understood the explanation and whether they are ready to proceed to the final phase or whether further explanation is necessary (repetition of the presentation phase). The final phase is then a production phase, with the emphasis on free production in contrast to the focussed practice of the second phase. In the production phase, learners might, for example, be asked to perform an oral communicative task, perhaps as role-play, or a free communicative writing task, so that their attention is focussed on communication rather than solely on the grammatical feature in question.

In the Grammar-Translation Method the language of instruction was the learners’ native language so that grammar explanations were formulated in the native language. Some writers, for example Ur (2012: 80), advise giving grammar explanations in the mother tongue for students of lower proficiency levels. However, this only works in classes where the learners all have the same mother tongue and the teacher speaks it too. In any case, the real problem is that explanations will often tend to be

abstract and difficult to understand anyway. Whether you tell learners that the third conditional form is ‘an unreal condition in the past’ in English or in any other language, they will still be baffled. It seems therefore to be advisable to introduce some limited grammatical meta-language in English early because otherwise it will be difficult to suddenly switch to explaining grammar in English as learners become more advanced.

In fact, many modern lessons for introducing new grammar adopt a modified deductive approach in that they maintain the PPP structure but avoid long explanations and rely on learners’ being able to infer the patterns from carefully chosen examples through which they are guided by the teacher in the presentation phase. A good example is Harmer’s (2015: 239–240) lesson to introduce the present simple progressive, third person singular. In such an approach the explanation, as formulated in the course book, can then be presented at the end of the presentation phase, or even at the end of the whole session.

For more on deductive approaches see Scrivener (2010) and Thornbury (1999: 33–47).

The Inductive Approach

The alternative approach to deductive grammar teaching is the inductive approach. This is sometimes called a discovery approach. Harmer (2015: 235–237) calls it ‘Discover and Practise’. Scrivener (2011: 166–169) distinguishes between teacher-directed ‘guided discovery’ and ‘self-directed discovery’. Rather than being first presented with explanations illustrated by examples, learners are just shown example sentences and invited to induce the grammatical rules which underlie them. To this end, the examples must be carefully chosen so as to highlight grammatical differences among otherwise similar sentences.

This approach is associated with a different three-phase lesson plan: ‘the three I’s lesson plan’ (Illustration, Identification, Inferencing) (McCarthy and Carter 1995). In the first phase (Illustration), learners are presented with example sentences of the structure to be introduced. Often contrasting sentences will be shown which differ only in terms of the new grammatical structure (for example, progressive versus simple tense forms). Pictures may be used to indicate the meaning difference between contrasting sentences. In the second phase (Identification), examples of the new structure are identified in texts or with context provided in other ways, for example by pictures, and their function investigated, with support from the teacher. In this phase learners may also do exercises which manipulate the sentences in various ways, for example expanding, reducing or adapting sentences to exploit the grammatical options available. In the final phase (Inferencing), the class reflects on what they have been doing and tries to identify grammatical

patterns and principles illustrated by the sentences and finally to formulate an explanation, if necessary with supportive scaffolding provided by the teacher. If learners can work with a concordance, then it is possible to combine an inductive approach with self-study and self-directed learning (see Thornbury 1999: 54).

Total Physical Response (TPR) (see Chapter 2) is a long-established technique which relies on inductive learning from the very start. Since the imperatives used in TPR are paired with actions, learners are encouraged to induce the relationships. This can work for prepositions, for example (Put your hands behind your head, in front of your face, on the table, under the table etc.). After this has been done, learners can be asked to recall the prepositions and their meaning. The same technique can be used to teach positive and negative imperatives, and learners can be asked to then take over the teacher's role to see if they are then able to produce the forms (see Thornbury 1999: 55–57).

Comparing Deductive and Inductive Approaches

Some aspects of grammar are better approached deductively and some inductively. In this regard it is important to distinguish those where the main problem is the mastery of form from those where the difficulty lies in function rather than form. Often grammatical form is better taught deductively and grammatical function inductively. For example, the form of the conditional sentences lends itself to a deductive teaching approach, since the system of tense shifting for the three conditional sentence types is relatively easy to explain. However, the functional differences among the three conditional forms are better taught by following an inductive approach. An inductive approach is also well-suited to exploring the functional differences among various ways of expressing futurity in English (simple future tense, future continuous tense, present continuous, 'going to' and simple present tense).

Advocates of the inductive approach stress that the approach is learner-centred rather than teacher-centred and is process-oriented rather than product-oriented. Learners are encouraged to self-direct their learning and actively involve themselves. It is argued that learners will retain rules that they themselves have formulated (or at least been involved in formulating) better than rules which have been supplied to them by the teacher or textbook. The opponents of inductive grammar teaching complain that in practice the inductive approach is extremely time-consuming and that learners are often unable to formulate the explanation themselves and may even go off on a wrong track so that in the end the teacher has to supply the explanation anyway. Additionally, learners may become frustrated and demotivated by their own fruitless search for the explanation. Rather than setting deductive approaches off against inductive approaches, however, it is perhaps better to regard

them as complementary weapons in the teacher's armoury. They may be used to vary teaching style and also to appeal to different learner styles.

For further sample lessons within the inductive approach, see Thornbury (1999: 58–67) and Harmer (2015: 246–247).

The Genre Approach

The genre approach is concerned with teaching the grammatical features which characterise specific text varieties or genres. It can be handled more or less deductively or inductively. In the first phase an example text of the specific genre in question is read, and learners are either asked to identify idiosyncratic grammatical-stylistic features, or these are pointed out to them, for example the agentless passive in scientific texts. In the second phase learners may be given a second text in the same genre with phrases or even whole sentences omitted and be asked to complete the text appropriately. This can be done on a multiple-choice basis, if desired. Alternatively, learners may be asked to supply the missing introduction to the text, or to complete the text, or to match text segments to their appropriate original texts (gap filling). In the final phase learners may be supplied with a specific communicative situation and asked to write an appropriate text in the same genre on their own initiative.

The genre approach often tends to focus on syntax rather than morphology and to be concerned with stylistic aspects of grammar rather than with ungrammaticality versus grammaticality. Lexical and pragmatic aspects may also be included if the features which characterise the genre straddle the boundaries between grammar, pragmatics and lexis. As well as being suitable for teaching ESP writing, it is also well-suited to working with features of conversational grammar, especially with advanced learners, using recordings of natural conversation or transcriptions, if available. Features to focus on might include 'left-dislocated structures' such as '**That house on the corner**, is that where you live?' and 'right-dislocated structures', such as 'It's very nice, **that road up through Skipton to the Dales**', as well as positive 'tags' with positive sentences, such as, 'She's lovely, **she is**' (examples from McCarthy and Carter 1995: 211–213).

For a sample lesson based on the genre approach see Thornbury (1999: 85–89).

The Lexical Approach

The fourth approach to grammar teaching is the lexical approach, which recognises that grammar teaching overlaps with vocabulary teaching. It is a bottom-up approach based on 'word grammar'. Word grammar operates at the interface between grammar and lexis and focuses on the

grammatical information assumed to be attached to lexical entries in the mental lexicon. This includes information on morphology, for example noun plurals, adjective comparison and verb complementation. The approach starts with the grammar of individual words and from this basis sentences are built up. Words are grouped into word classes in advance and introduced within specific word fields within certain thematic units as may be laid down by the syllabus.

To illustrate this with an example for noun plural morphology: for young children in primary school at an early stage of learning there might be a unit about a farm within which the semantic field of farm animals might be introduced. Starting with the sentence frame, 'Farmer Brown has three cows,' various regular plurals ('cows', 'horses', 'goats', 'hens') as well as irregular plurals ('sheep' and 'geese') could be introduced as learners adapt the sentence frame on a slot-and-filler basis to construct their own sentences. In this way the morphology of noun pluralisation is taught.

Another focus, suitable for older and more advanced learners, might be verb complementation. This could be embedded in a thematic teaching unit on giving a party. Verb complementation possibilities might then be introduced in sentences such as 'John suggested **inviting** Celia', 'Bill offered **to buy** the bread' and 'Anne suggested that Henry **should write** the invitations.' These sentences can be used as models or skeletal structures to be filled appropriately with other lexical items. In this way the grammar of gerund, infinitive or 'that'-clause complementation is being taught.

The Cyclical Approach

The cyclical approach is less an alternative to the other approaches than a supplement to them. The learning of grammar is not a linear but a cyclical process which continues throughout a learner's career. The cyclical approach goes beyond the idea of just practising forms which have already been learned, as in classic grammar revision sessions, and involves consolidation and extension of already known grammar. As their proficiency develops, learners repeatedly return to earlier, simplified rules and patterns they have learned so as to revise and expand on them. This includes adding new meanings or functions for grammatical forms already encountered. For example, the morphology of the English modal verb system is relatively simple, but the multiple meanings or functions of modal verbs are extremely complex and cannot be mastered all at once. When modal verbs are first taught, only a limited number of their meanings can be introduced. Within a cyclical approach to language teaching, however, even advanced learners will return again and again to modal verbs so as to refine and extend their functional command.

An example lesson would be a writing task for advanced learners in which they are asked to write a guarded personal reference for a job applicant about whose suitability for the position in question they have reservations. This is a classic case of indirectness in language which is expressed in part by verb modality. Students are given some model references and work in groups (collaborative writing). Each group is given a specific candidate profile with a particular weakness and asked to write the reference. Afterwards, groups can exchange references so that each group can take on the role of a prospective employer, read the reference and see if they can successfully ‘read between the lines’. Finally, the whole class can reflect on and discuss the uses of the modal verb system for hedging and expressing reservations indirectly. Lessons can also be designed for other areas of grammar, including, for instance, non-conditional uses of ‘if’ (‘If you wouldn’t mind ...’, ‘If I were you ...’), indirect speech acts involving interrogative and imperative sentences and modal uses of ‘will’.

Awareness-Raising

In addition to focussed grammar lessons, attention should also be paid to awareness-raising of grammar items encountered incidentally in the classroom, perhaps during a reading session. Awareness-raising involves directing the learners’ attention to a grammar item of interest which might otherwise pass unnoticed. What is a grammar item of interest? The answer is: items that are just slightly beyond the learners’ current proficiency level, or items which have recently been formally introduced in a focussed grammar session, or items which are known but which are in this case being used in a different sense or function or in a variant form. Awareness-raising should not involve greatly disrupting the lesson. The aim is to sensitise learners to the grammar point in question so that they are more likely to notice similar patterns for themselves in the future. It is not to be expected that learners will necessarily master the item or pattern in question immediately. (See Thornbury 1999: 24–25.)

For more on grammar teaching, see Thornbury (1999), Thornbury (2005), Scrivener (2011: 156–184), Ur (2012: 76–87), Thaler (2012) and Harmer (2015: 228–257).

Grammar Games

Grammar games provide additional practice and are helpful for proceduralisation and automatisisation because in a game learners do not focus attention on grammatical forms but rather on meaning. Within a PPP lesson plan, the third phase, the production phase, can take the form of a grammar game aimed specifically at the grammar point in question.

A simple game is ‘Split-pairs sentences’. This can be used, for example, to practise ‘unlikely conditions’ (type 2 conditionals). Each student receives two slips of paper. On the first slip of paper they write the first half of an improbable condition in the first person, which they are free to compose themselves, for example, ‘If I won a million dollars’. On the second piece of paper they complete the condition, for example, ‘I would take a trip around the world.’ They fold each slip of paper in two so that the writing is not visible. The first and second slips of paper are collected separately by two students and each pile is put into a separate box or bag. Students then take it in turns to come out and draw a paper from the first box, read it out and then draw a paper from the second box and immediately read this out so as to complete the sentence. The results may be humorous, silly, not meaningful, or surprisingly witty or apt by chance. The papers are not returned to the boxes so that each sentence produced is a new one. At the end of the game the boxes are empty. The game can be made less challenging by giving each learner the first half of a sentence on a slip and asking learners just to write a completion on a second slip of paper. After the game has been played once, subsequent rounds can include an assessment by the learners at the end as to which was the best sentence that was produced by chance. See Scrivener (2011: 177) for a variation on this game.

For further grammar games, see Harmer (2015: 253–256) and Scrivener (2011: 176–179). For a board game which involves creating sentences by combining lexical words and inflectional morphemes see Thornbury (2005: 84–87). See Thaler (2012: 60–69) for a variety of games, including grammar quizzes, panel games and ‘Memory’. The following game for practising word order within the sentence is a slight adaptation of a suggestion by Thaler (2012: 69).

Learners form groups of six. Each person first writes down a grammatical subject (number and person must be specified in advance), folds their paper over and passes it on to the next person who writes a monotransitive verb (agreeing with the subject). The paper is passed on to each member of the group with the following additions being made in this order: object, adverbial of manner, adverbial of place, adverbial of time. At the end the group decides which is their funniest sentence, and these can be presented *in plenum* to the whole class and a vote cast on which is the funniest sentence of all.

Songs for Grammar Practice

The thrust of this chapter has been that learners probably learn grammar better from examples than from rules. This is exemplar-based learning (see Ur 2011: 519). Songs or snatches of songs known by heart are well-suited as exemplars. Some songs repeat, with lexical variation, over and over again specific grammatical structures and are therefore particularly beneficial. Songs are probably best used as a supplement to the grammar

lesson, although in some cases they could be used to introduce a structure and would lend themselves to a text-based inductive approach. Songs may be sung or listened to by the class, as desired. They do not necessarily have to be sung by the learners to be remembered. More important is that they appeal to the learners. Songs include everything from nursery rhymes through traditional ballads to pop music.

One of many children's songs suitable for singing is 'Ten green bottles'. Anyone who can sing 'There are ten green bottles standing on the wall/And if one green bottle should accidentally fall/There'll be nine green bottles standing on the wall' already knows a lot of English grammar implicitly. They know how to use the existential construction ('there is/are') and how to use a participial phrase consisting of the present participle ('standing') plus a PP ('on the wall') to post-modify a NP ('ten green bottles'). They also know something about the order of elements before nouns, namely that numbers precede colours. They implicitly know how to form a 'type 2' conditional sentence using 'should', which is a variant form ('should fall' for 'fell') not often taught explicitly in the classroom. This is presumably the way native-speaker and bilingual children acquire and practise the grammar of English, namely implicitly. Young learners will enjoy singing this song and are unwittingly learning syntactic structures which will easily become established in verbatim memory and serve as a template for other sentences they may wish to construct on the same pattern. It is not necessary to make the grammar explicit to learners, although this can be done.

For adolescent and adult learners, songs can be chosen to listen to which hinge around a particular grammatical structure. Here are some suggestions for focus on various tenses:

- For type 2 conditional sentences: 'If I Had a Hammer'; 'If I Had a Million Dollars'; 'If I Loved You'
- For the present progressive tense: 'Oh What a Beautiful Morning'; 'Sailing'
- For the simple past tense: 'Yesterday'; 'The Banks of the Ohio'
- For the past progressive tense: 'The Tennessee Waltz'
- For the present perfect tense and questions: 'Where Have All the Flowers Gone?'
- For the future tense: 'We Shall Overcome'
- For the future tense and questions 'What Shall We Do with the Drunken Sailor?'
- For the modal verbs and questions: 'Blowing in the Wind'

Clearly, it is best to choose songs which appeal to the learner group, and some of the above songs might be best suited to a class of senior citizens. Learners themselves can be asked to find songs which best illustrate a particular grammatical structure. This helps raise metalinguistic awareness.

Food for Thought

- Q. 1. (Group task) Look at a list of irregular verbs, for example the list in Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 29–34). You will notice that the list includes many of the most commonly used verbs in the language, but also a few rather rare verbs ('wed', 'weep', 'withhold' and 'withstand', for example). Why do you think some verbs are regular and some are irregular, especially as all new verbs which enter the language are initially regular?
- Q. 2. Select what you consider the 20 most important irregular verbs for learners and see how well they fit into the seven groups mentioned in the chapter. How might you set about teaching these and how many would you teach at a time to your elementary level learners?
- Q. 3. (Group task) In the chapter, examples were given of various ways of expressing future time and examples were also given in which the 'will' future tense is used without reference to future time. Can you think of example sentences in which *present time* and *past time*, respectively, are expressed without using the corresponding *tense* form? Conversely, can you think of examples in which a *present tense* or *past tense* form is used without expressing the corresponding *time*?
- Q. 4. (Group task) Consider the 'Leroy Brown' song below. In this song the irregular comparative and superlative forms of 'bad' are 'regularised' for facetious rhetorical effect:

And it's bad, bad Leroy Brown
 The baddest man in the whole damned town
 Badder than old King Kong
 And meaner than a junkyard dog ...
 (Jim Croce 'Bad, Bad Leroy Brown' from the album *Life and Times*, 1973)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvwDohEEQ1E

Can you imagine using this song in a grammar lesson? If so, how would you use it and for what purpose? Can you think of any other examples of non-standard grammar which frequently occur in popular songs? Should authentic song texts with non-standard grammar be excluded from the classroom or should they be deliberately included, and if so, why, how and at what level?

- Q. 5. Consider the grammar 'of' 'much', 'many' and 'a lot of' with reference to the categories 'number' (singular and plural) and sentence form (statement, question and negation). Can you work out when you would be likely to use 'much' and 'many' and 'a lot of'? How would you introduce these forms to beginners? Have a look at some course books, if you wish, and see what they do.

Further Reading

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7 Vocabulary

Word Formation

The minimal meaningful unit of language is the morpheme. Morphemes are of two sorts: ‘free-standing’ morphemes and ‘bound’ morphemes. A free-standing morpheme is a morpheme that can stand alone as a word, for example ‘respect’ or ‘ox’. A bound morpheme, on the other hand, cannot stand alone as a word, but is always part of a word. There are two sorts of bound morphemes: ‘inflectional’ and ‘lexical’. Inflectional morphemes were dealt with at the very beginning of Chapter 6. Examples of inflectional morphemes would be, for example, the ‘-s’ in ‘respects’, which marks the verb as third person singular in the present tense, or the ‘-en’ in ‘**oxen**’, which marks the noun as plural. You will recall from Chapter 6 that inflectional morphemes are always suffixes (word endings) in English, although sometimes inflection can be shown by vowel change rather than adding a suffix, as in ‘give’ – ‘gave’, ‘foot’ – ‘feet’. In this section the focus will be on lexical morphemes (sometimes also called ‘derivational’ morphemes).

Lexical morphemes carry lexical rather than grammatical meaning and in English can be either prefixes or suffixes. The process of combining prefixes and/or suffixes with free-standing morphemes such as ‘respect’ is by far the most common means of word formation in English (Yule 2017: 62). For example, if the prefix ‘dis-’ is added to ‘respect’, we have the new word **disrespect**. Adding the suffix ‘-able’ produces **respectable**, adding the suffix ‘-ful’ produces **respectful**. Adding both a prefix and a suffix to ‘respect’ gives us **disrespectable** or **disrespectful**. These two words can be analysed into prefix plus ‘stem’ plus suffix.

The meaning change caused by adding lexical morphemes, whether prefixes or suffixes, to a stem is generally systematic, consistent and predictable. For example, the prefix ‘dis-’ carries the meaning ‘lack of’ in nouns such as **disrespect**, **disbelief** and **disregard**. The prefix ‘un-’ is used to produce the antonym of an adjective, as in **unhappy**, and is extremely productive. Just think of all the adjectives it can be combined with! But of course it cannot be combined with all adjectives. For

example, the opposite of 'opportune' is 'inopportune'. But there are usually patterns to be discerned. Consider 'unwanted', 'unloved', 'unheeded' versus 'misguided', 'misplaced', 'misdirected', where the meaning of the verb seems important for the prefix which goes with it. Some prefixes are available in antonym pairs: 'super-' and 'sub-', 'intra-' and 'extra-', 'pre-' and 'post-'. There are also some treacherous cases, however, where a prefix does not mean what one might expect: for example, 'flammable' and 'inflammable' turn out to be synonyms rather than antonyms: 'If only my English teacher had told me that,' as the oil-rig worker said to his surgeon.

Prefixes usually change the meaning of the original stem word without changing the word class, for example 'terminate' (verb) – 'exterminate' (verb). There are a few exceptions, however, for example, 'witch' (noun) – 'bewitch' (verb) (see Todd 1987: 43–44 for more examples). Lexical suffixes, however, differ from prefixes (and from inflectional suffixes, which *never* change the word class of the stem) in that they *always* change the word class of the original word, as in 'like' – 'likeable', 'eat' – 'eatable', 'measure' – 'measurable'. Here are some very productive, systematic, suffix patterns:

- '-ly' forms adverbs from adjectives ('possibly', 'sensibly')
- '-ness' forms abstract nouns from adjectives ('happiness', 'sadness')
- '-able' forms adjectives from verbs ('eatable', 'likeable')
- '-ful' forms adjectives from nouns ('wonderful', 'hateful')
- '-ise/-ize' forms verbs from nouns ('hospitalise', 'hospitalize')
- '-er' forms 'agent nouns' from verbs ('painter', 'writer')
- '-ish' forms adjectives from nouns, sometimes with negative overtones ('childish', 'oafish')
- '-like' forms adjectives from nouns, sometimes with positive overtones ('childlike', 'godlike')

See Crystal (1996: 109) for a list of suffixes that form abstract and concrete nouns, respectively, from verbs, nouns and adjectives.

Although adding prefixes and suffixes to a stem is the most common means of word formation in English, it is by no means the only one. Another very common way is compounding, or putting two words together to form a new word, as in 'bookcase', 'fingerprint' and 'sunburn'. There are other, rather less common processes of word formation. These include 'blending', in which the beginning of one word is joined onto the end of another as, in 'brunch' ('breakfast' + 'lunch') or 'smog' ('smoke' + 'fog'). Another means of word formation is 'clipping' or the reduction of a word of more than one syllable to a single syllable, as in 'flu' and 'porn'. Sometimes two words may be clipped and put together to form a single word, as in 'typo' for 'typographical error'. Words may also be 'borrowed' from another language and for this

reason may or may not be written in italics (*zeitgeist*, ‘blancmange’). For other word formation possibilities see Yule (2017: 55–71). For an activity for advanced learners on word formation see Ur (2012: 193–195). For further discussion of lexical morphology see Carter (1998/2012: 24–26), Todd (1987: 43–45), Yule (2017: 62, 73–88), Saxton (2017: 190–199) and Huddleston and Pullum (2005: 264–265, 281–288).

Word Meaning

Lexical and Grammatical Words

The distinction between lexical and inflectional morphemes finds its parallel in the distinction between lexical and grammatical words. Lexical words comprise nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Grammatical words comprise all other word classes and include determiners (such as *the, a, each, my, some, this*), pronouns (such as *she, anyone, something*), conjunctions (such as *but, and, because, since, although*) and prepositions (such as *on, in, during*). There is thus a distinction between lexical and grammatical word meaning. The meaning of lexical words involves reference to the outside world (extra-linguistic reference). The meaning of grammatical words involves reference to other words (intra-linguistic reference). Thus, a pronoun stands for a noun, a conjunction joins two clauses and the possessive determiner ‘my’ establishes a relationship between a following noun and the speaker or writer.

Grammatical words also differ from lexical words in that there is a fixed, limited number of them in each class so that one can name all the words in the class. Moreover, the stock of grammatical words changes only very slowly over time, for example the slow demise of ‘thou’, ‘thy’, ‘thine’ in the nineteenth century. Lexical words, by contrast, are not only much more numerous, but new lexical words are being coined all the time and others are falling into disuse. It is impossible to list all the lexical words in a language not only because there are so many, but because the stock is constantly changing. Grammatical words are thus said to be ‘closed class’ words. Lexical words are ‘open class’ words. Discussion in this chapter will focus on lexical words. The processes of word formation discussed in the previous section, you will have noticed, involved only lexical words. For more on lexical versus grammatical words, see Fries (1952), Carter (1998/2012: 23–24) and Aitchison (2012: 119–130).

Dictionary Meaning and Meaning in Context

There is a fundamental distinction to be drawn between a word’s ‘dictionary meaning’ and its ‘meaning in context’. The meanings of a word as cited in a dictionary represent its potential meaning range. Meaning in

context refers to the meaning a word takes on as used on a specific occasion in a specific context by a specific writer or speaker. Words such as ‘young’ and ‘old’, for instance, can mean quite different things in different contexts. Thus, when John F. Kennedy was elected President of the USA at the age of 43, he was a very young president but he would have been a very old footballer. ‘Old friends’ can be young people under 30 if they have known each other since their schooldays; an old girlfriend or old boyfriend is an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend, regardless of age. ‘Old chap’ is just a term of endearment and has little or nothing to do with age. Part of knowing the meaning of ‘young’ and ‘old’ is knowing their possible meanings in a variety of contexts (see Aitchison 2012: 77–79).

Criterial Attribute Theory

One approach to dictionary word meaning is to define what distinctive semantic features (criterial attributes) distinguish one word from another. For instance, a mare is a female horse, a stallion a male horse and a gelding is a castrated horse; a foal is a young horse, a colt is a young, male horse and a filly is a young, female horse. There are other features of horses which are not criterial for any of the above examples: colour, for instance. But the criterial attribute is colour in the following subset of horse words: ‘bay’, ‘chestnut’ and ‘grey’. In the case of ‘piebald’ it is the colour patterning which is criterial. In English we do not have a single word for a black horse or a white horse but some languages do. For more on criterial attribute theory see Aitchison (2012: 53–60).

Prototype Theory

However, not all words are so easy to define in terms of criterial attributes. To stay with the superordinate term ‘horse’, what exactly are the criterial attributes that make a horse qualify as a ‘nag’? Must a nag be an old horse, a slow horse, a worn-out horse or a bedraggled-looking horse, or what exactly? It is difficult to say, but we probably have a mental picture of a horse which would definitely fit the bill. In other words we know what a prototype nag looks like. Prototype theory holds that we have an ideal or central example of a word’s meaning in our heads. Individual examples we encounter may be more or less closely related to that central prototype. When an example falls between two of our stored mental prototypes, we may be uncertain what to call it. This uncertainty is often reflected in everyday conversation. People may say, ‘I like those shoes, or boots or booties or whatever.’ In other words, sometimes meaning may have to be negotiated anew for some unusual new object, quality or activity. Each use of a word in a particular context is unique but it must not stretch the bounds of that word’s potential meaning range

unduly. If it does, then communication is likely to break down. For more on prototype theory see Aitchison (2012: 66–79) and Taylor (2003).

Words with Fuzzy Edges

It is in fact the case that some words are far more referentially specific than others and the boundaries between words are often not as clear-cut as we might imagine. Linguists talk of words whose meaning has ‘fuzzy’ or ‘blurred’ edges. The colours of the spectrum are the classic example. Thus, the borderline between what we call ‘green’ and ‘blue’ in English is an artificial one. For a physicist, green and blue merge into each other. Moreover, the borderline drawn in English does not necessarily correspond to the borderline in other languages, which may have two or more different colour words for what we in English would describe as different *shades* of blue or green or perhaps as ‘greeny blue’ or ‘bluey green’. But although the borderline between ‘blue’ and ‘green’ is drawn somewhat arbitrarily, the two words are used systematically to mark that arbitrarily drawn border. For more on fuzziness of word boundaries see Aitchison (2012: 55–65) and Ullmann (1962).

Polysemy

Most words in English are polysemous, that is, they can have more than one meaning or sense. Often metaphor is the basis of the polysemy and one can distinguish a primary, or ‘core’, literal meaning around which secondary meanings based on metaphorical extension cluster (Verspoor and Tyler 2013: 163). The basis of metaphor is comparison, and the reader or listener has to grasp the implicit comparison underlying the non-core meaning. Metaphorical extension thus imparts structure to the polysemy of words, with some meanings being more transparent than others because they are closer to the core meaning. If we hear the word ‘face’ out of context, we think of a human face. This is the core, literal meaning, but by metaphorical extension we can talk of ‘the face of a clock’, ‘a rock face’ and even ‘the unacceptable face of capitalism’. ‘Face’ also combines with the verbs ‘lose’ or ‘save’, as in ‘lose face’ and ‘save face’, to form idioms. When a need arises for new words, as with the advent of computer technology, for example, then existing words may be used in a new, metaphorical sense. This extension of meaning by metaphor helps users to infer the new meaning based on their knowledge of the word’s existing meanings and the new context in which it is now used. A classic example is the newer sense of ‘virus’ in a computer context compared to its older sense from medicine and immunology. Other examples of metaphorical extension in computer technology are ‘gateway’, ‘surf’ and ‘patch’. For more on metaphor and polysemy see Aitchison (2012: 172–190), Carter (1998/2012: 137–144, 159–163), Gibbs (1994), Glucksberg (2001), McCarthy (1990: 22–30) and MacLennan (1994).

Referential and Associative Meaning

For any given sense of a word there are two broad meaning components:

- referential meaning
- associative meaning

Referential meaning or ‘denotation’ is primary and associative meaning or ‘connotation’ is secondary. Often, two or more words may have the same referential meaning but differ in their associations. In this way partial synonymy arises, as in ‘thin’, ‘skinny’, ‘emaciated’, ‘slim’, ‘slender’, ‘lissome’ and ‘svelte’ as used to describe people. In this set, the neutral word is ‘thin’ and its partial synonyms have positive (‘slim’, ‘slender’, ‘lissome’, ‘svelte’) or negative (‘skinny’, ‘emaciated’) associations. Differences in associative meaning may occur along a number of dimensions in relation to the core or neutral word. These include, among others:

- colloquial language (‘conk out’ for ‘collapse’)
- intimate language (‘mummy’ for ‘mother’)
- technical language (‘sternum’ for ‘breastbone’)
- archaic language (‘maiden’ for ‘girl’)
- polemical language (‘bourgeois’ for ‘middle class’)
- poetic language (‘leas’ for ‘fields’)
- complimentary language (‘slim’ for ‘thin’)
- derogatory language (‘skinny’ for ‘thin’)
- euphemistic language (‘glow’ for ‘sweat’)

For more on partial synonymy, see Collinson (1939), Ullmann (1962) and Lyons (1977)

Sense Relations

A word’s meaning in a specific context derives in part from its sense relationships to other words which could occupy its slot in the sentence or utterance in which it occurs. These are paradigmatic or vertical relations. Sense relations, such as synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy, operate along the paradigmatic or vertical axis of language, that is, they are words of the same class which are interchangeable in a particular slot of a sentence (‘she drives a **fast** car’ versus ‘she drives a **slow** car’). Part of a proficient speaker’s knowledge of a word consists of knowing which words can replace the given word in its slot in the sentence or utterance and how the replacement will change the meaning (de Saussure 1916/1986). For more on sense relations see Lyons (1977, 1981)), Leech (1974), Yule (2017: 129–134), Aitchison (2012: 99–112) and McCarthy (1990: 15–21).

Some important sense relations are:

- synonymy ('quick' – 'fast' – 'swift')
Synonymy is the relationship of semantic co-identity. However, although it may be helpful to explain a specific instantiation of a word to a learner by giving a near synonym for it that means more or less the same in that context, there are actually very few exact synonyms. The criterion for whether words do mean exactly the same is whether you can substitute one for the other in all contexts without changing the meaning. This is actually hardly ever the case. The more usual relation is that of partial synonymy, where the meaning of words overlaps, as with 'quick', 'fast' and 'swift'.
- antonymy ('quick' – 'slow')
Antonymy is the relationship of opposition. There are dichotomous antonyms such as 'off' – 'on' and 'in' – 'out', where there is no intermediate point, and there are scalar or gradable antonyms, such as 'boiling' – 'freezing', which mark the end points of a scale with identifiable intermediate points. Intermediate points on the scale may sometimes themselves be classifiable into antonym pairs so that, working inwards from the extremes, we have 'hot' – 'cold', 'warm' – 'cool', and, in the middle of the scale, 'lukewarm' – 'tepid', which we do not perceive as antonyms at all but rather as near synonyms.
- hyponymy ('bird' versus 'eagle', 'sparrow', 'lark', 'thrush')
Hyponymy involves an umbrella word (a superordinate) which spans a number of hyponyms, which are all examples of the set denoted by the superordinate term, as in the case of the superordinate term 'bird' and its hyponyms 'eagle', 'sparrow', 'thrush', 'lark', and many more. Another example is 'vehicle', which is the superordinate term for 'car', 'bus', 'taxi', 'van', 'lorry', 'trap', 'coach', 'rickshaw' and 'cart', among others. They are all hyponyms of 'vehicle'. Superordinate – hyponym patterns may nest one within the other. So 'car' is a hyponym of 'vehicle' but itself a superordinate of 'sports-car', 'limousine', 'hatchback', 'convertible' and 'roadster', among others.
- entailment ('parent' – 'child')
Examples of logical entailment are 'parent' – 'child', 'teacher' – 'pupil' and 'murderer' – 'victim'. The first term entails, implies or requires the other. In other words, you cannot logically have the first term without the second term.
- incompatibility ('aunt' – 'son')
The relationship of incompatibility means that the two words are mutually exclusive; one cannot be an aunt and a son, and vice versa.
- complementarity ('child' – 'adult')
The relation of complementarity involves two terms which are mutually exclusive and which together constitute the full range of options available to complete the set.

- converseness ('aunt' – 'niece'; 'teacher' – 'pupil')
Converseness involves a relationship of reciprocity: if Anne is Betty's aunt, then Betty is Anne's niece; if Bill is Tom's teacher, then Tom is Bill's pupil.

Collocational Relations

A word's meaning in context is also partly defined by its relation to other words with which it co-occurs (or collocates) in the sentence or utterance. Collocational relationships operate on the syntagmatic or horizontal axis of language. They refer to the co-occurrence probability of a lexical word (the source word) with another lexical word (its 'collocate') in a stretch of connected language or 'syntagma' (de Saussure 1916/1986: 171–180). The two words do not necessarily have to be adjacent to be in collocation although often they will be. Thus, 'red' and 'hair' are in collocation both in the sentence 'she has red hair' and in the sentence 'her hair is red' although in the second case the word 'is' intervenes between the two words in collocation. Common collocations involve noun plus verb, verb plus noun and adjective plus noun. For more on collocation see Firth (1957a, 1957b), Benson et al. (1986), Gough (1996), Aitchison (2012: 113–118), Carter (1998/2012: 61–74, 78–80), McCarthy (1990: 12–15), Nation (2001: 317–343).

Collocation is not so much a matter of right or wrong, as acceptable or unacceptable. There is a scale of collocational acceptability from unacceptable collocations such as 'beige hair' to highly acceptable collocations such as 'brown hair'. 'Beige', as any hairdresser will tell you, is just not a hair word, whereas 'brown' frequently co-occurs with 'hair'. However, 'brown' may be said to collocate acceptably but weakly with 'hair' because it can collocate with many other nouns as well, in contrast to words which strongly collocate with 'hair', such as 'blonde', 'auburn', 'flaxen' and 'mousey'. These words strongly collocate with hair because they do not collocate with many other nouns. There is a strong probability they will collocate with hair. There is thus a scale of collocational probability as well as a scale of collocational acceptability.

Sometimes the word that the source word collocates with actually determines its meaning. Thus, 'red' collocates acceptably with 'hair' and with 'car' as in, 'Bill has red hair and a red car.' However, we think of two different colours. In other words the meaning of 'red' is determined by the words it collocates with ('hair' and 'car', respectively). In some languages different words would be used. The French, for instance, say *les cheveux roux* for (natural) red hair but *une voiture rouge* for a red car. Many words which are normally regarded as synonyms, for example 'fast' and 'quick', usually turn out to be only partial synonyms in the sense that they are not mutually substitutable in all contexts. Thus, we say 'a fast car' and 'fast food', but not normally *'a quick car' and *'quick food' though these expressions are not grammatically wrong.

On the other hand, we say ‘to take a quick look at something’ rather than *‘to take a fast look at something’.

Creative language often involves the deliberate flouting of collocational expectations for rhetorical effect, especially in jokes, puns, witticisms, irony, and poetic imagery. In this way ‘nonce collocations’ may be produced. A nonce collocation is a ‘one-off’ collocation, a special collocation for a particular special context, as in ‘the wrinkled sea’ in Tennyson’s poem ‘The Eagle’, where the expression is used to describe a ‘bird’s-eye’ perspective of the sea. Another nonce collocation is ‘clean silence’ in the lines, ‘Clean silence drops at night when a little walk/ Divides the sleeping armies ...’ in Stephen Spender’s poem ‘Two Armies’ (c. 1939).

Some collocations become fixed and take on a special meaning which is often not necessarily deducible from the meaning of their constituent words. They therefore receive their own entry in dictionaries and presumably in the mental lexicon too (see below). Their meaning is often metaphorical and idiomatic. Examples would be ‘red herring’, ‘blue funk’, ‘gunboat diplomacy’ and ‘shotgun wedding’, all of which are listed in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. These are ‘firm’, ‘frozen’ or ‘lexicalised’ collocations (MacLennan 1994; McCarthy 1990: 27–28).

Knowing a word therefore involves building up knowledge of the network of sense relations a word enters into on the paradigmatic axis of substitutability as well as its collocational possibilities and restrictions on the syntagmatic axis of co-occurrence.

The Mental Lexicon

The Container Model of Lexical Storage

The term ‘mental lexicon’ is used to signify the store of ‘lexical items’ in the mind (Aitchison 2012: 11). Most items stored will be words, but the term ‘lexical items’ rather than ‘words’ allows for the possibility that some prefixes and suffixes as well as some multi-word units are also stored in the mental lexicon (Juffs 2013: 183–184). It is highly likely that some very productive prefixes such as ‘un-’, ‘anti-’, and ‘neo-’, as well as highly productive lexical suffixes such as ‘-able’ and ‘-ness’ will be listed in the lexicon (or perhaps in a separate lexical-morpheme lexicon). The evidence for this is that it is possible for listeners and readers to deconstruct the meaning of words they may never have encountered before provided they know the word stem, for example, ‘un-put-down-able’, ‘de-inflat(e)-able’. It is by the same token also possible to produce nonce words, such as ‘anti-banana-eating’ and be confident that one’s listeners will understand.

Some multi-word units with a fixed meaning will also have their own separate lexical entry in the mental lexicon (Levelt 1989: 186–187; Garman 1990:239–242). These may include the following:

- formulaic greetings such as ‘good morning’
- opening gambits such as ‘Could I have a word?’, ‘To cut a long story short ...’, ‘Unaccustomed as I am to speaking in public ...’, ‘Much as I would like to help you ...’
- stock metaphors such as ‘a lion in combat’, ‘at the crack of dawn’
- stock similes such as ‘as sober as a judge’, ‘as poor as a church mouse’, ‘as dead as a dodo’
- all-purpose stock expressions such as ‘at the end of the day’, ‘when all is said and done’, ‘that is a recipe for disaster’, ‘at this moment in time’
- stock expressions tied to a particular situation or register such as ‘I declare the meeting open/closed’, ‘Many happy returns’, ‘Further to my letter of ...’
- proverbs such as ‘Too many cooks spoil the broth’
- lexicalised collocations/idiomatic phrases such as ‘a red herring’, ‘a blue funk’
- sentence-length idioms such as ‘to buy a pig in a poke’, ‘to kick the bucket’, ‘to flog a dead horse’
- allusive lexicalised quotations such as ‘We are not amused’, ‘To be or not to be’
- fixed-order binomial or trinomial expressions such as ‘bread and butter’, ‘tea and biscuits’, ‘spick and span’, ‘knife, fork and spoon’, ‘hook, line and sinker’

For further discussion see de Saussure (1916/1986: 172–173), Yorio (1980), Alexander (1984), McCarthy (1990: 6–11), Nattinger and DeCarri-co (1992), Carter (1998/2012), Aitchison (2012: 113–118).

Jackendoff (1995) suggested that mature native speakers may have at their disposal as many as 80,000 ‘multi-word units’ if one also includes, in addition to the categories listed above, compounds, names, literary and other titles, quotations and foreign phrases. Some multi-word units are limited to speech or to writing, some to specific situations. Some are metaphorical, some literal. Some may function as discourse organisers and have a functional rather than a referential meaning (Nattinger and DeCarri-co 1992; Nation 2001: 210–216). Some may permit no lexical or grammatical change, whereas some may permit limited variation.

Direct access to ready-made language chunks improves fluency, but there must be a limit to the extent to which single-word entries are duplicated by multi-word entries in the lexicon, as this would at some point make the system inefficient and overload memory capacity. The mental lexicon is not a phrase book. However, some expressions cannot be decomposed and therefore *must* be stored as a prefabricated unit. A case in point would be ‘spick and span’: ‘spick’ and ‘span’ do not mean anything by themselves and so cannot be listed separately in the mental lexicon. Lexicalised foreign phrases such as *pied à terre* may also

be understood as a single lexical unit by many language users without their knowing the meaning of the individual words. But what about common idioms such as ‘to kick the bucket’? Although the constitutive words must be listed separately in the lexicon, it seems that the idiom also has its own special lexical entry. The evidence comes from studies which show that people actually understand very well-known idioms such as ‘to kick the bucket’ more quickly than they understand the literal meaning of the phrase (Ortony et al. 1978; Gibbs 1980; Glucksberg et al. 1982; Tabossi and Cacciari 1988). This suggests that people have direct access to the whole idiom.

The Spreading Activation Model

The idea of a store of words in the mind is a very old one. Nevertheless, the term mental lexicon is nothing more than a metaphor for lexical storage and it may not be a very good one. It implies a container and contents, and the image is static. The container metaphor is also misleading in that it implies safety. In fact, if a foreign language is not being constantly used, we soon find it difficult to retrieve words. Even in the case of the first language acquired, forgetting can occur with disuse, for example in the case of emigration, and for children this can take place rapidly (see Higby and Obler 2015).

The idea of ‘spreading activation’ within a connectionist view of language use and language acquisition was mentioned in Chapter 1. Spreading activation models of lexical processing emphasise the dynamic processes involved both in recognising words when listening or reading and accessing (retrieving) words when speaking or writing (Obler and Goral 2007; Jarema and Libben 2007a; Libben and Goral 2015). They are dynamic models based on what is known about neuronal interaction in the brain. They view the items of the mental lexicon, mainly words, as interconnected nodes which form vast networks of associations. These nodes correspond at the physiological level to the synapses or junctions between nerve cells (neurons) where information is believed to be stored. The cortex or outer surface of the brain is composed of a thin layer of neurons arranged in strata. There are ‘billions of neurons, and many more billions of synapses connecting them’ (Aitchison 2012: 246). Neurons are composed of a cell body and projecting fibres (*dendrites*, which conduct inwards, and *axons*, which conduct outwards). Via its dendrites the cell body receives information from other neurons in the form of an electrical charge and it transmits information electrically via its axons to other neurons. The biochemically bridged gap across which electrical activity is transmitted between the axon of one cell and the dendrite of another is the synapse (Garman 1990: 50–51).

It is through language use (listening, reading, speaking and writing) that words are acquired and maintained. Each time a word is used or encountered in input, neural connections of greater or lesser strength are assumed to be established by a wave of ‘spreading activation’ among interconnected words (Aitchison 2012: 245–247; Randall 2007: 115). The idea is that ‘a multiplicity of nodes are excited by the arousal of a node to which they are connected’ (Singleton 1999: 125). The strength of activation will depend on how directly words are associated in memory to the ‘priming’ word. These links among words include sense relations (Lyons 1977) and relations of lexical collocation (Firth 1957a, 1957b), already discussed in this chapter. Evidence for the psychological reality of such links is provided by word-association tests (Jenkins 1970; Aitchison 2012: 101–103.). Say ‘bread’ to people and they are likely to say ‘butter’ (collocation), say ‘bird’ and they are likely to say maybe ‘robin’ or ‘sparrow’ or ‘eagle’ or the name of some other bird (hyponymy), say ‘hot’ and they are likely to say ‘cold’ (antonymy). It is in fact the links a word has to other words which largely define its meaning (de Saussure (1916/1986: 179–180).

Unlike a printed dictionary, the mental lexicon is thus clearly not organised alphabetically but, rather, thematically (Aitchison 2012: 11–17, 99–144). All the words associated with a specific situation such as ‘shipwrecked’ or a topic such as ‘language teaching’ or a semantic concept such as ‘time’ comprise what is called a ‘word field’ and are closely linked to one another in the mind. The mental lexicon is thus more like an electronic dictionary, with hyperlinks and cross references, than a printed dictionary, but it is far, far better. There are criss-crossing links among the individual word entries within each word field but also links which go out from each word to words belonging to different word fields with which the source word may be semantically related. Some words will therefore belong to multiple word fields, and word fields themselves may overlap or nest within one another. The semantic links among words form a network like a spider’s web which is modified or updated every time a word is encountered and retained in memory. In other words, the links among words are established and modified by the individual’s own developing experience of the language (Libben and Goral 2015: 643). Since each individual’s linguistic experience is unique and may change over time, a word’s meaning can vary somewhat from one individual to another at any one time and also change over time for any individual.

What Information Is Stored for Lexical Items?

Whether the ‘container model’ or the ‘spreading activation’ model is adopted, the question still arises as to what information is available in the mind for lexical items. Levelt (1989:182–183) specified four sorts of

information: meaning, syntax, morphology and phonology, which he illustrated with the example of 'eat'. 'Meaning' would correspond to the definition of the word 'eat' in a dictionary. 'Syntax' would include information on the word class of 'eat' (verb) and its transitivity status (SV/SVO). 'Morphology' would include the information that 'eat' is the base form of the verb and is a free-standing morpheme as well as information on its inflection ('eats', 'ate', 'eaten' – or would 'ate' have its own separate entry in the lexicon?). 'Phonology' would comprise information on how to pronounce the word. To these four categories, we might add, for literate speakers of languages which have a written form, 'graphology' or how the word is written. Much of this information corresponds to the information in a physical dictionary. However, the mental lexicon will usually not contain the etymological information held in larger dictionaries since this is not part of normal speaker knowledge. On the other hand, the mental lexicon presumably contains much more information about the stylistic and register status of a word than print dictionaries provide (Levelt 1989: 183). Collocational information, including collocation-exclusion possibilities, is presumably also provided, as well as idiomatic uses of the word.

There is some controversy about whether separate lexica exist for the native language and for each foreign language known or whether one large lexicon should be envisaged with entries marked for the language to which they belong (Libben and Goral 2015). Lamendella (1977) suggested that beginning learners of a foreign language will tend not to link new words to their referents in the outside world but rather to the translation equivalents of the words in the native language (see also Juffs 2013: 187–192). Beginning learners will thus store and access words in the foreign language through a native language 'translation buffer'. As learners become more advanced, the links between the words within the foreign language will, if all goes well, become stronger than links between the foreign-language words and the first language words. This will enable learners to operate outside the translation buffer, so that their fluency will improve and negative interference will be reduced (see Chapter 1 on negative interference).

It is helpful to distinguish between storage and access when discussing the mental lexicon. Concerning storage, for all language users there will be many words that they do not know, and some information stored for individual words will be incomplete or erroneous. The processes of fleshing out skeletal entries for individual words and revising and refining existing stored information are never completed, especially as word meaning and usage change over the long term. Concerning access, even proficient speakers sometimes experience the 'tip of the tongue phenomenon' (difficulty in accessing a word which they do have stored). This may result in slow, hesitant and laborious search for *le mot juste* using controlled processes. Sometimes a number of different words come to mind and compete for selection and a wrong selection may be made – very often of a similar-sounding lexical item to the one required. This is malapropism.

Stored Lexicalised Sentence Stems

Lexical and grammatical knowledge are linked, and in first language acquisition there is a close link between grammatical and lexical development (Bates and Goodman 1997; Ur 2019: 22). It seems that proficient language users have access to various partly fixed, partly productive lexico-syntactic patterns or skeletal structures which serve as building blocks for language production and make both production and reception easier. These skeletal structures have an underlying syntactic framework but, unlike fixed phrases or idioms, they are more productive on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes. They straddle the border between grammar and vocabulary and can be varied by expansion, deletion or substitution of lexical elements as well as by grammatical transformations.

Pawley and Syder (1983) first drew attention to these ‘lexicalised sentence stems’, as they called them, and argued that proficient speakers draw heavily on them in order to speak both idiomatically and fluently. Lexicalised sentence stems are often invested with specific pragmatic meaning. Thus, the lexicalised sentence stem:

That’ll be the last time I’ll (ever) ask + [NOUN PHRASE] + to + [VERB] + [NOUN PHRASE] (optional) + for me!

underlies the sentence:

That’ll be the last time I’ll ever ask Harry to do a job for me!
(Pawley and Syder 1983: 212)

This utterance, and others built on its underlying stem but with different lexical items, expresses the pragmatic meaning of dissatisfaction, regret and annoyance and of having learned one’s lesson from bitter experience. Also implied is the idea of misplaced trust. This pragmatic meaning is still present in the following sentence, for example:

That’ll be the last time I’ll ever ask Bill to clean my car for me!

For more on the links between vocabulary and grammar, see Hunston et al. (1997).

Teaching Vocabulary

Vocabulary Acquisition: an Incremental Process

Getting to know words or other lexical items has been compared to getting to know people. First you may just recognise them as a face in the crowd, later you can describe them. If you get to know them better,

you may know something of how they behave, the company they keep and you may know something of their history. You will of course know many people, and many words, only very superficially but know others quite well, and some very well. You may even be on intimate terms with a few and feel you can rely on them. On the other hand, people and words you know well may, on occasion, suddenly surprise you by their behaviour and even let you down. Indeed our knowledge of people and words is constantly changing in micro-increments with every encounter we have with them. Ultimately, it may be said you can never know any person, or any word, completely. And people and word-meanings change over time.

Not every word or other lexical item a learner encounters in speech or writing finds its way into the mental lexicon; many are quickly forgotten. Such words never make it beyond short-term memory. Normally, repeated encounters with a word are necessary to ensure retention (see Zahar et al. 2001). Each time a word is encountered afresh, its memory trace is strengthened in the lexicon. Gradually a learner may start to build up an idea of the word's meaning and then start to use the word (Nation and Gu 2007: 85). The danger of forgetting is highest soon after the initial encounter with a word so that frequent repeated encounters shortly after the first encounter are important. As time goes on, less frequent encounters will be sufficient to stop the word from being forgotten (Nation 2001: 74–81).

Some words are easier to learn than others. Word difficulty is due to both word-internal factors such as word length and semantic transparency of the word (Laufer 1990), as well as learner-internal factors, especially interest in the thematic area or topic involved. If learners are familiar with and interested in the topic, the new vocabulary item can be linked into a semantic network which is already established in the mind. Further, according to Schmitt (2000: 121), '[T]he more one engages with a word (deeper processing), the more likely the word will be remembered for later use.' Particularly intense encounters are those which engage the emotions and relate to the individual's personal interests and communicative needs (Nation 2001: 63; Laufer and Hulstijn 2001; Laufer and Nation 2012: 168). There is an ascending scale of involvement with a word as follows:

- noticing a word as a known word on hearing or reading it
- retrieval of the word's meaning from memory on hearing or reading it
- retrieval of the word from memory when wanting to express meaning oneself
- recognising that a word is being used in a new sense on hearing or reading it
- using the word in what for the learner is a new sense or context

(adapted from Nation 2001: 66–69)

Enhancing Informal Acquisition of Vocabulary in the Classroom

Learners can be expected to acquire more vocabulary than they are explicitly taught and it is neither possible nor desirable that all vocabulary be explicitly taught in the classroom. Much vocabulary can be acquired or 'picked up' by conversational interaction, by reading and by exposure to the media both inside and outside the classroom. Nation (2001: 134–143; 394–404) describes a number of classroom speaking activities which may be beneficial for the incidental learning of vocabulary, including retelling stories, role-play, interviewing and information-gap activities.

In sessions which are not primarily devoted to vocabulary learning, teachers can take certain steps to make it more likely that important vocabulary is retained. These include various forms of 'input enhancement', such as pre-teaching selected vocabulary items, highlighting key vocabulary items in texts, asking questions about a text which involve searching for the vocabulary item and ensuring that an important vocabulary item is not just used once but is repeated several times in a lesson (Nation 2001: 64–73). Key vocabulary items which crop up can be briefly focussed on by lifting them out of context and checking on learners' comprehension of the word not only in its present context but in other possible contexts. If the word itself is not new to the class but is used in a new sense, it is worth pointing this out explicitly.

Explicit Teaching of New Vocabulary

However, since the classroom is an acquisition-poor environment, classroom learners also require explicit (formal) teaching of new vocabulary (Verspoor and Tyler 2013: 169). Wherever possible, new words should be taught in semantically related sets and be linked to other words which learners already know from the same semantic field. This increases the likelihood of long-term retention by tying the new words into the relevant neural semantic networks of the mind. Most vocabulary teaching will focus on words in context. Words are not stored in isolation and should not be taught in isolation but rather in relation to a specific topic, theme or situation. Learners need to master both the paradigmatic sense relations and the syntagmatic co-occurrence relations of a word to be able to use and understand it. The very worst thing we can do is to teach learners vocabulary disembodied from thematic context because the sense relations that a word enters into differ according to its context (Aitchison 2012: 108).

There are various techniques available for introducing new vocabulary and some words are better suited to some techniques than to others. It is advisable to employ as wide a range of vocabulary-presentation methods as possible. Often it is best to use various techniques for any one word rather than just relying on a single technique. Here are some suggestions:

- ‘swim’ could be introduced by mime
- ‘wink’ by demonstration
- ‘pliers’ by showing the object
- ‘give up the ghost’ by acting it out
- ‘diner’ by showing a picture
- ‘rifle’ by drawing a rifle on the board
- ‘paint the town red’ by telling a story
- ‘abolish’ by giving examples
- ‘lukewarm’ by drawing a scale from ‘boiling’ to ‘freezing’ on the blackboard
- ‘you’re welcome’ by describing a situation
- ‘portly’ by using related known words (sense relations)

Other techniques include:

- encouraging learners to infer the meaning of the word from context
- eliciting an explanation to the class from a learner who does know the word
- translating the word
- asking a learner to translate the word

The last possibility is best used after a difficult word has first been introduced by another technique as it serves as a final check on whether learners have really understood. See also Scrivener (2011: 189–190).

When introducing new vocabulary to beginners, the ‘spoken form first’ principle should be maintained for as long as possible in the first years of learning to avoid ‘spelling pronunciations’ of words such as ‘clothes’ or ‘gloves’. It is best for the teacher to first say the word, then ask the learners to repeat it in chorus and then individually. Only when the word can be pronounced acceptably should beginning learners then see it in written form and finally write the word themselves. Practice activities in which learners then use newly learned words are important. These include rhymes and chants as well as role-play such as ‘going shopping’ and ‘at the bank’. However, thanks to modern technology, it is now possible even for primary-school learners to learn the spelling, pronunciation and meaning of new vocabulary autonomously if they have access to a suitable electronic (or online) dictionary with an audio track to provide the pronunciation (Freudenau 2012, 2017).

Vocabulary Practice and Consolidation

Vocabulary learning involves not just adding new words to the mental lexicon but also fleshing out skeletal entries for words already present (Kersten 2010: 57). At any point in time there will be a distinction between a learner’s production vocabulary and recognition vocabulary.

Production vocabulary – those words which the learner can use in speech or writing – is always a subset of recognition vocabulary – those words the learner recognises but cannot yet use (see Laufer 1998; Laufer and Paribakht 1998). However, the distinction between recognition and production vocabulary is really scalar rather than dichotomous. Schmitt (2000: 119) notes, ‘For example, it is easy to find students who can produce a word orally without any problems but cannot read it receptively.’ Knowing a word includes knowing its meaning or meanings, pronunciation, spelling, morphology (inflections), its syntactic co-occurrence restrictions and its lexical collocational restrictions, and this knowledge cannot be accumulated at one fell swoop. Language teaching at all levels should therefore involve both teaching new vocabulary in structured fashion as well as consolidation work on words which are already partly known. This constitutes a cyclical approach, whereby the teacher and the learner keep returning to already encountered and partly acquired words.

Practice is important for vocabulary retention (Ur 2019). First attempts to use difficult words may be accompanied by much word searching, hesitation or mispronunciation as well as inaccuracies of various sorts, including the wrong collocational and syntactic environment and incorrect morphology. Learners need time and opportunities to experiment creatively with new words. In acquiring their first language, young children indulge in monologues and self-talk, often repeating words recently heard over and over again and making up rhymes and repetitive sequences (Weir 1962; Pinter 2017: 27; Saville-Troike 1988). Such self-talk, or private speech, is important for first language acquisition from a Vygotskian perspective (see Saville-Troike and Barto 2017: 121). Pinter (2017: 27) suggests that ‘playing with forms, sounds, rhyme and rhythm, and creating imaginary or nonsense words’ is valuable practice for young foreign language learners, too. Since nonsense words allude to real words, they help to establish these latter words in memory. Practice should, however, be creative rather than just mechanical (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 117). It is important that recently learned words are used in combination with other, better-known words. Drama activities and simple poetry writing work well for both younger and older learners. Ur (2012: 154) has an exercise which requires learners to compose rhyming couplets. Songs, jingles, poems, rhymes, slogans, limericks, proverbs and quotations offer practice in pronunciation and intonation and help to fix new words in memory.

Visual means can also be used to help vocabulary retention. Words are remembered more easily if they are linked to other words in the same word field. Learners can be encouraged to create wall posters of various sorts, for example ‘mind maps’ which they constantly update, adding new words as they are encountered. In a mind-map, a source word, for example, ‘airport’, is written in the centre of the page or poster and

related words are added around it with links shown by lines to the source word and to one another. Mind maps can be generated by the class calling out words for the teacher to add to the poster, or one of the learners can take over the teacher's role and ask other class members to contribute words. For more on mind maps see Scrivener (2011: 190, 201–203).

Another graphical means of representing relations between words is the use of 'word steps'. This involves drawing a set of steps to represent a semantic scale, for example from 'freezing' to 'boiling', with each step being labelled accordingly (Ur and Wright 1992: 86). Word grids are also a helpful means of aiding vocabulary retention. In a word grid a set of near synonyms is placed on the vertical axis and a set of criterial attributes is placed on the horizontal axis. The relevant attributes are then ticked off for each word on the grid (Scrivener 2011: 203–204). Collocation grids, to be discussed shortly, are another useful tool. All these graphical devices can be used for activities in class and then stored by learners either in an electronic vocabulary notebook, on file cards or in ring binders, all of which are better for recording vocabulary than traditional paper notebooks because they can be organised thematically and new material added as it is encountered.

Vocabulary exercises of various sorts also help aid retention of vocabulary and there are many published collections available. Among the exercises Ur (2012) provides are several which exploit sense relations along the paradigmatic axis of language, for example ordering gradable antonyms along a continuum (Ur 2012: 129–131); exploring differences among near synonyms (*idem*: 162–166); identifying the criterial attributes of semantically related words, for example co-hyponyms, using componential analysis (*idem*: 167–169); and finding hyponyms of a given superordinate using thesauri, either print or online (*idem*: 175–176). Another exercise exploits the idea of polysemy based on metaphorical extension of a core meaning (*idem*: 172–174) and activities are provided which encourage learners to explore word associations (*idem*: 177–178) and to reflect on the stylistic and register appropriateness of words in context (*idem*: 179–181).

Teaching Affixes (Prefixes and Suffixes)

Nation (2001: 269–278) suggests learners' awareness of morphological structure can be developed by asking them to decompose words. If a learner knows the meaning of a particular prefix or suffix, he or she can often predict how it will change the meaning of the word it is attached to. The meaning of a word such as 'disrespectful', which may be new to learners, can therefore become clear by breaking it down into its component morphemes. However, in order to *use* lexical morphemes correctly in speech and writing the patterns of possible combinations and also the constraints operating on morpheme combinations have to be

acquired, for example ‘disrespectful’ but ‘unhelpful’ and ‘happiness’ but ‘bravery’. There are interesting patterns to be discovered, for example the underlying phonological patterns governing when the suffix ‘-ity’ rather than ‘-ness’ is likely to be used to make abstract nouns from adjectives, as in ‘stupid-ity’, ‘insipid-ity’ and ‘rapid-ity’.

Games can be devised on the lines of *Scrabble* whereby learners have to combine morphemes to form acceptable words. This will help them discover restrictions on combinations. Cloze exercises can also be constructed in which instead of whole words being omitted, word parts are omitted. In this way learners have to decide between, for example, ‘impossible’ and *‘unpossible’. If enough suitable examples are provided, learners should be able to infer the pattern for themselves. After they have done the activity, they can be asked to formulate the rule. Acceptability-judgement exercises with words consisting of affix plus stem can also be designed to help learners discover the underlying patterns (Nation 2001: 278–281). Nation (*idem*: 263–281) provides further teaching suggestions and also a useful list of frequently occurring prefixes and suffixes in English, graded according to difficulty level (*idem*: 268).

Ur (2012: 81–91) also has a number of suggestions for activities with affixes and provides her own useful list of suffixes which transform words into another part of speech in a systematic way (*idem*: 83–84). One of her exercises for advanced learners involves giving learners boxes with a slot for ‘noun’, ‘verb’, ‘adjective’ and ‘adverb’ (*idem*: 90–91). One slot is already filled in, for example ‘ignore’ under ‘verb’, and learners have to complete the others. In this way learners not only become aware of the patterns of regularity but also of the gaps in the system (where there is no word to fill the slot). Such activities can be done with or without dictionaries. Nation (2001: 282–296) discusses the role of dictionaries in vocabulary learning more generally.

Some suffix patterns are very productive. One example is the ‘-er’ suffix to form ‘agent nouns’ from verbs as in ‘walk’ – ‘walker’. A lesson for adults of upper-intermediate level or above might start by asking learners to generate as quickly as they can agent nouns ending in ‘er’. They might be expected to produce ‘runner’, ‘swimmer’, ‘eater’, ‘drinker’, ‘player’, ‘surfer’ but might also sometimes overextend the pattern and produce erroneous forms, for example *‘cyclor’ for ‘cyclist’. Often an apparent exception to a pattern is in fact part of another intersecting pattern. Such intersecting patterns can then be explored so as to raise learners’ awareness of the morphological system. Concerning ‘cyclist’, for example, learners can be encouraged (if necessary with teacher prompts) to find other nouns on this pattern. They will discover that ‘cyclist’ belongs to another pattern in which the suffix ‘-ist’ is added to nouns and adjectives (not verbs), as in ‘cyclist’, ‘motorist’, ‘nudist’, ‘purist’, ‘guitarist’, ‘violinist’, ‘defeatist’. This pattern cuts across the ‘-er’ pattern and is a potential source of error for learners, who might produce erroneous forms such as *‘cyclor’ and *‘defeater’. Further reflection,

exercises and dictionary work may help learners to discover that sometimes within a particular word field a certain pattern is preferred. For example, within the word field of musical instruments the '-ist' pattern is generally preferred, as in 'guitarist', 'violinist', 'trombonist', but there are also other competing patterns, as in 'drummer' and 'trumpeter'.

Teaching Lexical Collocation

Mastery of collocations is closely linked to the easing of language processing because words are 'chunked' into larger meaningful units (MacWhinney 2012: 218–219). Learners need to build up collocational expectations which match those of proficient speakers (see Nation 2001: 317–343). There are various published collections of collocation exercises, for example McCarthy and O'Dell (2005). Dictionaries list some strong and frequent collocations, but learners may need guidance in how to understand this information. Ur (2012: 60–63) has an exercise which trains learners how to do this. She provides another exercise in which learners access an online corpus to explore collocation. Two websites that provide corpus-based examples of collocations are JustTheWord at www.just-the-word.com and SkELL <https://skell.sketchengine.co.uk/run.cgi/skell>.

In classroom work on collocation the focus should be on identifying strong collocations and collocation exclusions (words that a source word cannot collocate with). Here is an exercise on adjective-plus-noun collocations for advanced learners which could be done as a follow-up to exploring agent nouns ending in 'er', as outlined above. This exercise is best done in groups, using a dictionary, an online dictionary or a concordance programme:

Exercise:

For each of the adjectives below, say which noun or nouns it best collocates with, which other nouns it can collocate with and which nouns it cannot normally collocate with:

Adjectives:	attentive, beautiful, turgid, deep, efficient, clear, slick, brutal, reckless, unsteady, stern, ardent, skilled, tough, stylish, heavy, chain
Nouns:	thinker, driver, talker, smoker, manager, supervisor(!), teacher, fighter, waiter, murderer, speaker, cyclist, writer, runner, joiner, singer, lover.

You might like to do this exercise and see how you get on. You might also like to imagine you are a learner who is not sure of some of the collocations. See if online resources can help you to solve the problems.

Collocation grids can also be used to explore and practise collocations. In a collocation grid a set of source words is arranged on the vertical axis

and a set of possible collocates is arranged on the horizontal axis of the grid. Learners put crosses in the cells where collocation is possible. The following exercise uses a simple collocation grid to focus on the collocation possibilities of the delexicalised verbs, ‘take’, ‘make’, ‘have’ and ‘do’. Delexicalised verbs are verbs which are used as place fillers so that the verb itself is rather empty of meaning and the collocation possibilities for following noun phrases are quite unpredictable:

Exercise:

Which, if any, of the items along the top of the grid does each of the verbs collocate acceptably with? Put a cross to mark acceptable collocations. For ‘take’ this has already been done for you.

	a holiday	the shopping	a chat	a good time
take	X			
make				
have				
do				

As the possibilities in the above case are ‘acceptable’ versus ‘unacceptable’, a simple collocation grid is appropriate. However, in cases where there is a scale of collocational acceptability a scalar collocation grid is more appropriate. A scalar collocation grid allows for degrees of collocational strength. Instead of placing crosses in cells, learners place a value, say from 0 to 2, from 0 (does not collocate) to 1 (doubtful) to 2 (good) (see McCarthy 1990: 12).

Teaching Multi-Word Lexical Units

Multi-word lexical units of various sorts should be included in vocabulary work (Ur 2019). Ur (2012: 64–80) provides exercises which involve identifying lexical phrases and binomial expressions, as well as investigating the meaning of proverbs and idioms and exploring the underlying meaning of allusive book, film and play titles. Green (2019) offers detailed advice on how to use concordance programmes for teaching multi-word units. Some fixed-order binomial and trinomial expressions deserve special attention. For example, the sporting expressions ‘game, set and match’ (tennis), ‘hook, line and sinker’ (angling) and ‘down and out’ (boxing) are a rich source of metaphorical extension. Thus, ‘game set and match’ can refer to any complete victory; ‘hook, line and sinker’ to any complete deception, as in, ‘he swallowed the story, hook, line and

sinker'; 'down and out' can be used alongside its literal sense from boxing in its fixed metaphorical sense, as in the title of George Orwell's memoir *Down and Out in Paris and London*.

The meaning of multi-word units varies along a scale from transparent to opaque. Relatively transparent set phrases can be understood from their constituent words whereas relatively opaque ones cannot. These latter often tend to be idiomatic expressions. Boers et al. (2004) suggest a teaching approach to relatively transparent idiomatic expressions in which learners are asked to deconstruct the underlying metaphor. In the case of opaque expressions, sometimes there is a story behind them which dictionaries explain. For example, 'a red herring' comes from the practice of hunt disturbers using a raw herring to put the hounds off the scent of the fox (Webster's *New Encyclopedic Dictionary* 1995: 851). In such cases the teacher can unravel the metaphor for learners. Learners will in this way acquire both language and cultural knowledge, with possible positive motivational effects.

Teaching Lexicalised Sentence Stems

Work on lexicalised sentence stems should also be done, based wherever possible on an example which occurs in the classroom, often in a reading text. For advanced learners who are focussing on academic writing, such a lexicalised sentence stem might be:

[PLACE ADVERBIAL] + *alone* (optional) + *there are* + [PAST PARTICIPLE] + *to be* + [NP]

as in the sentence:

In England alone there are thought to be some two hundred different dialects.

Learners may understand this in context on the basis of understanding the meaning of 'England', 'thought' and 'two hundred different dialects' but may not be able to use the sentence stem for themselves in other contexts. This would be the justification for focussed work, as follows:

1. Learners work in groups, possibly using dictionaries or a concordance programme, and find words which could be substituted for 'thought'. Learners might produce the following list: 'guessed', 'calculated', 'estimated', 'supposed', 'known', 'imagined', 'believed'.
2. Learners then arrange these words along a scale of precision from 'known' to 'supposed'.
3. An alternative construction is now introduced:
[PLACE ADVERBIAL] + *alone* (optional) + *it is* + [PAST PARTICIPLE] + *that* (optional) + *there are* + [NP]
In England alone it is thought (that) there are some two hundred different dialects.

4. Learners now produce new sentences according to this pattern using the above list of verbs and replacing 'England' and 'two hundred different dialects' with different lexical content.
5. Learners are could then be given the following sentence stem:
 [PLACE ADVERBIAL] + *alone* (optional) + *there are* + [ADVERB] + [NP]
In England alone there are probably some two hundred different dialects.
 They now consider which adverbs can be substituted for 'probably' and they order these adverbs on a scale of probability, perhaps as follows: 'certainly', 'undoubtedly', 'probably', 'possibly', 'supposedly', 'arguably'.
6. Learners create a new sentence stem using an adjective rather than an adverb:
 [PLACE ADVERBIAL] + *alone* (optional) + *it is* + [ADJ] + *that* (optional) + *there are* + [NP]
In England alone it is probable that there are some two hundred different dialects.
7. Learners generate sentences based on any of the sentence stems using specific key words, for example 'France – wines', 'Oxford – bicycles'. A bit of research on the internet should provide appropriate examples and numbers. Some classes may prefer to produce factually appropriate statements from their subject area. Others may wish to unearth little-known statistics, so-called 'nerd statistics', and produce 'true' and 'false' statements. The class can then guess whether the statement is true or false in terms of the probability index attached to it.

Food for Thought

- Q. 1. (Group work) See if you can arrange some frequently occurring prefixes into groups according to whether they are attachable to nouns, adjectives or verbs and according to how they change the meaning of the word. Is it possible to predict the combination possibilities and combination restrictions operating on specific prefixes?
- Q. 2. (Group work) Based on some of the lexical suffixes mentioned in the chapter, and any others you want to add, create an activity or exercise to help learners explore word formation possibilities.
- Q. 3. (Group work) Design an activity or exercise to help learners understand and/or produce compound words such as 'bookcase'.
- Q. 4. (Group work) In groups, consider the meaning differences between the following pairs of words:
 river – stream; mountain – hill; shirt – blouse; pony – horse;
 to question someone – to interrogate someone; bitter – sour;
 to renovate – to redecorate; indignant – angry

Each group member should now take one pair and in turn *briefly* explain or demonstrate the meaning difference between the two words to the rest of the group, who should assume the role of learners and feel free to ask the 'teacher' if they do not understand. At the end of the sessions, reflect as a group on what approaches were used and what was effective and what was less effective. Consider whether some pairs of words are better explained by examples (prototype theory), and others better explained by giving defining characteristics (criterial attributes). Finally, as a group, design a gap-filling exercise to check whether learners have understood the explanations. Do the exercise as if you were learners and consider whether you would get it right or not on the basis of the explanations given.

- Q. 5. Look at the following list of words and phrases and consider which of the techniques listed below you would use to introduce them to learners at an upper-intermediate level of proficiency.

Vocabulary: advertising campaign, catalogue, café, chase (verb), exploitation, give up the ghost, hope (noun), hostage, house, memory stick, often, paint the town red, put up with, reduction, stapler, swimming, that'll be the day, vase, wellies, window sill, wink (verb)

Techniques: mime, facial expression, video, blackboard drawing, graph or diagram, students act it out, tell a personal anecdote, get students to infer meaning from a text, point to the object, explain by examples, read out the dictionary definition, translation, show a picture, bring it into class to show to students, act out a conversation, students who know explain to those who do not, students look it up in their dictionary, create a story using models or puppets, a guessing game (e.g. picture or definition matching), tell a story using the item

Would you prefer any other method not listed for specific words? Which methods listed would be particularly unsuitable for specific words? Why is this?

- Q. 6. The following adjectives are similar in meaning and the meaning differences among them are best described by presenting them in collocation with nouns with which they strongly collocate:

big, large, great, extensive, capacious, massive

Working individually, choose a noun which you think collocates very strongly with each adjective. The best way to do this is to say the adjective and then write down the noun that immediately comes to your mind. Compare your choices with those of your colleagues and see how similar or dissimilar they are. Create a sentence for each adjective which would nicely illustrate the meaning of the collocation

for learners. Finally, consider how you might teach these collocations to advanced learners – or do you think it would be a mistake to teach them explicitly at all?

- Q. 7. As a group exercise, or alone, design a 4×4 scalar collocation grid to help learners with using appropriate adjective and noun combinations within the semantic field of English weather. Suggested adjectives are 'heavy', 'strong', 'bright', 'patchy', 'light', 'slight'. Suggested nouns are 'rain', 'showers', 'wind', 'sunshine', 'snow', 'breeze', 'sleet', 'hail', 'drizzle'. Choose four appropriate adjectives and four nouns. Now complete the grid, as you think your learners might. Note any problems that might arise and discuss these with your colleagues. How effective or otherwise do you consider your grid?

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8 Listening and Speaking

The Spoken Mode

Speech precedes writing in two ways: firstly, children learn to speak before they learn to write and, secondly, all languages develop a spoken form before they develop a written form. Of the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, listening and speaking are therefore regarded as primary and reading and writing as secondary skills. Literacy, unlike speech, is not an acquired but a learned ability and has to be taught (Ur 2012: 151; Harmer 2004: 3). Even with tuition, success is not assured as witness the sizeable minorities of adults in countries with universal education who nevertheless remain functionally illiterate. The major world languages all exist in speech and writing, but there are many less well-known languages in the world which have not developed a written form, and may never do so. Conversely, a language may in the course of time lose its speakers but be preserved in written records, as in the case of Latin.

Another way of dividing up the four skills is into receptive skills (listening and reading) versus productive skills (speaking and writing). However, it is not helpful to regard listening and reading as 'passive skills' and speaking and writing as 'active skills' (Johnson 2018: 240). In fact, all linguistic communication is to a greater or lesser extent cryptic and the receptive skills require active reconstruction of meaning on the part of the listener or reader rather than mere reception of a signal (Field 2008: 209; Anderson and Lynch 1988: 11–15). Listeners no less than readers have, as a matter of course, to 'read between the lines' (Sperber and Wilson 1995; Clark 1996). Much can be left unsaid because it can be inferred from the context of situation (Malinowski 1923; Firth 1957; Halliday 1978: 28–31, 60, 109). Context of situation refers not just to the physical context or setting but also to the psychological context. The terms 'field', 'tenor' and 'mode' are sometimes used to specify three aspects of the context of situation. 'Field' refers to the topic, 'tenor' to the relationships among the participants and 'mode' refers to whether the text is written or spoken and what sort of written or spoken text it is

(Halliday 1978: 33, 62–64). All these factors combine to define the ‘register’ of the spoken or written text, which is the particular brand of language which marks its text-type or genre (Halliday 1978: 31–35; Wallace 1992: 30–33).

A spoken text and a written text from the same field, for example instructions for operating a washing machine, will each have a distinct register. One reason for this is that written texts lack the suprasegmental features of stress, rhythm and intonation available to the spoken mode. Another reason is that in face-to-face speech the participants can take some aspects of the physical context for granted (the washing machine itself), can use pronouns and demonstratives (‘press this one’) rather than complex noun phrases (‘press the large green button immediately below the central dial’) or just point to the object. Pointing, or more generally gesture of all sorts, is a paralinguistic device. Paralinguistic devices include, as well as gesture: tone of voice, facial expression and various non-speech sounds such as sighs, grunts, groans and chuckles. Since speech usually relies both on contextual information and paralinguistic features to a greater or lesser extent, listening to sound-only recordings of interactive, highly context-bound speech is often a daunting – and unnatural – task for learners. A video download is much easier to understand and, more importantly, it gives learners the chance to learn a lot about paralinguistic communication and appropriate social behaviour in various situations (Harmer 2015: 343). It is worth remembering that misunderstanding can occur at the paralinguistic level if, for instance, what is intended as a friendly smile by the speaker is taken for a self-satisfied smirk by the listener.

Style is distinct from register and refers to the scale of formality along which spoken and written texts will vary (Halliday 1978: 66). For any given text-type, for example, an invitation to a party, furniture assembly instructions, a joke or a marriage proposal, a written version is generally more formal than the spoken version if other variables are held constant. This is partly because there is a relationship between spontaneity and formality: the more spontaneous speech or writing is, the less formal it tends to be and vice versa. Since writing in general tends to be less spontaneous than speech, writing also tends to be, in general, more formal than speech. However, the register of a highly formal spoken genre such as a legal address is likely to be much more formal than that of a very informal written genre such as a postcard or a memo (Johnson 2018: 254). The level of formality of an online chat may be very close to that of conversational speech (see Ur 2012: 151–153).

There are also certain hybrid genres, which combine features of both speech and writing, such as reading aloud and talking from notes. Telephoning is an interesting case. Telephone conversations are conducted in the spoken mode but with speaker and hearer being unable to see each other. Children have to learn the special conventions of telephoning. Young children may talk to you on the telephone assuming that you can

see the toys they have around them without further description or identification. Whether in one's native language or in a foreign language, telephoning is a special sub-skill which has to be acquired. E-mails are another interesting hybrid form. They have their own conventions and their own scale of formality. The smiley is an attempt to add facial expression (a paralinguistic feature of speech) to the written mode.

For foreign language learners, proficiency in the spoken mode is not necessarily a good guide to proficiency in the written mode and vice versa. There are many people who can speak a foreign language quite fluently but have not learned to read or write it. There are others who can read and write in the foreign language quite well but who are not fluent speakers and have problems understanding fluent speech. Broadly speaking, classroom learners become proficient at those skills they practise in the classroom and less proficient at those skills neglected in the classroom. Nowadays, the emphasis is on striking a balance across the four skills in teaching while seeking to give a communicative thrust not just to listening and speaking, but also to reading and writing. In some English for Special Purposes (ESP) courses a detailed analysis of learners' needs may be necessary so as to define their specific future requirements in all four skills.

This chapter will focus on listening and speaking in the classroom and the next chapter will consider reading and writing.

Listening

Why Listen?

In real life we often do not just listen, we listen and respond. Response is not always verbal, for example we may nod, smile, shake our heads or frown. Spoken genres vary according to whether they expect no response, a non-verbal response or a verbal response. Sometimes a response is mandatory, sometimes it is optional. Sometimes a response is expected only after the speaker has finished talking, sometimes ongoing responses are permissible or even expected: either verbal ('OK. I've got that' or 'Sorry, I don't quite follow that') or non-verbal (nodding, smiling). In some genres, such as the conversation, the listener can interrupt the speaker so as to ask clarification questions. This is also possible in seminars, but is less possible in lectures, quite impossible in sermons and if you try it in political speeches, it is called heckling. Some other spoken genres do not permit a verbal response for technical reasons – for example radio news broadcasts, loudspeaker announcements in public places and answerphone messages.

We also listen for different purposes and the purpose for which we listen influences the way we listen, our listening style (Harmer 2015: 336; Scrivener 2011: 252–253). There is a link between genre and listening style, but we

may also listen to the same genre in different ways for different purposes on different occasions (Anderson and Lynch 1988: 30; Field 2008: 229–230). Learners need practice in at least three sorts of listening:

- listening for gist: ‘Has anything of interest happened in the world?’ (radio news broadcast)
- listening for significant detail: ‘Is that my registration number?’ (loudspeaker announcement)
- listening for implications: ‘Why did she *really* phone me?’ (answer-phone message)

Concerning listening for gist, Field (2008: 244) points out that listening-comprehension lessons in which learners work through a list of questions, each of which refers to a specific sentence, may actually deprive learners of the opportunity to listen for gist. He suggests using authentic recordings where the speaker rambles or digresses, as in some radio interviews, and asking learners to decide for themselves what the essential points are (Field 2008: 245–246).

Listening Difficulties

Each genre presents its own special difficulties. Speech accompanied by visuals is often easier to understand than speech without visuals. This is especially true of commentaries, for example a TV sports commentary of a football match or tennis match compared to a radio commentary of the same match. The classic spoken genre which cannot rely on visual input is the telephone conversation. Talking on the phone is difficult in a foreign language.

Other things being equal, description is easier to understand than narrative, which in turn is easier to understand than argumentation, opinion and evaluation. It may be particularly difficult to distinguish between fact and opinion if a speaker mixes the two (Anderson and Lynch 1988: 60). Concerning narrative, if events are presented in chronological order, this is easier than if there are flashbacks or flash forwards. The more characters there are, the more difficult it is to follow a story, especially if some main characters are easily confusable, for example two boys rather than a boy and a girl. Less proficient listeners may also find it difficult to cope with pronoun reference and the use of different nouns (for example, ‘vehicle’, ‘car’, ‘Ford’) to refer to the same thing rather than repetition of the noun (Anderson and Lynch 1988: 48–55).

Another difficulty for learners is that style shifting may occur within a given genre for rhetorical effect. For example, lectures are a formal genre and generally require formal language. However, in English-speaking cultures, lecturers like to spice their lectures with informal

asides and even jokes in a way that learners from some other cultures may not be prepared for (a cross-cultural difference). At worst, learners may be thrown quite off track and lose the drift of the lecture because they focus on trying to understand an aside which is actually not crucial for understanding the lecture at all.

However, many learners have problems at a far more fundamental level. The subjective impression they have is that people speak too fast for them so that they quite simply cannot make out the words (Scrivener 2011: 249). Learners do not necessarily need to make out every word, but if they can't make out word boundaries in general then they will be unable to use their knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar to understand what is being said. Learners often mention the following problems:

- separating out individual words in the flow of spoken discourse
- distinguishing between specific phoneme pairs
- coping with a specific regional or social variety of speech
- coping with rapid speech
- coping with informal speech
- coping with incomplete syntax, repetitions, non-standard grammar and colloquialisms
- coping with various forms of background noise
- coping with speakers chipping in on another speaker, overlapping speech turns and different speakers speaking at the same time

Field (2008: 157–161) notes that problems of word recognition often arise because the rhythmic patterns of strong and weak syllables cut across word boundaries in fluent speech, so that 'went in' may sound like 'when tin' and 'I scream' like 'ice cream'. More generally, learners may not be prepared for weak-form pronunciations, for elisions and assimilations (these things were discussed in Chapter 5). Learners may therefore benefit from being asked to identify the word in each intonation unit which bears the nucleus (tonic syllable) since these are the words which are likely to be the important ones (Field 2008: 194–203). Such awareness-raising will involve repeated listening to specific short stretches of a listening text which learners have found difficult to understand. Learners should also be encouraged to consider context so as to exclude unlikely meanings.

Getting Started

In the early stages, listening texts should be about things with which learners are familiar. For children in primary school, suitable topics are school itself, the family, hobbies, pets, shopping, sports, clothes, food and drink. Familiarity with the genre to which a spoken text belongs will also make the listening task easier, as will background knowledge about

the speaker, the situation and the topic. Sometimes one can ‘understand’ the spoken text just by inferring meaning from prior contextual knowledge. Here is a real-life example:

An English family with young children went into McDonalds in Florence. After they had successfully ordered in English, the sales assistant asked them something in Italian which they did not understand. However, knowing that McDonalds in Manchester were running an offer of plastic toys and at this point the sales assistant would have asked if the customer wanted the plastic toys or not, the mother nodded, said, ‘Yes, please’ and promptly received the plastic toys.

This technique of predicting utterance meaning from what one already knows is ‘top-down’ processing. The opposite, working out utterance meaning from the known meaning of the constituent words and phrases is ‘bottom-up’ processing (see Field 2008: 132–133; Scrivener 2011: 257–260; Harmer 2015: 337–339; Johnson 2018: 241–248). Genres with which learners are unfamiliar will be difficult for them because they cannot predict what is likely to happen next. Prediction skills can be developed in learners of all ages by stopping in the middle of a story and asking learners what they think will happen next. Anderson (2004: 82–85) presents a story with multiple cliff-hanger points and four options to choose from at each point.

In the early stages learners can often understand more than they can say, and they can benefit from listening activities which involve responding without speaking (see Hadfield and Hadfield 1999 for a collection of such activities). A simple task along these lines is the ‘zoo task’ (Ur 2012: 112–113). It is suitable for young learners who have learned the names of wild animals and how to express locations in space. Each learner is given a plan of a zoo with cages numbered and spaces left to write in the names of the animals. Various landmarks, such as a café, entrances and benches, can be included. The teacher then describes a route she takes through the zoo and names the animals she sees in each cage. Learners write in the names of the animals while she is talking (appropriate pauses being made for learners to write). The task can be varied to suit different proficiency levels in terms of speed of delivery as well as frequency and length of pauses. In some versions learners are allowed to ask questions or can ask the teacher to repeat. To eliminate the writing element, which may be slow and laborious for young beginners, learners can be given pictures of the animals, which they merely have to place in the right cages. In a further step, they can be given the names of the animals to match with the pictures and they can then copy the names into their plan of the zoo later.

A suitable listening task for young beginners who have just learned the colours and parts of the body is the ‘my monster task’. The children

each receive an outline drawing of a humanoid ‘monster’. The teacher tells them the colour of each part of its body, one sentence at a time (‘The monster has green arms ...’), and after each sentence gives learners enough time to start to colour-in that part appropriately before she moves on to the next part. At the end of the teacher’s talk the learners can complete their colouring-in or amend their first attempt as necessary. If the teacher sees there are many mistakes or uncertainties, she can repeat her monologue. In a follow-up writing exercise the learners can then label the different parts of the body on their picture, copying from flash cards.

Storytelling is another means of giving learners of all proficiency levels listening practice for real-life listening. It also makes it possible to introduce speaking based on listening. For children one can use fairy stories and fables. It is usually best if the teacher tells the story in her own words rather than reading a written version verbatim or using a pre-recorded story. Showing the children accompanying pictures can be helpful in easing comprehension and providing practice in predicting what might come next. Thus, a picture-book version of a story is often an advantage. It is best if the children sit in a circle or horseshoe around the teacher. Young children often like to hear the story over and over again. They also like to say out loud in chorus certain lines which may repeat themselves with variation at key points (‘Grandma, what big ears/eyes/a big nose you’ve got’ in *Little Red Riding Hood*). Individual children may then like to take over short pieces of dialogue themselves and even to act out part of the story in front of the class. Often they want to repeat this over and over again until they have all had a turn. At the end of the story learners can be given a series of pictures which they have to put in the correct order to represent the story.

Moving On

Beginning learners of all ages should be given ample time to get used to their teacher’s voice before being introduced to new voices (Field 2008: 159–160). As learners become more proficient, however, they need to move on to listening to a wide range of voices. Ur (2012: 101–106) points out that to prepare learners for real-life listening, recorded material should be used so as to provide learners beyond beginner level with different varieties of English, different speech styles and different contexts, as well as practice in listening to monologues, dialogues and multi-logues (more than two speakers). Harmer (2015: 340) distinguishes between live listening and recorded listening. There are advantages and disadvantages to both.

One advantage of live speakers is that they can adapt what they say to the audience as they go along and learners can ask them questions or engage in dialogue with them (Thornbury 2005: 57; Harmer 2015:

342–343). Live speakers include the teacher, other learners and invited guests as well as people interviewed live via Skype. Live listening can include listening to the teacher or other learners telling personal anecdotes, reporting items of news, including ‘gossip news’, telling short stories with a ‘sting in the tail’ such as the Nasruddin stories (Maley 1993: 107–117) or telling jokes. To achieve the transition from listening to speaking, the teacher can tell one group of learners a suitable story or joke while the other groups are engaged in another activity. Individual learners from the story/joke group can then, armed with a written list of keywords, retell the story or joke to another group (see Anderson 2004: 81 for a list of jokes and keyword skeletons). If jokes are used, practice in inferencing is provided since jokes often depend on implication.

One advantage of recorded materials is that they can be replayed over and over again, in part or as a whole. Recorded material can be subdivided into didactic recordings and authentic recordings. Didactic recordings may either accompany a general course book or a book for self-study. Authentic recordings include podcasts of TV or radio programmes as well as talks and lectures available on YouTube, such as the TED Talks (for advanced learners). Quasi-authentic recordings can also be made especially for the lesson, either by the teacher or the learners, for example an interview with some person of interest. The defining characteristic of authentic texts is that they are not intended for language teaching. Authentic listening texts are generally preferable to didactic listening texts since the latter are usually scripted and graded (simplified) and therefore their language is contrived and unnatural (Field 2008: 284). The linguistic difficulty of authentic listening texts can often be eased by providing scaffolding in the form of maps, pictures, diagrams and charts. Such scaffolds also enable learners to interact with and react to the spoken text. It is often advisable to keep authentic listening texts short but to give learners the chance to listen a number of times, each time for a different purpose.

Checklist for Selecting Listening Texts

When selecting listening texts, it is important to appeal to learners’ interests and to their own perceived future listening needs. If learners can relate the listening text to their own lives and linguistic needs, they will mobilise all their resources to understand and will achieve far above their usual levels. Conversely, if they lack interest in the topic and perceive the text as irrelevant to their needs, they will mentally switch off at an early stage. The following checklist can be used to help select listening-comprehension texts. The more questions to which the answer is ‘yes’, the more suitable the text is likely to be:

- Is the text interesting enough for the learners (not the teacher!) to listen to?
- Is the text an authentic spoken text rather than a written text read aloud or a contrived text recorded for teaching purposes?
- Does the text sound natural as an example of its genre?
- If the text originally had a visual track which has been removed, is it still readily comprehensible despite the loss of the visuals?
- Is it feasible to activate necessary background knowledge in the pre-listening phase or a preceding lesson?
- Will learners be able to understand enough of the text to feel a sense of achievement rather than frustration?
- If the answer to the previous question is 'no', is it possible to supply sufficient scaffolding, especially visual material, to solve the problem?
- Is the information content of the text suitable: neither too much nor too little for learners to cope with in the number of hearings planned for?
- Can learners interact suitably with the text, either non-verbally or verbally?
- Will learners have the feeling they have learned something worthwhile from the text, not only linguistically but educationally?

A Three-Phase Lesson Structure

In general, formal listening-comprehension sessions using recorded material are best structured into three phases: a 'pre-listening' phase, a 'while-listening' phase and a 'post-listening/reflection' phase.

Pre-Listening Phase

A listening text should never just be sprung on learners as a surprise, since listening in the real world usually takes place within the context of background knowledge about the topic and genre as well as clear expectations of the speaker and some motivation to listen. The pre-listening phase should therefore aim to prepare the reader for the upcoming text by:

- arousing interest in the topic
- priming latent topic knowledge
- tapping into relevant vocabulary learners may already know
- exploring key ideas which underlie the text and are crucial for comprehension
- relating the topic to the learners' own world

The pre-listening phase is often best organised as whole-class brainstorming. A suitable picture or title is often a good lead-in and can be used as

a stimulus for speculation on the likely content of the upcoming text. However, an inappropriate title or lead-in picture merely confuses learners and sets them off on the wrong trail. Harmer (2015: 352–353) suggests sometimes using a word cloud (www.wordle.net) to help learners speculate on what a story might be about before they hear it. As teacher, one should try to elicit information from the class rather than giving a mini-lecture. Only if no one in the class can supply a specific piece of necessary information should the teacher do this, and only as a last resort. Any new vocabulary introduced should be kept to an absolute minimum and should arise naturally from discussion. See also Harmer (2015: 336), Johnson (2018: 249–250) and Field (2008: 214–220).

While-Listening Phase

Although in real-life listening there is usually no chance to listen for a second or third time, in the classroom this is possible. Learners can benefit greatly from repeated listening and in this respect the classroom is an advance on the real world for foreign language learners. The more interested a class is in the text, the more they will be prepared to listen to it repeatedly. But fine judgement must be exercised here and skilled teachers stop just *before* learners become bored. Learners should always be given a distinct purpose for listening at each hearing, for example:

- first hearing: listening for gist (global listening)
- second hearing: listening for specific information
- third hearing: listening critically

This procedure is similar to that suggested by Scrivener (2011: 254). It can and should be varied for specific listening texts, however, and not become ritualised. For example, in some cases it might be appropriate to devote a first hearing to working out the role relationships of the speakers or the variety of English being spoken or the likely setting of a conversation. Harmer (2015: 346–347) describes a listening task in which learners are asked to put a picture sequence into the correct order while listening to a story.

Learner groups of limited proficiency cannot be expected to listen to rapid speech for too long a stretch of time. Instead, the text should be divided into sections and the recording stopped at various points to give them a chance to ‘catch up’ and check that they have understood the drift of the text so far before the listening task is resumed. These sections should be of just the right length to ‘stretch’ learners’ comprehension stamina but not to overstep the limits. The length of text to be listened to between stops should then be gradually lengthened in the medium term until learners can listen for several minutes at a time and enjoy the experience.

Generally speaking, a video recording is preferable to an audio-only recording. Harmer (2015: 344) suggests video viewing can be varied in three ways: by including silent viewing, by using a 'freeze-frame' or by using subtitles. English subtitles rather than native-language subtitles should be used, however, since it is virtually impossible for learners to take in the English soundtrack while reading subtitles in their native language. Switching between soundtrack and subtitles is easier if both are in English. If a particular video is too difficult for learners even with English subtitles, then it is unsuitable for them and an alternative video should be found.

A cautionary word: one should not try to extract every last grain of meaning from listening texts, particularly at the lexical level. Vocabulary is of interest only in so far as a particular lexical item may hamper or hinder text comprehension at the level desired. It is not necessary and often not even desirable that learners understand every single word.

Post-Listening Phase

In the post-listening phase learners should be encouraged to express their own reactions to, and opinion of, the text. Beyond this, time might be devoted to building on and extending any key vocabulary or grammar encountered. As homework, further reflection and evaluation might be done or further language work related to the listening text.

Songs as Texts for Detailed Listening

A special sort of listening task is listening to songs. Songs are particularly suitable if video technology is not available in the classroom, since the visual presence of the singer does not necessarily make it noticeably easier to understand the song. Songs present their own special difficulties of comprehension, however. In particular:

- syllables may be prolonged (drawls) or shortened to fit the melody
- words may be run together
- in some styles of singing there may be systematic phonological modifications, such as the replacement of '-ing' by '-in' and of 'going to' by 'gonna' in pop songs
- non-standard grammar may also be used, for example 'I ain't', for 'I'm not' and the use of 'double negatives' as in, 'You don't love me no more'
- some folk songs, nursery rhymes and traditional songs contain archaic syntax, morphology and vocabulary, which may need to be glossed

On the other hand, some features of songs, especially rhythm and rhyme, aid memorisation, while refrains, repetitions and modified repetitions ease comprehension as well. Furthermore, listening to songs

represents an authentic, real-world task. Unlike most listening texts, songs can be used profitably for detailed listening since learners often want to know what songs mean right down to the last word. All these advantages of songs far outweigh the negative points mentioned above. The three-phase structure of 'pre-', 'while-' and 'post-listening' can be applied to songs:

Pre-Listening Phase for Songs

As for any other listening text, a pre-listening phase can be used to prime background knowledge, including knowledge of the singer or band and the sort of songs they sing. Learners may be pleasantly surprised to find they have a chance to use some international English terminology already known to them, such as, for example, 'boy group', 'drummer' or 'vocals'. This will build confidence and encourage them to contribute to discussion.

While-Listening Phase for Songs

The normal procedure is for learners to listen to the song at least once, and perhaps twice, with the focus on global understanding without the song text. As a next step, learners can then be given a gapped version of the song text (cloze text) and they can listen to the song again and fill in the gaps (detailed listening). As a variation, advanced learners might be allowed to work in pairs with the gapped song text and try to predict words *before* the song is played and then listen to the song to see if their predictions are confirmed.

Song texts are usually easily available on the internet, but teachers will have to produce their own cloze versions. The classic cloze procedure is to automatically delete, say, every seventh word. However, one can choose specific words to delete instead. Another possibility is only to delete words of a certain word class. This helps raise grammatical awareness levels in learners. The first time one constructs a cloze song text it is advisable to test it on a colleague in advance to make sure it is 'doable' for the learners. It should be challenging but not beyond them, since this is a learning activity not a test. If the original cloze activity does seem too difficult, there are many ways of reducing difficulty. For example, two, three or four words can be provided at each gap from which learners have to choose (multiple-choice technique). Another possibility is to specify the number of letters for each word by using dashes or providing the first letter or even the first syllable of the missing words. During the cloze listening it is best to stop the recording after each stanza to give learners time to catch up. After filling in the gaps, learners can be given a chance to confer with other learners in pairs or small groups. They can then be given the full song text to compare with

their own versions. Then they can listen to the song once again while following the written text.

There are techniques other than cloze available. One possibility is to insert extra (plausible) words here and there in the written text so that learners have to listen closely and cross out those words which are not in the song. A variation is to replace some words or phrases by others. Another problem-solving activity involves learners reconstructing the song text on the basis of a mutilated text (consisting of either half lines or half stanzas) or learners can, instead, be given the lines of a song in jumbled order. This is well-suited to a group activity either before or after listening to the song. Harmer (2015: 358) suggests deleting the last word of each line from a rhyming song, giving learners the words and asking them to put them back in their correct places.

Post-Reading-Phase for Songs

This can be used for reflection on features such as rhyme, refrains, repetition and repetition with variation, provided these are of interest to the learners. Comparison can also be made with other songs learners know. Rather than specifying the precise direction of this phase in advance, it is advisable to have a number of options prepared and be flexible enough to follow up on learners' inclinations. In the spirit of individualised learning, learners can work in groups, each group focussing on a different aspect, and their results can be presented to the whole class afterwards. Role-play is also a possibility. Learners can take on the role of music critics (some pro and some contra) and evaluate the song. Another role-play activity involves a music critic interviewing the singer or songwriter and asking what was meant by a particular word or phrase.

Speaking

The Limitations of Traditional Classroom Discourse

Learners need to practise using the spoken genres they will use in the real world, even though these may not always be easy to predict. Traditional teacher-fronted classroom discourse is a special genre in itself with its own particular conventions and it does not necessarily prepare learners for the real world. In the traditional classroom it is the teacher who decides what is talked about, who talks to whom, when and for how long. The usual pattern is that the teacher asks questions of the class to which he or she knows the answer anyway (display questions) and learners have to give the answers the teacher wants. Questions may be addressed to the whole class or a specific learner may be nominated to answer by the teacher (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). As a result, learners may be at a loss for words in real-world communication, where they may need to initiate conversation,

plan and steer discourse and adapt to the linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic reactions of their interlocutors and audience. As we will see in Chapter 9, teachers' display questions have a part to play in classroom discourse. They provide scaffolding and guidance for learners. However, the main focus should be on genuine communication in the classroom among the learners themselves.

The following are some tell-tale signs of impoverished classroom discourse:

- Learners do not initiate speech themselves but only respond to teacher questions or directives.
- Learners give the answer they think the teacher is looking for.
- When learners do speak, they rely heavily on the vocabulary and structure of a teacher question or an available text.
- Learners mainly answer display questions, retell stories which everyone already knows or describe pictures everyone can see anyway (see Scrivener 2011: 217).
- Participation is limited to a few proficient and/or self-confident learners.
- Less self-confident learners tend to avoid answering questions altogether.
- Many learners do not speak at all.
- Learners who do speak often produce only short isolated utterances.
- One or two learners may try to answer almost every question immediately regardless of whether they have anything meaningful to say.

Spoken Classroom Activities

To make speaking activities reflect real-world communication, it is necessary that learners talk mainly to one another in small groups, which increases learner talk-time and gives more learners a chance to speak. It is also less daunting and more natural than speaking out loud to a teacher, standing in front of the whole class with everyone listening. This is best done by introducing task-based spoken activities such as presentations, interviews, simulations, role-play, mock trials, quizzes and games as well as project work. These give learners the chance to speak for more than just one short utterance at a time. Since task-based activities are goal-oriented, they are usually more motivating than topic-based activities such as discussions or debates (Ur 2012: 121). Activities should be pitched so that they are cognitively rather than linguistically challenging (no new structures and a minimum of new vocabulary). Some preparation on the conventions of certain activities, for example a mock trial, may be necessary. Learners may also need preparation for some of the roles which they may be asked to adopt. Seating arrangements are

important in all spoken activities to ensure that learners can face one another and are quite close to one another (Scrivener 2011: 216).

If possible, a choice of activities should be offered and the choice varied. The class should be encouraged to continually try new activities. Only if a class proves to be really averse to a particular activity after several tries should it be dropped. Variation on the format of a particular activity-type can give it a facelift and restore its waning appeal. The stimuli used for sparking off an activity should also be varied (not always brainstorming, not always a headline, not always a picture, not always a YouTube video) and the sources should also be varied (for example, not always the same website). To ensure the smooth-running of group activities and the participation of all learners, appropriate roles can be assigned to some group members, such as language watchdog, timekeeper, chairperson, speaker, secretary and referee.

Small-group work, or, even better, pair work, is particularly suitable for anxious learners because it is less threatening than talking in public. For all learners, speaking should proceed from pair-based activities to speaking in small groups, then in larger groups, then presenting in pairs or small groups to the whole class before individuals finally present before the whole class. Notes, pictures and other aids to presentation may be used as scaffolding and then gradually withdrawn as learners become more proficient and self-confident. It is easiest for learners to talk about themselves, and even beginners should be given the chance to introduce themselves to a partner or small group and say a little about themselves.

The problem for many learners is translating language knowledge into fluent performance (Johnson 2018: 232; Scrivener 2011: 213). To achieve this they need the opportunity to communicate in English in an unthreatening atmosphere. They should be put in situations where they want to say something and are willing to risk incorrect English in order to communicate. Practice in speaking should therefore be done largely without error correction, although scaffolding may sometimes be provided (see Scrivener 2011: 224–228). The teacher's primary role is that of the orchestrator who sets up the situation and then during the activity becomes an unobtrusive observer who usually tries to speak as little as possible so that learners spend more time speaking. However, the teacher has a number of secondary roles, including those of encourager, provider of scaffolding and feedback, supportive listener, prompter, conflict-solver and stage manager.

Provided the class has no objection, some oral activities can be video-recorded and reflected on in a follow-up review session or in one-to-one consultation with the teacher. Rather than focussing on errors made, however, it is more profitable to focus on the pragmatics of speech, for example conversational rules of turn-taking, interrupting, correcting, disagreeing and chipping in. Following a role-play it might be useful to examine how learners have used phatic language (language which oils the

wheels of social interaction) or to examine affective aspects of language: do learners come across in their role as inappropriately and unwittingly rude, over-polite, intimate, distant, jovial or downcast, for example.

Some groups of learners may voice discontent at the lack of error correction (Johnson 2005; Scrivener 2011: 225). For such groups, some formal feedback on error after the activity has been completed can be provided (see Scrivener 2011: 226 for some suggested techniques).

Some major types of spoken activity will now be reviewed.

Discussions and Debates

These are both topic-based rather than task-based activities (Ur 2012: 121–122). The difference between a discussion and a debate is that the latter is far more structured. It involves a motion, usually to abolish, introduce, limit the availability of, ban or legalise something. The motion is proposed by one speaker in a short opening speech and briefly seconded by another person. It is then opposed by another person in a speech of similar length to the proposer's (time limits should be set). The opposing speaker provides counter-arguments and is briefly seconded by another person as well. Then the debate is thrown open to the floor (the class in our case). Those who wish to speak must raise their hand and are called upon to do so by a chairperson sitting at the front. The chairperson also generally keeps order, sees that no one interrupts a speaker, ensures speakers speak one at a time, does not allow speakers to wander off topic and does not permit personal abuse of another speaker or the chair. Speakers who talk for too long are told by the chairperson to come to a close (time limits can be set). Additional rules can be negotiated by the class beforehand.

The success of a debate or discussion is always unpredictable, even if one has prepared well for it. Without preparation, failure is pre-programmed and for this reason unstructured discussions should never ever be used as fillers. Structured debates focus on coming to a decision and are therefore more likely to be successful than discussions, which lack this focus (Scrivener 2011: 214). The chances of success for both discussions and debates are enhanced if they are conducted as a follow-up to a sequence of lessons on the topic in question. Success is even more likely if preparatory sessions can be used for guided fact-finding research by learners, involving ordering, sorting, sifting and selecting background information, which may often be available online. For cautionary words on discussions, see also Johnson (2018: 236), Scrivener (2011: 211–212) and Ur (2012: 121–122).

Role-Play

Role-play is closer to improvised drama or free theatre than to conventional playacting, for it is not pre-scripted. A group of learners act out

a scene, each learner taking on another identity. The characters whose roles learners play have personalities, motivations and backgrounds which are set out on a role card for each character and given to the player. The outcome of the scene is, however, left open. The focus should be on achieving things with language rather than on producing correct language. Role-play should also be fun. Learners interact with others in discourse which spans more than just one or two turns and may develop in unpredictable ways. If role-plays are well chosen, participants may have to defend a point of view, be conciliatory or be firm in refusal. In this way they develop communication skills which will stand them in good stead for real-world linguistic encounters. As in other spoken activities, the teacher's role is essentially that of facilitator.

One role-play that works well with adolescents is the situation of a daughter or son who wishes to stay out later than parents wish for a concrete, specified occasion (for example a birthday party). The role cards should specify differences between the mother's and father's attitudes to enable strategies of 'divide and conquer'. The son or daughter may be supported by, for example, an older sibling and opposed by, for instance, a malevolent uncle or aunt. A compromise solution may be reached.

The collaborative effort involved in role-play is likely to enhance learner solidarity and group coherence, thus creating a relatively safe environment for language use compared to the real world, where there is always the risk of losing face. Reticent, even anxious learners who might not otherwise volunteer to speak are more likely to contribute actively when given a role to play (Harmer 2015: 393; Scrivener 2011: 219). All learners will experience the laying aside of their own personality and the assuming of another as liberating and conducive to speaking. This effect can be enhanced if learners dress up for the role, even if this only involves donning the appropriate hat, wearing a jacket, knotting a tie round one's neck or wearing sunglasses. A store of costumes and props, ideally provided by the learners themselves, can be kept in the classroom. Great attention should be paid to seating arrangements to make the role-play as realistic as possible.

Role-play is suitable for all ages and for all proficiency levels beyond absolute beginners. For less advanced learners, role-plays in simple transactional settings such as restaurants, hotels, shops, the post office or the bank are suitable. 'The Restaurant' role-play is a good one for novice teachers to start with. The class is divided into groups of guests seated at a number of tables. Additional roles are waiters and waitresses, perhaps a head waiter and the chef, too. Guests each receive a menu. Some specific language preparation will be required. The teacher can build-in to the role-play a point where negotiation has to take place. For example, one customer may have information on the role card which says he or she is vegetarian and is particularly fond of a specific dish. On the waiter's role card it may state that, although this dish is on the menu,

it is not available today. In this way, as in real life, the problem crops up without warning and negotiation has to take place.

Role-plays suitable for intermediate level learners include: 'The Shop-Lifter and the Store Detective' (see Scrivener 2011: 221–222) and 'Buying a Family House', which involves choosing a house from a number of (preferably authentic) estate agents' descriptions (see Anderson 2004: 8–13). As in 'The Restaurant', conflict can be built in to the role cards by giving different family members different priorities (quiet and peaceful neighbourhood versus easy access to shops, cinemas, bars and discos).

For advanced learners, more complex settings and tasks may be appropriate, such as casting for a play or film, interviewing for jobs, choosing a site for a facility such as a swimming bath in a town, deciding among rival tenders for a construction contract or dealing with an emergency such as a road accident or even a terrorist attack. A very formal role-play is the mock trial, which has to be carefully prepared for (see Anderson 2004: 50–53 for an example and a cautionary word about possible pitfalls of an intercultural nature). For collections of published role-plays see Anderson (2006) and Ladousse (1987).

Rather than holding a discussion in class, it is often better to treat the topic within a role-play. This is the 'committee makes a decision' brand of role-play. I once observed a very lively and successful role-play discussion in a German school class of 16-year-old learners. It was a follow-up to a unit in the course book on gun laws in the USA. The situation for the role-play was that the local German town council was to debate whether to allow more liberal gun laws on the American model in their town (a highly improbable eventuality but one to which the learners could easily relate). Roles were cleverly assigned to cover pro and contra positions, including some guest speakers from the twin town in the USA, among whom was the sheriff. There was a vote at the end. The element of dramatisation much enlivened what might otherwise have been a rather dry discussion.

Young learners will take to role-play naturally. Adolescents may need some encouragement in order to overcome barriers of self-consciousness. For adults it may be necessary to explain that there are very good didactic reasons for role-play, and it is not just about being silly. However, some individuals or groups may have inhibitions and no one should ever be coerced.

A role-play consists of three phases: setting up, acting out and reflection/evaluation. A role-play also involves a certain amount of pre-class preparation by the teacher. This includes:

- choosing the topic
- planning how much class time is needed for each of the three phases

- assigning roles
- preparing role cards
- writing clear instructions for the class concerning the situation and roles
- supplying extra support (if necessary), such as large prompt cards, *realia*, props
- language preparation: identifying any key vocabulary or key structures to pre-teach
- psychological preparation: planning how to sell the role-play to learners

Roles should be assigned carefully. Generally, males should play male roles and females female roles. An individual may be selected for a role because of a positive appearance feature (for example beautiful hair, athletic build, slim figure) but never for a negative one (for example, baldness, short-sightedness, obesity). Learners should not usually be allowed to assign roles themselves as they may not be sensitive to such matters.

Even at the very earliest stages, role-play should not involve learners preparing written dialogues which they read out. Learners at lower levels of proficiency may indeed need painstaking preparation before they can even enact a scene at a café or a shop, but at most they should have some keywords or phrases written down on a card they can hold. Even then, it is better if the teacher or another class member has a set of large prompt cards with key phrases on them and is ready to jump into the scene and brandish the card (without saying anything) to help a stumbling learner. Another possibility is to assign the role of prompter to a learner who does not have a part in the role-play. In the manner of a theatre prompter this learner should discreetly whisper prompts from the wings.

Setting up a Role-Play

The role-play has to be explained to learners, and often written instructions are advisable. Roles have to be distributed, learners given time to study their role cards and seating arrangements made. Costume and props may need to be distributed too. Role-play works best with a small number of fixed roles (three to seven). A role-play can be played by a single group performing to the rest of the class or the rest of the class can have a collective role in the manner of a Greek chorus. This is better than just being spectators. Alternatively, a number of groups can perform the role-play in parallel. With classes where there are great proficiency differences it may be a good idea to have a group of mainly proficient learners first demonstrate the role-play to the class, and then let the whole class do it in groups. In this case the members of the original group can each be assigned to one of the new groups to function as prompter and helper.

Basic information about each character (name, age, profession) should be made generally available. Sometimes a nameplate helps, sometimes costume makes it clear. Before the role-play starts, each character can briefly introduce himself or herself. For more complex role-plays there may be psychological information on the role card which is labelled 'secret' and is only to be revealed in the course of the role-play.

Acting Out a Role-Play

A fixed period of time should be allotted for the role-play and rigorously adhered to, with the teacher firmly stopping the activity after the time has elapsed and, hopefully, while learners are still excited and talking a lot. A role-play does not have to come to a conclusion and is often best broken off *in medias res*. (An exception is the 'committee makes a decision' role-play.) The teacher should be available only as a consultant during the role-play, as required by the learners.

Evaluation of and Reflection on the Role-Play

Each group reports on the progress of their role-play and how they dealt with unexpected eventualities that arose. They should then also be given a chance to evaluate the effectiveness of the role-play, or, for young learners, to say whether they liked it or not.

Simulation

Johnson (2018: 234) notes that some writers use the terms role-play and simulation synonymously. Other writers, for example Ladousse (1987: 5) and Scrivener (2011: 224), view simulation as simply large-scale role-play. It is true that a simulation is usually more elaborate than a role-play, but the essential difference is that in simulation, unlike role-play, learners do not assume a fictitious identity (Johnson 2018: 234; Thornbury 2005: 98). Thus, learners who find it difficult to take on another identity may prefer simulation.

Simulations should aim at solving some problem or other. Like role-play, they should have a preparation phase, a performance phase and a reflection phase. Usually the class will be divided into groups. In contrast to role-play, each group must come to a solution (which is recorded by a secretary). In the reflection phase the groups each present their individual solutions and these are evaluated *in plenum* by the class. Ideally, there should be a class vote for the best solution. The reflection phase is important and is not something that can be postponed to the next lesson because the tension of the moment will then be lost. This means that time-keeping must be strict.

A well-known simulation suitable for advanced learners is 'Lost at Sea':

Lost at Sea

You are drifting out of control on a yacht in the Indian Ocean. The yacht is badly holed below its waterline, is sinking fast and cannot stay afloat for much longer. Your compass has been damaged and most of your supplies and equipment have been lost overboard or ruined by seawater. You are unsure of your exact position but believe you are about 500 miles south-west of the nearest land. Below are the only items that you have on board which are undamaged and are in working order:

<i>a sextant</i>	<i>a flashlight with four batteries</i>	<i>a five-gallon can of water</i>
<i>mosquito netting</i>	<i>one case of emergency rations</i>	<i>maps of the Indian Ocean</i>
<i>one life jacket</i>	<i>a two-gallon can of petrol</i>	<i>a small radio (reception only)</i>
<i>shark repellent</i>	<i>a sheet of opaque plastic (20 sq. feet)</i>	<i>a fifteen-foot length of nylon rope</i>
<i>a fishing kit</i>	<i>a bottle of whisky</i>	<i>two boxes of chocolate bars</i>

Working alone, write down the five items you regard as most important for survival and the five you regard as least important. When you have done this, in groups of six decide on a group list of the most important five items and rank these from most important to least important. Be prepared to explain your group choice to the whole class and to justify your ideas.

The 'Lost at Sea' simulation exists in various guises, including 'Desert Dilemma' (Harmer 1991: 130; Johnson 2007: 266–267) and 'Lost in the Forest' (Scrivener 2011: 218). Anderson (2004: 54–57) presents a simulation in which learners are shipwrecked on a desert island and have to make a series of choices, receiving a pre-prepared card after each decision, which takes the story a step further and poses a new choice for them. In this way they are led through a decision-making maze towards survival but may lose some of their party in the process.

Other popular simulations involving group planning activities include booking a holiday (Scrivener 2011: 218) or looking for a flat to share (Johnson 2018: 230–231). On simulation and role-play see also Harmer (2015: 392–393).

Interactive Language Games

Interactive language games are suitable for learners from lower-intermediate level upwards. The idea is to get learners talking so that they have fluency practice. Games need to be chosen according to the interests, proficiency level, age-group and in some cases cultural background of the learner group. They should function without constant teacher intervention.

One well-known game suitable for learners at lower-intermediate level is the 'Apple Pie Banquet' (McCallum 1980: 9). This game provides practice in holding language verbatim in memory while searching for

a new word. Learners are told that the previous evening they attended an apple pie banquet where there were many sorts of food to eat. The game starts by a learner saying, 'Yesterday I went to a banquet and I ate apple pie.' He or she then draws out of a hat the name of another learner who repeats the sentence and adds a food item beginning with the next letter of the alphabet, for example, 'Yesterday I went to a banquet and I ate apple pie and baked beans ...' And so it goes on through the alphabet (excluding the letters 'x' and 'z'). Learners are not permitted to make notes. To ease the difficulty of the game, a poster displaying various named or unnamed varieties of food in the manner of a collage can be exhibited.

For advanced learners, the well-known BBC radio game 'Just a Minute' is a suitable way of promoting fluency (see Harmer 2015: 389). The rules are simple. A speaker must speak for 60 seconds on a set topic without hesitation, deviation or repetition. Initially, the teacher acts as chairperson/timekeeper/scorer, but learners can in time take over these roles. If the speaker hesitates, deviates from the topic or repeats information (not necessarily word for word) he or she may be challenged by another learner, who says 'Challenge.' The timekeeper now stops the clock and the challenger gives the reason for the challenge. If the challenge is upheld by the chairperson, then the challenger takes over and proceeds with the topic, having to talk only for the remaining time to gain points. Points are awarded to whichever speaker is talking at the end of the minute; additional points are awarded if a speaker speaks for the entire minute; points are also awarded for a correct challenge and penalty points for an incorrect challenge. The score is kept on the blackboard. Three points might be awarded for talking for the whole 60 seconds, two points for talking at the end of the 60 seconds, two points for a correct challenge and one penalty point for an incorrect challenge. Instead of awarding penalty points for an incorrect challenge, points can be awarded to the incorrectly challenged speaker. For a class unwilling to challenge, and this is often a problem, points for correct challenges can be raised and points for incorrect challenges can be lowered (or even abolished).

Games involving 'taboo' words can also be fun. Learners work in pairs or small groups. One learner is interviewed and is told in advance that he or she is not allowed to use a particular word, for example 'coffee'. The interviewer or interviewers then pose questions which try to lead the interviewee into saying 'coffee' inadvertently. For more advanced learners, grammatical words such as 'and' or 'but' or 'he' can be the taboo word.

Team quizzes are also a good means of stimulating discussion. Shuttleworth (2014) presents various possibilities. A variation on the quiz is the group-ranking task (see Scrivener 2011: 218). In groups, learners have to

prepare their own ranking list of the best something: for example, twentieth-century inventions, composers, singers or actors.

Guessing games such as ‘What’s My Line?’ (Thornbury 2005: 84) make it possible to introduce an element of role-play into a game. A learner assumes a particular occupational role and a panel asks yes/no questions to find out his or her occupation. The panel may guess at any point. After ten ‘no’s, including wrong guesses, the candidate has won. The game can be adapted for hobbies, favourite food and many other items.

‘Mystery film star’ is another role-play guessing game. This time a learner assumes the role of a film star (variations include pop star or sports star) and is provided with a fact sheet of, say, ten items about the star. The learner, as star, then reveals one fact about himself or herself (a clue). The remainder of the class is divided into panels of, say, four members. Each panel now in turn asks a yes/no question and may make an identity guess. Points are lost for each ‘no’ and each wrong guess. The star then gives another clue and so it goes on. The panel that guesses the identity of the star first wins. If no one guesses after the tenth clue has been given, then the star wins. The star should keep the most helpful clues back for as long as possible. For a different version of this game, see Anderson (2004: 32–35). Anderson (2014) provides a large selection of speaking games, which he divides into four classes, namely, board games, card games, guessing games and, finally, quizzes and puzzles.

Miscellaneous Problem-Solving Activities

Pairs or small groups of learners collaborate to solve a problem. The motivation derives from the cognitive challenge involved. Such activities may involve, for example, rearranging picture sequences to make a story (Harmer 2015: 397–398; Thornbury 2005: 81–92) or spotting the differences between two almost identical pictures. In this activity two learners are seated opposite each other and are separated by a screen. One learner has one picture and another learner the other. Without looking at each other’s pictures they have to find the differences by description and discussion. This is an information-gap activity because it involves one learner supplying another with vital information (Ur 2012: 123–124; Scrivener 2011: 217–218; Thornbury 2005: 80–81; Johnson 2018: 225–228). A variation is when one learner has a picture which he describes and the other learner has to re-draw the picture as accurately as possible. A further variation is where one learner has, for example, the plan of a furnished room and the other learner has sticky shapes representing items of furniture to stick on to a felt board. For advanced learners more elaborate problem-solving activities involving, for example, deciding who was the murderer in a ‘whodunit’ scenario are a possibility. For an example, see Anderson (2004: 86–93).

Bonding Activities

Some activities can serve the purpose of social bonding within the class. They include ‘ice-breaker’ activities for use with a new class. One such activity is for pairs of learners to find out how many things they have in common (Ur 2012: 126). Another well-known bonding activity is ‘Persuading someone to part with an object’. Learners work in pairs. One holds up a valued personal object (car keys, house keys, a ring or a watch). Objects chosen should be important to the learner for practical or sentimental reasons rather than monetary value. One learner tries to persuade the other learner (in a set time) to part with the object until tomorrow (but not for money). The owner of the object presents arguments why he or she cannot do this. Another ice-breaking activity involves pairs of learners standing back to back and describing each other. The inaccuracies can be amusing. The teacher or another learner can press for more details, for example about the colour of the glasses the partner is *not* wearing. Yet another activity involves learners working in pairs or small groups and telling about ‘three strange things that happened to me’. One of the three is fictitious and the other learners have to spot it (see Thornbury 2005: 96). A further useful activity is ‘Room 101’ (Anderson 2004: 44–45). In groups, learners decide on three things they hate and wish to ban to Room 101. Each group then has to justify their choices to the class, and finally, on the basis of a class vote, a class choice of three objects for Room 101 is decided on.

Post Hoc Evaluation of Spoken Activities

Immediately after any spoken communicative activity it is useful to ask oneself:

- Did learners talk a lot?
- Did they speak without being called on to speak?
- Was participation among the class reasonably evenly distributed?
- Was the language used comprehensible, appropriate and natural?

If the answers to these questions are affirmative, then the activity was probably successful. By contrast, an unsuccessful session is often characterised by the converse of these positive features, namely, learners do not talk much and do not talk without being called on to do so. Participation may be very half-hearted, with long periods of painful silence or, alternatively, just a small number of learners may monopolise the talk. The language used may be unnatural, stylistically inappropriate and incoherent so that communication is severely inhibited. In addition, learners may appear to be uninformed about or bored by the topic. They may appear to be shy, anxious or unwilling to initiate discourse. Some learners may become disruptive. Some learners may abandon the activity

altogether and talk among themselves in their mother tongue. The teacher may have to keep intervening to keep learners on topic and even to solve conflicts.

Food for Thought

- Q. 1. Imagine you are going to tell the story *Dick Whittington and his Cat* to a class of learners. There are different versions of the story, as you will see from a brief internet survey, including picture-book versions. The story could be told to children or adults at various levels of proficiency. Specify a group of learners and prepare a three-phase lesson. First, draft the story as you wish to tell it, building in devices such as repetition to aid comprehension. Check that the length of your story is suitable for the time you have available. Divide the story into thematic sections, at the end of which you can pause and check on comprehension. Decide on any scaffolding devices you may wish to use, especially pictures, and then plan the three phases of your lesson.

The story is based on a real historical character, as you will see from your internet survey. If you are intending to teach the story to older children or adults, consider how you might or might not use this fact, either in the pre-listening phase or in the post-listening phase or for subsequent project work.

If possible, conduct a mock lesson with your colleagues acting as learners (micro-teaching), or a real lesson with appropriate learners, ideally with some colleagues present as observers. Do not read out your draft verbatim but use it as a basis for your spoken rendering. If possible, in a post-teaching session discuss with your colleagues the success of the lesson and opportunities for further improvement.

- Q. 2. (Group exercise) 'The Hot-Air Balloon', is a well-known example of a discussion role-play using celebrity roles (see Thornbury 2005: 103; Harmer 2015: 390; Johnson 2018: 236).

The Hot-Air Balloon Role-Play

This role-play is best played in groups of six to seven people. Learners are each given a large card with the name of a (different) celebrity, and, in one case per group, a rather mundane profession or trade, written on it in large letters. Each learner pins their card on their chest and assumes this role. They sit in a tight circle, facing inwards and it is explained to them that that they are in a hot-air balloon over the Andes and that due to a defect, the balloon is fast losing air and that they will crash and all be killed if one of their number does not agree to jump overboard. Only the lightened balloon will make it over the peaks of the Andes. As a group they must decide (majority decision) within the next so many

minutes (specified by the teacher) which of them is least valuable to society and can therefore be jettisoned.

Consider how you would manage this role-play in the classroom. Anticipate any problems that might arise and how you would deal with these. For what sorts of learners would you regard it as suitable and for what sorts of learners as less suitable? Can you think of any variations on the procedure that could be introduced, either to make it easier or more demanding according to the learner group? Can you think of how the same idea could be presented under another guise so that its shelf life could be extended?

- Q. 3. Try out the 'Lost at Sea' simulation with your colleagues and decide on how you would use it in class, or whether you would not use it.
- Q. 4. (Pair exercise) Play the 'Persuading someone to part with an object' activity with a colleague. After doing it, evaluate the activity. Do you have any suggestions for refining and developing it?
- Q. 5. Compare the features listed at the beginning of the 'Speaking' section as characteristic of the impoverished classroom discourse found in traditional, teacher-fronted classrooms (perhaps a 'What did you do at the weekend?' teacher-led conversation class) and those mentioned at the end of the chapter as characterising an unsuccessful communicative speaking activity (perhaps a problem-solving activity such as a simulation). Which features occur in both discourse situations and which only in one or the other situation?

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9 Reading and Writing

The Written Mode

Producing and understanding speech is a natural human endowment, for we are biologically driven to give expression to thought, to engage in the exchange of ideas with other human beings and to make sense of the world through language. The written mode, by contrast, is a secondary symbolic system devised by human ingenuity. It renders the transient symbolic sounds of speech into a graphic system of markings which can be preserved on durable material such as wood, papyrus, parchment, paper, or, latterly, stored electronically. In this way not only can the limitations of time and space on oral communication be transcended, but thoughts that were never expressed in speech can be recorded for posterity in written form.

There are various writing systems used by the world's languages. A broad distinction may be drawn between alphabet-based systems and character-based systems although there have been other systems, including syllable-based systems, as used by the Phoenicians between 3,000 and 4,000 years ago (Yule 1996: 12). In alphabet-based systems, sounds are represented by letters. In character-based systems each character represents, roughly speaking, a word. English uses the Latin alphabet, which is the most widely used alphabet system in the world, the second most widely used being the Arabic alphabet. Most European languages also use the Latin alphabet, but not all: Russian and Bulgarian, for example, use the Cyrillic alphabet and Greek uses the Hellenic alphabet. Outside Europe, some of the world's major languages, including Chinese, use a character-based system of writing, not an alphabet-based system. Japanese combines a character-based system and a syllable-based system of writing.

Learners who can already read and write in a language which uses the Latin alphabet have a head start in learning to read and write in English compared to learners who have yet to learn the Latin alphabet. The greatest challenge of all is faced by illiterate or only partly literate learners. However, all learners who want to be able to read and write in

English, even those who already know the Latin alphabet, will have to learn the system of English spelling, since each language has its own set of significant sounds (phonemes) and its own system of matching letters to sounds. In some languages there is a more systematic set of correspondences between sounds and letters than in others, which means some languages are easier to read out loud and easier to spell than others. In this respect Italian is easier than French or English.

English spelling is difficult for a number of reasons. The first problem is that there are 44 GB phonemes but only 26 letters of the alphabet. Apart from this, the correspondence between letters and sounds is not completely systematic. This is particularly noticeable for the vowel sounds. Spelling conventions became established following the introduction of printing in the fifteenth century (Yule 1996: 14) but for a long time in handwritten documents spelling conventions were quite fluid. However, printing and universal education won out and standards were imposed. However, since pronunciation goes on changing and evolving naturally, the discrepancies between sounds and letters have become ever greater over the centuries. The situation was worsened by the activities of spelling reformers in the sixteenth century who introduced ‘etymological’ spelling. For example, they changed the spelling of the word ‘dette’ to ‘debt’, thus causing spelling problems for millions of schoolchildren for centuries thereafter, and with no end in sight. They did this for etymological reasons, correctly tracing the word back to the Latin *debitum*. However, what they did not know was that the word had not entered English directly from Latin, but, following the Norman Conquest, from French. To this day the French word for ‘debt’ is *dette*. All this makes reading and writing difficult, so that we all make spelling mistakes when we write in English and mispronounce words we have previously encountered only in written form. A good rule of thumb for learners is that the pronunciation of a word is never a foolproof guide to its spelling, and vice versa.

In this chapter it will be assumed that learners already know the Latin alphabet, either because it is used by their native language or another language they are literate in or because they have learned it for English at an earlier stage of their education. Thus, we will not be concerned with how best to teach the system of correspondences between the letters of the Latin alphabet and English sounds or words. Harmer (2004: 44–48; 2015: 361–362) and Ur (2012: 153–157, 163–165) offer suggestions for teaching handwriting and spelling. Collins et al. (2019: 98–110) offer a set of spelling guidelines.

Writing is not just speech written down. Writing is generally denser and less redundant than speech (Ur 2012: 150; Johnson 2018: 255). The written mode frees writers and readers from the time and processing pressures under which speakers and listeners have to operate. Writers have more time to plan and revise their message than speakers. Readers

can choose their own processing pace, can go back, re-read and can skip ahead to see what is coming. For these reasons, the written mode facilitates the expression of more complex and differentiated ideas than speech. It also makes it easier for writers to fine-tune their language and use rhetorical effects. For the reader, the written mode encourages reflection and critical thinking as well as appreciation and aesthetic enjoyment of the written product. However, writing also makes it possible to quickly scribble a note for the milkman and to chat online in a written exchange which is rapid and in many ways like the spontaneity of conversation (Ur 2012: 151–152). Not only does each written genre, like each spoken genre, have its own register, but there may be differences between languages, so that learners cannot necessarily carry over the conventions of a given genre from their native language into English (Hudson 2007: 201–226).

Reading

Reading Purpose and Reading Technique

For teaching purposes a distinction is usually drawn between intensive and extensive reading. Intensive reading involves short prose texts or text excerpts read in class under teacher guidance. Extensive reading involves longer texts, often whole books, read outside class. Consideration of reading in this chapter will be limited to intensive reading of the sort usually done in the reading comprehension lesson. Extensive reading of fiction will be dealt with in Chapter 10, as will the intensive reading of short poems in the classroom.

The aim of intensive reading sessions in the EFL classroom is to help learners to become good readers. This means, firstly, enabling them to read effectively a wide variety of authentic texts for various purposes relevant to their real-life needs and, secondly, helping them to experience reading in English as a pleasurable activity. Nuttall (1996: 31) describes reading effectively as reading ‘at appropriate speed’ and ‘with adequate understanding’. Appropriate reading speed does not depend only on how difficult the text is, but also on how much readers want to get out of a text. Learners have to know this and adjust their reading speed (and technique) accordingly (Wallace 1992: 5). One can read any text too carefully or too carelessly. Readers also need to be able to identify the parts of a text which are important for their reading purpose so as to read these parts carefully and to read in a more cursory fashion other parts which are less central to their reading purpose.

All learners will need to read extensively outside class on their own initiative if they are ever to become highly effective readers. This is because practice seems to be of great importance in becoming an effective reader. There is a link between reading effectively and enjoying reading.

Ineffective reading techniques mean that reading is not enjoyable, so reading is avoided, which in turn means that reading skills do not improve. By contrast, effective readers enjoy reading and so read more, which improves their skills so that they enjoy reading even more. Nuttall (1996: 127) refers in this regard to the 'vicious circle' of the weak reader and the 'virtuous circle' of the good reader.

If learners experience reading comprehension lessons as painful rather than pleasurable, they will never read extensively in English of their own accord because intrinsic motivation will be lacking. This must be prevented at all costs. Texts chosen should be carefully selected to engage learners' interest and the reading tasks performed should be challenging but achievable. At the end of the lesson learners should feel they have performed the tasks successfully under the guidance of the teacher. However, although the overt focus of the lesson is on comprehension of the text at the desired level, the hidden agenda of the lesson is that learners should be developing reading skills which they can transfer to other texts they will encounter in the future, without a teacher to guide them.

Ineffective readers are inflexible readers. They tend to read all texts word for word at the same slow laborious pace (Davies 1995: 138). They may have no alternative because otherwise they will not understand anything at all. For this reason it is counterproductive just to tell slow readers to speed up. They will then merely rush through the passage and become frustrated because they do not understand. Effective readers, by contrast, are flexible readers. They can adjust their reading technique and thereby their reading speed according to what they are reading and why they are reading it (Davies 1995: 132–140; Wallace 1992: 6–7).

Some reading purposes/techniques are listed below. The list can easily be added to.

- Scanning for specific information
This involves going through a text to see if a particular item of information is there, for example a name (Nuttall 1996: 48–49; Davies 1995: 137, 140; Scrivener 2011: 265).
- Skimming for gist
This involves going through a text to get a rough idea of what it is about (Nuttall 1996: 49–50; Davies 1995: 137, 140; Scrivener 2011: 265).
- Reading for information content
This is the neutral or default reading technique/purpose, which Grabe and Stoller (2011: 8) call 'reading for general comprehension'.
- Critical or reflective reading for learning or appreciation
This involves pausing for reflection or memorisation and going back and forth in the text (Davies 1995: 137, 140).
- Empathetic or receptive reading (reading for pleasure)
According to Davies (1995: 140), this involves 'a smooth, typically

unconscious reading of undemanding, familiar or narrative text, for pleasure and “unconscious” language learning’.

- Form-focussed reading
This involves reading a text for language learning and/or for formal or linguistic analysis.
- Word-for-word reading
This is the slow, laborious technique used by ineffective readers. Davies (1995: 138–13) calls this ‘practice read’ and suggests it is a reading technique in its own right, which even proficient readers fall back on to cope effectively with difficult bits of texts. In word-for-word reading learners may say the words under their breath (sub-vocalisation) or even whisper them or say them out loud, and in some cases this can be helpful.

Particular techniques of reading are associated with specific text-types but most text-types can be read in various ways (Davies 1995: 132). Thus, in the following (invented) example, a reader might first *scan* newspaper headlines and, if a particular headline, for example, ‘British men stingiest in Europe’, strikes that reader as being of interest, may *skim* the article to see roughly what it is about (for example, the amount of money British men spend on birthday presents for their wives). The reader might read the article *for information content* (how much do they spend and how much do men in other countries spend?) or *critically* (how trustworthy are the data for the contention?) or *empathetically* (for gleeful enjoyment, if the reader is, for instance, divorced from a stingy British man). In a university seminar, a newspaper article might even be read *in form-focussed* fashion, that is, to analyse its language. An ineffective reader could not use any of the techniques so far mentioned but would start with the first word of the headlines and proceed word by word, trying to understand each word.

Not mentioned so far is reading out loud in class. Learners should not be asked to read out loud a passage they have not yet had a chance to prepare, since reading aloud to an audience is a daunting task, even for advanced learners. And they should never ever be expected to read out loud while seated in their place in class but should face their audience, or the class should sit in a horseshoe formation. Inexpert readers find it very difficult to read out loud to others and simultaneously understand what they are reading. This also makes it difficult for the rest of the class to understand. Because of cognitive overload, the reader’s speech is likely to be unnaturally slow and halting; words will be mispronounced and inappropriate stress, rhythm and intonation patterns will be used. The result is that comprehension may be difficult even for highly proficient listeners. Even a professional reader needs preparation and rehearsal time. It can, however, be helpful for learners to listen to the teacher reading or to hear a recording of another expert reader. This is because the expert reader commands not only the pronunciation of individual words, but, more importantly, can impose appropriate

intonation, rhythm and stress patterns on the text. For helpful discussions of reading out loud, see Ur (2012: 136), Harmer (2015: 318–319), Davies (1995: 138, 140), Nuttall (1996: 201–203) and Scrivener (2011: 269).

A Three-Phase Lesson Structure

As with listening texts, reading passages should be chosen so as to fit in with the learners' interests and likely future language needs and they should also be well-suited to follow-up discussion or writing activities. Before deciding to use a text for reading, it is therefore worthwhile asking oneself the following questions:

- Can the learners relate the text to their own culture?
- Can the learners write a prologue or epilogue to the text?
- Can the learners respond to and evaluate the text from their own point of view?
- Can the learners contribute additional information of their own?

It is advisable to adopt a three-phase lesson structure comprising a pre-reading phase, a while-reading phase and a post-reading phase (Nuttall 1996: 149–169). This procedure parallels that for listening comprehension.

Pre-Reading Phase

The pre-reading phase aims:

- to introduce and arouse interest in the topic
- to motivate learners by awakening curiosity and giving them a reason to read the passage
- to provide some limited language preparation

Questions that the teacher might consider before going in to the class are:

- What do the learners already know about the topic?
- How can I best activate this knowledge?
- What aspects of the passage will interest the learners?
- How can I trigger this interest?
- Which relevant background cultural knowledge may the learners lack?
- How can I best supply this, perhaps with visual aids and *realia*?
- Which absolutely essential key vocabulary should be cleared up in the pre-reading phase?

A good way to start the lesson is to explore with learners the associations that the text's title has for them (Johnson 2018: 249–250; Nuttall 1996: 45, 155–156). This can be done as brainstorming. Learners should be asked to infer from the title what they can about the topic of the text they are about to read. Learners should never be given a text without a title. If the text has no title or the title is inappropriate, for example if the title of an original text is unsuitable for a short reading passage taken from it, a suitable alternative title should be supplied. It is important that the title is well-chosen since a well-chosen title helps readers to identify the likely topic of the text. On the other hand, an inappropriate or misleading title can be a great hindrance and lead readers up the garden path (Davies 1995: 68). Paying attention to titles should become part of learners' strategic approach to texts they will read by themselves in future. Without training they will not do this. Many learners never read titles, headings and subheadings.

Having identified the likely topic, for example, a bus crash, a funeral or a wedding, learners should then be encouraged to consider what background knowledge they already possess about it. Writers assume that their readers share with them some background knowledge which does not have to be explicitly stated. Relevant background knowledge is seen as being encoded in the mind in the form of *schemata* (Bartlett 1932) based on the individual's past experience, including experience gained vicariously through the media and by reading. All texts are incomplete in the sense that readers always have to contribute background knowledge of their own about the topic, the genre and perhaps even about the writer to understand any text they read. On the basis of this background knowledge, readers then make presuppositions about the content of the text before they even start reading. These presuppositions may then be confirmed or disconfirmed as the text develops and the updating process will continue while any particular text is being read. However, EFL learners may lack the requisite background knowledge or may have misconceptions if there are intercultural differences involved (Johnson 2018: 247–248). It is therefore important to identify any gaps in knowledge or wrong ideas learners may have. However, only background information which is essential for understanding the gist should be supplied, and only after attempts have first been made to elicit the information from the class.

Concerning vocabulary, the only words which should be explained in advance are those whose meaning is essential for understanding the gist of the text and cannot be inferred. If this group of words is too large (more than seven), this is an indication that the text is too difficult for the learners. Part of becoming a good reader is learning how to infer word meaning from context (top-down processing) and/or from the word's morphological structure (bottom-up processing). Every time we tell learners what a word means, we are robbing them of a chance to develop this necessary procedural knowledge (Johnson 2018: 241–248; Nuttall 1996: 16–18; Davies 1995: 57–62). The aim

of the reading lesson is not to teach vocabulary but to help learners develop the necessary procedural knowledge (skills) to read a text effectively for a specific purpose. As with background knowledge, so with vocabulary – it is preferable in the pre-reading phase to elicit word-meanings from the learners themselves if at all possible.

While-Reading Phase

The while-reading phase aims to give learners practice in employing various reading styles and to help them understand:

- the gist of the passage
- the more detailed meaning of the passage at certain key points
- something about the genre of which the text is an example
- the structure of the passage
- the writer's purpose

In preparing for this phase, teachers might ask themselves:

- Does the passage constitute a complete text, an abridged text or a text excerpt?
- What is the core meaning (gist)?
- What is implied rather than explicitly stated?
- To what genre does the passage belong?
- What can be inferred from the passage about the writer's stance?
- What structural divisions, such as thesis and antithesis or introduction, development and conclusion, can be identified?
- How will I divide the passage into sections for reading?
- Which guiding questions (see below) can I draft for each section?
- Which unknown language items occur for which learners can infer a rough meaning?
- Which unknown language items are not essential for global comprehension and are best ignored?
- Which reading techniques can learners practise?

How long should a text be? The answer depends on the reading experience and proficiency of the learners. Ideally, the text should be short enough for learners to read it through as a whole to get its gist initially. Short passages (up to one page) can often be read as a whole a number of times, each time for a different purpose. Thus, for the first reading learners might be instructed to find out roughly what the text is about (reading for gist or global understanding). This requires the technique of skimming, which involves focussing on key words and skipping over less essential words. A time limit which is sufficient to get the gist only, if learners skim effectively, should be set.

Subsequent readings may focus on specific detail, and stylistic and critical appraisal should come at later readings again (see also Scrivener 2011: 267). These later readings can often be best managed by reading the passage in sections. Passages longer than a page and up to two or three pages for more advanced learners will usually be read in sections of perhaps one, two or three paragraphs after an initial skimming of the whole passage. Before each section the teacher will provide the learners with guiding questions (one to three) which they should bear in mind while reading. The purpose of these questions is to direct learners' attention to salient aspects of the passage. It is possible to have groups of readers focussing on different guiding questions and pooling their findings afterwards (see Nuttall 1996: 160–161). In general, questions should not be sprung on learners as a surprise after they have read a section. Rather, learners should know the questions before they read the section so that they can listen for a purpose.

Questions may be arranged on a scale of ascending challenge (Nuttall 1996: 181–191). Just how this can be done will now be shown for a passage for advanced learners from a novel by Donald E. Westlake. This passage was used by Swan (1976: 43) as a passage for learners to summarise. Swan supplied the title, 'Just leave the keys in, sir':

Just Leave the Keys In, Sir

Stan Murch, in a uniform-like blue jacket, stood on the sidewalk in front of the Hilton and watched cab after cab make the loop in to the main entrance. Doesn't anybody travel in their own car any more? Then at last a Chrysler Imperial with Michigan plates came hesitantly up Sixth Avenue, made the left hand loop into the Hilton driveway and stopped at the entrance. As a woman and several children got out of the doors on the right of the car, toward the hotel entrance, the driver climbed heavily out on the left. He was a big man with a cigar and a camel's hair coat.

Murch was at the door before it was halfway open, pulling it the rest of the way and saying, "Just leave the keys in it, sir."

"Right," the man said around his cigar. He got out and sort of shook himself inside the coat. Then as Murch was about to get behind the wheel, the driver said, "Wait."

Murch looked at him. "Sir?"

"Here you go, boy," the man said and pulled a folded dollar bill from his pants pocket and handed it across.

"Thank you, sir," Murch said. He saluted with the hand holding the dollar, climbed behind the wheel, and drove away. He was smiling as he made the right

into 53rd Street; it wasn't every day a man gave you a tip for stealing his car.
(From *Bank Shot* by Donald E. Westlake)

The least challenging questions are those where the answer consists of explicit information to be found in the passage, for example:

- Q.1. *Where was Stan Murch standing?*
- A.1. *On the sidewalk in front of the Hilton.*

The learner can recover this verbatim from the passage. Rather more challenging are questions where some minimal interpretation is required:

- Q.2. *Was the Chrysler being driven fast up Sixth Avenue?*
- A.2. *No, it was being driven slowly.*

In this case one has to understand that 'hesitantly' means 'slowly' in context. The next question:

- Q.3. *Why did the man allow Stan Murch to drive his car away?*
- A.3. *Because he thought he was going to park the car for him.* (possible acceptable answer)

is more challenging again. It requires inferencing or reading between the lines because the answer is not stated explicitly in the passage. Even more evaluation is required by a question such as:

- Q.4. *Why do you think Stan Murch looks at the man and says, 'Sir?' when the man says 'Wait'?*
- A.4. *Maybe Stan thinks the man is suspicious and is going to ask him to show some identification.* (possible acceptable answer)

A still more demanding question requiring an evaluative personal response would be:

- Q.5. *What are your feelings for the man whose car Stan Murch drives away?*
- A 5. *I feel sorry for him but I also think he was very naïve and must take some blame himself for what happened.* (possible acceptable answer)

The most demanding of all tend to be questions which require critical reading and appraisal of authorial techniques, such as:

- Q. 6. *Can you identify some clues in the first part of the passage which at second reading suggest Stan may not be employed by the Hilton to park guests' cars?*

- A. 6. *On re-reading the text, I notice that Stan is not actually wearing a uniform but a 'uniform-like blue jacket' and that he is not standing on the hotel forecourt but 'on the sidewalk'. (possible acceptable answer)*

Questions should be varied and progress made from less to more cognitively challenging. One should guard against asking questions which focus on *unimportant* factual detail since they implicitly train learners to read in an ineffective way and the lesson can easily degenerate into a 'numbers, names and colours' quiz. Also to be avoided are questions which focus on linguistic niceties not essential for understanding and appreciation of the text. Questions may be given in written or spoken form and may be answered either orally or in writing. It is often good to build both written and oral questions and answers into the lesson.

An appropriate balance of closed and open-ended questions should also be struck. By a closed question is meant a question to which there is only one right answer (as in questions 1, 2 and perhaps 3, above). For open-ended questions (as in questions 4–6, above), by contrast, there is a range of possible answers (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 147). Classic closed questions take the form of 'yes or no' questions, 'true or false' questions, 'either/or' questions and multiple-choice questions. 'Question-word' questions can in principle be open or closed, but 'who', 'what', 'which', 'when' and 'where' questions are more likely to be closed, whereas 'how' and especially 'why' questions are more likely to be open. Relatively easy closed questions (such as questions 1 and 2, above) are often good to start with because they encourage learners to participate. Open-ended questions should generally come later and are valuable because they require learners to formulate longer answers involving language planning at the sentence level and beyond.

The distinction between closed and open questions is not the same as the distinction already touched on in Chapter 8 between display questions (where the teacher already knows the answer and wants to see if the learner also knows it) and genuine questions (where the teacher genuinely seeks either information or an opinion from a learner). This distinction depends not on the form of the question but on the reason for asking the question on the teacher's part. Some teachers might have a relatively open mind on questions 3, 4, 5 and 6, above, for instance, and accept novel ideas from learners, whereas others might not. Most reading comprehension questions are of course display questions designed to help learners understand the text and learners will appreciate them for this reason (Lightbown and Spada 2013: 146). Nevertheless, learners will also appreciate it if they are sometimes asked genuine questions as well (Nuttall 1996: 181–191). At the very best this may give rise to discussion among the learners.

Post-Reading Phase

The post-reading phase, which may be the final phase of the lesson or may extend over a follow-up session or include homework, aims:

- to consolidate and build on what has been read
- to give learners the chance to integrate the text into their own world-knowledge so that it becomes part of their 'mental encyclopaedia' (Clark 1996)

In preparing for this phase it is advisable for teachers to ask themselves:

- Is the passage open-ended (or one-sided)?
- Does the passage invite resolution or complementation?
- Does the passage invite a comparison with the life experience of the learners?
- Does the passage invite a rejoinder, a recommendation or a decision?

Post-reading tasks may be written or spoken or may combine speech and writing. Conventional written post-reading tasks are summaries and paraphrases, either done individually or in groups. Other possibilities include writing a prologue or sequel to the passage, rewriting the passage from a different perspective and rewriting the passage adopting a different register or style. Prologues or sequels can be combined with a change of perspective and/or with a change of style or register (Harmer 2004: 25–27). The 'Just leave the keys in, sir' passage, for instance, invites a sequel in the form of the written statement the man from Michigan might make to the police after reporting the theft (change of perspective and register). Another possibility would be a prologue or sequel written from the original authorial perspective (with no change of style or register). Spoken post-reading tasks do not have to be limited to evaluative discussion but can involve role-play. In 'Just leave the keys in, sir', various sorts of role-play suggest themselves, including the reporting of the theft to the police, an encounter between Murch driving the car and a suspicious traffic policeman and Murch bragging to his friends the following evening.

For advanced learners, a post-reading activity can lead into project work supported by internet research. Following a post-reading discussion of a text on the Spanish Armada, for example, project work could compare the different accounts to be found on the internet and decide why the Spanish plans failed. Another possible follow-up would be a formal debate in which one side could support the view that the main problem was the bad weather and (for the Spanish) uncharted waters, and the other side could support the view that it was Drake's naval strategy and his more manoeuvrable ships which thwarted the Spanish plans.

Alternatives to Traditional Reading Comprehension Classes

Reading can be combined with writing skills from the very start. One technique is that of text completion. This involves giving learners a narrative text which breaks off at a 'cliff-hanger' point. For example, 'Just leave the keys in, sir' could be presented only up to '... and drove away.' Learners could then be asked to work in groups and bring the story to a close using no more than perhaps 50 words. After doing this, each group could present or display its version to the whole class for evaluation and the various versions could be compared with the original. In effect this is training in text-prediction skills (Nuttall 1996:12–16; 118–121). Very short stories with a twist in the tail are well-suited to such cliff-hanger techniques, for example 'The Appointment in Samarra' as retold by William Somerset Maugham in his play *Sheppey* (Maugham 1933), which is also available online (www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english320/Maugham-AS.htm).

Related to the cliff-hanger approach are techniques of jigsaw reading, which are based on the information-gap principle. In this approach the class is divided into groups and each group gets a section of a passage to read and then the passage has to be reconstructed and put together by the class (Johnson 2018: 253; Harmer 2015: 331–334). Another problem-solving approach is the sentence-reordering task, in which learners are first given the sentences of the text in jumbled order and have to put them in the correct order (Harmer 2015: 328–330). Another possibility is providing learners with a passage which lacks an introductory, middle or concluding paragraph and asking them to supply the most suitable one from a selection. Alternatively, they can be asked to compose the missing paragraph themselves. Afterwards they can then compare their paragraph with the original one. Another variation is to insert an alien paragraph or sentence into the text for learners to identify (Grabe and Stoller 2011: 145).

Other possibilities include using matching tasks in which pictures are matched to the text they best correspond to or vice versa. Picture-matching is well-suited to descriptive texts, for example of houses, rooms, towns and landscapes, but is not limited to these. Texts can also be matched with other texts; headlines can be matched with newspaper articles, and headings; introductions and conclusions can be matched to texts. In a final phase, each learner group justifies its choice.

Yet another task-type is text expansion or reduction according to certain criteria, for example adding adjectives or relative clauses, or giving reasons, or providing flashbacks (Maley 1993, 1995). Other manipulative operations include transferring a text into another genre as well as restoring mutilated texts and completing incomplete texts (Harmer 2015: 323–325). All these activities are well-suited to pair work or small-group work.

For a variety of reading-based activities suitable for young and low-proficiency learners, see Hadfield and Hadfield (2000a). These include, as well as matching tasks and sentence-reordering tasks, information-transfer tasks where learners read a text and then complete a table or chart. Other tasks the authors present are where learners correct factual mistakes in a text, or draw an object described in a text, or guess what object is being described in a text.

Writing

Written Genres

For some writing classes an examination syllabus will define the genres learners are to master. In ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) classes it will be possible by means of needs analysis to identify the purposes for which learners will need to write. For many other learners, especially those in TENOR (Teaching English for No Obvious Reason) classes, however, it will often be difficult to predict which genres learners will be required to write in and which registers they need to command. Scrivener (2011: 238) suggests a number of real-world genres that learners might practise. These include letters and e-mails, newsletters, blogs, contributions to a class magazine, advertisements for events, contributions to discussion forums on websites, questionnaires, written applications of various sorts and project work. Ur (2012: 157–159) suggests stories, personal anecdotes, instructions, route directions, descriptions of scenes, places and persons, descriptions of a process – for example an experiment – summaries and critical reviews of books or films, recommendations, advertisements, leaflets, newspaper reports and short research papers. She also specifies various sub-genres of letters/e-mails, including job applications, complaints and replies.

Four Major Approaches to Teaching Written Genres

There are four major approaches to teaching written genres:

- the product approach
- the process approach
- the genre approach
- the process-genre approach

The Product Approach

This is the traditional approach and comprises four stages:

- familiarisation of learners with the specific features of the genre usually by means of an example text (see Scrivener 2011: 241–242)
- controlled writing, in which the learners practise the skill at the micro-level, first within strict guidelines and with the provision of scaffolding and then more freely as support is progressively withdrawn
- guided writing, in which learners produce a complete text guided by the provision of a skeleton structure, including perhaps some key-words or phrases, or even topic sentences
- free writing, in which students produce their own text without guidance (in groups or individually)

The product approach is well-suited to genres which are highly rule-governed at the formal level, for example business letters. It is also well-suited to learners at lower levels of general proficiency who may lack some necessary language at the level of declarative knowledge; it is also suitable for learners who do not have any experience of the genre (Harmer 2004: 55–59, 63). Additionally, the product approach is helpful if the teacher wants to focus on specific vocabulary, syntax and linking devices. It aims to supply learners with the necessary linguistic knowledge and linguistic items for the task at hand. The approach in its strictest form might be described as ‘assisted imitation’. The emphasis is on breaking down the productive process into stages so that a good linguistic product will finally be produced by the learners in autonomous fashion. Although the product approach tends to be associated with individual writing, collaborative writing is also possible (Harmer 2015: 367).

Hadfield and Hadfield (2000b) offer many examples of guided writing tasks suitable for young learners and learners of low proficiency. These include blank-filling exercises, linking sentences by using an appropriate co-ordinating conjunction (‘and’ versus ‘but’) and reordering tasks, involving either reordering jumbled words within the sentence, or reordering jumbled sentences within a paragraph. Sometimes learners are given skeleton sentence structures which they can vary by replacing the original words with appropriate substitutes at various points (substitution frames). Other activities involve giving learners notes to expand into a text. Another approach the authors use is providing ‘split halves’ sentences, where the first halves of a set of sentences are presented in a list and the second halves in another list, but in jumbled order. Learners have to match up the sentence halves correctly. The texts or sentences produced then serve as a basis for learners to produce their own texts (free writing).

One objection sometimes made to the product approach is that written teacher feedback tends to focus on error correction and is often received some days after the writing task was done, so that the chance to

learn may have been missed. Even if learners are able to make sense of all those arrows, letters and numbers as well as straight and wiggly lines – all in aggressive red ink – which they see when their work is returned to them, it may be difficult for them to remember what they had originally wanted to express anyway. Scrivener (2011: 244) suggests that teacher feedback should focus not just on error correction but on appropriateness in terms of style and register. Scrivener (2011: 245–248), Ur (2012: 161–163) and Pawlak (2014: 143–148) discuss a number of ways of providing feedback on written work.

The Process Approach

The process approach is quite different. It places emphasis on helping learners to develop skills such as planning, drafting and editing a text rather than on supplying learners with a model to imitate. Drawing on the distinction between declarative knowledge ('knowing that') and procedural knowledge ('knowing how to'), the approach assumes that each text is unique and poses its own challenges and problems. For this reason, it is held that model texts written for one situation will never work perfectly for another. The underlying premise is that the development of writing ability is an unconscious process, which can only take place when the learners are engaged in the writing activity itself (proceduralisation of knowledge).

Typically, four stages are involved, although these are not sacrosanct. The first phase may be done with the whole class, the subsequent three phases are usually done in small groups of four to six persons (collaborative writing):

- a pre-writing phase, often in the form of brainstorming (see Scrivener 2011: 239)
- a drafting phase, in which a rough version of the complete text is produced
- a revising stage, in which large-scale additions, deletions and reorderings at the macro-level may be made
- an editing phase, in which the micro-level of language is scrutinised and modified

In this approach the teacher's role is essentially that of facilitator, motivator, resource and feedback provider (see Harmer 2015: 369). He or she moves among the groups offering help and advice, but the processes of drafting, revising and editing are supposed to be carried out by the learner groups themselves. Sometimes groups may be shuffled or rearranged between phases, or one group may send a messenger to another to make for an interchange of ideas. The messenger may then return to the original group to provide feedback from the group just visited.

Each group should aim at producing a final group version. This can be produced by one member acting as scribe, but it is probably better for the final group version to be written up by each learner separately so that they are all actively engaged (Ur 2012: 160). The process approach does not insist on a finished product and holds that ongoing feedback (from the teacher and peers) during drafting is more likely to result in learning than post hoc written teacher corrections. The rationale behind this is that the provision of ongoing feedback operates within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) to tackle an immediate problem and thus offers affordances for learning (see Chapter 1 on the ZPD). Ur (2012: 162) notes, however, that learners usually prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback. On the other hand, Scrivener (2011: 244) suggests peer feedback may be preferable to traditional written teacher feedback since it is more likely to focus on appropriateness than error.

The process approach is often more suitable than the product approach for more advanced learners. It also lends itself to genres which do not have rigid conventions and permit of considerable stylistic variation.

The Genre Approach

A third approach is the genre approach. This approach follows the product approach in placing emphasis on imparting information to learners, since for any given genre there may be specific conventions concerning layout, organisation and sequencing of information, style and level of formality (see Scrivener 2011: 241–242). Furthermore, each genre, for example application letters, reports, essays and reviews, consists of various sub-genres, each of which will have a more specific register than that of the superordinate genre, for example *job-application* letters, *research* reports, *descriptive* essays and *film* reviews (see Harmer 2004: 16–22). Learners may therefore require special language preparation before writing in an unaccustomed genre or subgenre. This preparation may include lexis, for example legal or medical vocabulary; syntax, for example use of the passive in reporting experiments in the natural sciences; and pragmatics, for example not explicitly stating negative points about a person but implying them by what is left unsaid in personal references (Grice 1975).

In other words, genres cannot be lifted out of the social context in which a particular written text is produced: especially the purpose of the writer, the specifics of the subject matter and the writer's relationship with the intended audience. These variables make for the uniqueness of each text. Thus learners are not given a de-contextualised business letter, for instance, as a model for their own production, but rather a particular business letter written in a specified situation to a particular addressee about a subject which is clearly specified too. Additional relevant

information may be provided about the relationship between the correspondents. Having studied the model letter, learners may produce a reply to it or to a similar letter in a different but comparable context which is specified.

There are three stages involved:

- modelling the target genre, usually by an example with focus on possible permissible variations (teacher-fronted)
- the joint construction of a text by learners and teacher (with the whole class)
- the independent construction of a text by the learners (individually or in groups)

It is the introduction of the social element which distinguishes the genre approach from the product approach. Harmer (2015: 378–379) shows how a genre approach can be used for writing a guidebook entry. Scrivener (2011: 243) emphasises the importance of clearly defining in advance the intended audience for, and purpose of, any piece of writing, not just letters, as this will influence how the piece is to be written. Otherwise learners are just ‘writing for teacher’.

The Process-Genre Approach

The process-genre approach represents a synthesis of the genre and process approaches (see Harmer 2004: 86–87). It holds that writing involves specific language knowledge, so that appropriate language input which learners internalise will help to improve writing ability (as in the product approach). Also required, however, are knowledge of context and purpose (as in the genre approach). Further, it recognises that writing is a skill for which practice is required to develop procedural knowledge unconsciously (as in the process approach). The stages are:

- setting up the context for writing by means of authentic texts, pictures, brainstorming and teacher provision of situation-specific language
- a drafting phase, in which a rough version of the complete text is produced
- a revising stage, in which large-scale additions, deletions and reorderings at the macro-level may be made

In the process-genre approach even more background information is provided than in the genre approach. A scenario is presented which provides the entire social context within which the piece of writing has to be written. This is often built up by providing authentic texts or pictures and may involve an element of role-play or simulation. Learners

are informed about what has been the stimulus to write (past history), what the writer's intention is, what can be maximally achieved by writing and what unwished-for outcomes are to be avoided. Often this would be far too much for one single writing lesson alone. Thus, the approach lends itself well to an integrated-skills classroom, where the writing task could follow on from previous theme-based work. The whole session can constitute a role-play within which the writing is produced and feedback on the written product can then be provided by the learners themselves within the role-play. Such peer feedback is likely to be more successful than it would be outside the role-play framework since learners may otherwise not wish to criticise their peers' work nor receive criticism from them (Ur 2012: 162).

Role-play usually involves learners writing within a clearly specified role to a clearly specified (but fictitious) addressee (Scrivener 2011: 244; Harmer 2015: 376–378). However, by using authentic texts and authentic writers as models, role-play can be brought closer to real-world writing. Two suitable authentic genres available in newspapers and online are 'lonely hearts' advertisements and 'agony aunt' columns. These two genres provide practice in writing within the superordinate genres of 'written personal self-presentations' and 'asking for and giving written personal advice', respectively. The following two teaching ideas are suitable for adolescent and adult intermediate-level learners. Learners unfamiliar with these genres in English would need to study authentic examples to learn the conventions first. The teacher circulates while learners are writing and offers advice and support.

The first example uses lonely hearts advertisements to elicit written self-presentations. The class is divided into a number of small groups and each group is given a different role card, which has been prepared in advance by the teacher. This provides biographical data of a fictitious person and his or her wishes concerning a future partner. In the first phase each group studies their role card. In the second phase the same authentic selection of lonely hearts advertisements from newspapers or from the internet is given to each group, and each group has to decide which advertisement to reply to. In the third phase each group writes a letter of introduction to their chosen lonely heart. The role cards should be so drafted that there is no ideal match with a specific lonely heart advertiser, but some partial matches. In a final phase the letters of introduction can then be presented or displayed to the whole class and evaluated both in terms of appropriateness of prospective partner chosen and language appropriateness.

The second example uses agony aunt columns to elicit letters asking for and giving personal advice. The teacher selects a number of authentic letters to agony aunts and the corresponding replies and hands these out randomly. Learners work in groups and in the first phase match the answers to the appropriate requests for advice. In a second phase

learners can evaluate both the requests for advice and the answers given and work out a catalogue of criteria for good request letters and good agony aunt replies. In a third phase, some new requests for advice are distributed and each learner group assumes the identity of the agony aunt and writes a reply. In the fourth phase these replies are evaluated by the whole class according to the criteria already agreed on. In a fifth and final phase the replies actually written by the agony aunt can be handed out and compared with the learners' replies.

Some care should be taken to select letters with topics appropriate for the group of learners in question with respect to age and cultural background. An authentic example I have seen successfully used in school at intermediate level was a letter from an elderly couple in their seventies who appealed for advice about how to deal with their two lazy sons, both in their mid-thirties, who refused to leave the parental home, smoked and drank a lot, provoked complaints from the neighbours and generally made life unpleasant for their parents.

Beginning Writing

But how do we get young learners started on writing? From the early stages of learning English learners can be asked to label a picture according to teacher instructions, as in the 'my monster task' and 'the zoo task', both introduced in Chapter 8. The zoo task can be supplemented by a gapped written description of the zoo (a zoo guide) so that learners can fill in the names of the animals. The final one or two sentences can be supplied by the learners themselves. In the same way the 'my monster' task can lead into a controlled writing task in which the learners fill in a gapped text which describes the monster. In some sentence the relevant part of the body is omitted ('It has blue ____') and in some the relevant colour is omitted ('It has a ____ nose'). They can complete the text for the final two colours and parts of the body by writing the sentences in full on the model of the supplied gapped sentences. The principle is always that learners first hear a word and then see it in written form before they write it.

For older children, as well as adolescents and adults of limited English writing proficiency, a good way to get them writing is to focus on the genre of authentic notices, for example 'Silence', 'Private', 'No milk today', 'Keep out', 'Gone away', 'Reserved shelf', 'No entry', 'Through traffic only', 'No trespassing', 'No food and drink beyond this point.' Initially, the teacher can provide a selection of notices or photographs of notices, but then learners can be asked to photograph authentic notices and bring them to class. A first step might be for learners to put notices into thematic groups, for example, road signs, signs in public places, signs in libraries. They can also put notices into language-pattern groups, for example, notices beginning with 'no', with 'please', notices ending in

'prohibited'. A more demanding task is to modify the language of a notice (for example, 'No smoking' to 'Do not smoke' to 'Please do not smoke' or even 'Please refrain from smoking' so as to make it more polite). Learners do not have to understand every word of a notice, just to understand its pragmatic meaning. Cognitive challenge can be introduced by showing learners, for instance, a picture of a notice outside a walled estate saying 'Trespassing prohibited' and asking them to guess what it means. If they cannot do this, they can be shown another notice as a clue which says 'Private property' or 'Keep out', or both. Since notices and messages are often elliptical, learners can also profit from writing out a full-sentence version of the notice. Finally, learners might be asked to write suitable notices to display in their classroom, or in the school, including English versions of notices already displayed in the local language. This will involve copying and copying with variation.

Another writing activity suitable for lower-intermediate level is to have learners create their own greetings cards, especially Christmas cards, Easter cards and Valentine cards, as well as invitation cards for special occasions such as birthday parties, all based on a limited number of models. It is best to use authentic greetings cards as models: either printed or electronic ones.

Writing Short Descriptions and Narratives

As a next step, learners might be introduced to writing short descriptions and narratives. This involves developing coherence and cohesion in writing. Coherence refers to the implicit logical and epistemological structure of a text and cohesion refers to the linguistic means employed to make that structure explicit for the reader (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Harmer 2004: 22–24; Wallace 1992: 11–14; Hudson 2007: 173–178). Halliday and Hasan (1976: 13) identified five sorts of cohesive devices, namely: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical repetition/reiteration. Of particular relevance for learners are pronoun reference ('a boy and a girl ... they') and article reference ('a boy and a girl ... the boy'). Also important are conjunctions such as 'because' and 'although' and conjunctive adverbs such as 'therefore' and 'however' as well as direct lexical repetition (as in 'the boy ... the boy') and what Halliday and Hasan (1976: 277–282) called 'lexical reiteration', that is the use of near-synonyms ('the boy ... the youngster') or of words at different levels of specificity ('car ... vehicle') to refer to the same thing.

In descriptive writing, cohesion often involves use of pronoun reference and place-adverbial reference across sentence boundaries, as in 'A *girl* is sitting on a chair in a garden. *She* is reading a book. Behind *her* there is a field' One simple activity is for each learner (or learner group) to write a description of a slightly different picture and then hand

it to a learner (or group) who has not seen the original picture. All the pictures are then displayed on the wall and each learner or group decides which picture matches the description they have been given (a matching task).

For the establishment of cohesion in narrative writing, 'sequencing' time adverbials, for example, 'first', 'then', 'finally', as well as tense relations, especially simple and continuous past and past perfect tenses, are important. Learners can be made aware of this by doing paragraph-reconstruction tasks. Learners work in small groups and are first given the constitutive sentences of a narrative paragraph in jumbled order and asked to put them back into the right order and justify their decision (see Harmer 2015: 371–372 for an example). Their attention can be drawn to relevant cohesion markers and they can then write their own story based on the model and incorporate cohesive features into it.

In this way they will learn that in English the simple past tense is the normal or default tense for written narrative and the sequencing of verbs in the text represents the sequence of events being recounted as in, '(First) I came, (then) I saw, (and finally) I conquered.' They can be shown how adverbs not only make the time order clearer but can also express other relations such as cause and effect. For example, 'so' indicates cause and effect in, 'She finished her meal. Then the doorbell rang. So she went to the door.' As learners progress, they can be shown stories in which tenses are used to refer back to an earlier event (past perfect tense) or to show one event interrupting another (simple past and past continuous tenses). In such cases, appropriate use of adverbs makes these time relations even more fine-grained as in, 'She had *just* finished her meal and was *already* clearing the table when *suddenly* the phone rang.' Learners can be encouraged to build these features into their own stories. Wright and Hill (2008: 91–94) suggest some ways of doing this.

Picture sequences which form a narrative are another stimulus for narrative writing and there are many published collections of picture stories available. A problem-solving approach can be adopted by putting the pictures in jumbled order, having a blank picture frame in the sequence or leaving the final picture out, so as to have an open-ended story. Another refinement is to provide evidence of time elapsed from one picture to another (a clock on the wall in the picture, for example). Learners can then be asked to incorporate this information into their rendering of the story.

Another way of eliciting written narrative is to tell the learners a story using appropriate time adverbials, and then ask them to recall these words. The list is then displayed on the board. Next, learners are given the sentences which make up the story, but in jumbled order. They then reorder these appropriately. A variation to increase difficulty is to omit the time adverbials from the sentences in jumbled order and ask learners to add these themselves. In a final phase, learners then produce a story of their own along similar lines to the model story (Wright and Hill 2008: 89, 161).

Yet another well-known activity is writing a ‘chain narrative’ (Ur 2012: 160). The principle is that a group of, say, six learners writes a six-sentence narrative paragraph on a topic they are given or which they choose themselves. Usually the first sentence is specified. One learner then writes a second sentence which follows on from the preceding sentence, another learner writes the third sentence and so on. The final writer has to make the paragraph in some way conclusive. An elegant way of organising the chain narrative is the ‘story circle’, which makes it possible for all the group members to be working at the same time (on separate stories) and for multiple stories on the same topic to be produced and evaluated afterwards. The group of, say, six learners sits in a circle. Initially, each learner in the group has the same first sentence in front of them. They each write a (different) second sentence, then pass their papers to the learner next to them, who writes a following sentence and so it goes on until six versions of the story are completed. Various conditions can be introduced. For example, to practise discourse connection it can be specified that each sentence must begin with a connecting adverbial. A list of adverbials can be provided for learners. The narratives can finally be displayed for the whole class to evaluate.

The ‘dictogloss’ technique (Thornbury 1999: 82–85) can be used to introduce learners to writing stories with multiple paragraphs. The teacher tells learners a story, which is clearly divided into, for instance, three or four ‘oral paragraphs’. Suitable stories to choose are those where the breaks between paragraphs mark a change of scene, or a leap forwards or backwards in time. This will often be signalled by an initial adverbial of time or place at the beginning of the new paragraph, sometimes by both if a shift of time and scene is involved, for example ‘Meanwhile, back at the ranch ...’. While telling the story, the teacher indicates the paragraph boundaries by means of pause and intonation. Learners listen a number of times, they can make notes and then in groups they reconstruct the story, write down a group version and decide where to make the paragraph breaks. After the different versions have been compared by the whole class, learners can listen to the story again or see a written version of the original story and compare their versions with the original (see Harmer 2004: 74–76, 2015: 380–381 for examples).

The Transition to Discursive and Expository Writing

At intermediate level and above, learners need to make the transition to discursive and expository writing. By this is meant all writing which deals with abstract ideas and thus employs the language of written argumentation in English. Many learners will one day need to write essays, reports, recommendations, expositions and the like, whether in an educational or business context. As a very first step, learners need to

be introduced to the idea of the topic sentence of a paragraph and to practise identifying the topic sentence in well-chosen authentic paragraphs related to their needs and interests. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) five sorts of cohesive devices, namely: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical repetition/reiteration, mentioned above, provide a framework for understanding how ideas are linked in discursive writing. Particularly important are conjunctions which express abstract epistemological relations between two clauses within a sentence. These include reason ('because', 'since', 'as'), purpose ('so that', 'so as to', 'in order to', 'with the intention of'), result ('so', 'so that'), condition ('if', 'unless', 'in case'), concession ('although', 'while', 'whereas') and exception ('except that') (see Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 316–324). Equally important are conjunctive (linking) adverbs and adverbials which establish the relation between a new sentence and the previous one, for example: 'consequently', 'therefore' and 'as a result', (result); 'however', 'nevertheless' and 'despite this' (concession); 'on the other hand' (contrast) (see Greenbaum and Quirk 1990: 184–187).

Cloze techniques are one way of drawing learners' attention to paragraph organisation and connectivity (Johnson 2018: 256). This can be done by removing every *n*th (usually 7th) word from an authentic passage. It can also be done by removing linking adverbials and other cohesive devices. Another approach is not to leave blanks, but to switch the linking adverbials around, as in this example for university students of economics:

The techniques of modern large-scale manufacturing are based upon economies of scale. RATHER, many operations can be carried out at a much reduced cost per unit if the operation is to be carried out thousands of times rather than just a few times. THIS IS BECAUSE placing a large amount of manufacturing capacity under just one control does not guarantee economies of scale. CONSEQUENTLY, it furnishes the conditions for attaining them. HOWEVER, it would be a mistake to view economies of scale as an advantage which inevitably results as the extent of business operations is expanded.

Learners are given the task of rearranging the capitalised expressions appropriately. When they have done this, they can then be asked to decide which sentence is an explanation, a qualification, a result, a contrast and a general statement, respectively. In a final step, learners can be asked to reorganise the individual sentences. They are given the beginning of each sentence and have to complete it, as follows:

Economies of scale ... For many operations a much reduced cost per unit ... Economies of scale ... The conditions for attaining them ... To believe that ...

In a final phase, learners can write their own paragraphs on a topic related to their own areas of expertise but which follows the discourse structure of the model paragraph (parallel writing).

Using Pictures as a Stimulus for Writing

Learners need a lot of practice in writing, and the challenge for the teacher often resides in finding stimulating material which engages learners' interest and motivates them to express themselves in writing. One way of stimulating written expression is by using pictures rather than texts. This is particularly advantageous for less proficient learners since time is saved that would otherwise be spent on understanding the stimulus text before any writing could begin. Pictures can be used to lead in to various sorts of writing (see also Harmer 2004: 67–69).

Single pictures of landscapes, buildings and interiors of buildings, as well as various forms of ground plans and aerial views can be used to stimulate description. For learners of intermediate and lower-intermediate level, guidance will be needed on how to structure the description and in what manner it proceeds. A certain amount of technical vocabulary ('in the background', 'in the foreground') will need to be supplied. It is advisable, if at all possible, not to do the description as just a pedagogical exercise, but as a piece of functional writing (writing with a purpose) in a particular situation so that a specific genre is practised, for example an estate agent's description of a house or a police officer's description of the scene of a crime. This can be done within the context of role-play.

To stimulate narrative writing, picture sequences in the manner of a comic or cartoon sequence can be used, as already mentioned. The difficulty of the task can be eased by providing support, as follows:

- An accompanying gapped narrative text (cloze text) or a skeleton text (keyword text) can be provided so that learners just have to fill in the missing information rather than write their own text from scratch.
- Captions for each picture can be provided, and learners can use these as subheadings to structure their narrative.
- Speech bubbles can be provided for each picture so that learners can incorporate these as dialogue into their narrative if they wish.

Task difficulty can be increased, if appropriate, as follows:

- The captions or pictures can be presented in jumbled order.
- Instead of incorporating direct speech from the speech bubbles into their narrative, more advanced learners can transform the direct speech into indirect speech.
- Blank or gapped speech bubbles can be provided for learners to complete.

Reflective Writing (an Enigmatic Picture)

Enigmatic pictures which admit of different interpretations can be used to stimulate reflective writing. One possibility is to use a picture which is unambiguous for its intended audience but for intercultural reasons is enigmatic for the learner group, who can be asked to interpret the picture in writing. A newspaper picture I have often used is that of an elderly lady who has just won the National Lottery. Some learners tend to mistake the glass of champagne she is drinking for a glass of beer, which leads them to miss the whole point.

Another way of using pictures to stimulate reflection is to present action pictures which tell a story in the manner of a 'still' from a film. Pictures of train derailments, plane crashes, mass motorway pile-ups, floods, fires and the like are all suitable. Pictures of humorous mishaps or people being caught in the act of doing something they should not be doing are also effective stimuli. Learners can be asked to interpret the picture and write about what they speculate has just happened before the picture was taken and what will immediately follow. In all these cases, fine-grained use of a wide variety of tense forms – especially past continuous and future continuous forms – as well as adverbials and modal verbs to express various degrees of probability and possibility will be required. For practice in writing about the hypothetical, a question which is counterfactual to the picture can be posed ('What would have happened if ...?').

Evaluative Writing (Two or More Pictures for Comparison)

Pairs or groups of related pictures can be used to stimulate evaluative writing. Pictures of people are well-suited to this. Learners can be told that they have to select someone to do a particular job (for example, looking after someone's dog while the person is on holiday) based just on their appearance and justify their choice to the dog owner in writing. Pictures of real individuals unknown to the learners can be chosen, including criminals, highly praiseworthy, exceptional citizens and some ordinary individuals, for example, the teacher's brother-in-law.

Writing Which Accompanies a Picture

Pictures can also be used to stimulate specific genres of writing tied to the picture. These include 'Wanted' pictures of criminals, pictures of missing or lost pets, estate agents' pictures of property and pictures of cars for sale. Learners are given the picture and have to write an accompanying text based on examples of similar texts of the same genre. Learners can also be asked to write the accompanying story to a newspaper picture, for example of a plane crash. This can be done in groups, and afterwards learners can compare their productions with the

original article. To be able to do this task, learners will need some preparation on the special conventions of newspaper discourse, for instance that in newspaper articles the most important information comes first and less essential detail is added later, which enables newspaper readers to break off if they feel they already have enough information after the headline, the sub-headline or any of the paragraphs (van Dijk 1988). A refinement is for half the class to write an upmarket paper's report and the other half a tabloid report. This is suitable for advanced learners working within a theme-based syllabus which has a unit on newspapers and newspaper language.

Food for Thought

- Q. 1. Display questions are usually not asked outside classrooms and have come in for a lot of criticism from communicatively oriented TEFL theorists. However, display questions have a long and highly respectable history in education more generally, within the Socratic dialogic approach by which the teacher's carefully chosen questions guide the learner step by step towards understanding. How do you see the role of display questions in reading comprehension?
- Q. 2. Reading texts may be difficult for learners for various reasons. Find four difficult texts or passages, one of which is lexically difficult, one of which is grammatically difficult, one of which is pragmatically or culturally difficult and one of which is difficult because of its subject matter or argumentation. Consider how you would prepare learners for their respective problems in the 'pre-reading' and 'while-reading' phases.
- Q. 3. Imagine you have a class of lower-intermediate learners and you want to teach them to write personal and business e-mails in English. Which formal conventions/specific language will they need to be aware of? Which of the approaches mentioned in the chapter would you choose to teach them? Or would you employ a different approach?

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10 Literature in the Language Classroom

A Wide Definition of Literature for the EFL Classroom

For TEFL purposes it seems sensible to adopt a wide rather than a narrow definition of literature, embracing not only the ‘high’ literature of the classical canon, but also those ‘low’ forms of popular or folk literature in verse or prose to which Bakhtin (1981) drew attention. This includes, alongside novels, short stories and poems, genres such as nursery rhymes, pop songs, bedtime stories, fairy tales and comics as well as films and TV drama (see also Griffiths 2016 for more suggestions). The language of contemporary popular genres has the advantage that it tends to be closer to the vernacular than the more stylised language of high literature, especially older literature. It is also popular children’s and youth genres rather than the classical canon which provide input for first language development. For those learners who find reading difficult or uninspiring for whatever reason, then TV and film provide an alternative means of access to English-speaking culture. These media are readily available on the internet nowadays and advantage can be taken of such popular, vernacular genres as TV ‘soap operas’.

For children of primary school age, nursery rhymes and picture books are the relevant genres. Ghosn (2013: 135–136) discusses the selection of suitable story books for young learners of primary school age under consideration of a book’s literary and aesthetic merit, its enduring value, its developmental appropriateness, the universality of its theme or topic, its plot, its illustrations and its language. On the language of picture books, she comments:

The language in picture books should be rich and expressive but with some amusing repetition that allows for reader/listener predictions and confirmations. Ideally, grammatical structures and useful formulaic expressions will be repeated and made clear in the story context. Look also for vocabulary that provides synonyms and alternative expressions.

Ghosn (2013: 136)

For secondary school learners, Matz and Stieger (2015) discuss the advantages of using what are variously called ‘young adult’, ‘teenage’ or ‘youth’ novels, that is novels written for and about young people. In these novels the protagonists tend to be young people of similar age to the learners and the story often deals with concerns which are accessible to young people. Some attention should be given to ensuring that the novel will appeal to both sexes. In this respect Hesse (2009: 13–16) notes that whereas girls are generally willing to read ‘boys’ books’, boys are usually not willing to read ‘girls’ books’. For an annotated bibliography which includes picture books, children’s, youth and young adult fiction as well as poetry, graphic novels and story apps, see Bland (2018a: 277–300). For a discussion of story apps, see Brunsmeier and Kolb (2018).

In this chapter, however, focus will be on both verse and prose for adults, adolescents and children. Verse will include short poems as well as children’s verse, and the terms ‘verse’ and ‘poetry’ will be used interchangeably without any value judgement being attached to them. Concerning prose, focus will be on short novels and youth novels. Nothing will be said about reading plays in class because plays are written to be performed rather than read, are generally more difficult to deal with in the EFL classroom and are best reserved for mature, advanced learners interested in the genre.

Three Sets of Reasons for Reading Literature in the Language Classroom

The benefits of using literature in the language classroom include language-learning benefits, motivational benefits and intercultural benefits and these will now be explored.

Language-Learning Benefits

- Reading literature provides a great variety of authentic, situationalised language in a wide range of clearly defined settings and role relationships (O’Sullivan 1991: 3; Koutsompou 2015: 75).
- Reading literature provides practice in a variety of reading techniques, especially critical reading and empathetic reading (see Chapter 9 on reading techniques). Practice in empathetic reading can only be acquired by extensive reading of enjoyable books outside the classroom.
- Reading literature provides opportunities for developing inferencing and interpretative abilities so as to understand implicature, irony, imagery and other forms of indirect meaning (Griffiths 2016; Lazar 1993: 19; Collie and Slater 1987: 5).

Motivational Benefits

- Reading literature can be a powerful intrinsic motivator. This is because literature is written to be read for its own sake, for pleasure. The reader escapes from the real world and enters a fictional world with which he or she becomes psychologically involved (Collie and Slater 1987: 5–6; Lazar 1993: 15; Koutsompou 2015: 75). At best, the reader does not want to put the book down.
- Reading literature for pleasure can form the foundation for becoming a lifelong autonomous reader, which in turn contributes to the development of the personality (Lazar 1993: 19; Koutsompou 2015:76). Autonomous readers are willing, able and eager to read without having a teacher available. If this is to be achieved, it is important to select literature that is interesting enough to make learners want to read it and easy enough for them to understand without too much trouble. It is more important that the learner is interested enough to continue reading a short novel to the end than it is that every scrap of meaning has been wrung out of it – for every abandoned book is a demotivator for reading further books in English.

Intercultural Benefits

- Reading literature makes it possible to experience English-speaking cultures vicariously (Lazar 1993: 16–17; Collie and Slater 1987: 4). By ‘culture’ is meant the prevalent forms of social interaction and the values which underlie them in a speech community. At the most superficial levels these include rituals of greeting, conventions of eating and drinking, politeness conventions, behaviour within the family and in formal and informal situations at school, at work and in leisure and in social environments. At more subtle and complex levels, culture involves assumptions about human social interaction, social behaviour and value systems, which may be manifested in rituals and taboos (Grimm *et al.* 2015: 159–162). Language and culture are intertwined (Kramsch 1998). The child acquiring its first language is also simultaneously acquiring the cultural *mores* of its society. Any speech community shares not only a mental lexicon but also a mental encyclopaedia of cultural knowledge which lays the foundation for ‘cultural literacy’ (Hirsch 1988; Clark 1996). The mental encyclopaedia includes not only explicit knowledge learnt at school, for example that Henry VIII had six wives, but also implicit knowledge acquired indirectly through socialisation, for example when to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’.
- Reading literature also provides EFL learners with an alternative perspective on the world and on their own native culture, for

initially we all view the world through the spectacles of our own culture. Readers are encouraged to adopt this alternative perspective while reading, to reflect on the points of difference and, importantly, similarity between the two cultural perspectives and, in a further step, to see themselves as others see them (Ur 2012: 219–220).

- The repeated experience of reading successfully, and largely unaided, an authentic piece of literature can give learners the feeling that they belong to the community of English-speaking readers for whom it was written. This is not only an intercultural but also a motivational benefit.

Short Poems

Suitable Poetic Genres

Short poems encourage various reading techniques for different purposes, including empathetic reading, critical reading and form-focussed reading (all discussed in Chapter 9). Appropriate short poems may be read by intermediate or even lower-intermediate learners who are not yet in a position to read a short story or short novel. Short lyrical poems, including love poetry, descriptive poetry, reflective poetry and polemical poetry, are often suitable for use in the EFL classroom, as is humorous verse, including limericks, doggerel verse and riddles. For young learners, children's verse, including nursery rhymes, is suitable.

In selecting poems, the most important criterion, and the one often most difficult to gauge, is that of personal appeal to the learners. This will depend, among other things, on the learners' cultural background, age, maturity, interests and level of language proficiency. If possible, the poem should also fit in with the topics being covered in class at the time, which may be laid down by the syllabus or course book. A suitably chosen short poem is indeed often a good way of enriching the course book. Once a piece of verse which seems suitable has been found, it can be scrutinised more closely by considering how many of the following positive features it possesses:

- a personal, intimate tone, evocative of the speaking voice (as in much lyrical poetry and many dramatic monologues)
- the expression of personal emotions
- musicality imparted by rhythm, metre and rhyme
- language repetition with variation (as in refrains)
- formal brevity so that the poem can be read in a single classroom session
- inclusion of a riddle-like element, a sting in the tail or a surprise ending.
- clear physical division into stanzas

No single poem is likely to score highly on all these features. However, subsets of these features tend to co-occur in certain genres. For example, lyrical poems often display a personal intimate tone, musicality, formal brevity, emotional language and division into stanzas. Many humorous poems, on the other hand, are short and riddle-like in that the reader has to solve a problem while reading them. The riddle itself is an ancient literary form, popular in Anglo-Saxon and Latin literature. It survives today in popular culture and in children's culture, and lends itself well to exploitation in the EFL classroom.

However, the poem under consideration should also be scrutinised for the following features which, if present, may make comprehension difficult:

- considerable deviation syntactically and/or lexico-semantically from the language of prose
- greatly compressed syntax, ellipsis and lack of cohesive links, which may require the reader to make difficult bridging inferences
- double meanings, plays on words, reliance on secondary associative meaning, metaphor, puns and allusion
- stylised poetic diction, archaic language, word coinage or use of a word in a nonce sense

These features in themselves do not rule out a poem. Indeed, many of these features offer possibilities for exploitation in the classroom. It is a question of matching the difficulty level of the poem to the proficiency level of the learner group so that learners are challenged but not over-challenged. Learners may need teacher support to cope with the language within their zone of proximal development (ZPD) but this zone should not be exceeded and learners should be able to solve the problems with teacher support within the time available rather than just being given explanations which are beyond their grasp. (You might like to look back at Chapter 1 for what was said there about the ZPD.)

A Three-Phase Teaching Approach

In Chapter 9 a three-phase approach to reading short prose texts in class was presented. This same approach with some modifications can be used as a basis for reading short poems in the classroom. The following remarks on each of the three phases should therefore be read as a supplement to the guidelines given in Chapter 9, and it is probably a good idea to look at them again at this point before reading on.

Pre-Reading Phase

In the pre-reading phase the learners might be given the title of the poem and asked to infer what they can from it. Alternatively, the teacher might

recite the opening lines of the poem to the learners and ask them to predict how they think it will continue, what it will be about, even, if feasible, where and when it was written. This can be done by means of brainstorming and probing questions. Another approach is to start with a relevant picture related to the topic of the poem or with a picture of the poet. If the name of the poet is likely to be familiar to the learners, further brainstorming may elicit what the class knows about the poet's life and times. The teacher may introduce into the discussion a small number of crucial words from the poem which might be cleared up in advance and then displayed. To conclude the 'pre-reading phase' and lead in to the 'while-reading phase', the poem might then be recited to the class by the teacher, first without learners having access to the text and then with them having access to the text.

While-Reading/While-Listening Phase

In the 'while-reading/while-listening phase', the poem will be read silently, stanza by stanza. Some classes, however, may prefer to first read the poem in its entirety before going through stanza by stanza, and very short poems of a few lines can be read all at once anyway. The teacher will provide guiding questions in advance of each stanza. These will very often focus learners' attention on key vocabulary and syntactic aspects, especially where these differ from the standard language and are difficult to understand. At the end of each stanza a rough meaning for the stanza should be arrived at. This may involve focus on rhetorical features, including metaphor, double meanings and the like. The aim should be for the class to solve the problem to their own satisfaction. They may first work in groups, then the results from the individual groups can be pooled for the whole class. Residual problems can be cleared up by the teacher, but those places in the poem which are ambiguous and open to interpretation should be left open.

Poems are meant to be recited and recitation might conclude the while-reading phase. The teacher can recite the poem in stanzas or as a whole to provide a model for learners to follow. Alternatively, it is often possible to use a recorded recitation, even a recitation by the poet, which may be available, for instance, on YouTube. Learners can follow a recitation while reading silently, can whisper the words during the recitation or can read the poem out loud in chorus to accompany the reciter. Young learners will enjoy reciting poems, first in chorus as a whole class, following the teacher as model and then individually, perhaps one stanza per learner. For older children and adults, too, who may be more reticent, this procedure is also recommendable. Poems which have embedded dialogue are particularly suitable for recitation since roles can be assigned to individual learners. Bland (2015) stresses that children's poems and rhymes should be performed in the classroom.

She argues that children will delight in the rhythm, rhyme and repetition, all of which further memorisation and provide formulaic patterns which serve as a basis for the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary.

Post-Reading Phase

In the post-reading phase a task-based approach is often advisable, especially for school language learners who may not like literary discussion of a poem. Tasks can include matching the poem to pictures or matching the poem to other poems, which may, for example, treat the same topic from another perspective. Other tasks include writing sequels or prologues to the poem in prose or in verse. It is also possible for learners to write their own short poem on the model of the poem which has been read. Albers (2015: 106–110) reports using Carl Sandburg's six-line poem 'Fog' (www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45032/fog-56d2245d7b36c) which starts 'The fog comes/on little cat feet', with a school class of 14–15-year-olds. In the post-reading phase the learners were asked to write their own short poem in which they were to compare a natural phenomenon to an animal. Albers presents a poem produced by one learner which starts, 'The rain is coming suddenly/like bees.'

Humorous Verse for Children

For young learners of limited proficiency, children's verse, especially humorous children's verse, is a valuable way of introducing theme-based vocabulary. An example would be Kenn Nesbitt's poem 'School Supplies' (www.poetry4kids.com/poems/school-supplies/). In this poem the speaker is ostensibly a young child of school age who lists all the equipment a child needs for school. The metre and rhythm aid memorisation and children will enjoy reading the poem out loud. It can be fun to successively speed up the pace of reading out loud to get the best crescendo effect, which is implicit in the metre. This makes for excellent articulation practice. There is a joke in the tail of the poem as the child adds to its list of necessary school supplies items such as a new computer, a motor scooter and a giant screen TV and notes that mom is looking 'nauseated'. To understand the joke, learners not only have to work out what the new, rare and difficult-to-pronounce word 'nauseated' might mean in context, but also to understand how the word field of 'school supplies' has been overextended. If all goes well, the children will rise to the cognitive challenge and get the joke, which is a first step on the road to appreciating humour in English. The fact that this is a children's poem ensures that the humour is suitably pitched at children rather than adults.

Another Kenn Nesbitt poem with the joke in the tail which is suitable for young learners of limited proficiency is 'My dog does my homework'

(www.poetry4kids.com/poems/my-dog-does-my-homework/). This short poem is also written in the first person and the speaker is a child who tells how the dog not only does the homework every evening but gets all the answers right. The syntax is simple and conforms to prose, the tone is personal and the vocabulary unproblematic except for the word 'slobbered', which is crucial for understanding the joke in the tail, namely that the homework cannot be handed in because the dog slobbers all over it. Learners have to infer the meaning of the word 'slobbered' from context (top-down processing) and from the word's sound symbolism (bottom-up processing). If all goes well, young learners will be motivated to solve the riddle-like problem and to remember the word, which is a useful one to know.

Humorous Verse for Adults

Maya Angelou's poem 'The Health Food Diner' (<https://allpoetry.com/the-health-food-diner>), which satirises excessive preoccupation with healthy eating, is a good example of a humorous poem which could be integrated into a thematic unit on 'food' or 'health' for adolescent or adult learners. However, as tends to be the case in 'listing' poems, nouns tend to predominate and the lack of relevant verbs, adjectives and adverbs would need to be corrected for at other points in a teaching unit on food.

For more advanced adult learners, an example of a motivating piece of humorous verse would be 'The Purist' by Ogden Nash (<https://westegg.com/nash/purist.html>), where the joke is once again in the tail. The poem is about a certain Professor Twist, a scientist who 'never bungles'. When told that his wife has been eaten by an alligator, he '... could not but smile, "You mean," he said, "a crocodile."' The syntax of the poem conforms to prose and the only difficult word is 'bungle', which could be covered in the pre-reading phase and is a useful word to learn. The word 'purist' does not occur in the poem itself, and it is probably best to let learners infer the meaning from the joke in the last line and discuss this in the post-reading phase. Follow-up work could involve research on the differences between alligators and crocodiles.

Descriptive Poems

A suitable children's descriptive poem which could also be used with adults of limited proficiency is 'Four Seasons' by Cecil Frances Alexander (www.dltk-holidays.com/spring/poem/m-4seasons.htm). Each of its first four stanzas is devoted to a description of spring, summer, autumn and winter, respectively, without naming the season concerned, while the fifth stanza mentions the cyclical nature of the four seasons. This structure provides a basis for structuring the lesson. The poem

constitutes a riddle and is well-suited to a matching exercise in which the seasons are matched to the stanzas. The riddle element can be further increased by giving learners the poem without its title and asking them to supply a title or, for less proficient learners, to choose the correct title from a choice of, say, three or four options. Alternatively, the learners could be given the poem with the title and asked to label each of the first four stanzas with the correct season. In the post-reading phase learners can say what their favourite season is and justify their choice to their fellow learners. This could also be done as written homework.

This poem is also well-suited to recitation and to analysis of rhyme and metre. The rhyming couplets (aabb), are repeated from stanza to stanza, which is a nice easy rhyme pattern for novice poetry readers to identify. There are various instances of alliteration which can also be focussed on ('a coat of clover clothes the hills', 'slush and sleet') and of structural repetition ('And I must dance and I must sing'). Directing learners' attention to these can constitute a first step towards their becoming aware of poetic devices. Because the rhyme scheme makes the lines rather predictable, the poem is well-suited to an exercise in which words are blacked out and learners have to insert a suitable item, relying on rhyme, rhythm, semantics and structure, for example:

The ground is thick with slush and sleet/And I can barely feel my ____.

If this is too difficult for a particular group of learners, then scaffolding can be provided, as in:

And I can barely feel my f____.

or even:

And I can barely feel my f__t.

Alternatively, the final word of all the second lines of each couplet can be omitted and given in a jumbled list so that learners have the task of putting the jumbled items in the correct place in the poem.

Love Poetry for Advanced Learners

One great advantage of short poems is that they often deal with universal topics to which most people can relate and which transcend cultural differences, even though the setting may be strongly culturally specific. One of the great universal topics is love, and all the things that can go wrong with it. Humorous love poems such as John Betjeman's 'A Subaltern's Love Song' are suitable for the EFL classroom. In this case a reading is available on YouTube so that learners can appreciate the metre and rhyme and of course use the rendition as a model for recitation (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zh5YmyH3EGI).

Rather more sardonic treatments of love can also work well, such as Roger McGough's '40 Love' (<http://a-poem-a-day-project.blogspot.de/2012/07/day-25-40-love.html>), a poem about a middle-aged couple playing tennis. The poem is set out on the page with a gap in the middle of each line and the iconographic meaning of this layout can be focussed on, as can the double meaning of the title and the literal and figurative uses of the word 'net'. The poem is thus well-suited to a cognitively based, problem-solving approach, with the emphasis being on guiding the learners towards solutions rather than imposing interpretations on them. In the pre-reading phase the relevant language of tennis scores can be explored. However, the unravelling of the double meaning of the title is probably best postponed to the post-reading phase. The post-reading phase also invites discussion about the idea of lovers growing apart in middle age: an idea which should be familiar to all adolescent and adult learners. As follow-up work in the 'post-reading phase', role-play of a counselling agency for the couple can be conducted. Learners may like to create retrospective biographies for the couple, too, to make the counselling more realistic.

Advanced learners may find it motivating to find they can read older poetry. Some older love poems are quite accessible for advanced learners precisely because the theme is universal. A very accessible love poem, the language of which is simple but emotionally evocative, is 'First Love' by John Clare (1793–1864) (www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50263/first-love-56d22d33757cd). The poem deals with the experience of being in love. Poetic and archaic language features do not greatly impede comprehension. As a post-reading task learners can be asked to modernise the language of the poem, making only minimal changes, and to write it down in prose. They will be surprised at how modern it sounds. In further follow-up exercises, prologues and sequels in prose can be written. The poem ends with the couplet 'My heart has left its dwelling place/And can return no more.' This image of the separation of the heart from the suffering lover is very old and learners can do follow-up research to trace the image in literature and songs through the ages and across cultures. One line of research would be to see how it continues to thrive in popular culture, for example in the lyrics of pop songs. Another line of research would be for learners to find out about the poet on the internet. They will discover there was indeed a woman with whom Clare was unhappily in love for many years, and that it may have been this love which drove him to the madness which overcame him in his final years. Rather more difficult but still accessible is Clare's short poem 'I Am!' (www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43948/i-am), which starts 'I am—yet what I am none cares or knows', which deals with alienation and rejection.

An even older love poem which is accessible for advanced learners is 'To My Dear and Loving Husband' by Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672)

(www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/my-dear-and-loving-husband). The poem starts with the idea of the loving couple being one, 'If ever two were one, then surely we, / If ever man were loved by wife, then thee,'. Because this image of the two lovers being inseparable is so familiar, not only in English-speaking cultures, comprehension should be unproblematic for advanced learners despite the archaic pronouns and the complicated syntax.

Polemical and Reflective Poems for Advanced Learners

Polemical poems are suitable for advanced learners because they invite a rejoinder or reply to the argument. It is sometimes possible to find two polemical poems which take up opposing positions on the same topic. For example, on the topic of the First World War, 'Peace' by Rupert Brooke (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/13074/peace>), on the one hand, versus 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' by Wilfred Owen (www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47393/anthem-for-doomed-youth) or 'Break of Day in the Trenches' by Isaac Rosenberg (www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/13535/break-of-day-in-the-trenches), on the other, could be contrasted.

Another polemical poem on war, suitable for advanced learners, is Carl Sandburg's 'Grass' (www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45034/grass-56d2245e2201c). Towns and cities are another topic on which many suitable polemical poems can be found, for example 'Chicago', also by Carl Sandburg (www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/12840/chicago). A polemical poem which unites the themes of towns and war is 'Slough' by John Betjeman (www-cdr.stanford.edu/intuition/Slough.html).

Reflective poems, particularly those which invite completion or addition, are also suitable for the advanced EFL classroom. An example is Robert Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken' (1916) (www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken). The idea of choosing which of two roads to take is a familiar one. The syntax of the poem is that of prose and the vocabulary is everyday. A picture of two paths diverging in a wood in autumn with the leaves already turned to yellow is a good lead-in to the poem in the 'pre-reading phase' since the wood is described as 'yellow' in the first line. Guiding questions can alert the learners to the figurative meaning of the poem and to the switch to the future continuous tense ('I shall be telling this with a sigh') to express the prediction with which the poem closes, namely that in the far-distant future ('ages and ages hence') the poet will be recounting how he took the less frequently used road in the wood 'and that has made all the difference' (final line).

The nicely idiomatic phrase 'to make all the difference' and what it implies can be focussed on in the post-reading phase. The poem is also

well-suited to structural analysis, and further follow-up work might focus on the five-line stanzas, the rhyme scheme (abaab) and the metre (stress patterns). Finally, the poem might be used as a springboard for learners to write about a choice of roads (literal or metaphorical) they were once confronted with and the consequences of their choice. This will require good command of tenses.

Short Novels

Selecting a Short Novel

Once learners have reached upper-intermediate level, the first major step on the road to becoming an autonomous and extensive reader in English should be taken, namely the selection of a short story or short novel to be read by the class as a whole. Careful selection is important and the following catalogue of questions may be helpful (see also Nuttall 1996: 170–180.; Lazar 1993: 52–56; Hesse 2009: 12–13; Bland 2018b: 12):

- Are the plot, characters and setting appropriate to the age and interests of the learners? (Lazar 1993: 53, 56; Nuttall 1996: 170–171; Bland 2018b: 12)
- Are the plot, characters and setting appropriate to the literary and cultural background knowledge of the learners? (Lazar 1993: 54; Bland 2018b: 12)
- Is the language appropriate to the learners' level of proficiency? (Lazar 1993: 53)
- Is the length of the book appropriate to the time available? (Lazar 1993: 55)
- Is the plot relatively straightforward?
- Is the narrative technique straightforward and chronological?
- Is there a small number of easily identifiable main characters?
- Can learners, especially young learners, empathise with any of the main characters? (Bland 2018b: 12)
- Is there variety in terms of characters, settings, events, actions and emotions?
- Are there some clearly defined scenes which are exploitable for language-learning activities? (Lazar 1993: 55; Nuttall 1996: 171–174)
- Is the book authentic (neither simplified, abridged, nor a parallel text)? (Nuttall 1996: 177–178)
- Is the physical presentation of the book attractive (book cover, typesetting and illustrations)? (Nuttall 1996: 178–179; Bland 2018b: 12)
- Is the book compatible with the syllabus? (Lazar 1993: 55)

It is rare that any single novel or short story fully satisfies all these criteria, but if a book fails to satisfy most of them, then it is probably best not to use it. If at all possible, learners should be involved in the selection process although this may not be advisable for novice readers, who may not be able to make a principled choice. The more cognitively mature the class is and the more experience they have of reading, both in their own language and in English, the more they will be able to participate in the selection process. However, it is not advisable to give a class a completely free choice. Rather, the teacher should preselect between two and six books which satisfy most of the above criteria and present this short list for the class to choose from. In this way nothing can go seriously wrong. A whole classroom session should be devoted to the selection process and this should be carefully planned, since the choice made by the class must be abided by. It is worth bearing in mind that the physical appearance of the books shown for selection may influence learners' choices and it is clearly undesirable for the books to be literally judged by their covers. For this reason it is worth ensuring that all the books are reasonably new, clean, attractive and typographically reader-friendly.

The procedure for an advanced class would be to work in groups: one group for each book. Each group would browse through its book (as one might in a bookshop) and finally produce a group evaluation of it based on a catalogue of criteria provided by the teacher, including aspects such as overall length, characters, setting, subgenre (for instance, detective story), language difficulty and likely interest value of the book. After an evaluation has been arrived at, groups would be shuffled with at least one person per re-formed group from each of the original groups so that each book is represented. Within each group the evaluations of each book are compared and a group decision is made on which book to recommend. Then the whole class can discuss the decisions of each of the groups and a final decision can be reached on which book to read. It is important that each group has adhered to the criteria catalogue so that evaluations are easily comparable.

Less advanced classes should only be given two or three books to choose from, and more than one group should assess each book. They should be provided with one or more of the following:

- short excerpts from the book to read
- the publisher's blurb for the book
- a brief outline of characters, setting and situation which does not give away the plot
- pictures or maps of the setting

Often there are various editions of a book available and some thought should be given to which edition to choose. Generally, learners will prefer

clear, reasonably large print on bright white pages with clear spaces between lines and wide margins rather than a lot of small-font text crammed on to pages with meagre margins and close spacing between the lines. Illustrated editions are generally preferable to editions without illustrations and a bright, illustrated front cover is preferable to a drab front cover without visual material. So as to make the reading experience as authentic as possible, an edition produced for native speakers rather than a didactic edition for foreign learners is advisable. Learners themselves can be involved in the decision process of which edition to choose. The issue of ownership is important and for this reason each learner should possess his or her own personal copy. However, it is essential that everyone has the same edition. Everyone must be on the same page, as it were!

What Makes a Short Novel Too Difficult?

A major concern is that the novel should not be too difficult for learners. However, books may be difficult for various reasons. Some of the major sorts of difficulty are conceptual difficulty, intercultural difficulty, topic-related difficulty and language difficulty:

- conceptual difficulty
Conceptual difficulty arises when the ideas being expressed are themselves complex. An example might be the philosophical reflection one finds in George Eliot's novels, for instance. This sort of difficulty can be identified by asking the question. Could learners understand this book if it was written in their mother tongue? As a rule of thumb, learners should never be asked to read something which would be too difficult for them in their mother tongue.
- intercultural difficulty
Intercultural difficulty in reading arises when the writer takes for granted certain knowledge about the culture which EFL learners may lack. EFL learners may, for example, find the cultural *mores* represented in the story puzzling if these are very different from those of their own native culture or they may view the novel from their own cultural perspective, which can lead to misunderstanding. These problems of spatial dislocation can be compounded by problems of temporal dislocation if the novel is set in, or was written in, a bygone age. Nineteenth-century novels with their social *mores* in the area of marriage conventions and parental authority, for instance, are likely to be difficult even for native-speaker readers, especially young readers, since this is a world far removed from their own experience. In pre-selecting a class reader, it is therefore often worthwhile for the teacher to go through the book and mark aspects of setting, plot and characters that are alien to the learners' contemporary native culture and, conversely, aspects which are readily culturally transferable.

- topic-related difficulty
Topic-related difficulty arises when learners lack background knowledge about the area of life with which the novel deals. A famous example is Herman Melville's (very long) novel *Moby Dick* which deals with whaling. The problem is not limited to the inevitable occurrence of difficult technical words. The real difficulty will lie in the fact that much background information may not be explicitly stated but left implicit. There is, however, a positive side to topic-related difficulty for the foreign reader, namely that topic knowledge can in part compensate for limited language competence. If the learner is not only informed about the topic but also interested in it, intrinsic motivation is likely to operate. For this reason topics should, wherever possible, be matched to learners' interests.
- language difficulty
Language difficulty may involve pragmatics, syntax and lexis, as discussed in Chapter 9. However, provided the gist of the story can be understood and learners are sufficiently interested and motivated, then there is no reason to reject the book. Learners' ability to infer syntactic and lexical meaning from context should not be underestimated. This is all that is required for comprehension. If appropriate, but only if appropriate, follow-up work on lexis and syntax can focus on productive use.

Screening Short Novels for Language Difficulty

There are various measures for assessing lexical and syntactic difficulty. For lexical difficulty these include 'lexical density' and the 'type-token ratio' of lexical words (see McCarthy 1990: 71–73). By lexical density is meant the percentage of a text's total words made up of lexical words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs). The greater the percentage, the more lexically dense and potentially more difficult the text is. To calculate lexical density, the procedure is as follows:

1. Take a number of pages chosen at random from the book.
2. Count the total number of words.
3. Count all the lexical words (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs).
4. Divide the total number of words by the number of lexical words and express this as a percentage.

However, another factor also plays a role in lexical difficulty, namely how many of the lexical words are different words (types) rather than repeat occurrences of the same word (tokens). This figure can be obtained by conducting a type-token ratio test of the lexical words. To calculate the type-token ratio:

1. Count the number of lexical words which are different words (types), ignoring repeat occurrences of the same word (tokens). In

performing this count, word types are defined as a common stem plus inflectional morphemes. Thus 'wash', 'washing' and 'washed' are all tokens of one type, not three separate types.

2. Then divide the total number of lexical words (tokens) by this smaller number of different lexical words (types) and express this as a ratio of types to tokens.

For example, if there are 100 occurrences of lexical words (tokens) in the passage, but these consist of only 20 different words (types), then 100 divided by 20 equals 5 and the type-token ratio is 1:5, that is, 1 type to 5 tokens. The lowest mathematically possible type-token ratio is 1:1, which would mean that there is no lexical repetition, so the text is potentially lexically very difficult. Higher values of the second element in the ratio mean there is more and more lexical repetition.

Measures of syntactic difficulty include number of 'words per sentence', 'words per T-Unit' and 'subordinate clauses per T-Unit'. To calculate words per sentence:

- Take a number of pages chosen at random from the work and find the average number of words per sentence for each page by dividing the total number of words by the number of sentences.

Generally speaking, comprehension becomes more difficult as sentence length increases, so the higher the average number of words per sentence, the more difficult the text is likely to be.

However, sentence structure also plays a role, since coordinated clauses joined by 'and' produce long sentences, but because there is neither subordination nor embedding, the text is still quite easy to process. For this reason it is more accurate, if a little more time-consuming, to calculate not words per sentence, but words per T-Unit ('minimal terminable unit'). A T-Unit is the shortest unit which it is grammatically allowable to punctuate as a sentence. It is defined as 'one main clause plus any subordinate clause or non-clausal structure that is attached to or embedded in it' (Hunt 1970: 4). A clause in turn is defined as 'any expression containing a subject or coordinated subjects and a finite predicate [verb] or coordinated predicates' (ibid.). As examples of clauses, Hunt gives, 'Jim and I went home', 'I went home and rode my bike', 'Jim and I went home and rode our bikes.' However, 'Jim went home and I rode my bike' would be two clauses and also two T-Units. To calculate words per T-Unit:

1. Count the number of T-Units.
2. Count the total number of words, excluding 'and', 'or' and 'but' between T-Units.
3. Divide the number of words by the number of T-Units.

The higher the average number of words per T-Unit, the more difficult the text is likely to be.

An even more sensitive test for syntactic complexity is to calculate the average number of subordinate clauses per T-Unit, as follows. To do this:

1. Count the number of T-Units.
2. Count the number of subordinate clauses.
3. Divide the number of T-Units by the number of subordinate clauses.

The more subordinate clauses per T-Unit, the more complex is the syntax and potentially more difficult to understand.

Particularly difficult syntax is characterised by the subordinated clauses being embedded within the main clauses rather than attached to them. To measure this, a test for embedding can be carried out, as follows:

1. Count the number of T-Units.
2. Count the number of embedded subordinate clauses.
3. Divide the number of T-Units by the number of embedded subordinate clauses.

The more embedded subordinate clauses per T-Unit, the more difficult the text is likely to be, syntactically.

Concerning pragmatic difficulty, this is best assessed by taking a number of passages at random from the novel and examining the cohesion markers discussed in Chapter 9. In particular, if sentence-linking adverbials tend to be lacking and learners have to make difficult bridging inferences from one sentence to another, and if pronoun reference across sentences is not clear, then the text is likely to produce difficulties for learners.

Planning a Three-Phase Reading Course

How quickly a class will read a novel depends on many variables, including the proficiency and reading experience of the learners, their motivation, how much class time per week is available, how much time for reading out of class is available and what other commitments learners have. It is, however, not a good idea to have a class reader drag on for too long, since motivation and interest may flag, the plot may be forgotten and outside events may interfere with completing the novel.

A three-phase plan of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading can be applied. The novel will usually be read mainly out of class. At the end of each classroom session learners should be given a section of the book to read for next time, starting at the end of the pre-reading

phase (see below) and extending up to the end of the while-reading phase (see below). In the post-reading phase writing activities based on the book can be incorporated. These can be used for assessment purposes, should the syllabus or curriculum require this (see O'Sullivan 1991: 5). In the while-reading phase, classroom sessions should generally not be used for reading a new section of the book but for consolidating what has just been read at home and for preparing learners for the next piece of reading to be done. This is part of training learners to become autonomous readers. However, learners should not just be left alone to read the book. The classroom sessions are vital for providing learner support and function as bridging structures between out-of-class reading phases.

Pre-Reading Phase

The aim of the pre-reading phase is to arouse expectations about the book. In the first introductory session, a possible point of departure is the book's cover and the book's title. Learners can be encouraged to brainstorm possible literal and metaphorical meanings of the title. They can then speculate on what the book may be about. Any ambiguity or a secondary allusion in the title which the class does not spot should not be gone into at this stage but taken up after the whole book has been read. Instead of this approach, or as a follow-up to round off the first session, the teacher might read aloud the opening of the book to the class, without the class having access to the printed page. The class can then speculate on what they think might happen next. The teacher should be careful not to give away what actually does happen next! The class's predictions can be discussed in later sessions after they have read some of the book.

In a second introductory session, brainstorming about the time and place in which the book is set might be done. The teacher might supply appropriate pictures of the setting. Key background information, for example about the profession of a major character, may be provided by the teacher if probing indicates that learners do not possess this knowledge already. As much relevant information should be elicited from the class as possible and the teacher should supplement or correct any wrong assumptions parsimoniously. Only in areas where it appears that learners are vastly uninformed or actually misinformed compared to the intended native-speaker readership, should the teacher provide copious information to redress the balance. Concerning vocabulary, only a very limited number of key words (no more than five or six) which are vital for getting started with the book should be discussed at this pre-reading stage.

Learners should start reading the book after the first or second pre-reading sessions and be asked to get to a specific point for the following session. Rather than saying, 'Read to page 10 for next week,' it is better

to say, 'Read to the end of Chapter 1' for next week, or 'Read up to "he stepped off the train and looked at the sleepy little town he had said goodbye to all those years ago" on page 11, line 7.' Where possible, learners should be asked to read to a cliff-hanger point.

Starting in this session and continuing for each session of the 'while-reading' phase, a small number of guiding questions, perhaps between three and seven, should be set to help learners through their allotted out-of-class reading (see Chapter 9 on 'guiding questions'). Answers to these questions will form the basis of the first half of the following in-class session each week (see 'while-reading phase', below). If learners are keeping a reading log, the guiding questions can help them to structure their log entries (see 'reading logs' below).

While-Reading Phase

Each classroom session in the 'while-reading' phase falls into two parts. The first part consists of consolidation work on the section of the book which has just been read out of class since the last session and the second part consists of preparation for the next section of the book to be read, including the provision of guiding questions. For the consolidation part, learners work in small groups and compare their answers to the guiding questions. Any difference of opinion within groups can then be discussed later in the session by the whole class, or the teacher can be asked for help. Every effort should be made to ensure that the classroom sessions do not just degenerate into re-reading the last section assigned for reading at home. If some backtracking is absolutely necessary in class, then it is better to concentrate on one or two key scenes from the previous section. If possible, the teacher should refrain from beginning each session by summarising the plot to date. This might encourage some learners not to read at home and simply to rely on the teacher's plot updates.

This approach is not without its practical problems, for which it is best to be prepared. In particular, some class members (the high-fliers) will tend to do the reading and come to class already armed with full answers to the guiding questions, while others (the laggards) will tend to fall behind in their reading, and, if left to their own devices, would fall hopelessly behind and be lost for ever after a few sessions. The aim of the group work is to iron out these differences after each reading assignment. If all goes well, discussion of the guiding questions in groups will not only bring the laggards up to date but will have a disciplining effect on them since they will not want to be found lacking by their peers. In this regard, at least for school classes, learners should generally not be left to form their own working groups since there is then the very real danger that the laggards will choose to stick together within their shared comfort zone and the high-fliers may also stick together. Rather, the class

should work in mixed groups of high-fliers, average-pace readers and laggards. A good policy is for groups to be selected by the teacher at the beginning of each session with one member of each group being exchanged each week.

The second part of each ‘while-reading’ classroom session is devoted to preparation for the next section of the book to be read. This may include the teacher reading the opening of the next section or chapter out loud, and, if a change of scene or a shift in time is involved, probing to see if learners have grasped this. Relevant character developments should also be discussed and expectations about pending new developments in the plot elicited. Finally, as already mentioned under ‘pre-reading phase’, new guiding questions should be set to guide learners through their next chunk of reading. These questions should focus on possible surprises learners may experience while reading and should be so formulated that they do not actually give the plot away in advance. For example, ‘Why do you think character X reacts the way she does after she learns character B’s secret?’ (This question neither gives away the reaction nor the content of the secret.) Learner reactions to guiding questions should always be taken up in the following classroom session. More advanced classes can be asked to formulate their own guiding questions (see Kucza 2012).

Post-Reading Phase

How much classroom time is available for this phase will vary, but after the book has been read learners should produce something of their own which goes beyond the book and encourages them to reflect on what they have read. This may be done individually or in groups. It is best in the final weeks of the while-reading phase to give learners a choice of possible activities to choose from, but to be open to any further suggestions learners may make themselves. Possible post-reading activities include:

- analysing the language of a key passage
- rewriting a chapter or scene from the perspective of another character
- rewriting a key dialogue from the book, replacing one of the participants by oneself
- rewriting a dated scene or dialogue (perhaps an argument between parent and child or two lovers) so as to bring it up to date
- presenting the supposed viewpoint of a major or minor character on something which occurs in the story
- importing a character from another book in place of an existing character and rewriting a scene as this character might act
- dramatising a scene (see Bamford and Day 2004: 115–121)

- contacting the author via the publisher by e-mail and posing questions (whole class activity)
- writing a prologue or a sequel to the book
- dividing the story into a certain number of episodes for TV dramatisation purposes, trying to close each episode at a cliff-hanger point
- rewriting a section to change the plot development
- writing an alternative ending, perhaps providing a happy rather than a sad ending or vice versa (see Bamford and Day 2004: 164)
- filling in something not included in the narrative, such as what character X did while in place Y
- adding a fictitious dialogue of the pattern, 'What would characters X and Y have said if they had met at point Z in the story?'
- writing an inner monologue for a character expressing what he or she was thinking when he or she did this or that (see Bamford and Day 2004: 148)
- writing a psychologist's report on one of the characters
- writing a review of the book
- (for suitably talented and interested learners) making a set of illustrations for the book
- (for suitably talented and interested learners) designing an improved book cover
- writing an introduction to the book aimed especially at foreign learners
- writing a blurb for the book

Many of the activities mentioned above are well-suited to group work. Some can be done in classroom sessions, some out of class as project work and some can be done within the context of keeping a reading log (see also Koutsompou 2015: 77–78 for some further suggestions). For assessment purposes written tasks of the 'personal response' sort suggested in Bamford and Day (2004: 148) can be set. These include writing an appraisal of the character the learner most or least identifies with, or, alternatively, assuming the role of a character and writing either a letter to a friend or a diary entry at a particular point in the story. A further variation is for learners to imagine that one of the characters has moved in next door to them and to describe a day spent with the character. Alternatively, learners can imagine that a character has written to them for advice on some point and they should write a reply (see also Bamford and Day 2004: 155). Yet another idea is for learners to mention any lesson for their own lives they have learned from the novel.

Reading Logs

Class readers do not necessarily have to be accompanied by a reading log. However, a reading log provides the learner with a personal, tangible

record of his or her reading experience. It records the learner's emotional interaction with the book, encourages ongoing reflection on reading and promotes individualised learning and learner autonomy. This is far better than doing tasks which have been set by the teacher. Kaupmann (2012), working with children aged 13–14 years in mixed ability classes in a German secondary school, stresses that the reading log caters for individual interests, different levels of reaction, quantitative variation in production and different speeds of reading. For these reasons a reading log is particularly valuable for learners embarking on reading their first short novel as a class. If a reading log is to be kept by novice readers, the pre-reading phase will have to be extended by one or two extra sessions devoted to explaining how to keep a reading log. The extra time and effort spent in explanation and setting things up at the beginning will be amply repaid by the benefits which accrue in the following weeks.

It is, incidentally, a good idea to use the term 'log' rather 'diary' or 'journal' with learners. It suggests a journey or voyage, as in a ship's log. One way of introducing the term in the 'pre-reading' phase is to explain what a ship's log is and point out that certain features of a ship's log are relevant for the reading log. In particular, the ship's log is written up at the end of each tillerman's turn of duty and, similarly, the reading log should be brought up to date as soon as possible after reading each allotted section of the novel so as to mirror the reader's immediate reactions. Furthermore, the ship's log charts the ship's course but also records anything out of the ordinary which attracts the tillerman's attention and, similarly, the reading log should chart the course of the plot but also record things which engage the reader's attention. This means it should not be limited to chapter summaries. Learners will appreciate being given a short list of possible items to include in their reading logs and they should be encouraged to vary their choice of items appropriately (not just mechanically) from entry to entry.

Possible reading-log entries include:

- personal reactions to new characters, places and institutions introduced in the book as well as plot developments or actions of a character which surprised, shocked, disappointed or favourably impressed the reader
- problems or difficulties the reader had in understanding aspects of the plot, setting or a character's motivation
- updates to previous entries concerning things previously problematic which have now become clear as well as things the reader has now changed his or her mind about
- predictions as to how the plot will go on in the next section to be read
- one or more new words that the reader liked or found useful and why this is so

- one or more words the reader found tricky and had to look up in the dictionary
- extra background material or personal creative material, including pictures, verse or a comic strip (see Bamford and Day 2004: 148, 158–162)

Reading-log entries should look both forwards and backwards. Looking forwards involves making plot predictions but also expressing hopes and fears. Looking backwards involves confirming or revising predictions, hopes and fears made in previous log entries. In the post-reading phase additional entries which look back at the novel as a whole can be incorporated into the reading log. Hesse (2009: 102–103), however, cautions that some learners in schools, especially boys, may not like the element of personal reflection involved in many reading-log tasks and may prefer more hands-on, practical tasks such as doing web research, drawing or even making a model of the landscape of the novel's setting or dramatising parts of the novel. Learners can also assume the role of a film director who has to reduce the length of the novel by one third.

The reading log can provide teachers with ongoing feedback on how learners are progressing, but teachers should consider carefully whether they want to avail themselves of this opportunity or not. It may be better for the teacher not to have access to the log and to regard it not as a display document but as a private document which is the personal property of the learner (like a personal diary). At the very least, the teacher should not read the log without the consent of the learner and probably should not write on it, that is, should not correct language or make written suggestions for improvement in the margin.

It is regrettable that reading logs are sometimes used as part of the assessment procedure, since this encourages learners to write for the teacher. If a reading log becomes nothing more than another testing instrument, many of its potential motivational and educational benefits will be vitiated. If the syllabus or the institution does require a reading log to be used for assessment, then it is best to do this on a portfolio basis so that learners can select specific parts of their log for assessment. The precise details of the assessment procedure must also be made clear to learners in advance.

Project Work

Links between Reading Logs and Project Work

Reading logs can lead in to project work in which learners work largely autonomously over a period of several weeks. However, whereas reading logs are a personal product, project work is often best done in groups of two to six persons. Project work will normally involve groups of learners answering a question which goes beyond the content of the novel and for

which it is necessary to gather additional information. For example, after reading *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell, learners might consider, 'How well or how badly did the Victorians treat their horses?' Like keeping a reading log, project work, whether done individually or in groups, involves personal involvement, responsibility and ownership. Both result in an end product in which learners can take pride and experience a sense of achievement. Skills are integrated around the task at hand in a natural way so that the gap between language study and language use is effectively bridged. Both reading logs and project work further learner self-direction and autonomy as well as cooperation. In project work in particular, learners are given the opportunity to draw on knowledge from different areas of their lives. This means that each individual may have something special to contribute and that all can benefit from the specialised knowledge or experience of individual learners. Learners also have the opportunity to contribute what they have learned in their profession or in other academic subjects as well as from relevant books they may have read in their native language or in another foreign language they command. This gives them a sense of the unity of learning. Within a school setting, opportunities for interdisciplinary learning also present themselves.

A Three-Phase Plan

For project work, a three-phase plan is advisable, consisting of in-classroom planning, extra-classroom execution and presentation:

- in-classroom planning
In this phase learners discuss the content of their project with the teacher and decide on how its scope is to be limited. Methods of data collection such as interviews, visits, literature research and web research are discussed. A sufficient number of in-classroom planning sessions must be held before the execution phase starts, because then learners should work independently of the teacher.
- extra-classroom execution
In this phase learners now carry out their information-gathering activities, sifting material, making notes and writing up the project. Students may report back to the teacher for consultation if they wish, and an office hour should be available for this eventuality. This makes it possible for the teacher to spot in good time any procedural errors learners may make. Learners should, however, self-monitor their activities at all times in the execution phase precisely because continuous teacher monitoring is not available.
- presentation
This is the phase in which each group then presents its project to the whole class for critical review and feedback. Teachers should make sure

that a clear time schedule for presentations is drawn up in advance and adhered to. Otherwise, there is always the danger that presentations take too long, insufficient time for critical review is available, presentations run late and the last few presentations and reviews have to be hurried through. This should be guarded against at all costs.

Four Possible Problem Areas

There are four broad areas in which problems may arise in project work before the presentation phase is reached. These are poor time management, lack of perseverance, lack of self-direction and use of the mother tongue:

- poor time management
It is often difficult for learners to predict how much time it will take to establish contact with individuals or institutions and get a reply or to find specific material. For this reason the worst case scenario should be sketched out in the planning phase and contingency plans formulated in advance so that learners can quickly switch to a plan B if necessary. These plans should be formulated in the form 'If X does not happen by DATE, then do Y' It is very important to do this in advance, since once students are in the execution phase the teacher cannot intervene so quickly and so easily. Since it is unfortunately often the case that precisely those groups who are experiencing problems do not choose to consult the teacher, it is sometimes advisable to require each group to send an e-mail by a certain date indicating their current state of progress.
- lack of perseverance
Individuals may not develop sufficient interest in the topic or may be discouraged by setbacks. For this reason it is important during the in-class planning phase to make certain that learners are under no delusions about the demands of their project. Another problem is that conflicts within the group may lead to a loss of perseverance. This is one reason for providing an office hour and learners should be strongly encouraged to go to the office hour if they are experiencing intra-group conflicts.
- lack of self-direction
The downside of freedom to choose is freedom to do nothing. A small minority of learners may believe that by adopting a passive stance and not acting on their own initiative the task will be done for them by the teacher. These learners may turn up in the office hour and expect to be provided with materials and information. To do this would be counterproductive. The teacher should offer advice but not do the group's work for them. The problem can be minimised in advance by ensuring that each group contains some self-directed learners.

- use of the mother tongue

In the case of groups who all share a single mother tongue, there is always the danger that, once the teacher is not present, the mother tongue will become the language of work. Learners should be encouraged to always work in English. In multilingual groups, if there are two or three mother tongues among the class which are over-represented, then the teacher should ensure that mother tongue subgroups do not form.

Nine Guidelines for Supervising Project Work

Many problems can be eliminated before they arise if certain simple precautions are taken from the very start:

- Stress throughout that learners are responsible for their own work.
- Provide learners with checklists of things they need to do in each phase.
- Give clear instructions in advance of each new step so that learners know exactly what to do next. It is best if these instructions are in written form.
- Ensure learners are fully briefed by the end of the planning phase before they are sent off into the execution phase in their groups.
- Be very firm during the in-class planning phase about limiting the scope of the project since learners often tend to overestimate how much they can achieve in the time available.
- Instruct learners to draw up a strict time plan and to keep to it in the execution phase.
- For the presentation phase, ensure that learners have a realistic time plan.
- Impress upon learners that they should be in a position to shorten their presentation if they start to run out of time, rather than having to break off *in medias res*. An abridged presentation is preferable to an incomplete presentation.
- Be prepared to step in firmly during presentations which are taking too long and urge learners to come to a conclusion.

Food for Thought

- Q. 1. Which of the following advantages of using literature in the language classroom, suggested by Collie and Slater (1987: 3ff.), do you find most valuable: authenticity, cultural enrichment, language enrichment, personal involvement? Which of these advantages do you find least convincing? Do you think there are any other advantages which are important?

- Q. 2. Read the poem 'The Road Not Taken' by Robert Frost, mentioned earlier in the chapter, and decide on how you would introduce it in the pre-reading phase for a group of advanced learners.
- Q. 3. Take any one of the poems mentioned in the chapter and decide on some suitable post-reading activities for it.
- Q. 4. (Group activity) Take *either* a short novel you have read yourself *or* a youth novel you know *or* a children's story-book you know. Based on the suggestions made in the chapter, set up a catalogue of criteria for assessing its suitability for a particular group of EFL learners you are familiar with. How well would the results of an assessment based on the catalogue chime in with your own subjective assessment of the book's suitability for the group of learners?
- Q. 5. (Group activity) Imagine a teacher has asked you for advice about the suitability of selecting *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene as a class reader for a group of young, female, European EFL students (aged 16–20) at an upper-intermediate/advanced level of proficiency. Familiarise yourself with the novel, test its suitability for these learners against the criteria for selecting a short novel as class reader presented in the chapter and decide what advice you would give the teacher.

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11 Language Testing

Approaching Language Testing

Teachers and Testing

Language testing is the measurement of language-learning development and is for this reason alone of great importance to both language teachers and learners. Beyond this, however, language testing is situated at the interface between language teaching and society at large. This is because in addition to teachers and learners there are other important stakeholders involved, including parents, employers, governments and, ultimately, the taxpayer. Parents, schools and universities all use language tests to make important decisions which directly affect language learners. Most language teachers will be involved with language testing in some way. They may have to set, administer and mark tests for their own classes. They may have to collaborate with colleagues in setting, administering and marking tests for their own institution. They may have to prepare learners for external examinations which others set and mark. They may have to invigilate at written examinations. They may have to conduct oral examinations and assess oral performance, either alone or in collaboration with colleagues.

It is therefore important for language teachers to know what language tests can and cannot achieve, how far they can be trusted and what their inherent limitations are. Parents and employers sometimes want to know whether a specific language test is good or bad. The question, however, should be whether the test is good or bad for a particular purpose, namely the purpose for which it was designed. Problems arise when tests are re-used for purposes for which they were never intended, with learners for whom they were never designed and in situations not originally envisaged. Problems also arise when the results of a test are used to make decisions for which the test was not intended. In designing one's own language tests and in assessing language tests designed by others it is very important to choose horses for courses rather than trying to spot the winner.

Before setting any language test, test setters should always ask themselves the following questions:

- Why am I testing?
- What am I testing?
- How am I going to test?
- What will the consequences of the test be?

Testing Purposes

A broad distinction can be drawn between proficiency tests, which aim to measure learners' general language ability independent of any course they have attended, and achievement tests, which aim to measure learners' success on a particular language course (see Hughes 2003: 11–15; Ur 2012: 167; Bachman 1990: 70–71; Johnson 2018: 262–263; Harmer 2015: 411). Also worthy of consideration are placement tests and diagnostic tests.

Proficiency Tests

Proficiency tests are, as a rule, standardised tests developed by some external body. Proficiency tests may be limited to a particular skill, for example, reading proficiency, or may aim to test proficiency across a number of skills and tasks by means of a battery of different tests. Well-known standardised English proficiency tests which use test batteries include the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Cambridge Proficiency tests. They aim to rate learners' language ability for comparison with other learners anywhere in the world who may have learned under quite different circumstances, may have various mother tongues and may be of diverse social, cultural and educational backgrounds as well as being of different ages. Such tests have a standard design, are always intended to be taken under the same conditions and always to be marked according to the same set procedure. Using a test battery makes it possible to give learners discrete marks for each sub-component of the battery, for example reading, writing, listening and speaking. These discrete marks are valuable for diagnostic purposes since they will reveal the relative strengths and weaknesses of the learner. For detailed discussion of standardised tests see Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 103–121).

Achievement Tests

Achievement tests include progress tests, end-of-course tests and revision tests. They differ from proficiency tests in that they are part of classroom teaching. It is this sort of test in its various forms which classroom teachers

are most likely to be concerned with setting, administering and marking (Hughes 2003: 12–13; Harmer 2015: 411). The defining characteristic of achievement tests is that they are always based on a specific course or syllabus that learners have followed or are following. They aim to establish whether learners have learned what the course or syllabus has aimed to teach them. This is usually done by looking at what has been covered in class (course content) and testing it, but Hughes (2003: 14) argues for basing achievement tests on course objectives rather than course content.

Placement Tests

Placement tests, sometimes called admission tests or entrance tests, aim to place learners within broad bands for admission to particular courses (Harmer 2015: 410; Johnson 2018: 263). If candidates come from a variety of learning backgrounds, then a standardised proficiency test may be used or the admitting institution may set its own proficiency test. However, placement tests do not need to be as fine-grained as proficiency tests. They only need to distinguish those candidates who fall within the proficiency band stipulated for the course from those candidates below and above that band. Hughes (2003: 16–17, 70–72) discusses the setting of placement tests. For placement tests within an institution or where the candidates have all followed the same syllabus or course, then the end-of-course achievement test may serve as a placement test for the next course.

Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests aim to identify learners' strengths and weaknesses so that future teaching can be matched to learner needs. This is also a test which teachers are likely to set, administer and mark; for example, if they take over a new class previously taught by another teacher. In a school context the test might be based on the syllabus learners have been following or the course book they have been using (an achievement test). However, if the new class is very heterogeneous, with learners having followed different syllabuses, used different course books and been taught according to different methods, then a proficiency test which assesses specific skills such as reading or writing, or domains such as grammar or vocabulary, may be used as a diagnostic measure. For discussion of the possibilities for computer-based diagnostic tests see Hughes (2003: 15–16).

Summative versus Formative Testing

Another perspective on test purpose is provided by the distinction between 'summative' and 'formative' testing. Summative tests 'provide only a single mark, often expressed as a percentage, offer no specific feedback on aspects of performance, and are designed to summarise or

conclude a period of learning' (Ur 2012: 167–168). Formative testing, by contrast, 'happens in the middle of a period of learning rather than at the end, provides clear feedback in the form of error correction and suggestions for improvement, and has the primary aim of enhancing future learning' (Ur 2012: 168). According to Harmer (2015: 408), 'Formative assessment is part of the learning process itself and looks to the future, rather than focussing exclusively on what has been achieved up to a given point in time.' There is actually a formative–summative scale along which any test can be placed. A diagnostic test which does not give an overall mark but rather identifies areas of strength and weakness for each candidate in certain skills and domains is at the formative end of the spectrum. A proficiency test or an end-of-course assessment test which provides just a single mark is at the summative end of the spectrum. However, a proficiency test which consists of a number of test batteries and provides separate marks or proficiency bands with descriptors for various domains, such as grammar and vocabulary and certain skills, such as speaking and writing, offers test takers and their teachers some differentiated feedback on performance and has formative value. For examples of different forms of test feedback see Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 80).

Classroom achievement tests, especially progress tests and revision tests, have a number of didactic or formative functions, as follows:

- to make apparent the structure of the syllabus
- to offer opportunities for language learning
- to provide feedback on progress to learners and thus further learner autonomy
- to help maintain learner motivation
- to provide feedback to teachers for fine-tuning of future teaching

Thus, in designing the test every effort should be made to ensure that the test corresponds to the structural design of the syllabus, constitutes a positive learning experience for learners, provides them with feedback on their learning and will have positive motivational effects for them. It should also provide the teacher with valuable feedback on progress (see Ur 2012: 168). Even in the case of end-of-course achievement tests, which are primarily summative, it is advisable to set the test for the penultimate session and then hold a feedback session in the final session. Even if the test marks the end of formal teaching, learners can still benefit from test feedback and teacher advice for the future (see Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 7–8, 39).

The Three Phases of Testing

All testing, but especially formative testing, involves three phases for learners:

- preparing for the test (content and technique)
- taking the test
- reflecting on the test and obtaining feedback

Preparation for the test should build ‘anticipatory motivation’, doing the test should generate ‘achievement motivation’ and reflection/feedback should be conducive to ‘reinforcement motivation’. As a result, all learners, not just the top 10%, should be positively motivated by the test to go on learning. They should all feel a sense of achievement in having successfully prepared for and completed a test. Tests should never be used to show learners how little they know or how incompetent they are! Every failed test, or test perceived as failure, is a nail in the coffin of continuing language-learning motivation.

Young and beginning learners will need in-class training in test-preparation techniques, while older and more advanced learners should increasingly be able to take charge of their own preparation, which can be done mainly out of class. Doing the test is itself a learning experience. For this reason, as already mentioned, a feedback session should be held as soon as possible after tests have been marked and scripts returned to learners. Feedback should be both positive and negative. Emphasis should be on individual learner progress rather than on comparisons among learners. Ideally, this would be based on ‘individual-referenced’ marking criteria, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Sometimes brief individual feedback sessions with each learner rather than a long session with the whole class may be preferable. These individual sessions can be held during class time while the class is engaged on other activities.

Testing Techniques

Direct versus Indirect Testing

Ideally, one would want to test directly the precise real-world skills learners require (see Hughes 2003: 17–19). Much real-world language use involves drawing on a number of skills for a particular task, as for example in interviewing (listening and speaking), note-taking (listening/reading plus writing), summarising (reading and writing). ‘Integrated skills testing’ aims to get close to real-world language needs by assessing performance directly on such complex tasks. In some cases, however, setting up a direct test would be time-consuming, difficult to administer and expensive. Therefore, testers often have to find indirect methods of testing. Thus a skill is tested which is judged to be a good guide to the target skill and which is easier to test. In practice, most testing is more or less indirect, but this always involves a risk since the learner is not being asked to

perform a real-world task under real-world conditions. An example of an indirect test would be a written conversational cloze test to assess conversational ability. Another sort of indirect test of language skill is a test of language knowledge, for example of grammar or vocabulary. Knowledge-based tests tend to be easier to set and to score than skill-based tests, but they are, unfortunately, poor predictors of real-life language use because knowledge about the language may not be directly transferable to performance in the language. (This is the distinction drawn in cognitive science between ‘declarative knowledge’ or ‘knowing that’ and ‘procedural knowledge’ or ‘knowing how to’, discussed in Chapter 1.)

Discrete-Point versus Integrated Testing

A further distinction can be drawn between ‘discrete-point tests’, for example yes/no questions, true/false statements, gap-filling exercises and multiple-choice questions, on the one hand and ‘integrated tests’, such as an essay, a translation, an oral presentation or interview, on the other. Discrete-point tests consist of separate test items and test one thing at a time (Harmer 2015: 412; Johnson 2018: 263; Hughes 2003: 19), whereas integrated tests seek to test language performance as a whole (see Hughes 2003: 19; Johnson 2018: 264–267; Harmer 2015: 414–417). In integrated tests there is no limit to the number of possible mistakes test takers can make, but they also have the chance to perform positively without the test explicitly demanding this of them (by using a particularly apt idiomatic phrase, for example). Discrete-point tests are generally easier to administer and mark and generally less time-consuming than integrated tests. On the other hand, one obvious disadvantage of discrete-point tests such as yes/no questions and true/false statements is that the test taker has a 50% probability of being correct by chance, and in multiple-choice tests with four options the probability is still 25% (Hughes 2003: 76–77, 79).

Discrete-point tests lend themselves to objective marking procedures and integrated tests invite subjective marking. Discrete-point tests with one and only one correct answer per item require no judgement on the part of markers and marking is therefore quite objective. All that is needed is an answer key. If the test is laid out appropriately, a mask can be placed over each completed test for quick manual marking. Online versions of discrete-point tests can be computer-marked. Integrated tests, by contrast, usually require more or less subjective judgement on the part of markers. The more subjective marking is, the more time-consuming and less economical it will be and the greater is the likelihood of disagreement among markers. This means that objectively marked tests are more statistically reliable than subjectively marked tests.

Here are some well-known testing techniques:

- Gap-filling (isolated sentences)
Example: Fill in the gap with the right word.
If it rains, you can get ____.
- Matching of words or sentences (usually synonyms or opposite meanings)
Example: Match each word from the first list with a word with the same meaning from the second list
large, unhappy, a lot of, little
small, many, big, sad
- Multiple-choice
Example: Fill in the blank with a suitable word from the list below.
(1) hot (2) wet (3) bored (4) frozen
If it rains, you can get ____.
- Cloze (a passage)
Example: Fill in the gaps with suitable words.
A cold front is approaching from ____ west and we can therefore expect lower ____ tomorrow throughout the country. There is ____ to be some rain in the morning, ____ it will become brighter later in the ____.
- Syntactic transformations
Example: Put the sentence into the passive
The dog bit the man.
- Dictation
The tester dictates a passage and the test takers write it down. Usually the passage is read through once first at normal speed before candidates write, is repeated slowly in sections with repetition while they write, and is finally read through again at normal speed. (For specific focus on spelling, a set of isolated words can be dictated.)
- Listening or reading comprehension questions
Example: Was the door open or closed when Jim arrived at the house? (Yes/No)
The jacket was lying under the chair. True or false? (True/False)
Where was the jacket when Jim entered the dining room? (Factual question)
Why do you think Jim shuddered when he saw the jacket? (Opinion question)

- Guided writing (sentences or passages)
Example: (Based on a written text) Rewrite the passage from the perspective of the woman referred to in line 3, making any necessary changes.
- Translation
The candidate is required to translate words, expressions, sentences or a passage into or out of the foreign language. Sometimes dictionaries may be provided, sometimes not.
- Task-based writing
A simulated real-life piece of writing, often a letter or report, is to be produced with a specified goal, addressee and context.
- Essay writing
Example: Write an essay of approximately 2,000 words on EITHER 'The role of the monarchy in Britain today' OR 'The role of drugs in sport today'.

Gap-filling, matching and multiple-choice are classic discrete-point test techniques. Cloze is claimed to combine elements of discrete-point and integrative testing because although it consists of separate items, these items are not completely independent of one another and an understanding of the passage as a whole is required. Dictation of a passage is an integrated test but dictation of single words is a discrete-point test. Listening and reading comprehension tests often combine discrete-point techniques (yes/no, true/false and factual questions) with integrative techniques (evaluative or opinion questions). Guided writing, translation, task-based writing and essay writing are integrated tests. All the tests listed above are written tests and for this reason are better guides to written proficiency than to oral proficiency, which is usually tested directly. For discussion of these and other test techniques see Ur (2012: 174–177), Hughes (2003: 75–82), Harmer (2015: 412–416) and Johnson (2018: 263–268, 272–276).

Tests Which Focus on Receptive Skills

Sometimes one may wish to test mainly listening or reading comprehension, respectively, while minimising the use of speaking or writing. This is often done by setting yes/no or true/false questions or factual questions requiring a short answer based on a recorded spoken text or a reading passage, respectively. The longer the answers the questions require, the more the test becomes an integrated test of both receptive and productive ability (which may well be desired). Evaluative (opinion) questions usually require longer answers than factual questions.

Multiple-choice questions based on a reading passage or a recorded spoken test also test comprehension without demands on productive ability. Multiple-choice tests are quick and easy to mark and they are objective, but these advantages are partly offset by the difficulty of constructing the test. The great problem is to produce options which to the learner should all seem equally plausible. This is in fact very difficult to achieve, particularly if the test writer has no assistance. A small team of test designers is much more effective than one person. For some criticisms of multiple-choice tests see Hughes (2003: 76–78), Johnson (2018: 263–264), Harmer (2015: 412).

When designing multiple-choice tests there are therefore a number of principles to abide by:

- There should be only one correct option per item.
- There should be no fewer than four items to choose from (otherwise it may be too easy to guess) and no more than five (because in practice it is often difficult to find more than five plausible options).
- The sentence stem should provide the full context necessary to solve the task and conversely the options should be dependent on the context created by the stem.
- All the options should be formally comparable so that test takers cannot make shrewd guesses at the odd one out.
- The stems and the options should also be kept reasonably short. (The form of the stem can be varied, however. It may be an incomplete statement, a question, a gapped sentence or a sentence in which an element is to be replaced by one of the options.)

For more detailed guidance on how to design multiple-choice items, see Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 67–78).

Before drafting questions for reading and listening comprehension, one should first decide on which items of information one wants to ask about. If one simply goes through the text, just drafting questions spontaneously, it is likely that the focus will be on unimportant or inessential information which it just happens to be easy to write a question for. The items of information sought for should also be sufficiently far apart in the passage to enable learners to answer one question before having to focus on the next. In the case of listening comprehension, candidates should also be given sufficient time before the recording is played to familiarise themselves with the questions. Otherwise, what is tested will be multi-tasking ability, involving reading and listening simultaneously. Questions should take up key words from the passage so that learners can use these as a means of orientation, unless one intends to make the task extremely difficult (for advanced learners, for example).

Information-transfer tasks, not included in the list above, are another way of testing receptive skills while minimising productive skills, and may be particularly useful for learners at low-levels of proficiency, especially in classroom tests where the emphasis is on formative rather than summative testing and on maintaining motivation. Information-transfer tasks include picture-cued tasks, involving at the simplest level identifying items in a picture. Picture-cued tasks can also be combined with multiple-choice, either deciding which of two or more pictures corresponds to a spoken or written cue word or sentence, or deciding which of a number of cue words or sentences corresponds to a picture. Other forms of information-transfer include labelling a diagram, completing a form and marking a route on a map based on spoken or written instructions.

For examples of information-transfer techniques to test reading ability see Nuttall (1996: 194–200) and Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 239–240). For a similar approach to listening comprehension, see Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 169–171). Scanning tasks in which test takers have to locate a date, a name, a number or a price, for example, also test reception without any element of language production (Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 249).

Criterion-Referenced versus Norm-Referenced Testing

This distinction refers to the criteria against which tests are marked (see Hughes 2003: 19–22; Bachman 1990: 72–76; Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 8–9; Johnson 2018: 268). They should always be made clear to test takers.

Criterion-Referenced Testing

A criterion-referenced test assesses learners relative to a set of predetermined criteria, for example, ‘the ability to ask for information and understand simple instructions’ or ‘the ability to write a letter of recommendation which is understandable, stylistically acceptable and not seriously marred by language error’. Theoretically, all the learners taking the test could pass, assuming they satisfy the criteria, or they could all fail, assuming they were all unable to satisfy the criteria. The advantage of criterion-reference¹ testing is that learners who achieve the criteria receive positive reinforcement, which will be motivating, and learners who do not achieve the criteria can be shown in what ways and by how much they have fallen short.

Norm-Referenced Testing

A norm-referenced test does not assess learners with reference to pre-determined performance criteria but with reference to how other

learners perform. A classic example of norm-referenced testing is IQ testing. An IQ of 100 defines the intelligence of the average person. From experience of testing many people, IQ scores above and below 100 become associated with certain levels of capability. The same is true of scores on a proficiency test such as TOEFL. The test itself does not say that with a particular score the candidate is able to follow lectures in English or with a higher score is able to write a Master's thesis, for instance, which would be done by a criterion-referenced test. Rather, based on past experience, institutions set certain TOEFL target scores for admissions because they know that candidates who score above a certain level have been able to, for example, follow lectures, and above a certain higher score have been able to, for instance, write a Master's thesis (see Hughes 2003: 21).

The teacher who applies norm-referenced testing to his or her class for achievement tests awards marks based on the achievement of a hypothetical average learner for that class. In practice, the experienced teacher probably has an idea in mind of what level of performance can be expected of the average learner based on the past performance of average learners over the years. This hypothetical average learner's performance becomes the norm against which the performance of other learners is judged. This is why children who move from a less academic school to a more academic school may suddenly find that their marks are much lower than they used to be. It is not that their English has got worse, just that a higher standard is expected.

Individual-Referenced Testing

Proficiency tests must be either norm-referenced or criterion-referenced to fulfil their purpose. However, for classroom achievement tests, especially progress tests and diagnostic tests, there is a third possible approach, namely, 'individual-referenced testing' (see Ur 2012: 170). This approach sets test results which are neither norm-referenced nor criterion-referenced, but are based on comparison with the individual's prior performance. Thus, individual-referenced testing aims to measure a learner's individual progress. This is likely to be far more motivating for most individuals and also provide them with more fine-grained feedback to help them progress further.

Test Selectivity

All language testing is necessarily selective along a number of dimensions, especially the following:

- 'language selectivity'
This refers to the range of grammatical structures, vocabulary, pragmatic functions and genres as well as the number of language varieties, styles and registers which are tested.

- ‘mode selectivity’
This refers to whether the test is a written or a spoken test.
- ‘skill selectivity’
This refers to which of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, are tested.
- ‘test design selectivity’
This refers to the tasks the test taker has to perform, for example a gap-filling exercise, translation or a dictation.
- ‘topic selectivity’
This refers to what the thematic content of the test is, for example an essay on ‘Drugs in Sport’ versus an essay on ‘The Role of the Monarchy in Britain Today’.
- ‘test-conditions selectivity’
This refers, for example, to whether the test is an open-book exam or not, whether it is done under time pressure or not and, for an oral presentation, whether preparation time is allowed or not.

When a test is highly selective on a number of these dimensions, great care must be exercised in generalising its results to other contexts. Thus, learners who score well on a grammar test which tests only prepositions might not have done so well if the test had been on the passive and vice versa. A written test is not necessarily a good guide to spoken ability and vice versa. A test based on receptive skills (listening and reading) may not always be a good guide to proficiency in the productive skills (speaking and writing) and vice versa. Transferability of proficiency from one task to another should not be assumed either. For instance, good translators are not necessarily good letter writers and good conversationalists are not necessarily good negotiators or good lecturers. Discrete-point tests may not always be the best of guides to integrated language use, and knowledge about the language may not be transferable to performance in the language. Tests done under time pressure may not be a good guide to using the language without time pressure and vice versa. Oral ability tested in a one-to-one interview may be a poor guide to conversing against background noise or chairing a meeting.

Where a number of discrepancies between the test and the future real-world language needs of the test takers exist, one should be cautious about expecting it to be a good predictor of real-world proficiency. That is to say, it may have limited validity—something about which more will be said soon. Thus, for example, a written test consisting of multiple-choice questions on verb morphology might be expected to be a rather bad guide to ability to handle a complaints phone-line for a washing machine manufacturer. This does not mean that the test does not measure mastery of verb morphology well, but rather that command of verb morphology is not the only or even the most important aspect of

task proficiency for handling telephone complaints lines. In general, one should be cautious about relying solely on indirect, discrete-point tests for purposes which may have far-reaching consequences for learners. This is the issue of ‘ethical validity’, about which more will also be said shortly.

Test takers and Tests

Finally, one should always bear in mind that test takers are people and not machines. There is variation among EFL learners themselves concerning the way they react to tests in general, to the specific form of test being taken and, in the case of oral exams, to the specific examiner. Some of the personality factors discussed in Chapter 3, such as self-confidence, anxiety, willingness to take risks and, in the case of oral tests, willingness to communicate, are likely to influence test performance. Test anxiety in particular can distort test results, particularly in oral tests. All that was said in Chapter 3 about anxiety is acutely relevant in test situations, especially in oral tests.

Furthermore, certain learners are able to apply general cognitive strategies, such as dividing their time appropriately among questions, while some learners may be rather inept at managing the cognitive challenge of the test, including time management. These are differences in ‘test-wiseness’ (Bachman 1990: 214; Harmer 2015: 412). Some learners will grow in ‘test-wiseness’ over time as a result of practice in taking tests. Some learners may receive special training and practice in specific test-taking techniques, for example intelligent guessing for multiple-choice questions, so that they learn the tricks of the trade and become ‘super test-wise’. This may improve their test result but it does not necessarily mean their English has improved.

Evaluating Language Tests

Any test can be evaluated according to certain criteria but the evaluation must always consider the context in which the test is conducted and the purposes it is intended for. Lado (1961: 30–37) set up five criteria for evaluating a test, namely: ‘validity’, ‘reliability’, ‘scorability’, ‘economy’ and ‘administrability’. To these may be added ‘discriminability’ and ‘backwash on teaching’ (see Hughes 2003: 53–57). This makes a total of seven criteria for assessing a test.

Validity

By ‘validity’ is meant the extent to which the test measures what it aims to measure and nothing else. It is possible to look at validity from a number of angles (see Harmer 2015: 409; Hughes 2003: 26–35;

Bachman 1990: 236–295; Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 29–36). These include the following five angles.

Construct Validity

Construct validity can be regarded as the overarching idea of validity (Hughes 2003: 30–32; Bachman 1990: 256; Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 33–34; Harmer 2015: 409; Johnson 2018: 270). By ‘construct’ is meant things such as ‘proficiency’, ‘fluency’ and ‘communicative competence’, which we are trying to get at in the test. As Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 33) put it, to check construct validity we must ask the question, ‘Does this test actually tap into the theoretical construct as it has been defined?’ Weigle (2002: 41) defines ‘construct’ as ‘the ability we want to measure’. She continues that for a language test this involves ‘determining what factors are involved in real-world language use, and which of those factors are essential to what we want to measure and what we do not.’ Construct validity therefore entails ensuring that ‘the test is consistent with current theories of language and language learning’ (Johnson 2018: 270) and ‘performance ... is consistent with predictions that we make on the basis of a theory of abilities, or constructs’ (Bachman 1990: 254–255). Thus, a test of conversational ability that consisted of candidates introducing themselves and saying something about their hobbies and interests would lack construct validity because this is a monologue and conversation involves two or more participants.

Face Validity

By ‘face validity’ is meant whether the test ‘looks right’ in terms of the language skills it aims to measure. Of course, this is no guarantee that the test really is a valid test (Bachman 1990: 286). Face validity is thus not a scientific concept. However, it is difficult to persuade testers and test takers to believe in tests with poor face validity, for example paper-and-pencil tests of oral ability (see Hughes 2003: 33; Bachman 1990: 285–289; Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 35–36; Johnson 2018: 269–270).

Empirical Validity

By ‘empirical validity’, sometimes called ‘criterion-related validity’, is meant how well the results of the test correlate with other recently obtained measures of assessment, for example performance on another language test or teacher ratings (*concurrent empirical validity*) and/or with the learners’ subsequent performance, for example in a later final examination (*predictive empirical validity*). See Hughes (2003: 27–30) and Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 32–33). Empirical validity can only be established after the test has been taken.

Content Validity

By ‘content validity’ is meant the extent to which the test covers a balanced sample of the course content and language skills taught and no others (for achievement tests). Or it means that the test covers the domains of language and language skills it aims to test and no others (for proficiency tests). Like face validity, content validity can and should be established before the test is taken (Hughes 2003: 26–27; Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 30–32; Johnson 2018: 269).

Ethical Validity

By ‘ethical validity’, sometimes called ‘consequential validity’, is meant whether the test provides a solid enough foundation to justify the personal, educational, financial and career consequences it may have for test takers (Bachman 1990: 279–285; Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 34–35). Relevant questions to ask are, ‘Who will know the results of the test, to what uses may these parties put the results and what control or influence do I, the test setter, have over those uses?’ Also of relevance is whether it will be possible for test takers to retake the test at a later date. Concerns of ethical validity become particularly acute if the test constitutes the sole criterion on which decisions will be based, unaccompanied by other instruments, such as continuous assessment and teachers’ reports.

Reliability

‘Reliability’ is concerned with the stability and consistency of results obtained on the test (see Hughes 2003: 36–38; Johnson 2018: 270–272; Bachman 1990: 160–235; Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 27–29; Harmer 2015: 409). Bachman (1990: 160) describes reliability as being concerned with answering the question, ‘How much of an individual’s test performance is due to measurement error, or to factors other than the language ability we want to measure?’ A completely reliable test would be unaffected by:

- the time and circumstances of testing (‘test-retest reliability’)
- the identity of the marker and repeat marking by the same marker (‘marker reliability’)
- fluctuations in the test taker’s mood (‘test taker reliability’)
- the topic of the test (‘topic reliability’)
- (for oral tests) the identity of the tester (‘tester reliability’).

Test reliability can be measured statistically by calculating the ‘re-testing coefficient of reliability’ of a test (see Hughes 2003: 38–40). A perfectly

reliable test would mean that the same set of candidates would theoretically score exactly the same on it every time (a reliability coefficient of 1.0). If, on the other hand, there were no relation at all between how the candidates would score each time they took the test, then the reliability coefficient would be 0. This would mean it was a completely useless test. There are three methods of obtaining reliability coefficients, all of which have obvious limitations (see Hughes 2003: 39–40):

- the test-retest method
This involves a sufficiently large number of candidates taking the exam twice. The two sets of results are then compared to obtain the 're-testing coefficient of reliability'. The disadvantage of the method is that one would expect test takers to score better at a second attempt on the same test (a learning effect).
- the alternate forms method
This involves having the candidates take two different forms of the same test. How closely the results of the two versions of the test correlate or match gives an indication of the reliability of the test. The problem is that a shadow version of the test has to be produced which differs from the original version only in the content of each question.
- the split halves method
This involves the candidates taking the test just once, but separate scores are computed for each half of the test. Performance on each half of the test is then compared. The correlation coefficient for the two sets of scores is computed. This is the 'coefficient of reliability for one half of the test'. A statistical formula is available to compute, from the reliability of one half of the test, a close estimate of the entire test's reliability. This is in fact the method most frequently used to calculate test reliability. It is, however, not always easy to split the test into two halves which are exactly comparable (see Bachman 1990: 172–174).

Some types of test are inherently more reliable than others. Reliability coefficients as high as 0.9 have been obtained for some highly structured test-types such as vocabulary tests and reading comprehension questions. Reliability coefficients for listening comprehension tests are unlikely to be higher than 0.8, perhaps because of the acoustic element, which may be subject to various external influences, including outside noise and how well-placed the test takers are relative to the recording equipment. Slightly lower reliability coefficients (0.7) are found for oral production tests (see Hughes 2003: 39).

As a rough guide to interpreting reliability coefficients, one should remember that the square of the coefficient gives a percentage measure of the variance between the two sets of test scores being compared, which is accounted for by the differences in ability the test is trying to

measure. The remaining variance is due to other factors. Thus, a reliability coefficient of 0.7 means that the test accounts for 49% of the variance and a coefficient of 0.5 means that only 25% of the variance is accounted for by the test. These figures do *not* mean that 49% or 25%, respectively, of test takers would have the same score if they took the test on a different occasion. The coefficient is, rather, an overall measure of statistical agreement between two data sets (Hughes 2003: 29).

If a published test reports a reliability coefficient, this gives an indication of how trustworthy the results of the test are, but it does not say how close scores on the test are to candidates' 'true scores'. By 'true score' is meant what candidates' average score would be if they took the test many times (Hughes 2003: 40–42; Bachman 1990: 166–167). Of course, this would be impossible in practice for a language test for all sorts of reasons. But the difference between the 'true scores' and 'actual scores' is very important when decisions are being made about borderline 'pass' or 'fail' candidates.

In fact, a further statistical technique is available which uses the reliability coefficient of a test and the standard deviation (SD) of the test's scores to obtain a 'standard error of measurement' (SEM) for a test (see Brown 1999; Bachman 1990: 197–202; Hughes 2003: 40–42, 223–224). This is expressed as a single number and the more reliable a test is, the lower the number will be. If, for example, the SEM of a test is 2, this means that an individual's 'true score' is within the range ± 2 of his test score, with a probability of about 68% ($= 1$ standard error). And we can be 95% sure that his/her true score lies within ± 4 of the test score ($= 2$ standard errors). These relationships apply *quid pro quo* for any SEM value. According to Hughes (2003: 41), published tests should give not only a reliability coefficient but also an SEM.

The SEM can thus be used to identify a sensitive band of scores around the pass/fail borderline where candidates should be given special attention, with consideration perhaps being given to teachers' reports, or other work produced by these learners, before a decision is made. For instance, if the pass mark for the test is 40 and the SEM is 2, as in the above example, then if you want to be 68% certain that you are passing and failing the right people, you should recognise that within the band of scores above 38 and below 42 this degree of certainty is not guaranteed. If you want to be 95% certain that you are passing and failing the right people, then this degree of certainty is only guaranteed for those scoring below 36 (fail) and above 44 (pass). In such circumstances, thought has to be given to the consequences of passing and failing for learners. These are considerations of ethical validity, which have already been discussed.

Perfect test reliability is a pipe dream, but often reliability can be improved by ensuring that:

- Test items or questions are independent of one another.
- Questions are unambiguous.

- Instructions are clear.
- Candidates are familiar with the type of test being used.
- There is little or no scope for successful guessing.
- Marking is objective.
- Topics, techniques and question types are varied.
- Learners write or speak on more than one topic.

For further suggestions for improving test reliability, see Hughes (2003: 44–50).

Discrete-point tests tend to be more reliable than integrated tests because:

- they are easier to score and their scoring is more objective (marker reliability)
- results are possibly less influenced by the test taker's mood (test taker reliability)
- results are probably less influenced by the questions (topic reliability)

However, integrated tests are usually much closer to real-world skills and may therefore often have higher validity for the testing purpose at hand (Johnson 2018: 271–272).

Scorability

By 'scorability' is meant how easy or difficult it is to score (mark) the test. More precisely, scorability is concerned with how much time it takes to mark the test, whether markers need special training and briefing and whether multiple markers are required. As already mentioned, if scoring is objective, as in discrete-point tests with one correct answer, then scoring is made very easy and can often be done by computer. Scorer-reliability coefficients can be obtained in much the same way as test-retest reliability coefficients. One would expect the scorer-reliability coefficient to be higher than the overall test-reliability coefficient, which includes other sources of unreliability. Hughes (2003: 43–44) cites a case where the scorer reliability on an essay-writing test was 0.92 and the test-reliability coefficient was 0.84.

Economy

By 'economy' is meant the extent to which the test justifies the amount of time, money and other resources invested in it. Other resources include not only technical equipment but also human resources. Tests conducted individually are much less economical than those done in large groups. For this reason written tests tend to be more economical than oral tests. A re-usable test is also an economical test. Discrete-point tests which can be taken online are extremely economical once they have been set up for the first time.

Administrability

By the rather cumbersome term ‘administrability’ is meant whether the test can feasibly be administered in the specific situation. Administrability is thus concerned with issues such as the availability of suitable testers, adequate rooms, appropriate technology and adequate ancillary personnel.

Discriminability

By the equally cumbersome term ‘discriminability’ is meant to what extent the test effectively distinguishes among performance differences to the degree required. It sometimes happens in discrete-point tests, for example, that scores bunch at the top end of the scale (a ceiling effect). Generally, a test should give weaker learners scope to show what they know, while stretching stronger learners to their limits. However, in placement tests which merely wish to establish a cut-off point as a criterion for entrance to a course, discrimination across the whole spectrum may not be necessary. In a criterion-based progress test, bunching of scores at the top might merely show that learners have mastered what the course aimed to teach them, which is fine.

Backwash on Teaching

By ‘backwash’ on teaching is meant the influence the test will have on the teaching carried out to prepare candidates for it (see Hughes 2003: 1–2, 53–57; Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 37–39; Johnson 2018: 261–262; Harmer 2015: 410; Bachman 1990: 283). Generally speaking, direct tests have positive backwash effects. For example, direct oral testing of spoken ability to conclude a conversation course will tend to mean that a lot of speaking will be done in class (Bachman 1990: 283). Indirect tests may have negative backwash effects. For example, assessment of reading comprehension solely by a multiple-choice test may lead to too much class time being spent on practising test-taking strategies (Johnson 2018: 264). The issue is tricky, for unfamiliarity with a particular type of test can depress performance and lower reliability. Thus, some test-taking practice will be necessary and desirable to make learners familiar with the type of test they have to take (Harmer 2015: 421–422).

Written Language Tests***Piloting the Test***

Ideally, a written test should be piloted in advance with another group of learners comparable to the target group. If this is not possible, one or

more colleagues should be asked to read through the test in advance and see if they find anything problematic. If this is not possible either, then the test setter should assume the role of a test taker and take the test in advance under exam conditions to assess its feasibility (see Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 77–78; Harmer 2015: 418).

Advance Information for Test Takers

Test takers need to be informed of the following things in advance:

- the time and place of the test
- the test conditions (for example, the availability or not of aids such as dictionaries)
- what they must, may and may not bring into the examination room
- the length of time allotted for the test
- how unanswered questions, incomplete answers and ‘off-topic’ answers will be marked
- (in achievement tests) what parts of the syllabus are being tested
- (for novice takers of written exams) the rules of maintaining silence, of non-consultation with one’s neighbour, of not looking at one’s neighbour’s script and of asking the invigilator if one wishes to leave the room

Invigilation

On the day of the test the invigilator should exude calmness, confidence and relaxation and, if he or she is also the classroom teacher, should on no account adopt a different persona from the normal classroom persona the learners know. If the invigilator seems tense, then the learners will get tense, too. Invigilators should plan in advance exactly what they will say in their introductory remarks and try to strike a note of supportive encouragement. Immediately before the papers are given out, learners should be reminded that there is to be silence now. Learners should also be told that if anyone does not understand the wording of a question, he or she can at any point in the exam raise a hand and the invigilator will come and explain the language only. Otherwise, examinees should receive no help of any sort during the exam.

Further, invigilators should decide in advance at what point or points in the exam they will tell learners how much time they have left. When there are only five minutes left, this should in any case be announced. When it is almost time to finish, the invigilator should then say something like, ‘Your time is up now. Please finish the sentence you are writing and put down your pens.’ Then, when time is up, the invigilator should say, ‘Stop writing now. I shall now collect your scripts. Make certain your pages are numbered and your identification number is on

every page.' The invigilator should then immediately start collecting the scripts. For further guidance on administering written tests, see Hughes (2003: 215–217) and Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 78).

If possible, candidates should be identified by numbers rather than names on their scripts, so that knowledge of the candidate's identity, gender or ethnicity does not influence the marker.

Marking (Scoring) Procedures

For integrated tests such as reports and essays, it must be decided in advance whether marking is to be 'impressionistic', 'holistic' or 'analytic'. Impressionistic or 'general impression' marking means that the marker reads the script and assigns a mark without any criteria being explicitly stated (Weigle 2002: 112). However, usually a decision has to be made between holistic and analytic marking. For holistic marking, a rating scale comprising usually about six bands of achievement is set up and a brief description of the expected level of performance for each band on the scale is formulated in writing. Markers then assign each script to the appropriate band on the scale in the light of these descriptions. It is important to explain the descriptors for each band to markers so that there will be no discrepancies of interpretation among markers. For sample rubrics for holistic marking of integrated writing tests, such as essays, see Hughes (2003: 87–89) and Weigle (2002: 113).

For analytic marking instead of a single banded scale, a number of specific aspects of performance are focussed on, for example, 'content', 'organisation', 'grammatical command', 'lexical command', 'spelling and punctuation'. For each aspect of performance, a rating scale comprising, say, six achievement bands is set up and provided with a description specific to that aspect. Markers then assign each script to a band on the scale for each performance aspect (content, organisation etc.). If an overall mark or grade is required, then grades for each performance category are averaged. A weighting factor can be applied, however, so that, for example, 'spelling and punctuation' counts for less than the other categories (see Weigle 2002: 72–73, 112–127). For sample rubrics for analytic marking of integrated writing tests, such as essays, see Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 114–115), Ur (2012: 182), Weigle (2002: 116–119) and Hughes (2003: 91–93; 95–96).

The argument advanced in favour of analytic scoring is that each learner has his or her own profile of individual strengths and weaknesses: a fact not accommodated for by holistic scoring (Hughes 2003: 100; Weigle 2002: 120–121). Often a candidate is strong in some respects, say content and organisation, and weak in others, say grammatical and lexical command, so that it is difficult to assign him or her to a specific holistic band. Those who favour holistic scoring argue, however, that it

is easier and perhaps more realistic to judge learner proficiency holistically than to analyse a limited number of selected performance features. They make the point that it is by no means clear which particular performance features are the most relevant for inclusion anyway, let alone what their relative weightings should be. Holistic and analytic marking can be combined by providing markers with both analytic rating scales and a holistic rating scale. However, a procedure then has to be set up concerning how to deal with possible discrepancies between the two sets of scores.

For both holistic and analytic marking procedures, markers must be provided with a scoring key or rubric, guidelines for marking and examples of typical answers for each category on the rating scale. It may be necessary for test setters to train markers in the procedure in advance (see Hughes 2003: 49–50). In the training sessions, sample answers can be discussed and it can be shown how these should be scored. Markers also need guidance in how to treat ‘off-topic’ answers, incomplete answers and the like. For all integrated tests, however they are scored, at least two markers who mark independently of each another should be used and the final mark should be an aggregate of their two marks (Hughes 2003: 50). It is advisable to lay down in advance that in cases of a (specified) great discrepancy between marks, for example more than one band on a six-point scale, or a difference between a passing and failing grade – even if this is only one band difference – then a third marker will independently mark the paper and an aggregate of all three marks will be taken as the final mark. If holistic rather than analytic marking is adopted, Hughes (2003: 95) suggests using four markers to ensure high reliability. (See Weigle 2002: 127–134 for more detailed discussion of marking integrated written tests.)

Techniques are available for computerised marking of integrated written tests such as essays taken online. One approach is to use the statistical technique of regression analysis to find which quantifiable surface variables are the best predictors of scores given by expert markers for a fairly large subset of a set of essays (see Weigle 2002: 234–237). The variables investigated might include some of those already mentioned in Chapter 10 for assessing linguistic difficulty, for example sentence length, syntactic embedding, type-token ratios and lexical density. The best-fit model obtained can then be used to score the rest of the essays in the set.

Van Moere and Downey (2016: 346) report that for the online version of the writing section of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT) two scores are calculated, one a computerised score and the other a score produced by an expert human marker. Correlations between the two scores are apparently comparable with or even slightly higher than those between pairs of human markers.

Oral Language Tests

Techniques

If at all feasible, oral proficiency should be tested directly rather than indirectly. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 205) list various direct techniques, the most frequent of which include:

- describing a picture
- telling a story from a series of pictures
- giving an oral presentation on a specific topic (prepared or unprepared)
- a conversation with one or more examiners (the oral interview)
- a group conversation among, say, four test takers (the peer conversation)

The first three options involve monologue, and Ur (2012: 181) suggests picture-cued tasks are more appropriate for young learners or beginners and an oral presentation is more suitable for more advanced learners. (For various examples of picture-cued oral testing see Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 193–100, 220–221.)

Oral presentations are not without their problems. It is a very stressful experience to be told to speak extempore on a topic. Yet, if candidates are given their topic well in advance of the test, they are likely to deliver a prepared and memorised speech. It therefore seems preferable to tell them their topic just before their test and give them a few minutes to prepare (Ur 2012: 181). Decisions then have to be made about whether candidates should have access to a dictionary or not. Another problem which arises is that if all candidates are to be given the same topic or topics, or the same set of topics to choose from, it is likely that candidates who have just done the test will ‘leak’ the topics to candidates waiting to take the test, who thus have more time to prepare. Yet another problem is that it is difficult to avoid topic bias, which will lower reliability. A single set topic will inevitably suit some candidates better than others, but offering a choice of topics does not solve the problem of topic bias, since complete comparability of topics cannot be ensured. For these reasons it may be best to ask candidates to speak on a range of topics, although this involves mini-presentations, which may not be desired if the test aims to assess whether candidates can speak at length. For discussion of various ways in which bias can enter a test, see Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 96–98).

In view of the problems involved with oral presentation, it is perhaps not surprising that the oral interview is often preferred as a technique of oral assessment. A further advantage is that, since most learners will need to interact in English in the real world, the interview will often have

greater construct validity. However, the fact that the interviewer has to assess the test taker's performance while participating in the conversation will tend to lower reliability compared to non-interactive oral assessment where the tester can devote complete attention to assessing the test taker's performance (Ur 2012: 181). One way of obviating this problem is to assign the roles of interviewer and assessor to two different persons (Harmer 2015: 420).

In all oral testing involving interaction between the tester and the test taker, the latter is always in the uncomfortable position of having to interact with someone in the superior or dominant role position (Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 211). This may affect performance. Furthermore, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, for testers not to be influenced positively or negatively by personal characteristics of the test taker, which lowers reliability. Conversely, test takers may be influenced by personal characteristics of the tester and this may affect their performance in the test. These factors include age, sex, ethnicity, social status, variety of English spoken, accent and even style of dress, as well as perceptions of psychological characteristics such as dominance versus submissiveness, helpfulness versus unhelpfulness and tolerance versus intolerance. There may also be intercultural attitudinal differences which operate, too, particularly when men are interviewed by women and vice versa. Sometimes peer conversations, rather than the traditional interview, may help to reduce such problems, but not always.

The advantages of the peer conversation over the interview are, firstly, that it is more economical, particularly in terms of time, than a one-to-one interview. Two assessors can sit in with a group of, say, four test takers and concentrate entirely or mainly on assessment, according to how much they participate. Secondly, if both testers assess all four candidates, then two marks are available to be aggregated for each candidate, which should improve reliability. Thirdly, rather than just asking test takers to discuss a topic, tasks can be set up for learners to solve in the manner of a simulation or role-play (see Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 214). If these are chosen to correspond to the candidates' likely future uses of the language, for example in their professional lives, then the test acquires greater validity. Fourthly, it is also claimed that, compared to the one-to-one oral interview in which the interviewer asks questions and the test taker gives answers, the language produced is likely to be more varied and less constrained. This should improve construct validity since most real-life speech does not consist solely, or even mainly, of answering questions. However, one has to guard against the danger of unequal distribution of speech among the test takers and group dynamics may be unpredictable (Brown and Abeywickrama 2010: 211). For discussion of a testing project which focussed on peer conversations involving collaborative group interaction, see Little and Ushioda (1996).

Marking (Scoring) Procedures

As in the case of integrated written tests, a decision has to be made whether to adopt holistic or analytical scoring techniques or to combine the two approaches (Harmer 2015: 419–420). For marking purposes, a scoring sheet should be designed for use by all testers. The aim should be for testers to unobtrusively keep score, for if they are constantly having to make elaborate notes this could disturb the test taker. Anxious candidates in particular may assume that the tester is just counting and noting their mistakes. This problem is most acute in one-to-one interviews. If resources allow the possibility of having a scorer and an interviewer, then the scorer can sit out of the direct line of vision of the test taker.

Holistic Scoring

Various banded rating scales are available, for example, those developed by the CEFR, to cover the complete range of proficiency from the near-native speaker down to someone who cannot communicate at even a basic level in English (see Ur 2012: 12; Johnson 2018: 272–274). For each band, a descriptor of the typical performance for someone in this band is provided. Problems of some candidates not fitting easily into the holistic descriptor bands, as noted for assessing written tests, apply – perhaps even more acutely – to spoken performance. For instance, some learners may be fluent but produce lots of errors (under-monitoring), while others may speak largely without errors but in a halting and hesitant manner (over-monitoring). For sample rubrics for holistic scoring of spoken tests, see Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 116, 206, 217, 219), Harmer (2015: 419) and Johnson (2018: 272–273).

Analytical Scoring

In assessing spoken language it is very difficult for a tester to concentrate on more than about six features at once, so that it is important to carefully choose the best set of features. They should be discrete, relevant and comprehensive. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 212–213) provide an analytic scoring rubric comprising six features, namely: ‘grammar’, ‘vocabulary’, ‘comprehension’, ‘fluency’, ‘pronunciation’ and ‘task’ (= success in doing the task required). Each feature has five bands or levels of attainment. Harmer (2015: 420) gives an example set of features comprising ‘pronunciation’, ‘fluency’, ‘use of vocabulary’, ‘use of grammar’, ‘intelligibility’, ‘repair skills’ and ‘task completion’ with a six-band scale of attainment for each feature.

It is clearly important to define exactly what is meant by a particular feature label to avoid different testers interpreting it differently. My own

research has indicated that even trained and experienced native-speaker EFL teachers may interpret criteria such as 'fluency' in various ways if these are not specified for the task at hand (Lennon 1995). For example, if a test taker does a lot of self-correcting, some testers may perceive this as lack of language correctness, while others may perceive it as lack of fluency, while others again may actually double-count self-correction as contributing both to lack of correctness and to lack of fluency. Furthermore, some testers may react positively and some negatively to communication strategies such as circumlocution, paraphrase, syntactic reformulation or use of a series of near synonyms to convey a word not available in lexical storage. It is also very difficult to ensure there is no overlap among features. For example, with reference to 'intelligibility' in the Harmer (2015: 420) list above, lack of intelligibility can have various causes, including grammar, vocabulary and especially pronunciation, so that there is some category overlap here.

Not only the feature labels themselves, but also the descriptors for each attainment level, will usually need elucidation. To stay with fluency, descriptions which use expressions such as 'speaks quickly with occasional hesitations' or 'speaks slowly with many pauses' are by no means unproblematic, since speed of speech is not only a function of fluency but of other factors, including temperament and affective factors. Some intellectuals speak slowly and deliberately and excited or nervous candidates may speak unnaturally quickly. Other terms frequently used in descriptors, such as 'few', 'frequent', 'quite a lot of' are not self-explanatory and need to be defined more closely. For these reasons there should at very least be a meeting of testers in advance and consensus should be reached on how to interpret the feature labels and descriptors. If time and resources allow, one or more tester-training sessions may be advisable so that testers can listen to selected recordings from previous oral tests, score them and compare their scores with the scores originally given.

Test takers themselves should also be informed well in advance about how their spoken performance is to be assessed. They may otherwise make incorrect assumptions about what the scoring criteria are. In particular, some candidates may assume that language correctness is the sole criterion and adopt message reduction and avoidance strategies. In this regard it is advisable to reward successful use of communication and repair strategies and to inform candidates about this well in advance. Similarly, it should be explained to learners that over-monitoring and under-monitoring will be equally penalised and that the optimal monitor user will be rewarded.

As for written language testing, procedures for computerised scoring of oral tests have been developed, based on using regression models to establish which sets of measurable features associated with, for example, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, correlate best with

scores given by expert human markers. High correlations between computerised scores and scores given by human markers are often obtained (see Van Moere and Downey 2016: 347–350).

Six Rules of Thumb for Oral Testing

There are a number of rules of thumb to bear in mind when conducting oral examinations:

- Use the first few minutes as a warm-up phase which does not count as part of the test, and make this clear to the candidates.
- Try to create a friendly, unthreatening atmosphere both in terms of the room chosen, seating arrangements and one's own manner as examiner. This will contribute to a more natural conversation and discourage excessive monitoring by the examinee. It is not advisable to waste time formally introducing oneself as examiner to each candidate, much less shaking hands because this will only make test takers more nervous.
- Use a variety of tasks, topics and techniques to contribute to a more rounded picture of proficiency.
- Two testers (or an interviewer and a scorer) are better than one.
- Use both formal and communicative criteria for assessment and consider combining analytical and holistic assessment. Analytical criteria should include both positive as well as negative features.
- Agree in advance on the scoring criteria with any other testers and make sure these criteria are made known to candidates in advance.

Some Alternatives/Supplements to Traditional Tests

Concern about the ethics of making learners' future academic and professional careers hinge on a single test have led to increasing conviction that tests are best supplemented by alternative assessment instruments (see Ur 2012: 169–171). Additionally, some alternative methods of assessment may be less culturally biased than traditional testing. The term 'triangulation' is used when a number of different perspectives or information sources are combined for assessment purposes, for example a traditional language test, a teacher report and peer assessment (see Brown and Rodgers 2002: 243–245). Some varieties of alternative assessment include the following.

Teacher Reports

One long-established supplement to the test is the teacher report. In the report the teacher may state the mark expected of the learner in the test. This projected mark may even be used in conjunction with the mark achieved on the test to arrive at the learner's final mark. Traditional teacher reports may

be supplemented by teacher observations on work done and activities performed. Teacher judgements are, however, necessarily subjective.

Continuous Assessment

Another alternative to traditional testing is continuous assessment, in which various pieces of work during the year are marked by the teacher and these marks are amalgamated to form a final mark at the end of the course. This may supplement a final test or replace it.

Portfolio Assessment

An approach that encourages the development of learner autonomy is the compilation of a portfolio of work done over the course. Learners should be permitted to include only those examples of work that they wish to include. Portfolios may include audio and video material as well as self-evaluation questionnaires and peer evaluations. In these ways a composite, rounded and multifaceted picture of a learner's progress can be built up. For a discussion of portfolio assessment as an alternative to traditional tests, see Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 130–134), Harmer (2015: 411) and Weigle (2002: 197–229).

Peer Assessment

Where the results of a test are only for classroom-internal use and do not have any significance for learners' future academic or professional careers, peer assessment as a supplement to a test should be considered. The more experienced and mature the learners are, the more that peer assessment is likely to be a viable option. It can, for example, be used for assessing learners' oral presentations to fellow students. Peer assessment requires careful preparation, however, and a clear catalogue of scoring criteria has to be agreed on in advance. One advantage of peer assessment is that learners may be more willing to accept the criticism of their peers than that of their teacher. In this regard, the didactic value of peer assessment will be maximised by the inclusion of a final reflection and feedback phase. For an experimental study of peer assessment of essays with school learners aged 15–16 years see Bärenfänger (2012).

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is another supplement to testing, worthy of consideration for classroom-internal purposes. Learners need practice in this technique if they are to develop a measure of autonomy and self-direction, to become less reliant on external feedback from exam results

and be able to monitor their own progress more accurately. Self-assessment should ideally be a continuous process which accompanies learning. Learners should be encouraged to reflect on their performance and to document their reflection in written form so that a longitudinal record of their progress emerges. Such documentation may take the form of a learning log or diary. In particular, learners should focus on what they can do and not just record perceived deficits. Ideally, the log should be the property of the learner and the teacher should not necessarily have access to it unless the learner so wishes. Self-assessment can be combined with individual-referenced testing. For further discussion of self-assessment and peer assessment, see Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 144–154).

Food for Thought

- Q. 1. Look at the list of well-known test-types in the chapter again. Do you know of any other test-types to add to the list? If so, how would you categorise them along the spectrum of discrete-point to integrative, and how objective or subjective is marking likely to be? What would you regard as their advantages and disadvantages for specific learner groups in particular situations?
- Q. 2. Have you experienced as a learner, or used as a teacher, individual-referenced testing techniques? If so, explain to the group how it was done and say how effective or otherwise you found the technique. If not, would you be interested in using them and do you see any concrete applications for them in your own teaching?
- Q. 3. What, in your opinion, are the advantages and disadvantages of supplementing or replacing traditional tests with (a) teacher reports, (b) continuous assessment (c) portfolio assessment (d) peer assessment? Limit your answer to the specific groups of learners whom you teach or will teach.
- Q. 4. (Group task for practising teachers) Do you see any possibilities for integrating self-assessment into classroom practice with your own groups of learners. Do you think this would be desirable?
- Q. 5. With reference to what you have read in the chapter, what suggestions could you make to an institution which only uses a traditional essay to assess proficiency at intermediate and advanced levels? Or do you think this is a good idea and should not be changed?
- Q. 6. (Group task) Imagine you have to design a placement test for a large number of adults of vastly differing proficiency levels and whom you have to assign to three broad groups – beginner, intermediate, advanced – in the following skills: speaking, reading, writing. How would you do this as economically as possible?

Further Reading

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