

ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook

Report prepared by:
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Have you taught groups that sometimes don't gel? Do you feel that the way students get on in class is important? This lesson looks at the way classroom dynamics create a good learning environment and enhance opportunities for learning. It looks at what helps create good dynamics and the reasons for that.

Task 1 – Sonya's least favourite class

Sonya: I'm teaching a class at the moment that I really am not very fond of. As a group I find them very cold – almost to the point of being hostile. At the beginning of the course, I went out of my way to be nice to them, but they just didn't react, and it's just gone from bad to worse. I can't wait for this term to end so I can be free of them.



Question: Is this just a personality problem? Why (not)? Jot down your thoughts on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️

Task 1 Feedback 🗝️

There may be a personality problem here. However, Sonya's comment about being nice to the students suggests that this is all she did. Some student groups do contain difficult personality mixes and simply being nice to students (while very important!) is not enough to ensure a good group dynamic.

Key Skill

Teachers sometimes need to work hard at creating a good classroom dynamic and in doing so they will need to employ a variety of strategies. This work needs to occur not only at the beginning of a course but also during every lesson.

Task 2 – Why are classroom dynamics important?



Below are some statements that give specific reasons as to why classroom dynamics are important. However, in some of the statements the rationale is not so valid. Read the statements and decide if the rationale is *valid* or *questionable*.

Statements about classroom dynamics	
1. Good classroom dynamics mean that the lesson is more fun for the teacher.	<i>valid</i> <i>questionable</i>
2. Good classroom dynamics involve interaction, and practice at interacting is a key element in learning and being able to speak a language.	<i>valid</i> <i>questionable</i>
3. Good classroom dynamics foster a positive and constructive learning environment.	<i>valid</i> <i>questionable</i>
4. Good classroom dynamics mean that there is much more student-centred interaction and the teacher can relax.	<i>valid</i> <i>questionable</i>
5. Good classroom dynamics can more clearly determine what different roles students and teachers can take during a lesson.	<i>valid</i> <i>questionable</i>
6. Good classroom dynamics can result in a more spontaneous learning environment that allows for more creative decision-making by the teacher.	<i>valid</i> <i>questionable</i>
7. Good classroom dynamics mean that you can respond to students more and you don't have to plan in so much detail.	<i>valid</i> <i>questionable</i>
8. Good classroom dynamics will result in more enjoyable lessons for the students and increase their motivation to learn.	<i>valid</i> <i>questionable</i>

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Good classroom dynamics are connected to the maximisation of learning opportunities. Making lessons enjoyable is something that should be of benefit to the learners. While teachers may also enjoy a fun learning environment, their needs as far as this is concerned are secondary to the students.

Task 3 – Key requirements for classroom dynamics



Numbers 1 to 10 below are all key requirements of good classroom dynamics. Letters a to j are explanations of these requirements in terms of classroom practice. Match the key requirements to the explanations.

Key requirements	Explanations
1. Good group dynamics require a shared sense of purpose.	
2. Good group dynamics require clear staging of lessons and clear sign posting of activities.	
3. Good group dynamics require a sense of trust, empathy and confidence within the learner group.	
4. Good group dynamics require a variety of activities.	
5. Good group dynamics require consideration of teacher and student roles in a lesson.	
6. Good group dynamics require consideration of students' expectations.	
7. Good group dynamics require consideration of cross cultural issues.	
8. Good group dynamics require consideration of individual preferences and learning styles.	
9. Good group dynamics require consideration of physical factors in the learning environment.	
10. Good group dynamics require real communication that is meaningful and relevant to students.	

Explanations

- a. While students need to assume some responsibility for their learning, the teacher often has to take the role of leader in the classroom.
- b. Teachers need to think about how they can arrange the classroom furniture to facilitate different interactions that aim to promote good classroom dynamics.
- c. The teacher needs to indicate clearly to students when one activity finishes and another begins as well as letting students know where the lesson is heading.
- d. Individual students need to be aware of the fact that not everyone in the group will want to learn in exactly the same way that they do.
- e. This can only be achieved when students are able to personalise language and share their ideas.
- f. In multi-lingual / multi-national classes teachers need to make sure that students are tolerant of one another's differences.
- g. The teacher needs to provide activities that give students a sense of working together on a problem that can be solved by means of co-operation.
- h. This can only happen when teachers and students begin to see each other as individuals and not just part of a collective whole.
- i. Students need to understand that they are part of a group that has to work together and they are not doing a one-to-one lesson.
- j. Too much routine activity will not create a dynamic and spontaneous environment that facilitates learning.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Task 3 shows that careful consideration of learners as individuals and how they may or may not fit together lies at the heart of establishing good group dynamics. With most groups, good dynamics will not happen spontaneously, but only as a result of careful planning on the teacher's behalf.

Task 4 – Ways of facilitating good dynamics



Numbers 1 to 10 are all ideas that can be used in the classroom to help create good dynamics. Letters a to j describe the purpose of these ideas. Match the ideas with the purposes. Different variations are possible

Classroom ideas

1. Do ice breaker activities at the beginning of a course ...
2. Do regular, daily warmer activities ...
3. Do group problem-solving tasks ...
4. Do tasks that allow students to personalise language and ideas ...
5. Do activities that integrate 'old' students with 'new' students when the composition of the class changes ...
6. Do work on learning styles and learning strategies ...
7. Let learners know about your teaching style, the course content and your reasons for doing some activities ...
8. Monitor students not only for language problems, but also for the 'climate' or mood of the class ...
9. Monitor your own decision-making during the lesson and the effect this has on pace ...
10. Allow for interpersonal exchanges between you and the learners before, during and after the lesson ...

Purposes

- a. ... so that students find out more about themselves as learners and how to learn more effectively.
- b. ... so that you can become aware of any potential threats to the dynamics of a group.
- c. ... so that newly formed classes can get to know each other as people.
- d. ... so that you get to find out about each other and what is happening in your lives.
- e. ... so that a good dynamic is constantly passed on within the group.
- f. ... so that the group's energy levels are raised at the beginning of each lesson.
- g. ... so that lessons don't drag and have a negative effect on the group dynamic.
- h. ... so that students get the chance to work as a team,
- i. ... so that they are more likely to feel confident about you when you assume the role of 'leader' in the classroom.
- j. ... so that students can express genuine opinions and feelings.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Think about some previous learning experiences that you have had. They don't need to be related to language learning. Can you remember classes that had a good dynamic? Try to analyse what it was about the teacher and the other students that helped to create this dynamic.

Note your observations in your *Teaching log*

Taking it to the classroom ...

In task 4 there is a good array of ideas. It is likely that there are some ideas in the list that you haven't tried. Make it your aim over the next term to try out as many of the ideas in task 4 as possible. Having tried each idea, evaluate its effectiveness for creating a positive learning environment with your students.

Want to find out more ... ?

Classroom Dynamics by Jill Hadfield (OUP 1992) has an invaluable resource of ideas and activities that aim to promote a good learning environment.

On pages 161 – 167 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4th edition) by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further reading on the advantages and disadvantages of using different grouping options in the classroom and their effect on class dynamics.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 1 b) Student interaction and teacher roles:** Includes discussion and analysis on a variety of different seating arrangements and appropriate teacher roles for each.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

1. **questionable** – *The teacher's sense of enjoyment is less important than the students'.*
2. **valid**
3. **valid**
4. **questionable** – *There is likely to be more student-centred interaction. However, the teacher should monitor this interaction attentively and not relax.*
5. **valid**
6. **valid**
7. **questionable** – *While it is good that teachers are responsive to students, teachers also need to ensure they plan their lessons in such a way that students get a sense of coherence from the teaching programme.*
8. **valid**

Task 3 – Feedback

1. g
2. c
3. h
4. j
5. a
6. i
7. f
8. d
9. b
10. e

Task 4 – Feedback

1. b, c, d, k, j
2. d, e, f, k
3. e, h
4. j
5. c, e
6. a
7. i
8. b, g
9. g
10. d, i, j




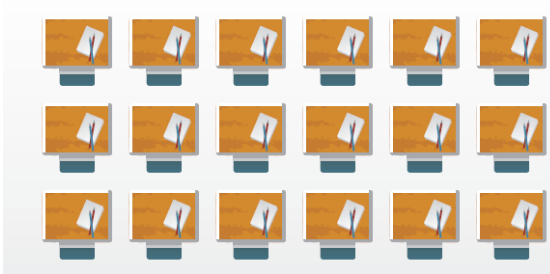
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How should you sit and group students for the best learning results? This lesson will describe different ways of arranging students in your learning space and what roles the teacher plays within these different arrangements.

Task 1 – Seating arrangements



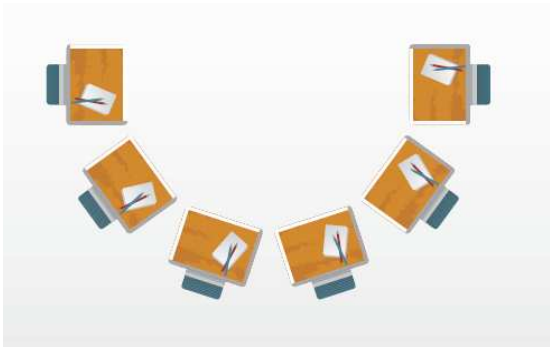
Look at the different seating arrangements a) to d) below. Which ones have you used as a teacher (or perhaps as a second language student)? Rank them in order from 1 = most preferred to 4 = least preferred. Then read the feedback on Task 1 below. 



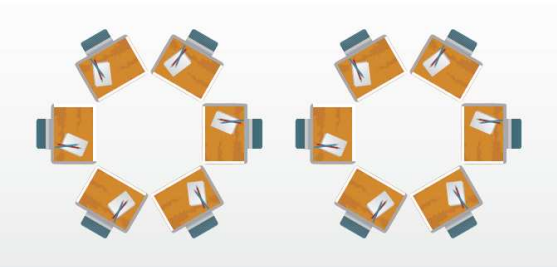
a) Rows



b) Circle



c) Horseshoe



d) Islands

Task 1 Feedback

Your answers to this task will depend on past experience and personal choice. In many private English language learning contexts with smaller classes, 'the horseshoe' is a favourite seating arrangement. However, with larger groups 'islands' might be more manageable. Sometimes the institution you work for dictates the seating because the desks are permanently fixed to the floor. However, the key issue is more to do with how the students are grouped during specific activities, rather than how the furniture is arranged.

Key Skill

It is important for a teacher to think about how a room is arranged and how students will interact for different activities. It is useful if a teacher thinks through these arrangements when they are planning their lessons.

Task 2 – Patterns and activities



Numbers 1 to 7 below show pictures of different interaction patterns. Letters a to g give the names of the patterns. Numbers i to vii describe typical activities associated with one of the patterns. Match the pictures to the names and activities.

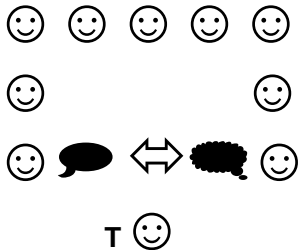
1.



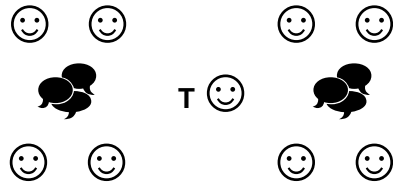
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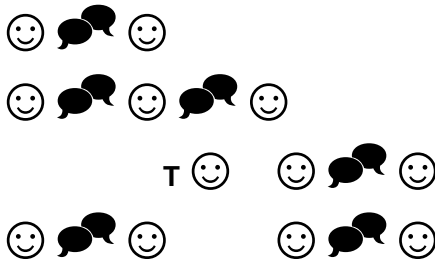
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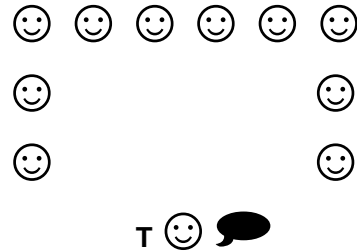
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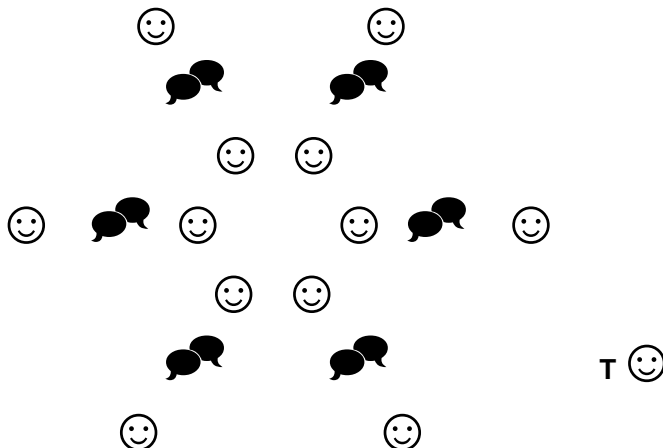
5.



6.



7.



Names of patterns	
a. open pair	b. teacher-fronted plenary
c. group work	d. student working alone
e. closed pair	f. onion ring
g. mingle	

Activities

- i. controlled oral practice of a four-line dialogue.
- ii. discussion on a news topic – different students present their point of view.
- iii. multiple role play – students assume different roles with different students.
- iv. survey on free time activity – students find out information from others.
- v. written grammar practice task.
- vi. students check their answers to a listening task with each other.
- vii. teacher conducts feedback on a reading task.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

In task 2 there are lots of examples of student-centred interaction. These are only examples and some activities could use different interaction patterns. For example, the discussion could be done by closed pairs and the multiple role play could use a mingle interaction.

Task 3 – What’s the teacher doing?



Using the same interaction patterns from task 2, decide on which two roles a teacher has for each activity from the list a to d below. Then match the teacher activity i to vii to the interaction patterns and teacher roles.

Teacher roles

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| a. controller | b. evaluator |
| c. informer | d. facilitator |

Teacher activity

- i. Monitor closely and help students with language.
- ii. Keep students moving around so that everyone has a partner.
- iii. Nominate who should answer a question.
- iv. Time interaction and tell students when to change partner.
- v. Monitor at a distance and make a note of errors.
- vi. Nominate who should speak.
- vii. Monitor closely and point out mistakes.

Interaction patterns	Teacher roles	Teacher activity
open pairs		
teacher-fronted plenary		
group work		
student working alone		
closed pairs		
onion ring		
mingle		
open pairs		

Check your ideas in the answer key.

Key Skill

During student-centred interaction, the teacher plays two key roles: facilitator (making sure the students are able to speak) and evaluator (assessing students' progress with the task and also assessing the language they are producing). How closely you monitor depends on the nature of the activity and the strengths and weaknesses of your students.

Task 4 – What are the issues?



Numbers 1 to 10 below describe criticisms that teachers can have of student-centred interaction (pairs, groups, mingles). Letters a to j are replies to these criticism. Match the criticism to the replies.

Criticisms	Replies
1. Students make too much noise when they are all speaking at once.	
2. The desks in my room are screwed to the floor, so it is difficult for students to form pairs and groups.	
3. Often when students work in pairs, they don't like the person they have to work with.	
4. Students aren't used to working in this way. They will find it strange.	
5. I worry that students don't really learn any grammar or vocabulary when they are just chatting in pairs.	
6. Some pairs finish before others and just sit there.	
7. I feel like I am losing control of the class when students are in pairs or groups.	
8. Weak students often find pair work hard because they are not sure what they are meant to be doing.	
9. I can't hear everything students are saying so that I can correct them.	
10. Students will revert back to using their first language when I put them together.	

Replies

- a.** Sometimes it is a good idea just to let students speak and not worry about mistakes. This will help them develop some degree of fluency.
- b.** Students also need to develop speaking skills and this kind of interaction can help them to learn to speak.
- c.** This means you need to help those students first when you are monitoring.
- d.** Even if you can't move the furniture, you can always move the students.
- e.** This may happen so you will need to reinforce the importance of using English and check that students are doing so when you monitor.
- f.** That's true to some extent, but at least this means they are producing language.
- g.** This doesn't need to happen if you monitor pair and group work actively and attentively.
- h.** If that's the case, you should keep students moving around so they work with different students for each activity.
- i.** If this often happens, you should plan an extra activity that will keep these students occupied until the others have finished.
- j.** In this case, you should introduce new kinds of interaction patterns gradually. Also let your students know why you are doing this and what benefit they can gain from it.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Do you feel your classroom is student-centred enough? Over a period of about five lessons, try keeping a record of how much time is spent on teacher-fronted interaction and how much time is spent on student-centred interaction. If you feel the percentage of teacher-centred interaction is too high, think about which activities could include a greater amount student-centred focus.

Keep a record of your findings in your *Teaching log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Are you familiar with all the interaction patterns in task 2? Try experimenting with some of them. For example, role plays are traditionally done in pairs. However, for variation, it might be interesting to try an onion ring role play exercise. Students could perform their role with three or four other students as they move around the onion ring. You will need to set a time limit for each interaction.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 108 - 111 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further reading on different teacher roles.

On pages 84 - 90 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on classroom interaction and seating options.

See also section 1 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 1 a) Classroom dynamics:** Includes discussion and tasks on how the physical classroom environment can have a positive effect on classroom dynamics.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

1. d and v
2. a and vi
3. e and i
4. c and ii
5. g and iv
6. b and vii
7. f and iii

Task 3 – Feedback

Interaction	Teacher roles	Teacher activity
open pairs	controller, evaluator	vi. Nominate who should speak.
teacher-fronted plenary	informer, evaluator	iii. Nominate who should answer a question.
group work	facilitator, evaluator	v. Monitor at a distance and make a note of errors
student working alone	informer, evaluator	vii. Monitor closely and point out mistakes
closed pairs	facilitator, evaluator	i. Monitor closely and help students with language
onion ring	facilitator, evaluator	iv. Time interaction and tell students when to change.
mingle	facilitator, evaluator	ii. Keep students moving around so that everyone has a partner.

Task 4 – Feedback

1. f
2. d
3. h
4. j
5. b
6. i
7. g
8. c
9. a
10. e



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Why is it that all students don't learn in the same way? By doing this lesson, you will find out about different student learning styles and how to deal with them.

Task 1 – What's wrong?

Lisa is talking about her current class to a colleague, Kate.

Kate: Are you going to use this grammar game?

Lisa: I don't think so.

Kate: Why not?

Lisa: Games don't seem to work with the class I have at the moment. They usually do, but not with this class.

Kate: That's strange.

Lisa: I know. I used to love language games when I was learning Spanish. This class gets excited when we do a gap fill exercise. I don't know what's wrong with them.



Is there something wrong with Lisa's class? What should she do? Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️

Task 1 Feedback 🗝️

There is probably nothing wrong with Lisa's class. It is likely that as a group they have a learning style that prefers more serious language learning activities. Lisa and Kate are making the assumption that because *they* enjoy language learning games *all* their students will. Lisa should talk to her students directly and find out exactly what they do like. She could also do a learning styles quiz with her class to discover what kind language learning activities her students might enjoy more than games.

Key Skill

All students have different learning styles. This affects the way they behave in the classroom and their response to different materials and activities. Here are some common learning styles:

- **Fluency-focused** – *likes communicating and doing freer speaking activities*
- **Accuracy focused** – *likes to be sure that they are getting things right*
- **Visual** – *likes working with visual information when learning English*
- **Auditory** – *likes receiving information by listening and responding*
- **Kinesthetic** – *likes to include physical activities in the learning process*

It is important to realise that each learning style is a continuum and all students will have a mixture learning styles, however some may be more prevalent than others.

Task 2 – Learning styles and classroom activities



Numbers 1 to 11 describe different classroom activities. Letters a to e are the learning styles from task 1. Match each classroom activity with the correct learning style. You will need to use some of the learning styles more than once.

Classroom activities	Learning styles
1. Mingle activities that involve walking around and talking to other students.	
2. A role play done in pairs or small groups.	
3. A grammar lesson taught through a context created by pictures and drawings.	
4. The teacher corrects students a lot during oral pair work.	
5. Listening to the teacher read stories aloud.	
6. Running dictations where students have to run to a text and run back to their group to dictate what they can remember.	
7. Completing a grammar gap-fill task that checks understanding.	
8. Writing tasks based on graphs and tables.	
9. Drilling students in a new grammar structure.	
10. Listening to and responding to the teacher's oral questions.	

Learning styles

- a. fluency-focused
- b. accuracy-focused
- c. visual
- d. auditory
- e. kinesthetic

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Task 3 – Finding out about your students’ learning styles



Match up columns A, B and C so that you create four logical sentences, then write those sentences in the empty table below.

A	B	C
1. Giving students a lecture on learning styles is a good idea is a bad idea because this is a quick and efficient way of having some idea of how your learners like learning.
2. Doing a simple learning style quiz because it will give you a more in-depth idea of their learning style over a longer period of time.
3. Asking students directly about their learning style because they probably won't understand what you are saying
4. Observing how your students react to different activities because they probably don't know what it is.

Logical Sentences	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Check your ideas in the answer key.



Task 4 – What can teachers do?



Once we begin to understand the different learning styles of our students, what can we do about it? Below are some descriptions of teachers' actions. Decide which actions are 'constructive' (C), and which are 'not constructive' (N). Write C or N in the right-hand column.

Teachers' actions	C or N?
1. The teacher tells the learners they must change their learning style so they become better learners.	
2. The teacher makes sure her/his lessons contain good variety so all learning styles are catered for.	
3. The teacher makes learners aware of their learning style.	
4. The teacher asks students to discuss the usefulness of different activities with their classmates.	
5. The teacher monitors students carefully and tells them when they are using the wrong learning style.	
6. The teacher suggests different ways of doing activities in the classroom and offers students a choice.	
7. The teacher makes students aware of the fact that their classmates' learning styles are different and that sometimes they need to be flexible about their reaction to different activities.	
8. The teacher always puts students with the same learning style together in pairs.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

It can be interesting to think about your own learning style. Do a learning style quiz to discover which kind of learner you are. Describe learning activities or ways of learning that appeal to you when learning something new. Then consider this question: “To what extent do my choices about teaching reflect my own preferred learning style?”

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Whenever you get a new group of students, spend some time trying to work out the learning style of individual members of the group as well as focusing on the group as a whole. You can do this by questionnaires and direct observation of their behaviour and response to activities. Try to strike a balance between catering for their learning style and providing them with variety.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 88 & 89 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further discussion on learning styles and some alternative ways of describing students.

Learning to Learn English by Gail Ellis and Barbara Sinclair (Cambridge University Press 1989) includes many practical ideas for dealing with learning styles.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL TaskBook series, which also relate to this topic:

- Unit 1 e) **Learner autonomy:** Looks at different ways to help individual learners become more autonomous.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) a, d, e
- 2) a, d
- 3) c
- 4) b
- 5) d
- 6) b, e
- 7) b
- 8) c
- 9) b, d
- 10) d

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) Giving students a lecture on learning styles / is a bad idea / because they probably won't understand what you are saying.
- 2) Doing a simple learning style quiz / is a good idea / because this is a quick and efficient way of having some idea of how your learners like learning.
- 3) Asking students directly about their learning style / is a bad idea / because they probably don't know what it is.
- 4) Observing how your students react to different activities / is a good idea / because it will give you a more in-depth idea of their learning style over a longer period of time.

Task 4 – Feedback

- 1) **not constructive:** *While it is good to encourage students to be flexible, forcing them to change is likely to affect their motivation in a negative way.*
- 2) **constructive:** *The idea to try and please all of the students some of the time.*
- 3) **constructive:** *When students know their learning style, they are likely to be more receptive to trying alternatives.*
- 4) **constructive:** *If one student says she doesn't like listening activities, but another student explains why she likes them and finds them useful, the first student might re-evaluate her ideas.*
- 5) **not constructive:** *Adapting a learning style can only come about gradually over time. This kind of very direct feedback to a student in the middle of the activity could cause resentment.*
- 6) **constructive:** *Particularly if many learners in a group have a similar learning style. Letting students participate in the learning process in this very active way is likely to motivate them.*
- 7) **constructive:** *This means individual students are less likely to expect lessons tailored to their individual learning style all the time.*
- 8) **not constructive:** *It is good for students to experience a range of learning styles when working in groups. It can open their eyes to different ways of learning.*



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Do your students sometimes look bored and unmotivated? This lesson gives ideas about how this can happen.

Task 1 – Sally’s problem.

Sally started her teaching career as a primary school teacher. She liked young children, but after a couple of years she found it tiring to teach them. She decided to make a change to teaching English language to young adults. She did a training course and got a job. To her surprise, she found teaching adults wasn't all that different from teaching children. Many of her students needed the kind of encouragement and support young children do. She liked the first groups of students she taught and thought she got on well with them. She was shocked when her boss told her some of the students had complained. They said they didn't like her teaching style.



What is causing Sally’s problem? Below are some ideas.

Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 

- a. Sally has an unpleasant personality and the students don't like her.
- b. Sally really wants to give up teaching all together and generally has a negative attitude.
- c. Sally speaks slowly and gives strong stress to certain syllables. Her voice sounds a bit patronising.
- d. The students that complained feel that Sally is giving more support to other learners in the class and not them.
- e. The students that complained found out that Sally has only just finished her training and they want a more qualified teacher.
- f. Sally tends to treat her students as though they were younger learners and hasn't adjusted her manner to teaching adults.



Task 1 Feedback

All of the answers are possible, but, in this situation, answers **c** and **f** are the most likely. Teachers often adopt a manner and a way of speaking according to who they are teaching. It is possible that the students who are complaining feel

Key skill

It is important for teachers of any subject to really connect with their students. If you do this successfully, you will really help students become motivated to learn.

Task 2 – Teacher behaviours



Letters a to e below describe teacher behaviours that could cause students to react in a negative way. Make notes about possible student reactions to these teacher behaviours.

Teacher behaviours

a. The teacher enters the classroom and looks at the learners over the top of her glasses without saying anything. She looks a bit angry and waits until all students are quiet. She then questions them in a loud voice.

Student reactions: _____

b. The teacher enters the classroom, looks quickly at the students and immediately opens the course book. She asks students to do the same thing. The teacher doesn't look at her learners and questions them about the material in the course book.

Student reactions: _____

c. The teacher tells a joke in class. The students don't really understand it, but the teacher laughs loudly anyway.

Student reactions: _____

d. The teacher talks for a long time and never varies the pitch and tone of her voice.

Student reactions: _____

e. The teacher creates a lot of fun activities to help motivate her learners. She even makes a cake once a week so they can have morning tea together in class.

Student reactions: _____

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key skill

Apart from creating problems in the classroom, inappropriate teacher behaviour can create a generally negative atmosphere for learners. It becomes harder for teachers to teach and for students to learn when the learning environment has an uncomfortable atmosphere.

Task 3 – Identifying the problem



Statements i to v say clearly what the problem is with the teacher's behaviour in each situation. Match the problems to the behaviours below.

Problems

- i. The teacher forgets that most students want to learn rather than just have fun.
- ii. The teacher's voice is monotonous.
- iii. The teacher misjudges the interests of the students.
- iv. The teacher is too strict with the students.
- v. The teacher has poor eye contact with students.

ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook

Motivating students to learn: Unit 1 d)

Behaviours	Problems
a. The teacher enters the classroom and looks at the learners over the top of her glasses without saying anything. She looks a bit angry and waits until all students are quiet. She then questions them in a loud voice.	
b. The teacher enters the classroom, looks quickly at the students and immediately opens the course book. She asks students to do the same thing. The teacher doesn't look at her learners and questions them about the material in the course book.	
c. The teacher tells a joke in class. The students don't really understand it, but the teacher laughs loudly anyway.	
d. The teacher talks for a long time and never varies the pitch and tone of her voice	
e. The teacher creates a lot of fun activities to help motivate her learners. She even makes a cake once a week so they can have morning tea together in class.	

Check your ideas in the answer key.



Key skill

If the learning environment is negative, the responsibility is on the teacher to do something about it. Students often do not have the skills to deal with the situation and it is, in the end, the teacher's job to manage the learning environment as constructively as possible. The first, key step is working out what the problem is so that you can do something about it. The next task looks at strategies for solving these motivation problems.

Task 4 – Getting help



In the column on the right, there are some solutions to the problems we identified in task 3. Match the problems to the solutions. It may be possible to match more than one problem to a solution.

Problems

- i. The teacher forgets that most students want to learn rather than just have fun.
- ii. The teacher's voice is monotonous.
- iii. The teacher misjudges the interests of the students.
- iv. The teacher is too strict with the students.
- v. The teacher has poor eye contact with students.

Problems	Solutions
	a) Ask a colleague to observe you and give you feedback.
	b) Ask a colleague to video record your lesson and watch yourself.
	c) Use a cassette player and record your lesson – listen to your voice on the tape.
	d) Think about using gesture and facial expression more to make information clear to learners.
	e) Find out from your students what interests and motivates them.
	f) Begin each lesson with an informal chat with your students.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Think about the following question:

“When I am teaching students how much am I in the role of ‘performer’?”

Think about things like your voice, your physical energy, eye contact, body language.

Note your thoughts in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

If you are interested in exploring how you motivate your students, you could try any of the ‘solution’ ideas in task 4. Or you could also keep a diary of the mood of your students and your mood and see if there is any connection.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 98 to 104 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4th edition) by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further discussion on what motivation is and where it comes from. On pages 112 and 113 of the same book there is also an interesting discussion of the teacher’s role as a performer and the effect this can have on students.

Answer Key

**Task 2 – Feedback**

There is an infinite variety of possible student reactions. The reactions described below are based on real situations.

a. Student reaction: *The students do not answer any of the teacher's questions, even though they know the answer. The students remain silent.*

b. Student reaction: *The students become restless and begin to whisper to teach other.*

c. Student reaction: *The students are polite, but very distant to the teacher. They do what she asks them, but they are very quiet in class.*

d. Student reaction: *The students complain to the Director of Studies that their teacher is boring. Many of them want to change class.*

e. Student reaction: *The students complain to the Director of Studies. They tell her that they feel they are not learning anything by only playing games and eating cake.*

Task 3 – Feedback

- a. iv
- b. v
- c. iii
- d. ii
- e. i

Task 4 – Feedback

- a) ii, iv, v
- b) ii, iv, v
- c) ii
- d) v
- e) i, iii
- f) iii, iv




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Do you sometimes worry that what you are doing with your students inside the classroom just isn't enough? There is probably good reason for your concern. This lesson looks at why it is a good idea for learners to be autonomous and suggests ways that you can help them achieve this.

Task 1 – Opinion survey



Look at the statements below and decide if you agree or disagree with them. Think about why you agree or disagree. Then read the feedback box below for some comments on these opinions. 

- a) The best thing for students to study outside the classroom is vocabulary.
- b) You can't change a student's learning style.
- c) When it comes to independent learning, students don't know what they need.
- d) It's no good setting homework because students never do it.
- e) You can waste a lot of time making your methodology obvious to learners.

Task 1 Feedback

- a) Vocabulary is only one thing students can study outside the classroom. They can also study grammar and practise language skills. There is a lot of things that they can do outside the classroom.
- b) You probably can't change a student's learning style in any radical way, but you can point out to them ways in which their learning style can limit them and suggest some options.
- c) This is often true. Students know what they like doing, but that is not always what they need the most.
- d) This is true of some students, but many students expect homework and feel disappointed if teachers do not set it.
- e) However, this can also give students an insight into different approaches to learning that they can utilise outside the classroom.

Key skill

Students can make better progress if they spend some time learning autonomously outside the classroom. Teachers need to help their students develop awareness of autonomous learning options and suggest strategies for putting them into practice.

Task 2 – Why should teachers promote autonomous learning?



1 to 5 below are key ideas associated with learner autonomy, while a to e provide an explanation of the key ideas. Match the ideas to the explanations.



Key ideas	
1. Learning time	2. Students' individual needs
3. Students' motivation	4. Students' general study ability
5. Students' individual responsibility for learning	

Explanations

- a. Some students may have had little or no training on how to study any subject in an effective way, so English language teachers will need to help them with useful strategies.
- b. If students have a sense of ownership of their English language learning, they are likely to want to study more.
- c. Teachers cannot hope to teach students absolutely everything they need to know so a good part of the learning is up to the student.
- d. Students are outside the classroom more than they are inside it and need strategies to help them use their own time productively.
- e. When students are working in a group they cannot hope to always do the things they like doing or need to do. They have to consider other students needs too.

Key skill

One of the broader aims of learner autonomy is to ensure students accept some responsibility for their own learning outside the classroom. It is easier for students to meet their individual needs during the time they study alone. With the right kind of advice from the teacher on how to go about this, student motivation can be increased.

Task 3 – Advice to students



Numbers 1 to 8 below are areas of advice for students who need to develop autonomy. Letters a to h are statements you might make directly to students in relation to each area of advice. Match the advice to the statements.



Areas of advice for students	
1. goals	2. time frames
3. materials	4. help
5. learning style	6. progress
7. revision	8. learning systems

Statements

- a. You will need this sometimes, so don't be afraid to come and ask for it.
- b. This has got to be done regularly. We'll do some in class, but you also need to do your own.
- c. A good way to start is by finding out what is available in the library and the learning centre – not just books, but also computer programmes and things off the internet.
- d. You need two lots of these – ones that you can reach in a short space of time and others, bigger ones that will take you longer to reach, for example studying at an English-speaking university.
- e. You need to think about setting up ones that work for you, for example, the best way for you to record vocabulary so that you'll remember it.
- f. These need to be realistic in relation to your learning goals.
- g. I'm not asking you to change this, but you sometimes need to be a bit flexible about the way you study language.
- h. It's just as important to know when this has been made as it is to realise what you don't know yet.

Key skill

The ideas in task 3 suggest that teachers have an important advising or counselling role to play with their students. However, this is not all they can do. See task 4 below for more ideas.

Task 4 – Some specific strategies



Some strategies for learner autonomy are best taught in class, while others are best taught in one-on-one counselling sessions. Look at the techniques below and put them into the correct box.

Techniques

1. Set homework regularly.
2. Discuss the rationale for the methodology you use e.g. stages in a reading lesson in relation to practising reading sub skills (scan, gist, intensive reading etc.)
3. Help students articulate specific short and long term goals.
4. Systematically revise language that you teach.
5. Give advice on alternative learning strategies e.g. suggest a fluency-based learner try some accuracy-based activities for a change.
6. Set up group and project work that gets students relying on each other independent of you.
7. Provide learners with an orientation to resources that you have such as a library or a learning centre.
8. Give learners feedback on their progress in relation to the goals they have set.
9. Point out specific resources such as self-access books, computer programmes or internet web sites that could help students.
10. Provide examples of different learning systems that other students have used.

Best taught in class	Best taught in one-on-one sessions

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Put yourself in your students' place. If you are currently learning a language, this will be easy. If you are not, try to imagine that you are. Which of the autonomous learning techniques in task 4 would you find most useful. Rank them from 1 to 10 (from the most to the least useful) and note down why.

Record your observations in your *Teaching log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Choose one of the in-class strategies from task 4 that you do not currently do with your learners. Try it out and get them to give you feedback on this. You can record this experiment in your Teaching log.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 394 – 408 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further reading on learner autonomy.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL TaskBook series, which also relate to this topic:

- Unit 1 c) **Learning styles:** Looks at how students' learning styles may affect their preferences for certain kinds of learning activities both in and outside the classroom.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1. d
- 2. e
- 3. b
- 4. a
- 5. c

Task 3 - Feedback

- 1. d
- 2. f
- 3. c
- 4. a
- 5. g
- 6. h
- 7. b
- 8. e

Task 4 - Feedback

Best taught in class	Best taught in one-on-one sessions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set homework regularly. 2. Discuss the rationale for the methodology you use e.g. stages in a reading lesson in relation to practising reading sub skills (scan, gist, intensive etc.) 4. Systematically revise language that you teach. 6. Set up group and project work that gets students relying on each other independent of you. 7. Provide learners with an orientation to resources that you have such as a library of a learning centre. 10. Provide examples of different learning systems that other students have found useful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Help students articulate specific short and long term goals. 5. Give advice on alternative learning strategies e.g. suggest a fluency-based learner try some accuracy-based activities for a change. 8. Gives learners feedback on their progress in relation to the goals they have set. 9. Point out specific resources such as self access books, computer programmes or internet web sites that could help students.



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When you have to write a lesson plan is it sometimes difficult to write down your aims? This lesson will give you ideas on how to write better aims when you need to.

Task 1 – Milly’s dilemma.

Milly is asking for help from her Director of Studies.

Milly: I’m going to teach this lesson using a reading text. The students will spend quite a bit of time reading and then working on vocabulary-in-context. The only thing is there are some really good examples of the past continuous in the text. I want them to underline these verb forms because we studied them last week and it would be good revision. The problem is I’m not really sure what my main aim is – reading or grammar?



Can you answer Milly’s question and tell her why? Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️

Task 1 Feedback 🗝️

Milly indicates that her students will “spend quite a bit of time reading”. Her focus on grammar looks like she will only get students to underline and notice the past continuous without doing a detailed focus on this verb phrase. This suggests that the main aim of Milly’s lesson concerns the development of reading skills and the grammar focus is a subsidiary (or secondary) aim.

Key skill

Sometimes it is necessary to write detailed lesson plans, for example, when you are going to be observed by another teacher. Writing main and subsidiary aims for the lesson as a whole as well as writing aims for each step or stage in a lesson can help you to think carefully about what you are trying to achieve with your students.

Task 2 – Writing clear aims



Some of the following aims are well written, while others are not clear or do not contain enough detail. Put the aims into the appropriate column below.

Aims

- a) For learners to distinguish between ‘will’ and ‘going to’ used to make spontaneous decisions in the context of stating intentions after a lottery win.
- b) By the end of the lesson learners will have had practice in using strategies to guess the meaning of new vocabulary in context.
- c) To clarify the present perfect continuous using a taped dialogue.
- d) For learners to practise the present continuous with the attached picture.
- e) To provide practice in scan listening skills in the context of listening to flight departure information at an airport.
- f) By the end of the lesson students will have had speaking practice and clarification of some tenses.
- g) To provide freer writing practice in the context of mini paragraphs.
- h) By the end of the lesson learners will have an understanding of which kinds of words can have both a weak and strong phonological form in authentic spoken language.
- i) For learners to practise detail reading and the inferring of opinion from a newspaper article with political bias.
- j) To focus on linking as per page 27 ex. 3
- k) To clarify the form and meaning of the future perfect in the context of speculating about technology in the future.
- l) By the end of the lesson learners will have done a great variety of reading practice around the topic.

Well written aims	Aims are not clear or lack detail

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Task 3 – Aims in the procedure



Sometimes it can be difficult to write aims in the procedure of the plan. You need to be sure you are stating an aim and not just describing what the students are going to do. For example:

- 1) To get students to read and answer question 1.
- 2) To make sure students have a gist understanding of the text.

Comment: *1) is just describing procedure, but 2) is clearly stating an aim.*

Decide whether the following statements are (A) aims or (D) merely a description of activities. Put A or D in the column on the right.

Statements	A or D?
a) To check learners' understanding of the activity.	
b) To identify and highlight irregular simple past forms.	
c) To complete the second task.	
d) To discuss the answers in pairs.	
e) To provide oral fluency practice	
f) To underline examples of the present perfect in the text	
g) To plan the essay before the first draft	
h) To provide controlled oral practice of the target language	
i) To complete the gaps in the sentences	
j) To brainstorm and share ideas for the first draft.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Task 4 – Aims and description



Now describe activities that match the aims. The first example has been done for you.

Example activities

a) To check learners' understanding of the activity.

Description: The teacher asks oral asks oral questions to make sure the students know what they have to do.

b) To identify and highlight irregular simple past forms.

Description: _____

e) To provide oral fluency practice

Description: _____

g) To plan the essay before the first draft

Description: _____

h) To provide controlled oral practice of the target language

Description: _____

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

You probably do not write detailed aims for lessons that you teach on a day-by-day basis. However, it is often a good idea to think about what your aims are in a lesson. Think of some lessons that you have taught in the last two or three weeks. Decide whether your aims were clear for these lessons or whether they were a bit confused and resulted in lessons that you were not happy with. Do you think your students were clear about your aims?

Note your thoughts in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Try telling your students what your aims are at the beginning of each lesson. You can write them up on the board. Alternatively, you could ask your students at the end of the lesson what they thought the aims were. It might be interesting to see what they say. If their ideas are different from yours, it is interesting to explore why.

Want to find out more ... ?

Page 371 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) has an introduction to lesson aims.

On pages 124 to 128 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on lesson aims.

See also section 3 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Answer Key

**Task 2 – Feedback****Well written aims**

a), b), e), h), i) and k)

Aim not clear or lack detail

c) To clarify the present perfect continuous using a taped dialogue.

Comment: *There is no mention of the topic of the dialogue or the context.*

d) For learners to practise the present continuous with the attached picture.

Comment: *There is no mention of what kind of practice – oral or spoken, controlled or free. There is no mention of the context.*

f) By the end of the lesson students will have had speaking practice and clarification of some tenses.

Comment: *There is no mention of whether the speaking is language practice or more general fluency practice. The tenses are not named.*

g) To provide freer writing practice in the context of mini paragraphs.

Comment: *There is no mention of the text type (narrative, report, argument) or the topic of the text.*

j) To focus on linking as per page 27 ex. 3

Comment: *There is no mention of whether the linking is to do with pronunciation or grammar.*

l) By the end of the lesson learners will have done a great variety of reading practice around the topic.

Comment: *There is no specific mention of the kind of reading sub skills (scan, skim, intensive) that will be practised in the lesson.*

Task 3 – Feedback

- a. A
- b. A
- c. D
- d. D
- e. A
- f. D
- g. A
- h. A
- i. D
- j. D

Task 4 – Feedback

b) To identify and highlight irregular simple past forms.

Description: The teacher asks learners to underline simple past irregular forms in the text. She gives them a list of irregular verbs to help them identify new forms.

e) To provide oral fluency practice

Description: The students work in pairs to personalise the information in the text by telling each other about a recent holiday they have had.

g) To plan the essay before the first draft

Description: Students share their brainstorming notes and discuss the content of each paragraph of the essay. They write up a paragraph-by-paragraph plan.

h) To provide controlled oral practice of the target language

Description: The teacher uses white board prompts to elicit a four-line dialogue. Students then practise the dialogue in pairs.



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Do you sometimes feel that sentence-level examples of language do not always help learners? Do some authentic examples of spoken language not fit into neat grammar categories? This lesson aims to help you look at some ways of analysing authentic written and spoken language.

Task 1 – What about the little words?

Anna: “I’ve got this student, Milos. He often picks up on some of the little words and sounds that we use like ‘well’ and ‘umm’ and wants to know about them. However, there’s nothing in the course book that we are using at the moment that can really help him. What should I do?”



Can you help Anna? What should she do? Jot down your ideas on a note pad, then check with the answer key below. 🗝️

Task 1 Feedback 🗝️

Anna probably needs to go outside the course book and find some examples of authentic spoken language. She needs to look at how these little words are used in spoken language and prepare a task of some kind that she can not only give to Milos, but the class as a whole. Students are often very keen to learn about this kind of language.

Key Skill

The analysis of authentic examples of written and spoken language is known as discourse analysis. This kind of study of language encompasses not only the “little words” mentioned above, but a whole range of features that look at language as a communicative event. This lesson is a very brief introduction to some aspects of discourse analysis.

Task 2 – Analysis of written language



a) Here is a letter that is mostly authentic (only the names and addresses have been changed). Read the letter and complete the analysis task below.

5 February 2009

Anna Martin
1 College Street
Schooltown

Dear Anna,

Thank you for sending in your application and test for our TESOL Course.

We are sorry to tell you that your work in the test is not at a high enough level for you to follow a TESOL Course. We need to be sure that the level of English of students on these courses is high because part of the course involves teaching your classmates, some of whom will be at an advanced level.

We feel you need to spend some more time studying general English to improve your English language skills and think about applying for a course at a later date.

Thank you again for the interest you have shown in our courses.

Yours sincerely,

Emily Smith
Director of Studies



b) Analysis task: Numbers 1 to 8 are language examples from the letter. Letters a to h are labels for these examples. Match the examples to the labels, then place them in the correct table below: ‘key features of a formal letter to a student’ or ‘features of problem → solution patterning’.

Key features of a formal letter to a student

Labels		Examples from Letter
	↻	
	↻	
	↻	
	↻	

ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook

Analysing written and spoken language: Unit 1 g)

Features of Problem → Solution Patterning

Labels		Examples from Letter
	→	
	→	
	→	
	→	

Labels

- a. Full name and address included at the beginning of the letter.
- b. This outlines the background **situation**.
- c. The salutation uses the first name of the student.
- d. This is used throughout the letter by the writer to indicate that the organisation and not the individual is responding to the student.
- e. This outlines the key **problem** in the letter.
- f. This outlines a **solution** to the problem.
- g. This signals to the reader that the information that follows will be some kind of problem.
- h. This sign off is used because although the letter is official, the writer of the letter knows the name of the person she is writing to.

Examples

1. The second paragraph (beginning "We are sorry ...").
2. Yours sincerely,
3. The pronoun 'we' used in the letter.
4. The third paragraph (beginning "We feel you ...")
5. Anna Martin, 1 College Hill, Schooltown
6. the first paragraph (beginning "Thank you for ...")
7. Dear Anna,
8. the word "sorry" (paragraph 2)

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

This task gives an idea of the kind of analysis that can be done with authentic written texts. The 'key features' are examples of typical language that we associate with particular written genres. The situation → problem → solution pattern in this letter is known as a discourse pattern. Discourse patterns can be found across a wide range of genres. For more information on genre features and discourse patterns, refer to the "Want to find out more...?" section below.

Task 3 – Analysing spoken language

Below is a piece of authentic spoken language:

- Line 1. A:** What's different about Tokyo to Auckland?
Line 2. B: **Well, for a start**, it's ... **um** ... I don't know if it's actually bigger in size, but
Line 3. bigger population-wise. **Of course**, it's a lot more crowded and a lot busier.
Line 4. Obviously the transport system is a lot different – there *is* a transport system **as**
Line 5. opposed to Auckland where there's ... **well**, there are buses, **but** not
Line 6. as efficient as Tokyo.



Letters 1 to 8 are pieces of language taken from the text (they have also been highlighted in the text). Letters a to h give definitions or explanations of these bits of language. Match the definitions to the pieces of language.

Language from the text	Definitions
1. well (line 2)	a. making a contrast
2. for a start (line 2)	b. showing you think the listener already knows this information
3. um (line 2)	c. starting a new topic
4. of course (line 3)	d. adjusting information in a sentence
5. obviously (line 4)	e. showing that you expect the listener to understand because the idea is clear
6. as opposed to (lines 4 – 5)	f. indicating you are going to make your first point
7. well (line 5)	g. introducing a different idea
8. but (line 5)	h. hesitating

Check your ideas in the answer key. 🗝️

Key Skill

Task 3 has focused on only one aspect of spoken text: words that are typically described as ‘discourse markers’. It is also possible to look at the way pronouns refer forward and back to nouns, or the way that unnecessary words are often left out of spoken language. A key problem is finding material that can be used to focus on authentic spoken language. The next task suggests a strategy.

Task 4 – Creating your own spoken language samples



Letters a to f describe steps in an approach to creating an authentic or semi-authentic recording that you could use in the classroom for the purposes of analysing spoken language with students. Put these steps in the correct order.

Steps to creating an authentic recording	Order
a. Transcribe the excerpt.	
b. Give students a language task that gets them to notice some useful key features in the excerpt. You don't need to focus on everything that's there.	
c. Listen to the conversation and find an excerpt that exemplifies some interesting features of spoken interaction.	
d. Give students the transcript.	
e. Record some native speakers having a conversation or set up an improvised role play of a particular situation.	
f. In class treat the excerpt as a normal listening lesson and get students to understand the gist and more detailed information in the text.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

In the TaskBook lesson: *Teacher Language*, it was suggested that you record part of your lesson in order to evaluate your language. It could be useful to analyse your own language along the lines suggested above. It would be interesting to see how many discourse markers you use, or you could look for broader patterns in terms of the way you initiate spoken interaction with students and how they respond.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Try to include regular lessons in your teaching programme where you focus on language features that are not concerned with grammar or vocabulary. The suggested book below will help give you ideas.

Want to find out more ... ?

The following book is an excellent introduction to the ideas introduced in this lesson: *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers* by Michael McCarthy (Cambridge University Press 1991).

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

Key Features of a Formal Letter to a Student

- a → 5
- c → 7
- d → 3
- h → 2

Key Features of Problem → Solution Patterning

- b → 6
- e → 1
- f → 4
- g → 8

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) c
- 2) f
- 3) h
- 4) b
- 5) e
- 6) a
- 7) d
- 8) g

Task 4 – Feedback

- 1) e
- 2) c
- 3) a
- 4) f
- 5) d
- 6) b



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ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook

Analysing written and spoken language: Unit 1 g)

Do students sometimes not understand what you are saying, particularly at low levels? This lesson will help you to pinpoint problems with your classroom language and look at ways of making it clearer.

Task 1 – Andy’s Feedback

Andy used to have a problem of speaking too quickly and students found him difficult to understand. He has worked hard at trying to slow down his speech, but students have told him that they still have problems understanding his instructions and explanations.



Can you help Andy? What do you think the problem is?

Jot down your ideas on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 



Task 1 Feedback

While the speed of Andy’s delivery may have improved, he is probably still using language that is too difficult for his students. He may also be using more language than he needs.

Key Skill

Teachers should use language in the classroom that is clear and natural. It should be simple enough for students to understand, but not too simplified so that it becomes ungrammatical or condescending. Teachers need to make sure they do not use more language than is necessary with students.

Task 2 – Problems with instructions



Numbers 1 to 8 are all examples of problematic teacher language. After each example, there are two problems. Which of the two problems best describes the example?

✓ **Tick the statement you think is correct.**

1. “I want you all to get up on your feet and hitch up with someone other than your mate next to you...”

- a) The teacher uses more words than necessary.
- b) There is too much colloquial language in these instructions.

2. “Just imagine if you might be an astronaut visiting the space station.”

- a): There is too much hypothetical language that is unnecessary.
- b) The use of ‘just’ is unnecessary.

3. “Then together talking – many words – happy class.”

- a) The teacher is too specific about the language output for the activity.
- a) The teacher over-simplifies her language and is speaking in an unnatural pidgin.

4. “The ideas espoused by group 1 are very interesting.”

- a) The teacher uses a word that is overly formal.
- b) The first noun phrase in the sentence is too long.

5. “I was wondering if you could all work in pairs and then would you mind talking about the picture.”

- a) The teacher uses too much unnecessary polite language.
- b) There is too much hypothetical language that is unclear.

6. “I’m just writing up a question on the white board and I want you to ... there we go I’ve finished ... yes, you should answer the question that I’ve written up.”

- a) The teacher mixes the present progressive with the present simple and this is confusing.
- b) The teacher narrates their activity and uses more language than is necessary.

7. “So how was your weekend? Did you have a good time? Oh and I’d do task one first. I had a great weekend.”

- a) The teacher mixes social language with instructional language and this is confusing for students.
- b) The teacher narrates their activity and hides the instructions amongst the narration.

8. “Those two clauses have a hypotactic relationship.”

- a) The 2 noun phrases in this sentence are too complex.
- b) The grammar terminology used in this explanation would probably be too sophisticated for many learners.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

To make your teacher language clear, it helps to avoid the following: language that is very colloquial, language that is very polite, language that is rarely used or is very technical. Two other things to avoid are: narrating what you’re doing and mixing different types of language (explanation vs. instruction).

Task 3 – Instructions and gestures



Sometimes it helps to use gestures when talking to students. Look at the examples of teacher language below and decide whether you would use gestures or not. Circle 'Y' for yes and 'N' for no. If you choose 'yes', describe the kind of gesture you would use.

Instructions	Gesture?	Describe your gesture
1. Talk together in pairs.	Y N	
2. Fill in the gaps in exercise one.	Y N	
3. Move around the room and talk to as many people as possible.	Y N	
4. Listen and complete exercise 2.	Y N	
5. Those in group A should sit on the left and those in group B should sit on the right.	Y N	
6. You've got 5 minutes to finish.	Y N	
7. Stand up and find the picture that matches your text.	Y N	
8. Read the text and complete the True / False questions.	Y N	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

A good way of reducing the amount of teacher talk you need to use is by using gesture and body language. It can also help support what you are saying and makes your language clearer for learners.

Task 4 – Making your instructions clear



The following examples of teacher language are unclear in one way or another. Rewrite them so that they are clear. The feedback provides *suggested* answers and variation is possible. 🗝️

Teacher language

1. Have a chat to your partner.
2. If you were a journalist ...
3. Time's just about up.
4. How about maybe getting into groups.
5. Check out if you were right at the back of the book.
6. Listen and work out if you've more or less got the hang of it.
7. If you could just pop the word in the right place.
8. Just have a read and jot down some of the core arguments.
9. Don't take forever – just whip through them.
10. What I want you to do is just get into pairs and have a look at what each other has got.

Thinking about your teaching ...

A good way to check your own instructional language is by taking a tape recorder to the classroom and recording yourself giving instructions. After the lesson, write out a transcript of some of your instructional sequences and analyse it to see if any of problems noted in task 2 are present in your teacher language.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

An interesting challenge you can set yourself (and it can be intriguing and fun for your students) is to try teaching for half an hour or an hour without talking at all and trying to mime things. You may need to write the odd word on the white board. This will give you an insight into how little it is possible to say some times with learners. Note how much more language they produce in order to fill the silence.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 116 - 118 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4th edition) by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further reading on how teachers can help students hear and understand language.

On pages 95 - 96 of *Learning Teaching* (2nd edition) by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on using gesture in the classroom.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 2 c) Giving instructions:** *Learn how to plan and give effective instructions in the classroom.*
- **Unit 2 b) Questioning techniques:** *Learn how teachers can effectively use questions not only to check instructions, but also to check learning.*

Answer Key

**Task 2 – Feedback**

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1. b) | 5. a) |
| 2. a) | 6. b) |
| 3. b) | 7. a) |
| 4. a) | 8. b) |

Task 3 – Feedback

- Talk together in pairs. Gesture: Yes.*
Describe gesture: The teacher points to each pair with both hands.
- Fill in the gaps in exercise 1. Gesture: No.* However, the teacher could hold up the book or worksheet and indicate the correct exercise.
- Move around the room and talk to as many people as possible. Gesture: Yes.*
Describe gesture: The teacher makes circular arm movements to suggest mingling.
- Listen and complete exercise 2. Gesture: No.* However, the teacher could cup one hand behind an ear to indicate listening.
- Those in group A should sit on the left and those in group B on the right. Gesture: Yes.* Describe gesture: The teacher points to the parts of the room where the people in each group should go.
- You've got 5 minutes to finish. Gesture: Yes.* Describe gesture: The teacher holds up a splayed hand – five fingers represent 5 minutes.
- Stand up and find the picture that matches your text. Gesture: Yes.*
Describe gesture: The teacher raises her hands to indicate standing up, then points to two or three pictures in the room.
- Read the text and complete the True / False questions. Gesture: No.* However,

the teacher could hold up the book or worksheet and indicate the correct text and task.

Task 4 – Feedback

- Have a chat to your partner.
Rewrite: *Talk to you partner.*
- If you were a journalist ...
Rewrite: *You are a journalist. (Or: Imagine you are a journalist.)*
- Time's just about up.
Rewrite: *It's almost time to stop / to finish. (Or: 30 seconds to go)*
- How about maybe getting into groups.
Rewrite: *Please get into groups of ...*
- Check out if you were right at the back of the book.
Rewrite: *Look at the answers on page X of the book.*
- Listen and work out if you've more or less got the hang of it.
Rewrite: *Listen for gist to get a general understanding.*
- If you could just pop the words in the right place.
Rewrite: *Put the words in the correct place.*
- Just have a read and jot down some of the core arguments.
Rewrite: *Read and write down the main ideas in the text.*
- Don't take forever – just whip through them.
Rewrite: *Don't spend too much time on them – do them quickly.*

10. What I want you to do is just get into pairs and have a look at what each other has got.

Rewrite: *Please get into pairs and look at your partner's answers.*



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Do you question your students a lot? Is it a good idea to use questions in the classroom? This lesson will help you find out about questions as learning tools.

Task 1 – Kate’s question.

Kate was teaching a group of pre intermediate students the other day. She gave them these instructions and asked them a question afterwards:

Kate: ‘I want all the students who are letter A to stand over here and all those who are letter B to stand over there. Then I want you to find a partner from the other group and talk to each other using the questionnaires and make notes on your partner’s answers and then go back into your original group and tell each other about the answers you got. And then you should order them from the most to the least interesting.’

Kate: “OK? Do you understand?”

Students: [Silence]

Kate: ”Do you understand?”

One student: “Yes” [very quietly]



Why are the students reluctant to answer? Do you think they understand? Jot your ideas on a note pad, then check the answer key below 🗝️

Task 1 Feedback

Kate’s instructions are quite long and complicated and the students’ silence probably means they don’t understand them, at least not completely, and this makes them reluctant to answer. The students who eventually answer ‘yes’ may have understood the instructions, but they could just be saying ‘yes’ to save face or because they think that if they say ‘no’, they will invite more difficult questioning from Kate. The problem is that Kate’s question does not give her a clear indication of whether her students have understood or not.

Key skill

Questions are a useful teaching tool in the English language classroom because they increase student participation in the lesson. It can also mean that teachers become less reliant on very long explanations, which can be difficult for students to understand. Questions can be 'open' (i.e. the question begins with a 'wh-' word like 'what' or 'where') or they can be closed (i.e. a question that you can answer with 'yes' or 'no'). Questions can also be 'display' (the teacher knows the answer) or 'referential' (the teacher doesn't know the answer).

Task 2 – The questions we use



Letters a to f are example teacher questions. Match them to the categories 1 to 6 below.

Teacher questions

- a. Do we know exactly when the action happened in the past?
- b. So are you going to talk to one student or many students?
- c. What's a word that means very, very tired?
- d. Did anyone go to the movies at the weekend?
- e. Who knows who invented the worldwide web?
- f. So does a 'burglar' steal from banks or only from people's homes?

Categories	Teacher questions
1. eliciting language	
2. eliciting information	
3. checking classroom instructions	
4. checking a vocabulary concept	
5. checking a grammar concept	
6. social or personal	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

There are many opportunities for teachers to use questions effectively during different stages of a lesson. Used appropriately, questioning keeps the students engaged and involved and helps to keep up the pace of the lesson.

Task 3 – Some problems with questions



In a to e below there is a description of problems that teachers can have when asking their students questions. Match the problems to the scenarios 1 to 5 below.

Scenarios	Problems
1. Teacher: So what kind of food do you eat for dinner in your family (2 seconds later) OK. Not sure? Not to worry.	
2. Teacher: OK, so first of all student A runs outside the classroom and reads a sentence and then comes back in. Student B then writes down what student A says, then its student B's turn to go outside. And they do the same thing. All right? OK, so Paulo, what do you have to do?	
3. Teacher: You might like to answer then and tell me where you're likely to find something like "rubbish"?	
4. Teacher: So you see this diagram on the white board – the one at the top with the little wiggly line. So do you think that's the present perfect, or is it this one with the little crosses on it?	
5. Teacher: So are you going to do the exercise or are you going to listen to the radio?	

Problems

- a. The answer to the question is too long and unmanageable for students.
- b. The answer to the question is so obvious it is not worth asking the question.
- c. The teacher does not wait long enough for the answer to the question.
- d. The teacher uses unnecessary language. She could probably just point to what is on the white board.
- e. The teacher could simplify her language in the question.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Just asking questions is not enough. Teachers need to think carefully about what kinds of questions they ask and how they ask them. Questions should be easy for students to understand and they should have short, manageable answers. Teachers need to give students a little thinking time and not expect them to answer questions immediately.

Task 4 – Asking questions about language



Letters a to h below are labels for different questions that can check students' understanding of language. Some refer to vocabulary, while others refer to grammar. Match the labels to the questions 1 to 8 below.

Labels

- a. Checking the meaning of a new word.
- b. Checking the register (level of formality) of a new word.
- c. Checking the collocation of a word – the way it goes together with another word.
- d. Checking the connotation of a word – whether it has a positive or negative meaning.
- e. Checking the time reference of a grammar structure.
- f. Checking the probability of a grammar structure
- g. Checking the duration of a grammar structure.
- h. Checking the function (e.g. giving advice) of an utterance.

ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook

Questioning techniques: Unit 2 b)

Questions	Labels
1. If we say someone is “pretentious” is that good or bad?	
2. Can we say “make my homework”?	
3. Is a “reward” something you buy or something that a person gives you?	
4. Is he saying that it’s necessary or only that it’s a good idea?	
5. Did he do that once or more than once?	
6. Can you use this word when you are talking to your boss? What about your friends?	
7. Are we sure it happened or do we only think it’s possible that it happened?	
8. Did the action happen at a definite time in the past?	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Record some of your lessons with a tape recorder and analyse how much time you spend explaining things to students and how much time you spend questioning them. Do you explain too much? How long does it take for students to answer your questions? Are your questions easy to understand?

Note your observations in your Teaching Log.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Whenever you think you need to give your students a reasonably long explanation for something, think about turning part of the explanation into a series of questions that guide students to an understanding of whatever it is you are focusing on. It might help to plan these questions until such time as you feel confident about asking them spontaneously in the classroom.

Want to find out more ... ?

In *The Self-directed Teacher* by David Nunan and Clarice Lamb (Cambridge University Press, 1996), there is further reading on using questions in English language classrooms.

See also section 2 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

1. c
2. e
3. b
4. f
5. a
6. d

Task 3 – Feedback

1. **Problem: c.** The teacher does not wait long enough for the answer to the question.
2. **Problem: a.** The answer to the question is too long and unmanageable for students.
3. **Problem: e.** The teacher could simplify her language in the question.
4. **Problem: d.** The teacher uses unnecessary language. She could probably just point to what is in the white board.
5. **Problem: b.** The answer to the question is so obvious it is not worth asking the question.

Task 4 – Feedback

1. d
2. c
3. a
4. h
5. g
6. b
7. f
8. e



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When you set up activities, do your students sometimes look confused? This lesson will help you sort this out.

Task 1 – Simon’s instructions

Simon is teaching a group of pre intermediate students.

Simon: ‘So what I would like you to do is this. First of all, I’d like you to imagine you’re a waiter. Well, that’s student A. If you were the waiter what would you do? And student B if you were the customer what would you say? Oh that’s right, guys, you’ll all need to look at the menu. Actually you both will. OK, so you do that and talk together. All right? OK, so what do you have to do?’

Students: [silence]



Write answers to the questions below.

- a. Do you think Simon’s instructions are clear and easy to understand?
- b. Can you improve Simon’s instructions? Rewrite them on a piece of paper.
- c. What grammar and vocabulary changes did you make to Simon’s instructions?

Then check the answer key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

a. No, they are likely to be difficult for pre intermediate level learners. Simon realises at the end he needs to check his instructions and this is a positive thing. However, his way of checking is asking students to repeat the whole instruction sequence and this is difficult.

b. There are many possible ways of rewriting Simon’s instructions. The following example would be easier for students to understand:

Simon: OK, student A – you are all waiters. Student B – you are all customers. So who are the waiters? [the A’s raise their hands] And who are the customers? [the Bs raise their hands] Great! All the waiters and all the customers read the menu. Customers - think about what you are going to say. Waiters, think about what you will reply. Now, what will you do first, read the menu or speak?

Task 1 Feedback (cont'd)

c. The example in answer b has no grammar and vocabulary associated with an imaginary situation. For example, *if you were the waiter ...*, *...imagine ...* It also has no unnecessary polite language *I'd like you to ...* and it has no redundancies such as *I mean...*, *actually...*, *guys...*

Key Skill

When teachers can give clear instructions, learners feel more secure in the lesson. It also means learners can begin tasks more quickly, which increases time for learning.

Task 2 – Hints for giving clear instructions



Look at each pair of sentences and choose the one that is TRUE.

Sentences

- a) You should use polite language otherwise students will get offended.

b) You should use simple language so the instructions are clear.
- a) You shouldn't do a demonstration because it takes far too much time.

b) You should do a demonstration so students can see the activity in action.
- a) You should use questions to check key aspects of the instructions.

b) You should use questions to check all aspects of the instructions.
- a) You should hold up worksheets when giving instructions so that students look at you.

b) You should hand out worksheets and then give instructions so students can read what they have to do.
- a) You shouldn't use gesture as this will distract students from what you are saying.

b) You should use gesture because visual information can support what you are saying.
- a) You should never use the OHP (overhead projector) to help you give instructions because it is awkward and it is really a bit like cheating if you do.

b) You could sometimes use an OHP to help you give instructions because you can show a transparency of a worksheet clearly to your learners.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

It is helpful for students if teachers plan their instructions. Good instructions use simple language and are often supported by clear gestures or demonstrations. The whiteboard or OHP may also be used to help give instructions. Remember to ask questions to check your students have understood the instructions correctly.

Task 3 – Getting instructions in the right order



Put the teacher actions a – f in the left-hand column in the correct order 1-6, so that you create a clear and logical instruction sequence.

Teacher actions	Order [1- 6]
a. give instructions	
b. hand out the work sheet	
c. hold up the work sheet	
d. gesture the interaction pattern to be used (e.g. work in pairs)	
e. get the students' attention	
f. check the instructions	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

In class, before you begin giving your instructions, ensure that all the students are looking at and listening to you. It's important not give out the worksheet too early otherwise you will lose your students attention. Only give out the worksheet once you have finished giving and checking your instructions.

Task 4 – Checking instructions



Each number below 1 – 6 is a learning activity. After each activity, there are 2 questions a) and b) that could be used to check the instructions. One question is effective, but the other is not. Choose the question that you think is most effective.

<u>Learning activities</u>	<u>Questions to check instructions</u>
1. role play	a) Are you going to write or speak together? b) Who speaks first?
2. mingle	a) Do you ask your partner or other students? b) Do you mingle around?
3. gist reading	a) Are you going to read or listen? b) How much time have you got?
4. information gap activity	a) Are you going to show your sheet to each other? b) So what are you going to talk about?
5. gap fill	a) Are you going to fill in the gap? b) Do you use only one word or more than one word?
6. dictation	a) How many times will I read the text? b) Who is going to write down the words?

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Think about the last time you gave instructions for a more complicated activity, for example, a mingle activity or a split reading and feedback task. Did it go well? Did your students begin the task promptly? Why or why not?

Make a list of ideas and record these in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

If you are interested in finding out if your instructions are effective, you can record yourself during the lesson and transcribe your instruction sequences. It is interesting to note what language you use and whether you can improve this or not.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 90 to 92 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on giving instructions.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 2 a) Teacher language:** Learn how teachers can use language in the classroom that is clear and natural.
- **Unit 2 b) Questioning techniques:** Learn how teachers can effectively use questions not only to check instructions, but also to check learning.

Answer Key

**Task 2 – Feedback**

1. **b)** You should use simple language so the instructions are clear. - **TRUE**

Comment: *If you are too polite, you may end up using complicated language that is difficult to understand.*

2. **b)** You should do a demonstration so students can see the activity in action. - **TRUE**

Comment: *Doing an example is a very concrete way of giving instructions.*

3. **a)** You should use questions to check key aspects of the instructions. - **TRUE**

Comment: *If part of your instructions are obvious, for example, “work in pairs”, then it is not necessary to check this aspect of the activity. Check aspects that are more confusing for students.*

4. **a)** You should hold up worksheets when giving instructions so that students look at you. - **TRUE**

Comment: *If you give out worksheets too soon, students start reading them and stop listening to your instructions.*

5. **b)** You should use gesture because it is visual information that supports what you are saying. – **TRUE**

Comment: *Any visual information you can add is always useful for students.*

6. **b)** You could use an OHP to help you give instructions sometimes because you can show a transparency of a worksheet clearly to your learners. – **TRUE**

Comment: *Showing students a worksheet on an OHP can make the instructions clearer. It also means that students look at you and listen to you when you give the instructions.*

Task 3 – Feedback

1. **e**

2. **c**

3. **a**

4. **d**

5. **f**

6. **b**

Task 4 – Feedback

1. **role play b)** Who speaks first?

Comment: *The first question is obvious. The second question is useful because students often don't know who should begin a conversation in a role play and this question is a good reminder.*

2. **mingle a)** Do you ask your partner or other students?

Comment: *The word ‘mingle’ may not be understood by some students. The language in question a) is clearer.*

3. **gist reading b)** How much time have you got?

Comment: *The first question is too obvious. Question b) reminds students that they should read quickly for gist as they have a time limit.*

4. **information gap activity a)** Are you going to show your sheet to each other?

Comment: *Question b) is too open-ended. Question a) checks a key aspect of information gap activities.*

5. **gap fill b)** Do you use only one word or more than one word?

Comment: *Question a) is too obvious. Question b) can be an important instruction to check for a gap fill task as some of these tasks restrict the choice to one word.*

6. **dictation a)** How many times will I read the text?

Comment: *Question b) is too obvious. However, it is useful to remind students of the number of times you will read a dictation text.*



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Do you sometimes worry that your lesson might be too fast or too slow for your students? This lesson can help you find out if that's true and what you can do about it.

Task 1 – Test yourself



Answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following questions:

Do you like to ...

- | | |
|--|----------|
| ... wait for the last student to finish an activity before doing feedback? | Yes / No |
| ... explain language points in a good level of detail? | Yes / No |
| ... help as many students as much as possible when monitoring? | Yes / No |
| ... always do teacher-controlled feedback? | Yes / No |

Now check your answers in the key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

If you answered 'yes' to 2 or more of the questions in task 1, you might have a problem with pace in your lesson. It could be a bit slow and sometimes, your students might get bored.

Key skill

Pace will vary according to different stages of the lesson. However, it is important that teachers are aware of how variations in pace can affect their learners' motivation and learning.

Task 2 – Bored or rushed students?



Look at teacher actions a to j. Some actions can make students feel bored in a lesson, while other actions will make them feel rushed. Place the actions into the correct column in the table below.

Teacher actions

- a. You teach to the level of the weakest student in the class.
- b. You often can't find your plan and materials and get a bit lost in the lesson.
- c. You stick rigidly to time limits you set. It doesn't matter whether students have finished the activity or not.
- d. You immediately nominate a second student when the first student can't answer a question.
- e. You like to use the same kind of materials in your lessons because you know what works best.
- f. You do really lively drills to keep students' energy up.
- g. You give instructions as you hand out worksheets.
- h. You give students a lot of time to answer open class questions.
- i. You don't let students ask questions about activities after doing feedback.
- j. You wait for students to read all of a worksheet and then give instructions for the activity.

Bored students	Rushed students

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key skill

Maintaining an appropriate learning pace for a group of students is a key part of good classroom management. If students feel bored or rushed in any way, they don't learn as well as they could.

Task 3 – What else can affect pace?



Below are some other factors that can make the pace of a lesson feel too slow. Why do you think they do this?

Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key. 🗝️

Factors that can make the pace feel too slow

- a. Monitoring students.
- b. Teacher talk.
- c. Dominant student.
- d. Teacher's personal style.
- e. Student interaction patterns.

Key skill

The answers in task 3 show the degree to which the teacher often controls the pace of a lesson. It might be useful to imagine that you are like the conductor of an orchestra and be aware that your interventions will affect the rate of learning in any lesson.

Task 4 – Ways to find a better pace



Letters a to j describe a problem associated with pace. Numbers 1 to 10 are strategies that can help deal with these problems. They are not in the same order. Match the strategies to a problem.

Problems with pace	Strategies
a. You think you talk too much to students.	
b. You let activities continue for too long.	
c. You get stuck with students when monitoring.	
d. You always get your students to work in the same pairs.	
e. You let one student dominate the lesson.	
f. You stick rigidly to time limits.	
g. You teach to the weak learners in the class.	
h. You think your personal style is too fast or slow.	
i. Your open class feedback sometimes goes on for too long.	
j. You think your materials are always the same.	

Strategies that can help with pace

1. When planning lessons, think about using a variety of interaction patterns: pairs, small groups, mingle activities. During the lesson, change pairs frequently.
2. Make a conscious effort to use alternative materials – once a week if teaching full-time, once a month if teaching part-time.
3. Monitor student-centred activities more carefully. Do feedback when most, but not all, students have finished.
4. Record yourself to see if it is true. If so, try using student-centred discovery tasks to help you get ideas across to students.
5. You can give feedback on some answers to a task when monitoring. In open class feedback, deal only with the questions students found more difficult.
6. If you think this is happening in the lesson, go immediately to whole group feedback. What you were explaining to one pair might be useful to all students.
7. If you are worried about this, invite a colleague you trust to observe one of your classes and give you feedback on this.
8. Monitor students carefully and check their real progress on a task. If it's taking them longer than you thought, be flexible and allow them more time.
9. Teach to a middle level of ability in your group. If necessary, deal with weaker students' questions when monitoring or after class.
10. Nominate other students and politely ask the enthusiastic student to let other students contribute. If necessary, talk to the problem student after class.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Sometimes the pace of the lesson can be created by the learners. Try keeping a record of lessons that felt fast-paced to you and those that felt slower. Note the time of day, day in the week and anything else that might have affected your students' pace. Also make a note of what kind of materials you use. After about 10 or more lessons, see if you can note any patterns in this information.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Try getting feedback on the pace of your lessons directly from your students. At the end of each lesson ask them if the lesson was too slow, too fast or about right. If you do this, you will need to expect some negative feedback, but it might help you to keep your students happier in the long term.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 153 to 160 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is reading on problem behaviour of students which looks at issues such as boredom and dominant students, and how to manage these successfully.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

bored students	rushed students
<p>a. You teach to the level of the weakest student in the class. Comment: <i>This will be too slow for the majority of students in the class.</i></p>	<p>c. You stick rigidly to time limits you set. It doesn't matter whether students have finished the activity or not. Comment: <i>Your estimated time limits may not always be correct and students might need extra time.</i></p>
<p>b. You often can't find your plan and materials and get a bit lost in the lesson. Comment: <i>This can take time and it makes you look disorganised to the students.</i></p>	<p>d. You immediately nominate a second student when the first student can't answer a question. Comment: <i>You are perhaps not giving the first student enough thinking time to come up with an answer.</i></p>
<p>e. You like to use the same kind of materials in your lessons because you know what works best. Comment: <i>This can be very repetitive and students feel they are always doing the same old thing.</i></p>	<p>f. You do really lively drills to keep students' energy up. Comment: <i>The drills might be too lively and weaker students can't hear or understand the words or phrases they are being asked to repeat.</i></p>
<p>h. You give students a lot of time to ask open class questions. Comment: <i>This can drag on and sometimes it is only the weak student(s) who asks(s) questions.</i></p>	<p>g. You give instructions as you hand out worksheets. Comment: <i>Students will probably feel pressure because they are trying to understand your oral instructions and make sense of the worksheet at the same time.</i></p>
<p>j. You wait for students to read all of a worksheet and then give instructions for the activity. Comment: <i>Some students will be quite slow at reading and the faster readers will often have to wait for them to finish.</i></p>	<p>i. You don't let students ask questions about activities after doing feedback. Comment: <i>The students' questions could be important to their learning.</i></p>

Answer Key (Cont'd)



Task 3 - Feedback

a. Monitoring students

Answer: *There are 2 possibilities here. First the teacher may not monitor enough in order to find out students' progress on a task. She may let tasks go on for too long. Secondly, the teacher might spend too much time with one student or one group of students and the others get bored waiting for her.*

b. Teacher talk

Answer: *If the teacher talks too much, the students might not understand what she is saying and switch off. Students can only process a limited amount of explanation in a second language. Often it is better to get them working on discovery tasks.*

c. Dominant student

Answer: *The student may demand a lot of the teacher's attention and ask a lot of questions that are not relevant to the group as a whole. This is boring and sometimes frustrating for the other students.*

d. Teacher's personal style

Answer: *Some teachers speak too slowly and do not vary their voice enough.*

e. Student interaction patterns

Answer: *If the teacher always uses the same interaction pattern (e.g. working in pairs) and she never changes the pairs in a lesson, this can result in the students feeling the activities are repetitive and boring.*

Task 4 - Feedback

- a) 4
- b) 3
- c) 6
- d) 1
- e) 10
- f) 8
- g) 9
- h) 7
- i) 5
- j) 2



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Do you often avoid drilling new language items with your students? Is this because you don't think it's useful or is it because you are not sure how to go about it? This lesson aims to get you thinking about the role of drilling in language-focused lessons and demonstrate how to go about it.

Task 1 – To drill, or not to drill?

Two teachers are discussing drilling in the staffroom.

Mona: Then after I've done feedback on the matching tasks, I thought I'd drill the words.

Louise: Really?

Mona: Yeah – why not?

Louise: I never drill language – it's so old-fashioned.

Mona: Do you think so? I was taught to drill on my training course and that was only last year.

Louise: I've been teaching for just over ten years now and I've never drilled anything.

Mona: Interesting. What do your students say?

Louise: Nothing.

Mona: Mine never complain when I drill them.



Whose opinion do you agree with? Jot down your ideas / suggestions on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️

Task 1 Feedback

Drilling is a teaching skill that can sometimes be considered controversial. Teachers who don't like it see it as a relic of the audio-lingual approach to language teaching. Other teachers think that drilling is useful because that is how they like to learn a language. There is another group of teachers who avoid drilling because they are not sure of how to drill. This lesson will work through some of those issues associated with the skill and describe different drilling procedures.

Key Skill

What is drilling? In its most basic form drilling involves teachers asking students to repeat individual words or utterances. The teacher gives a model of the language and the students repeat it either in unison or individually or both.

Task 2 – What are some of the issues?



Below are some opinions about drilling. Sort them into two groups, opinions ‘for’ drilling and those ‘against’.

NB. Two of the opinions are probably NOT true. Can you decide which two they are?

1. Many students expect their teachers to drill new language.
2. Part of language learning is a physical skill. Drilling is like sending students’ speech organs to the gym.
3. Drilling doesn’t involve real communication.
4. Drilling helps students to memorise new language.
5. Drilling can help students with pronunciation. It allows them to feel new sounds.
6. Drilling means that the teacher imposes new language on students and is unnatural.
7. Even if teachers don’t drill, students will often quietly drill themselves because they want to have a go at saying new language items.
8. Drilling won’t necessarily lead to internalisation and acquisition of new language.
9. Drilling helps students to understand new language.

for	against

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Drilling probably does not aid the acquisition or learning of new language items, but it can help students with the pronunciation of language. It may not be a natural and highly communicative classroom activity, but students seem to want to be drilled nonetheless. It helps if students understand the language that teachers drill. In other words, the meaning should be clarified first otherwise drilling simply involves mindless repetition.

Task 3 – Ways of drilling



Match the five ways of drilling 1 to 5 with the definitions a to e and the examples i to v.

Ways of drilling	Definitions	Examples
1. choral		
2. individual		
3. open pair		
4. substitution		
5. transformation		

Definitions

- a. Students repeat an utterance. The teacher says or holds up a new word or phrase. Students repeat the first utterance, but replace a word or phrase from that utterance with the new word or phrase.
- b. The teacher drills one student in a question and a second student in an answer to that question. The two students then repeat their question and answer exchange with the rest of the class listening.
- c. The teacher says a word or an utterance and the whole class repeats that word or utterance together in unison.
- d. The teacher says an utterance and the students say something similar to the teacher's utterance, but, in doing so, they change a key structure.
- e. The teacher says a word or utterance and then nominates a student to say that word or utterance.

Examples

- i. Teacher: 'He's just gone home'. - Jin Yong.
Student: He's just got home.
- ii. Teacher: 'He's just gone home'
Students: He'd just gone home.
- iii. Teacher: 'Where's he gone?' - Yang.
Student: Where's he gone?
Teacher: 'He's just gone home.' - Sven.
Student: He's just gone home.
Teacher: OK again. Question – Yang. Answer – Sven.
- iv. Teacher: 'He's just gone home.' - Everyone.
Students: He's just gone home.
- v. Students: He's just gone home.
Teacher: 'the bank.'
Students: He's just gone to the bank.


Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Drilling does not have to always be repetitive and uncreative. Substitution and transformation drills can provide students with a small degree of creativity and cognitive effort.

Task 4 – Five steps to drilling



Numbers 1 to 8 below are eight steps in the process of drilling a new word or utterance. Put these steps in the correct order. Letters a to h give a rationale for each step. Once you have ordered the steps, match a rationale to each step. 

Eight steps of drilling	Rationale
1. Once students give you the word or utterance, provide your own oral model at a natural speed ...	
2. Students repeat the language together as a group ...	
3. Having broken down the oral model of the language, repeat it again at a more natural speed	
4. If the word or utterance you want to drill is on the white board, start by wiping it off ...	
5. Re-elicite the language you want to drill using the prompts ...	
6. Nominate individual students and get them to repeat the word or utterance ...	
7. Show students a prompt – a picture or some key words that relate to the language you want to drill ...	
8. Highlight any key pronunciation features of the new language – demonstrate these orally rather than using the white board ...	

Rationale for each step

- a. ... so that students have some visual representation of the language you want to drill.
- b. ... so that you can check the pronunciation of the new language by individual students.
- c. ... so that the first oral model that students hear is a natural one.
- d. ... so that students have to think a little bit about the language they are going to repeat.
- e. ... so that students focus on pronunciation features such as stress, weak forms and linking.
- f. ... so that all students have the opportunity to say the new language without being heard by the rest of the class.
- g. ... so that students don't just read the new language aloud and they have to listen carefully in order to repeat.
- h. ... so that students will repeat the language with a more natural rhythm.

Thinking about your teaching ...

Find a colleague who speaks a second language that you don't know at all. Ask your colleague to give you two or three mini-lessons in that language and specifically ask that person to drill you in the new language. After the lesson write down your reactions to being drilled and think about why you had those reactions.

Note your reactions and thoughts in your *Teaching log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

If you don't normally drill your students, try doing it over a period of about four or five lessons. If you normally drill, try not doing it over the same period of time. After that, give your students a questionnaire about drilling – did they like it or did they miss it? Why?

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 255 - 260 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on drilling.

For some practical ideas on drilling options see pages 206-7 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 2 g) Correcting spoken errors:** deals with error correction of students' spoken errors in the classroom.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

for	against
<p><i>1. Many students expect their teachers to drill new language.</i></p> <p><i>2. Part of language learning is a physical skill. Drilling is like sending students' speech organs to the gym.</i></p> <p><i>5. Drilling can help students with pronunciation. It allows them to feel new sounds.</i></p> <p><i>7. Even if teachers don't drill, students will often quietly drill themselves because they want to have a go at saying new language items.</i></p>	<p><i>3. Drilling doesn't involve real communication.</i></p> <p><i>6. Drilling means that the teacher imposes new language on students and is unnatural.</i></p> <p><i>8. Drilling won't necessarily lead to internalisation and acquisition of new language.</i></p>

Probably not true: 4. Drilling helps students to memorise new language.

Probably not true: 9. Drilling helps students to understand new language.

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1. choral c and iv
- 2. individual e and i
- 3. open pair b and iii
- 4. substitution a and v
- 5. transformation d and ii

Task 4 – Feedback

- 4. g
- 7. a
- 5. d
- 1. c
- 8. e
- 3. h
- 2. f
- 6. b.



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Do you feel that you always do feedback on classroom activities in the same way? This lesson will help you to gain an understanding of different types of feedback and suggest ways that you can vary your approach.

Task 1 – Emily’s observation

The Director of Studies (DoS) at Emily’s school observed her teach a lesson a couple of days ago. In the DoS’s written feedback, she made the comment: “you are sometimes unclear during feedback stages”. Emily isn’t quite sure what the DoS means and she hasn’t had a chance to have a tutorial with her as yet.



What do you think the DoS means? Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️

Task 1 Feedback 🗝️

Sometimes teachers want students to think carefully about their answers and initially neither confirm nor deny whether the answer is correct. However, this can sometimes go on for too long and get frustrating for students. At the end of feedback, students can sometimes be unsure about whether their answers to a task were correct or not.

Key Skill

Doing feedback on a task involves more than giving the right or wrong answers. First, you need to think about whether you are doing *language-focused* feedback or *content-focused* feedback. In content-focused feedback, teachers are responding to ideas and information. However, in language-focused feedback teachers are responding to the language that students produce.

Task 2 – Different types of feedback



Numbers 1 to 8 describe different kinds of classroom activities. Put these activities in the correct box in the table, thinking about whether the feedback is language- or content-based, and whether or not there is a right answer. Two of the activities can be placed in more than one box.

Type of feedback	There is a right answer	There is no right answer
Content-based		
Language-based		

Classroom activities

1. Reading comprehension task.
2. Matching new vocabulary to definitions.
3. Role play that is freer oral practice of a grammar point.
4. Completing a text that has missing words.
5. Listening comprehension task.
6. Problem-solving information gap activity.
7. Discussion that is a lead-in to a reading text.
8. Written grammar task where students choose the correct tense.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 🗝️

Key Skill

When you give feedback on both content and language, it is usually more motivating and interesting for students if you deal with content first. This shows that you are responding to their ideas and not just focusing on how they said something.

Task 3 – Some example feedback procedures



Letters a to l describe different steps in two feedback procedures. One is feedback on a *discussion* that students have been having; the other is on a *grammar activity* where students had to choose a correct tense.

- a) Decide which steps belong to the speaking activity and which belong to the grammar activity.
- b) Put the steps in the correct order for each activity.

Discussion	Grammar activity
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

Steps

- a. Nominate students randomly and put all suggested answers on the white board.
- b. Praise students' contributions and ideas.
- c. Encourage other students to ask questions about or comment on what each group says.
- d. Confirm which answers are correct.
- e. Ask students to check their answers in pairs.
- f. Ask some follow up questions and make comments on what students have said yourself.
- g. Get pairs to look at the unresolved answers quickly for a second time.
- h. If there is disagreement over the answers, accept both versions and write them on the white board.
- i. If you feel it is appropriate and useful, highlight a few errors you overheard in the discussion.
- j. Ask each group to decide what they will say in reporting their discussion.
- k. Elicit the outcome of the second pair discussion.
- l. Ask each group to tell the class what they have been talking about.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

You have to manage your student group carefully if you want to do feedback well. Nominating students, encouraging peer interaction and praising students are all key components of successful feedback.

Task 4 – Some good ideas



Numbers 1 to 6 are some good ideas for the management of feedback. Letters a to f are rationales for each idea. Match the rationales to the ideas.

It's a good idea to...	Because...
1. conduct feedback by nominating students randomly rather than in a sequence ...	
2. ask students to justify their answers, particularly with reading and listening comprehension tasks ...	
3. allow a certain amount of wait time when doing content-focused feedback ...	
4. be clear about what answer is correct and what answer is not ...	
5. provide a written model answer for some tasks on the white board or on an OHP ...	
6. occasionally avoid doing feedback at all ...	

Rationales

- a. ... it will avoid any frustration for students.
- b. ... it is not necessary if you can see that all students got all answers correct when you monitored – you can just confirm that everything is correct and move on.
- c. ... it keep students involved in feedback.
- d. ... as it allows weaker students something concrete to check their answers against.
- e. ... sometimes students need to organise their ideas before replying.
- f. ... it makes students think a little harder and offers stronger students more challenge.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Make notes over a week's teaching. At the end of each lesson, think about what feedback you did and how you did it. Taking into consideration some of the points made in the tasks above, evaluate how effective you think your feedback was.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*

Taking it to the classroom ...

An alternative approach to feedback is to let learners know that you will only confirm the answers to 2 or 3 questions on a task. In groups they have to negotiate and decide which answers they feel certain they have got right and which they are most unsure of. This strategy makes them think harder and it also generates a lot of groups discussion as they negotiate.

Want to find out more ... ?

Pages 107 - 113 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) contains reading on the teacher role of 'organiser' and also discusses the role of feedback in lessons.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 2 d) Pace in the classroom:** includes discussion of the idea that feedback can affect pace, either positively or negatively.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

Type of feedback	Right answer	No right answer
Content-based	1. Reading comprehension task. 5. Listening comprehension task.	3. Role play that is freer oral practice of a grammar point. 6. Problem-solving information gap activity. 7. Discussion that is a lead in to a reading text.
Language-based	2. Matching new vocabulary to definitions. 4. Completing a text that has missing words. 8. Written grammar task where students choose the correct tense.	3. Role play that is freer oral practice of a grammar point.* 6. Problem-solving information gap activity.*

* This kind of feedback would involve error correction. The answer is not 'right' or 'wrong' as such as there was no expected answer and the teacher feeds back on what they have heard.

Task 3 – Feedback

Speaking Activity

- 1) j
- 2) l
- 3) c
- 4) f
- 5) b
- 6) i

Grammar Activity

- 1) e
- 2) a
- 3) h
- 4) g
- 5) k
- 6) d

Task 4 – Feedback

- 1) c
- 2) f
- 3) e
- 4) a
- 5) d
- 6) b



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Are you sometimes unsure about when you should correct your students' spoken language? Do you feel that you always correct them in the same way? This lesson looks at the types of errors students make with oral language and it outlines a procedure and some techniques for dealing with these.


Task 1 – Was that an error or a slip of the tongue?

Andy: "I corrected this student of mine in class the other day. She left out an article, so I interrupted her and told her she needed to add 'the'. She got quite annoyed with me and told me that she knew all about articles. However, in the next breath she was telling me she wants to be corrected more."



Who has the problem – Andy or his student? Why do you think this? Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

The student does seem  be sending slightly contradictory messages to Andy. However, Andy's intervention may have been untimely and interrupted the student's flow of conversation. The key issue here is that knowing when to correct is a sensitive judgment call for teachers. Students do want feedback on their language, but they like to get it at the right time.

Key Skill

An important distinction to make is the one between systematic errors and mistakes or slips. Systematic errors are indicative of a student's lack of language knowledge, while small mistakes or slips occur in language that students know, but lack of concentration or tiredness can mean they make a mistake.

Task 2 – Types of errors



Numbers 1 to 5 are examples of spoken errors. Letters a to e are categories of errors. Number i to v indicate what the problem is. Match the examples to the categories and problems.

Example	Category	Problem
1. "I will to the party go."		
2. "My sister is higher than my brother."		
3. "I went to a barty and danced all night."		
4. A: "Do you like wine?" B: "No thank you."		
5. Customer in a café: "Give me a coffee."		

Categories

- a. pronunciation
- b. pragmatic (language in context)
- c. grammar
- d. vocabulary
- e. discourse

Problems

- i. collocation
- ii. cohesion
- iii. register too informal
- iv. sound (phoneme)
- v. word order

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

The causes of error stem from the students' lack of knowledge. This can be a result of having learnt rules incorrectly or oversimplifying a rule they have learnt. A student's first language can play a role in the cause of error, particularly with pronunciation errors. Some errors are the result of a student being creative with the limited English they do have in order to communicate.

Task 3 – A procedure for correcting errors



Letters a to j below outline ten steps in a procedure for correcting students errors. Place the steps in the correct order.

Steps	Order? [1-10]
a. If that's not successful, other students can be asked to correct the language.	
b. Alternatively, the teacher may wait until the activity is finished then correct errors.	
c. Another approach is to record students as they carry out a speaking activity and get them to correct themselves when they listen to the recording.	
d. The first decision the teacher has to make is whether to correct the error, or just let it go by.	
e. If no-one can help, then the teacher should give the correct version of the language.	
f. The teacher hears the error and categorizes it in their head.	
g. However, the teacher may decide to correct the language after the speaking activity by noting down errors and then writing them up on the white board for the students to correct.	
h. Either way, the error (or errors) needs to be pointed out to students.	
i. If the teacher decides to, on-the-spot error correction could be done, to deal with the error immediately.	
j. When the teacher does on-the-spot correction, the student who made the error needs to have the opportunity to self correct, first of all.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Teachers are more likely to do on-the-spot error correction during accuracy-focused activities such as clarifying new language and controlled oral practice of new language. Delayed feedback on errors is more likely to take place after freer practice or spoken fluency activities.

Task 4 – Correction techniques



Letters a to f below describe different correction techniques. Put them in order from 1 *least directive* (i.e. the teacher does little to point out that an error has been made and does not indicate where and what the problem is) to 6 *most directive* (i.e. the teacher very clearly indicates the place and nature of the error).

The student error is: *'I have gone to the movies yesterday.'*

Correction technique	How directive? [1 – 6]
a. The teacher repeats the student's error with a rising intonation and perhaps a quizzical facial expression.	
b. The teacher says: <i>It was yesterday – exact time – what's correct?</i>	
c. The teacher says: <i>So do we use present perfect or past simple?</i>	
d. The teacher says: <i>Think about the grammar – the verb.</i>	
e. The teacher spells out the utterance on their fingers, highlights the fingers that represent 'have gone' and says the word 'tense'.	
f. The teacher recasts the student's utterance without expression: <i>Oh so you went to the movies yesterday.</i>	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Student errors are an interesting insight into learners' interlanguage (the current state of a learner's language). This keeps changing and developing as their level of ability increases. It can be interesting to do a detailed study of one learner's interlanguage. Collect as many samples as you can from the learner by listening carefully to them in class and perhaps by asking permission to record them speaking. You might be able to add written errors to your collection. What do these errors tell you about this learner? What do they tell you about learners at this level? (i.e. are some of the errors familiar?)

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

The best way of finding out if you are correcting enough is by asking your students. You can do this directly or you can give them a simple survey. It might be interesting to explore the idea of a 'correction contract'. You and the students formally agree when you should correct and what kinds of errors you correct.

Want to find out more ... ?

Pages 137 to 138 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) has an introduction to why learners make errors and mistakes.

Pages 288 to 292 of *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom* by Tricia Hedge (Oxford University Press 2000) contains extra reading on errors and error correction.

Pages 298 to 302 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005) contains extra reading on different kinds of errors and discussion of on-the-spot correction techniques.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- Unit 2 h) Correcting written language: *a useful follow-up to this lesson, dealing with error correction of students' writing.*
- Unit 2 f) Conducting feedback on classroom activities: *discusses a different ways to approach feedback after tasks and activities.*

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) c, v
- 2) d, i
- 3) a, iv
- 4) e, ii
- 5) b, iii

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) f
- 2) d
- 3) i
- 4) b
- 5) h
- 6) j
- 7) a
- 8) e
- 9) g
- 10) c

Task 4 – Feedback

1. **f.** *Comment: The teacher does almost nothing to indicate that an error has been made.*

2. **a.** *Comment: The teacher indicates that there is something wrong with the utterance, but does not say what the problems is.*

3. **d.** *Comment: The teacher is slightly more specific and indicates that the problem is grammar and not vocabulary or pronunciation.*

4. **b.** *Comment: The teacher clearly indicates that time reference is the problem and therefore the verb form needs correcting.*

5. **e.** *Comment: The teacher clearly points out where the error is and explicitly states that there is a problem with the verb form.*

6. **c.** *Comment: The teacher is specific about the fact the verb form is incorrect and tells the student how to correct it. This approach assumes that the student knows grammar terminology.*



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Are you sometimes unsure about how to correct your students' written work? Should you just write in the correct version or maybe just underline errors? This lesson looks at the areas you can give feedback on and looks at some different ways of providing feedback on students' written work.

Task 1 – A complaint about Andy

Andy's Director of Studies pulled him aside and informed him that a lot of the students in his academic writing class had made a complaint. They said that Andy never gave feedback on their written work. Andy protested and said that he did. He indicated that he responded to the ideas and in doing so reformulated many of the language errors in a correct version. He thought the students and the Director of Studies were being unfair.



Is Andy's opinion justified? What do you think and why? Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️



Task 1 Feedback

Andy has some justification in his opinion. However, this kind of feedback might have been too subtle for some of his learners. He may not have pointed out to them that this is his way of providing feedback on writing and he could have indicated that his reformulations contained useful suggestions on correct language. If the students don't know to look for this, they are unlikely to see it.

Key Skill

There are many different ways of providing feedback on students' written work. The key issue is that students need feedback not only on their language but also on the ideas they include in their written work.

Task 2 – A procedure



Letters a to e outline steps in a typical procedure for the correction and rewriting of students’ written work. Put these steps in a logical order.

Steps	Order? [1- 5]
a. In pairs or small groups students help each other to make sense of the corrections that the teacher has pointed out in their written work.	
b. Students write the next draft of their text incorporating the feedback.	
c. Students finish a draft of their text and exchange them to get feedback from their peers.	
d. The teacher collects in the students’ texts and indicates where there are problems.	
e. The teacher monitors and helps the pairs and groups, clarifying anything that is unclear in the marking.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

The procedure above is not the only approach. For example, students could take the marked texts home to work on and the teacher could set up one-to-one tutorials with students. Another variation is the extent of the teacher’s marking. How explicit are you about errors? The next task looks at different approaches.

Task 3 – Different approaches



Numbers 1 to 6 in the grid are different approaches to providing feedback on students' written work. Letters a to f are strengths, while numbers i to vi are weaknesses that can be associated with the different approaches. Match the strengths and weaknesses to each approach.

Approaches to feedback on written work	Strengths	Weaknesses
1. The teacher corrects all mistakes and provides the correct version.		
2. The teacher underlines mistakes and uses a code to indicate the nature of the error.		
3. The teacher underlines errors, but gives no indication of the nature of the error.		
4. The teacher writes suggestions for improvement in the margin.		
5. The teacher takes 2 example texts and reformulates the language in these texts. The reformulations are distributed to the class as a whole to consider.		
6. Students give peer correction without any feedback from the teacher.		

Strengths

- a. This approach can combine feedback on language and content.
- b. This approach presents students with some challenge, but offers them some degree of support.
- c. This approach can provide students with useful models of language.
- d. This approach is very comprehensive in its feedback on language.
- e. This approach is very good at encouraging students to use each other as a resource.
- f. This approach provides students with a good sense of challenge.

Weaknesses

- i. This approach can be confusing for students as they are not sure what the problem is.
- ii. Students can feel that this approach lacks any real certainty for them.
- iii. This approach can result in too much feedback and can become demotivating for students.
- iv. In this approach the feedback on language can be too vague for many learners.
- v. Strict adherence to this approach won't provide learners with feedback on the content of their texts.
- vi. Learners may find this approach too general and not relate the feedback to their own work.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

It is a good idea to vary your approach to giving feedback. In doing so, you may be able to develop student independence and encourage them to think about accuracy and self-correct as much as possible.

Task 4 – Language Errors



Letters a to j are example errors. Numbers 1 to 10 below show typical symbols used to point out language errors (commonly used in the second approach described in task 3). Match the symbols to the errors.

Errors	Symbols
a. Say goodbye, he left for the airport.	
b. I am losing always my glasses.	
c. They went the library after lunch.	
d. I was very surprising to see him there.	
e. He got lost in a Amazon jungle.	
f. However it cannot be considered a perfect example.	
g. He is the highest person in his family.	
h. We have received your last message.	
i. I have been to Fiji last year.	
j. Sam has just finished recently.	

ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook

Correcting written language: Unit 2 h)

Symbols

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. WF = wrong form | 6. WO = wrong word order |
| 2. WW = wrong word | 7. P = wrong punctuation |
| 3. T = wrong tense | 8. V = wrong verb form |
| 4. ^ = something is missing | 9. A = wrong article |
| 5. Sp = wrong spelling | 10. ø = extra word, not necessary |

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

It would be interesting to trial two different approaches to giving feedback on students' written language that you have never used before. For example, where you typically give feedback by means of symbols, you could spend a month experimenting with reformulation and peer correction. (It is probably not a good idea to do this with a group that has to sit an exam.) At the end of the trial period, you could see whether there is any significant improvement in your students' written language. You can also ask them to give you feedback on the two approaches.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Often students will make similar errors. You can build up a collection of common errors by having an "Error Box" in the class room. When learners make an error, it can be written on a card and placed in the "Error Box". The error cards can be used as the basis of a revision activity when doing writing activities.

Want to find out more ... ?

Pages 313 to 316 of *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom* by Tricia Hedge (Oxford University Press 2000), and pages 147 to 152 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), contain extra reading on giving feedback on students' written work.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- Unit 2 g) **Correcting spoken errors:** recommended as a precursor to this lesson, dealing with error correction of students' spoken errors in the classroom.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) c
- 2) d
- 3) a
- 4) e
- 5) b

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) d, iii
- 2) b, v
- 3) f, i
- 4) a, iv
- 5) c, vi
- 6) e, ii

Task 4 – Feedback

1. WF = wrong form
*d. I was very **surprising** to see him there.*
2. WW = wrong word
*g. He is the **highest** person in his family.*
3. T = wrong tense
*i. I **have been** to Fiji last year.*
4. ^ = something is missing
c. They went ^ the library after lunch.
5. Sp = wrong spelling
*h. We have **received** your last message.*
6. WO = a problem with the word order
*b. I am losing **always** my glasses.*
7. P = wrong punctuation
f. However, it cannot be considered a perfect example.
8. V = wrong verb form
*a. **Say** goodbye, he left for the airport.*
9. A = wrong article
*e. He got lost in **a** Amazon jungle.*
10. ø = extra word, not necessary
*j. Sam has just finished **recently**.*



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What are the different listening sub-skills and how do we practise them in the classroom? This lesson will help you understand what different listening sub-skills students need to practise. It will also give you an understanding of how to order activities in a typical classroom lesson that aims to practise listening.

Task 1 – Is there another way?

Emily is explaining a problematic lesson to a colleague.

Emily: “Well, I was doing this listening lesson and I didn’t want the lesson to be too hard for students. So I told them just to listen and try and understand what they could. But my students just complained and said they couldn’t understand the words in the conversation, so they’d never have a hope of understanding the whole conversation. In the end I just gave up.”



It is not surprising that Emily’s lesson was problematic. What could she have done? Jot down your ideas / suggestions on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️

Task 1 Feedback 🗝️

Emily didn’t think about which listening sub-skills to practise and how to order different listening activities in the lesson. This probably meant the students immediately focused on a lot of detail and tried to understand individual words rather than the main ideas in the conversation. There are more efficient and supportive ways of conducting listening lessons. Read on.

Key skill

When people listen in their first language, they use a variety of strategies to get both the main idea and the detail of what they listen to. By staging well planned listening lessons in the classroom, we can help students to understand spoken text more effectively.

Task 2 – Listening and processing models



When learners listen to a stream of sound, they use both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ processing. Match the processing models to the correct definition. Two of the definitions are not correct:

Processing models	Definition
1. ‘top-down’ processing	
2. ‘bottom-up’ processing	

Definitions

- Listeners only listen to parts of a conversation and take small ‘rests’ from the stream of sound.
- Listeners try to make sense of the stream of sound by trying to understand words or grammatical structures they are familiar with.
- Listeners process what they hear in relation to their background knowledge of the topic or the situation.
- Listeners try to make sense of the stream of sound by following the logical order of what they hear.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key skill

The way we process incoming language can affect the way we understand information. In our first language we use *both* processing models and sometimes in tandem. We do this automatically in response to the kind of text we are listening to.

Task 3 – Listening strategies and processing models



Letters a to g describe different listening strategies which are associated with either top-down or bottom-up processing. Match the strategies to the correct processing model.

Top-down processing	Bottom-up processing

Listening strategies

- a. Listening carefully to football results.
- b. Listening to flight departure announcements in order to hear the departure gate.
- c. Predicting the content of a lecture or short talk on a subject that the listener knows something about.
- d. Listening attentively to try and understand (or infer) a speaker's attitude to something because the speaker has not stated their opinion clearly.
- e. Listening to get the general idea of the topic of a conversation.
- f. Listening to a series of short conversations in order to understand where the conversation is taking place.
- g. Listening in order to do a dictation activity.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 🗝️

Key skill

- When we use **top-down processing**, we tend to use “bigger picture” information such as the context, the gist of the message, the tone of speakers’ voices to make sense of what we are hearing.
- When we use **bottom-up processing**, we listen for the individual “blocks”

Task 4 – A typical listening lesson



Numbers 1 to 5 show a typical order for different steps in a listening lesson. Imagine your students are listening to a conversation between a tourist and someone who lives in your town – the local. The tourist is asking the local for directions. Letters a to e are the different activities for this lesson. Match the activities to the steps.

Steps in a listening lesson	Activities
1. Pre-listening activity to activate students' knowledge on the topic of the text.	
2. Listening for a general understanding (listening for gist).	
3. Listening for a more detailed understanding of information in the text.	
4. Very detailed listening for language (vocabulary, grammar, phonology) in the text.	
5. Follow-on speaking activity.	

Activities

- a. Students listen and mark the route the local suggests on the map.
- b. Students listen to find out where the tourist wants to go and why they want to go there.
- c. Students evaluate whether the route suggested by the local is the best one.
- d. Students look at a map of the city and find different landmarks.
- e. The teacher dictates two sentences from the local's directions.

Additional question:

- In steps 2 and 3, should the teacher give students the task *before* or *after* they listen? Why do you think this?



Jot down your ideas on a note pad, then check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

When we listen to things in our daily life, we listen in different ways and we usually have different reasons for listening. Think of a typical day (yesterday? last weekend?) and make a note of all the things you listened to. Try to analyse *why* you listened to these things and *how* you listened. What relevance does this have to getting your students to listen in the classroom?

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

In general, students understand more of a listening text each time they listen to it. It might pay to point this out to them, or you could elicit this idea from them and ask them if they understood more or less the third time they listened to the text. It also helps if you play the tape more than once, particularly during activities that require students to listen in detail.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 178 to 183 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on developing listening skills, and ideas for staging listening lessons.

On pages 270 to 274 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further reading on top-down and bottom-up processing, and how these relate to the structure of receptive skills lessons (both listening and reading).

See also section 7 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL TaskBook series, which also relate to this topic:

- **Unit 3 b) Listening 2:** Learner-friendly listening lessons (*a follow up to this lesson*)
- **Unit 3 c) Reading 1:** Knowing about strategies and sub-skills (*a useful focus on another receptive skill, highlighting the stages of a reading lesson*)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) c
- 2) b

Task 3 - Feedback

Top-down = c, e, f
Bottom-up = a, b, d, g

Task 4 - Feedback

- 1) d
- 2) b
- 3) a
- 4) e
- 5) c

Additional question:

The teacher should give the task before students listen, as this gives them a reason for listening. If the task is not given first, students may be unsure about what they need to listen for and begin to focus on irrelevant words or ideas.



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Do your listening lessons sometimes go badly? Do your students often look anxious when you say that you are going to do listening practice in a lesson? This lesson will help you understand why this is sometimes the case and will give you strategies for making listening lessons more manageable for your students. Before you complete this task, it may be helpful to have looked at *Listening 1: Listening sub-skills and a typical lesson*.

Task 1 – Frank’s disastrous lesson



Frank’s listening lesson went really badly. Most of the things he did or didn’t do in the lesson did not help the students. Look at all the things he did. Only one of these actions was a good idea. Put X next to the good idea. Then check your ideas in the answer key below. 🗝️

The things Frank did/didn’t do

1. He didn’t cue the tape before the lesson and it took him some time to find the right text on the tape.
2. He didn’t bother giving the students a gist task.
3. He wrote on the white board with a squeaky pen during the gist listening.
4. He handed out the detailed listening task after the tape had started.
5. He got students to check their answers in pairs before doing feedback.
6. He didn’t bother doing feedback on all the questions in the detailed task.



Task 1 Feedback

Action 5 was the only really good idea in Frank’s lesson.

Key Skill

For many students, listening is the most challenging of the four skills. Often listening lessons are like tests for them and teachers need to find ways of making these lessons more manageable and less threatening.

Task 2 – Advice for Frank



What advice can you give to Frank to help him improve his lesson? Write some advice for each problem 1 – 5 below. Begin with the phrase “Make sure” and give him a reason beginning with “because”. Look at the example to help you.

Problem	Make sure...	Because...
1. The tape wasn't cued at the right place and it took him some time to find the right text on the tape.	eg ... you cue the tape before you go in the classroom	eg ... trying to find the correct place on a tape in class can wastes a lot of time and looks unprofessional.
2. He didn't bother giving the students a gist task.		
3. He wrote on the white board with a squeaky pen during the gist listening.		
4. He handed out the detailed listening task after the tape had started.		
5. He didn't bother doing feedback on all the questions in the detailed task.		

Check your ideas in the answer key. 🗝️

Key Skill

Listening lessons need to be thoroughly prepared and planned. This means thinking of suitable tasks and preparing all materials associated with the listening in advance. During the lesson, tasks should be set before playing the tape and teachers should maintain as low a profile as possible.

Task 3 – What makes listening difficult?



Listening in the classroom is harder than reading. Numbers 1 to 6 show different reasons why this is so. Sort them into two categories, according to whether the problem is related to the listening process itself or to the nature of listening texts.

The process of listening	Nature of listening texts

Reasons why listening in the classroom is harder than reading

1. Students have no control over the speed of the text.
2. Speakers in listening texts often have different accents that may not be familiar to students.
3. Students have no time to pause and think about the content of the text.
4. There is often background noise in the recordings that is a distraction from the voices of the speakers.
5. Sometimes the speakers in a dialogue speak very quickly.
6. Listening happens in real time.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Challenges associated with listening are largely beyond your students’ control. However, it is possible to make sure that the nature of listening texts are manageable for the level you are teaching, particularly lower levels. The next task gets you to think of some ideas for how to achieve this.

ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook

Listening 2: Learner-friendly listening lessons: Unit 3 b)

Task 4 – Creating listening texts



When you create and use your own listening texts, there are things to consider that can make the process of listening and the nature of listening tasks more manageable. Think of a good idea for each consideration. Look at the example to help you.

Consideration	Good Idea
1. Number of speakers	eg. Don't include too many speakers in a taped conversation, as it can be difficult to work out who is who.
2. Gender of speakers	
3. Kinds of tasks	
4. Speed of delivery	
5. Pausing the tape	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Keep a note of listening lessons that you give with one particular group of students over an extended period of a month or more. Note down the topic of the text, the number and type of speakers, the length of text and then rate it in terms of level of difficulty. (You can create your own scale of difficulty.) The aim of doing this is to try and establish whether there are any trends that you can note in terms of what challenges your learners.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Look back at the ideas suggested in task 4. Have you tried all of these strategies at some time in your teaching experience? If not, try them out over a period of time. If you feel that there are problems with a listening text that will be too difficult for your students (e.g. speed of delivery), you can try re-recording it using your colleagues.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 187 and 188 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4th edition) by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is a useful discussion on alternative sources of listening materials and formats for students and teachers.

On pages 181 - 184 of *Learning Teaching* (2nd edition) by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there are ideas for some alternative approaches to listening lessons.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 2 a) Listening 1:** Listening sub-skills and a typical lesson (*recommended as a precursor to this lesson*)
- **Unit 3 d) Reading 2:** Setting tasks for reading texts (*a useful focus on another receptive skill, highlighting the need for learner-friendly tasks to accompany reading texts*)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

2. Make sure you give students a simple gist listening task because it gives them a reasons to listen and if it is easy, it gives them confidence.

3. Make sure you don't do anything to distract your students when the tape is playing because they need to concentrate as much as possible.

4. Make sure you hand out the task before you play the tape because students need time to read the task before they listen to the text. The task will also help them understand 'how' to listen.

5. Make sure you do feedback on all questions in the task because students often feel unsure if they have really understood and like confirmation of their understanding.

Task 3 – Feedback

Process of Listening = **1, 3, 6**

Nature of listening texts = **2, 4, 5**

Task 4 – Feedback

2. If you have 2 speakers, it is often easier if one is male and the other is female. For students, this makes it easier to distinguish between the 2 speakers.

3. Don't give tasks that are too challenging or turn the listening practice into a test. The aim of the task should be to give students a reason to listen.

4. Make sure the speakers of a recorded conversation speak at a natural speed, but don't let them speak too quickly, particularly for low level students.

5. If the listening text is very long, it may help students if you pause the tape occasionally to give them a little bit of thinking time.



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Which different reading skills should students practise and when should they practise them? This lesson will give you a clearer idea about how to find your way around reading skills.

Task 1 – A short quiz.



How many questions can you answer?

1. Are skim and scan reading the same thing?
2. Are gist and skim reading more or less the same thing?
3. Can you infer meaning before you read?
4. Do you typically scan a bus timetable?
5. What kind of text do you typically read extensively?

Check your answers in the key below. 🗝️

Task 1 Feedback



- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| 1. No | 4. Yes |
| 2. Yes | 5. A novel |
| 3. Not usually, no | |

If you got 2 or more answer wrong, or you are uncertain about some of the terminology in this lesson, then this lesson will definitely help you!

Task 2 – Defining the sub-skills



**Look at different reading sub-skills and strategies 1 - 7.
Match the definitions a – g below with the correct sub-skill.**

Reading sub-skills and strategies	Definitions
1. prediction	
2. skim reading	
3. gist reading	
4. scan reading	
5. intensive reading	
6. inferring meaning	
7. extensive reading	

Definitions

- a. Reading to get detailed information from the text.
- b. Reading a text to locate a specific piece of information such as a word or a number or a time. It is not necessary to understand the whole text in order to do this.
- c. Either guessing the meaning of new vocabulary in a text or understanding meaning or a message in the text that is not immediately obvious.
- d. Reading to get a general but not detailed understanding of the text.
- e. Also reading to get an overall but not detailed understanding of the text.
- f. Reading longer texts frequently over a period of time. This is usually done independently and not in the classroom.
- g. Looking at headlines, pictures, typeface and layout to guess what you think a text will be about.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 🗝️

Key skill

When we read in our first language, we read in different ways. When students start reading in a second language they need to re-learn different ways of reading. Teachers need to know about these different reading skills so they can develop them in the classroom.

Task 3 – Which sub-skill for which text?



Read the description of the different texts and the motivations for reading (a – h) below. Decide which reading sub-skills and strategies (1 – 7) you would probably use to read each. Write the number of the sub-skill / strategy in the second column. You will need to use some of the skills more than once, and some texts may use more than one skill.

Texts and the motivations for reading	Sub-skills / Strategies
<i>eg. A novel that you are really enjoying</i>	7
a. A job advertisement for a job that you are really interested in.	
b. A couple of unknown words in a text that is included in an exam you are doing.	
c. A telephone directory.	
d. The editorial of a newspaper that you are not familiar with and whose political viewpoint you would like to understand.	
e. A series of articles, only some of which will be useful to you, for a report you're writing.	
f. Instructions for kitset furniture you are assembling (you are usually not very good at doing this!)	
g. A travel brochure when you are trying to decide on a holiday destination.	
h. An armchair travel book about a country you have enjoyed visiting.	
i. An online flight timetable.	

Reading sub-skills and strategies

1. Prediction.
2. Skim reading.
3. Gist reading.
4. Scan reading.
5. Intensive reading.
6. Inferring meaning (of vocabulary in context, or of the writer's point of view).
7. Extensive reading.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Task 4 – Which task type for which skill?



Letters a – h show some typical reading tasks or instructions for reading texts in different ways. Match them with the reading sub-skills and strategies from the previous exercise (1-7) above.

Typical reading tasks or instructions	Reading sub-skills
a. Does John go overseas before or after finishing his degree?	
b. Talk about the headline and pictures and decide what you think the article will say.	
c. Does this article discuss a problem and offer a solution, or does it talk about 2 different points of view?	
d. Look at the words immediately before and after and see if they can help you guess the meaning.	
e. The government will change the law in the near future TRUE/FALSE	
f. Find the best times for leaving and returning.	
g. Do you think the writer of the letter supports the City Council or not? Why do you think so?	
h. Complete the following table by making notes on all the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

It is useful to think about why you read different texts every day and how you read them. Over a defined period of time such as a week, keep a list of different texts you read and the way in which you read them.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Whenever you get students to read in the classroom, it is useful to ask yourself what reading skills you are practising and developing. Sometimes at the end of a reading lesson you can get students to reflect on the way they have read in class and suggest they use the same skills and strategies outside the classroom.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 184 to 191 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on practising and developing reading skills with learners.

On pages 283 to 287 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further reading on reading sub-skills and strategies.

See also section 8 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 3 d) Reading 2: Setting tasks for reading texts** (*a useful follow-up to this lesson, on creating tasks to help learners with reading texts*)
- **Unit 3 a) Listening 1: Listening sub-skills and a typical lesson** (*a lesson on another aspect of receptive skills*)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) g
- 2) d
- 3) e
- 4) b
- 5) a
- 6) c
- 7) f

Task 3 - Feedback

a. A job advertisement for a job that you are really interested in.

Detailed reading – your interest in the job means you will want to understand as much as possible.

b. A couple of unknown words in a text that is included in an exam you are doing.

Inferring meaning (guessing vocabulary in context) – it is unlikely that you will have a dictionary in an exam and it is important that you try and understand these words.

c. A telephone directory.

Scan reading – you will only want to locate the number or name that you are looking for.

d. The editorial of a newspaper that you are not familiar with and whose political viewpoint you would like to understand.

Inferring meaning (working out the message) – the political opinion of the editorial may not be immediately obvious.

e. A series of articles only some of which will be useful to you for a report you're writing.

Skim or gist reading – not all the articles will be useful to you, so you do not want to waste time reading them all in detail.

f. Instructions for kitset furniture you are assembling (you are usually not very good at doing this!)

Detailed reading – if you are not good at assembling kitsets, you will want to be sure you follow the instructions carefully.

g. A travel brochure when you are trying to decide on a holiday destination.

Both skim and scan – you are likely to scan for destination names, prices, dates etc. but you would also skim read descriptions of the destinations.

h. An armchair travel book about a country you have enjoyed visiting.

Extensive reading – you are likely to read this for pleasure as you would a novel.

i. An on-line flight timetable.

Scan reading – you will try and locate the dates and times that suit you best.

Task 4 - Feedback

- a) 2
- b) 8
- c) 5
- d) 1
- e) 4
- f) 3
- g) 9
- h) 7
- i) 6



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What kind of tasks should be used with different reading texts, and what reading skills will they practise? This lesson will give you ideas on how to create more focused reading tasks. Before you complete this task, it may be helpful to have looked at *Reading 1: Knowing about strategies and sub-skills*.

Task 1 – What went wrong?

Chris gave his students a reading text about a lifesaver who rescued a young girl from the sea. He made sure students had a task to go with the text. After students finished reading, he asked them to do a role play – one person playing the lifesaver, the other person playing a journalist who interviews the lifesaver. When he asked students to do the role play, they told him they didn't feel confident and couldn't speak.



What went wrong?

Choose which of the following reasons is most likely to have made the students feel unconfident about doing the role play.

- a. The students are shy about speaking.
- b. Chris' instructions for the role play were unclear.
- c. The students hadn't understood the text well enough to do the role play.
- d. Chris didn't do a long enough lead in to the text.
- e. The students can't imagine what it's like to be a lifesaver

Check your answers in the key below 



Task 1 Feedback

All the answers are possible, but c is the most likely. Chris may have given his students a reading task, but it might not have checked the information in the text in enough detail and students do not feel they have understood the text well enough to do the role play.

ESOL Teaching Skills Taskbook

Reading 2: Setting tasks for reading texts: Unit 3 d)

Task 2 – Some opinions about reading



Read the following statements about reading and decide if you think these statements are True or False by writing 'T' or 'F' in the right hand column below.

Statements about reading	True or False?
a. It's a good idea to get students to underline new vocabulary in the text the very first time they read it.	
b. It is not possible to create an intensive reading task for a bus timetable.	
c. True / False questions can only be used for detailed reading tasks.	
d. You should set reading tasks before students begin reading.	
e. It's not a good idea to set time limits for reading because it makes students panic.	
f. The first time students read a text, it's better that they don't use a dictionary.	
g. Sometimes it's a good idea to get students reading and not bother about a task.	
h. Lead in activities are mostly a waste of time.	
i. It helps students to get the gist understanding of a text before reading for detail.	
j. Students should be able to understand a writer's opinion about a topic the very first time they read.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Task 3 – Matching tasks to texts



Numbers 1 to 3 show three different kinds of reading text. Letters a to i are descriptions of reading tasks. Match them together with the appropriate text, and then put them in the correct order (which task would you do first?, second?, etc).

Texts	Tasks
1. a job advertisement.	
2. a letter to the editor of a newspaper.	
3. an encyclopedia entry.	

Reading tasks

- a. scanning for numbers like hours, wage etc.
- b. very detailed reading to understand the writer's point of view
- c. skim reading to locate relevant information
- d. scan to locate the correct heading
- e. detailed reading about the profile of the person they want and job description
- f. skim reading to determine interest in topic under discussion
- g. detailed reading to fully understand all the information related to this topic
- h. skim reading for suitability
- i. detailed reading to understand all points being made

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key skill

When we ask students to read texts it is a good idea to give them a task with the text. Reading tasks should aim to do 2 things: make sure students practise a reading sub-skill and make sure students understand the text. Which skills students practice and how much detail they need to understand will depend on the kind of text students are reading and whether they are reading the text for the first, second or third time.

Task 4 – Evaluating reading tasks



In the box below is a short reading text followed by 3 reading tasks aimed at pre intermediate students. On the next page there are 3 statements (a to c) with two options (i and ii) that ask you to evaluate the reading tasks. Tick the option that you think is correct to complete each statement.

Popular TESOL Course

Our current TESOL Course has proved to be very popular with students from all around the world. We are running two groups this month and there is a very good mix of people from many different countries: China, the Czech Republic, Japan, Italy, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland and Tahiti.

Paola Cavalcante is the first Italian teacher to attend the TESOL Course since it began 8 years ago. She has taught English and French in her home town of Florence for a total of 12 years, but has focused almost exclusively on teaching English for the last 6 years.

She says there is great demand for English teachers in Italy. “Most people want to speak a foreign language for their jobs, for travelling, for study abroad and so on.” The TESOL Course is the first methodology course that Paola has studied overseas. “At home when there was ever anything interesting about methodology I always liked to go – usually in the evening or weekends – in my free time.”

Task 1 (first reading)

What countries are talked about in the text?

Task 2 (second reading)

Which answer is correct? This text is ...

a) a report? b) an article c) a story

Task 3 (third reading)

What does the word “exclusively” mean? (see line 7)

✓ **Tick the statement you think is correct.**

a. Task 1 is ...

- i. appropriate for a first reading because it is easy for students to do.
- ii. not appropriate for a first reading because scanning the country names does not give a general idea of what the text is about.

b. Task 2 is ...

- i. appropriate for a second reading because it makes students think about the text type.
- ii. not appropriate for a second reading because it does not check understanding of the text in enough detail

c. Task 3 is ...

- i. appropriate for a third reading because by a third reading students should be able to work out the meaning of new words from the context.
- ii. not appropriate for a third reading because it is too hard

Check your ideas in the answer key. 🗝️

Thinking about your teaching ...

Many course books do not provide appropriate reading tasks. They either require students to understand too much detail too soon, or they do not check understanding of texts in enough detail. Look at the course book or teaching materials you are currently using. Look at the reading texts and evaluate the tasks.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Whenever you get students to read in the classroom, it is useful to ask yourself what reading skills you are practising and developing. Sometimes at the end of a reading lesson you can get students to reflect on the way they have read in class and suggest they use the same skills and strategies outside the classroom.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 205 to 212 of *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom* by Tricia Hedge (OUP 2000), there is further reading on teaching reading and task design.

On pages 184 to 191 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on teaching reading and task design, including a section on extensive reading.

On pages 283 to 302 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further reading on teaching reading and task design, including a section on how to sequence a reading lesson.

See also section 1 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 3 a) Reading 1: Knowing about strategies and sub-skills** (*recommended as a precursor to this lesson*)

Answer Key



Task 2 feedback

- a. False** – *this means that students focus immediately on what they don't know, rather than focusing on what they do know.*
- b. False** – *it is only worth scanning a bus timetable for specific information. It is not necessary to read the whole timetable in detail.*
- c. False** – *True/ False questions could be used to check gist understanding of the text. It depends how you word the question.*
- d. True** – *this provides students with a reason to read.*
- e. False** – *sometimes it is necessary to set time limits for reading to make sure students practise skim or scan reading skills.*
- f. True** – *students need practice in reading as fluently as possible and stopping to use a dictionary every time they don't understand a word inhibits this process.*
- g. False** – *students need a reason for reading, particularly in the classroom where their motivation to read some texts may not be very high.*
- h. False** – *lead in activities can help raise a student's interest in reading a text and they can often provide useful background information on the content of a text.*
- i. True** – *a global understanding of the text will allow students to process the details more easily on the second reading.*
- j. False** – *to understand a writer's opinion more often than not requires a very detailed understanding of a text. This is too difficult to pick up in a first reading.*

Task 3 feedback

- 1) h, a and e
- 2) f, l and b
- 3) d, c and g

Task 4 feedback

- a) Task 1 is ...ii. ...** not appropriate for a first reading because scanning the country names does not give a general idea of what the text is about.
Task 1 should aim to provide a gist understanding of the text as a whole.
- b) Task 2 is ...ii. ...** not appropriate for a second reading because it does not check understanding of the text in enough detail
Task 2 should aim to give students a more thorough understanding of the information in the text.
- c) Task 3 is ...i. ...** appropriate for a third reading because by a third reading students should be able to work out the meaning of new words from the context.
But note: for task 3 to work, tasks 1 and 2 will need to be changed so they check information in the text more thoroughly.



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Do you sometimes have trouble getting your students to speak? Are they sometimes reluctant just to have a go at speaking? This lesson will help you to understand how you can use different types of speaking activities to get your students talking. It will also give you an indication of a good way to set up these activities.

Task 1 – Jim’s confusion

Jim: Sometimes I get students to do a role play because I want them to practise a particular grammar point. Other times I get them to do a role play because I want them to act out a situation they have just read about in a newspaper article. I know my overall aim is to get students to speak, but I’m sometimes not sure if I should also be doing some kind of grammar practice as well. The question is this: is it OK to do the kind of role play where students are just acting out a situation? And if it is OK, why is it OK?



What advice would you give Jim?

Jot down your advice on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

Jim is right. The two kinds of role play are slightly different. In the first situation, the aim is to give students freer oral practice of a grammar point. However, in the second situation, there may not be a grammar practice aim at all. However, it is useful for students to have this kind of practice with the aim of developing students’ spoken fluency”. The rest of this lesson will look at ways of developing spoken fluency practice.

Key Skill

Students often lack the confidence to just speak and not worry about making mistakes. Spending time in the classroom helping them to develop some degree of oral fluency can go some way towards giving them confidence to speak freely and not be overly concerned with accuracy.

Task 2 – Different kinds of speaking activities



Below is a list of different kinds of speaking activities (1 - 8). Match these to the descriptions of the activities (a – h).

Speaking activities	
1. discussion	2. questionnaire
3. ranking activity	4. jigsaw activity
5. role-play	6. simulation
7. communication game	8. problem solving activity

Descriptions

- a. Students read brief restaurant reviews then discuss an order for a list of restaurants from the best to worst.
- b. Students are given a logic puzzle and talk about possible answers in pairs or small groups.
- c. In groups students pretend they are having a city council meeting to decide if some trees in the main street should be cut down or not. Each student has a different role to play, but they use their own names.
- d. In small groups, students put forward their ideas about global warming and what should be done about it.
- e. Students work in pairs, each with a picture. Both pictures are very similar, but there are some small differences. Without showing each other their pictures, they describe their pictures in order to spot the differences.
- f. Students move around the class asking each other about their last holiday destination as well as their ideal holiday destination.
- g. Different students read different information about a murder mystery. They form a group and share their information in order to try and solve the mystery.
- h. In pairs, students pretend to be neighbours. One neighbour thinks his partner a bit too noisy

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

There is a great variety of activities available to get students speaking. Some of the activities above can belong to more than one category. For example, **g** the jigsaw activity can also be seen as a problem solving activity. A key component of successful speaking activities is an information gap where one speaker knows something that the other speaker doesn't and there is a real reason to communicate.

Task 3 – A typical speaking lesson



Below are some steps in a typical lesson that aims to develop spoken fluency. Put these steps in the most logical order.

Typical lessons	Order
a. The teacher elicits or gives feedback either on the content or the performance of the speaking activity.	
b. The students spend some time planning the content of the speaking activity.	
c. The teacher introduces the speaking activity and perhaps provides some information input that will help students carry out the activity.	
d. The teacher gives feedback on the language that students used in the activity and might highlight and correct mistakes that learners made during the activity.	
e. The teacher gives instructions for the activity. This might mean that the students read some instructions or perhaps role cards.	
f. The students do the speaking activity and the teacher monitors and listens in on their progress.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Speaking lessons like any other lesson need careful setting up. If you hand out role cards for a role play and expect students to start speaking immediately, you will probably be disappointed. Students need to understand the context, the instructions on the role card and have a little time to think about what they want to say and how they are going to say it.

The order of the final 2 steps could be reversed. However, it pays to focus on content before rushing to do error correction, which could send a slightly negative message to students.

Task 4 – Managing speaking activities



Decide if the following ideas for speaking activities are “useful or “not so useful”. Jot down why you think so.

Ideas for managing speaking activities	
1. It pays to give students some thinking time before they speak.	
<i>Useful</i>	<i>Not so useful</i>
2. It’s useful to do as much error correction as possible while students are talking.	
<i>Useful</i>	<i>Not so useful</i>
3. You need to think carefully about grouping and pairing students for speaking activities.	
<i>Useful</i>	<i>Not so useful</i>
4. It doesn’t really matter what topic you choose for speaking activities. Students can talk about anything.	
<i>Useful</i>	<i>Not so useful</i>
5. It’s a good idea to encourage students to think about their speaking speed to make them sound more fluent.	
<i>Useful</i>	<i>Not so useful</i>
6. It is sometimes helpful to base a speaking lesson on a reading or a listening lesson.	
<i>Useful</i>	<i>Not so useful</i>

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Over a period of time, monitor and record your students' reactions to different speaking activities. Decide how motivated they were to speak and how quickly they began speaking once you had set the activity up. Finally, evaluate how much language the activity generates. Did students speak for a long or a short amount of time? If you feel the speaking lesson was not successful, try to work out why this was the case, using the "useful" and "not very useful" ideas in task 4.

Note your observations in your *Teaching log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

To help you plan speaking lessons that your learners enjoy, try doing some evaluation of each speaking activity you do once it is over. Ask students what they feel they got out of the activity and how much it motivated them. Perhaps get them to discuss these ideas in small groups then give your own feedback. It will also give them further speaking fluency practice.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 146 - 163 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on spoken fluency practice, including teaching ideas.

On pages 343 - 363 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further reading on spoken fluency practice, including classroom speaking activities and speaking lesson sequences.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 3 f) Speaking strategies:** *Discusses useful skills and strategies associated with successful oral communication.*
- **Unit 5 g) Using drama activities:** *Discusses how adding an element of drama to activities may help motivate students to speak in English.*

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

1. d (discussion)
2. f (questionnaire)
3. a (ranking activity)
4. g (jigsaw activity)
5. h (role play)
6. c (simulation)
7. e (communication game)
8. b (problem solving activity)

Task 3 – Feedback

1. c
2. e
3. b
4. f
5. a
6. d

Task 4 – Feedback

1. **Useful** - students need time to organise not only their ideas, but also their language.
2. **Not so useful** - this might interrupt the flow of speech or inhibit students in some way, particularly at lower levels when learners tend to have less confidence.
3. **Useful** - putting students together who have very different abilities or who do not get on can mean that students will be reluctant to speak.
4. **Not so useful** - if a topic is not familiar or interesting to learners, they won't want to speak about it. You need to think carefully about learners' interests and needs.
5. **Not so useful** as this might put unnecessary pressure on them and inhibit their speaking. Fluency and speed is not the same thing.
6. **Useful** - the content of a reading or listening text will give learners something to talk about and may provide useful background information for the speaking.



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Do you sometimes feel that your students speak English well enough, but you are not sure of their ability to communicate effectively with native speakers? This lesson will help you to understand skills and strategies associated with oral communication that can be useful for your students. It will give you ideas on how to highlight these aspects of oral interaction with your students.

Task 1 – Jenny’s exam students

Jenny: I’ve got two students who are going to be doing an important speaking test next month. We did a practice test today. The students’ grammar is fairly correct, they have good vocabulary and their pronunciation is clear enough. The problem is I still sometimes have problems following what they’re trying to say. For example, at one stage in the practice test I suddenly noticed that they had changed the topic of the conversation without me realising it! I feel there’s something I should be teaching them, but I am not quite sure what that is.



Have you got any ideas of how you can help Jenny?

Jot down your advice on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

Jenny could help her students communicate more clearly by getting them to focus on some core speaking skills and strategies. The following tasks will help you understand what these are.

Key Skill

The teaching of speaking involves more than just providing students with speaking fluency practice. Teachers need to focus on skills and strategies that will help students negotiate meaning and communicate effectively with other people.

Task 2 – Identifying skills and strategies



1 to 6 below are speaking skills and strategies. a – f are definitions of these strategies, and i to vi are examples. Match the speaking skills and strategies with the definitions and examples.

Speaking skills and strategies	Definitions	Examples
1. Turn taking		
2. Repair		
3. Seeking clarification		
4. Feedback		
5. Boundary or transition marking		
6. Paralinguistic devices		

Definitions

- a. Asking the person you are speaking to explain something they have said
- b. Using things like body language, gesture and eye contact to send a message to the person you are speaking to
- c. Signalling that you have finished speaking or knowing when and how to get into a conversation
- d. Indicating that you have finished talking about a topic and perhaps also showing that you are about to introduce a new topic into the conversation.
- e. Correcting yourself when you speak, or rephrasing something when you feel the person you are talking to hasn't understood.
- f. Using small words or sounds to indicate to the speaker that you are listening to what they are saying.

Examples

- i. A: I suppose I was feeling depressed ... no, what I really mean is ... I was feeling sad.
- ii. A: What was that you said about using the washing machine?
B: Oh – you can use it whenever you like.
A: Oh so I don't need to book a time.
B: No.
- iii. A: Ok ... now let's move on to ...
- iv. After making her point, Ann sat back in the chair and looked at her colleagues to see if anyone would disagree with her.
- v. A: ... and the weather was fantastic
B: Great
A: It didn't rain once
- vi. A: .. and I think that's all we can say about it.
B: OK, but I think another point worth considering is ...

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

These micro skills do not necessarily generate spoken language, but they do ease spoken communication between two speakers. Many of these micro skills are realised in very different ways in different languages and cultures. For example, many native speakers of English find there are cultures where people stand too close to them during a conversation, or they may find that the person they speak to is not giving them enough feedback. For this reason, it is important to focus on these skills. They can avoid misunderstandings and break downs in communication.

Task 3 – Spoken genre and speaking skills and strategies



Letters a to e below are different spoken genre. Decide which 2 of the following 5 speaking skills and strategies are most likely to be used in each spoken genre. You need to think about both the speaker and the listener.

NB. Paralinguistic devices are not included here because they are likely to be used with all the genres.

Speaking skills and strategies	
1. Turn taking	2. Repair
3. Seeking clarification	4. Feedback
5. Boundary or transition marking	

Spoken genre	Speaking skills and strategies	
a. Telling a story to a friend.	i.	ii.
b. Giving instructions of how to download pictures from a digital camera to a computer.	i.	ii.
c. A business meeting.	i.	ii.
d. Social chatting with friends.	i.	ii.
e. Explaining a medical problem to a doctor.	i.	ii.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Many of these micro skills are more typically found in some spoken genre as opposed to others. When preparing speaking lessons, it is a good idea to ask yourself if there are any typical micro skills associated with that genre then aim to highlight these during the lesson.

Task 4 – Teaching ideas for speaking skills and strategies



Numbers 1 to 5 describe different tasks that can help develop students' awareness of speaking skills and strategies. Letters a to e describe activities that can be included with these tasks. Match the tasks to activities.

Tasks	Activities
1. Students analyse a transcript of some authentic native speaker interaction.	
2. Students watch an authentic video or DVD of native speakers performing specific spoken genre.	
3. Students perform a speaking task in small groups. One of the students takes the role of observer.	
4. The teacher films students performing a specific spoken genre.	
5. The teacher gives students invented words or phrases to use in a conversation.	

Activities

- a. The filmed item is played back to students who evaluate their ability to use speaking strategies and communicate clearly.
- b. The excerpt is played without sound and the teacher asks students to focus on the body language and eye contact that native speakers use.
- c. The students try to drop the word or expression into the conversation thereby forcing the other student to seek clarification.
- d. The teacher asks students to find and underline specific words or expressions that are used as speaking strategies.
- e. The observer is asked to focus on two or three speaking strategies and evaluate the group's effectiveness. After the activity the observer gives feedback to the group on these strategies.

Thinking about your teaching ...

Many published teaching materials see speaking either as freer practice of language or as spoken fluency. Study the course book or materials you are currently using and see if there is any explicit focus on speaking skills and strategies. If there is, could you add any more? If there are not, can you think how you can add a focus on skills and strategies to a fluency activity. Try to create a speaking skills and strategies mini-syllabus that matches other speaking activities in your teaching programme.

Write up your mini-syllabus in your *Teaching log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

After doing a lesson that focus on speaking skills and strategies, ask your students to evaluate it. Give them some questions to talk about (for example, what was useful in this lesson? What was easy / difficult for you? What do you think you need more practice in?). You can ask the questions in an open class situation or students can talk about them in small groups and give you feedback on their discussion.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 27 - 31 of *How to Teach Speaking* by Scott Thornbury (Pearson 2005), there is further reading on speaking skills and communication strategies.

On pages 163 - 169 of *Learning Teaching* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on speaking skills and genre.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 3 e) Speaking fluency:** *Discusses how different kinds of speaking activities can help get your students talking.*
- **Unit 5 g) Using drama activities:** *Discusses how adding an element of drama to activities may help motivate students to speak in English.*

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Turning taking | c. and vi. |
| 2. Repair | e. and i. |
| 3. Seeking clarification | a. and ii. |
| 4. Feedback | f. and v. |
| 5. Boundary or transition marking | d. and iii. |
| 6. Paralinguistic devices | b. and iv. |

Task 3 – Feedback

a. Telling a story to a friend.

- i. Boundary or transition marking ii. Feedback

Comment: The speaker will signal transitions from one stage in the story to the next. The listener will give feedback to indicate that he or she is listening.

b. Giving instructions of how to download pictures from a digital camera to a computer.

- i. Repair ii. Seeking clarification

Comment: The speaker is likely to rephrase more complex instructions if he or she feels the listener has not understood (perhaps because they do something wrong). The listener may also ask for certain points to be clarified.

c. A business meeting.

- i. Turn taking ii. Seeking clarification

Comment: All speakers will need to be aware when other participants in a meeting have finished speaking, or they may want to interrupt. Different ideas will be put forward at the meeting by individual speakers and other participants may want more detail or further explanation of those ideas.

d. Social chatting with friends.

- i. Turn taking ii. Boundary or transition marking

Comment: All participants in the conversation will need to be aware of when they can enter the conversation. Social chatting can often cover a large range of topics, so transitions will need to be clearly signalled.

e. Explaining a medical problem to a doctor.

- i. Repair ii. Seeking clarification

Comment: The patient may need to repair what they say to the doctor to make sure he or she understands the symptoms. The doctor is likely to ask for more information about the symptoms from the patient.

Task 4 – Feedback

1. d.
2. b.
3. e.
4. a.
5. c.



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Writing 1: A product approach and features of written language: Unit 3 g)

Do you sometimes worry that your writing lessons are nothing more than practice? Are there features of written language that you feel that you are not focusing on? This lesson looks at some of those features and outlines a typical procedure for writing lessons.

Task 1 – Cassie’s exam class

Cassie: “I am teaching a Cambridge First Certificate class at the moment. I’ve never taught an exam class like this before. I’ve been giving my students lots of writing practice using old exam papers. However, they have told me that they want more on writing. We’re doing two practice writing tasks each week. I’m not sure what they mean.”



Can you help Cassie? What do you think her students mean? Jot down your ideas and suggestions on a note pad, then look at the answer key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

The students may be voicing their frustration at only practising writing and might want some kind of analysis of the genres they have to focus on in the FCE exam. While providing practice opportunities is important, this alone will not necessarily develop students’ skills in these areas, in the same way as merely practising grammar without providing any kind of clarification will not necessarily develop students’ grammar accuracy.

Key Skill

Written language has its own specific features and conventions. These will often differ from one language to another. It is useful for learners if you focus on these features in an explicit way when doing writing lessons.

Task 2 – Differences between written and spoken language



Numbers 1 to 6 below are typical features of spoken language. Letters a to f are their counterparts in written language. Match the spoken and written features.

Spoken features	Written features
1. When we speak, we use stress, intonation and pausing to highlight specific pieces of information and to help listeners understand what we are saying.	
2. Spoken language is spontaneous and is usually not recorded in any way.	
3. When people speak there is usually someone who is listening and can give feedback to the speaker.	
4. When people speak, their sentences are sometimes incomplete and they change their mind about how they will say something in the middle of a sentence.	
5. Speakers often use facial expression, gesture and body language to add meaning to what they are saying.	
6. When people speak, they plan and organise their language as they go and not a long time in advance.	

Features of Written Language

- a. In written language there is a greater expectation of accuracy in language features such as grammar, vocabulary and spelling.
- b. Writers tend to think about what they are going to write and how they are going to write it before they begin writing.
- c. Written language is usually fixed on the page so that people can return to the text as often as they like.
- d. When we write, we use punctuation to help signpost the message of written texts.
- e. Writers often never find out what readers think of their text. However, e-mail and texting are kinds of writing where writers will receive some response to their message.
- f. Paragraphing and layout are used in written language to make the message clearer.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

While it is true that writing requires more accurate use of language than speaking, grammatical accuracy is not the only feature of written language to focus on in the classroom. Nor is it a good idea to see written language as a collection of correct sentences. It is a good idea to see a piece of writing as a whole text with its own conventions.

Task 3 – Steps in a typical writing lesson



Letters a to i below show steps in a typical writing lesson. Put these steps into what you think is an appropriate order.

Steps in a Writing Lesson	Order
a. Students brainstorm ideas for their own text.	
b. The teacher checks understanding of the model text using some kind of comprehension task.	
c. Students write their final draft of the text.	
d. Students do an activity that aims to practise the highlighted written feature.	
e. The teacher provides a lead in to the topic of the model text.	
f. Students get feedback on the first draft from their peers or from the teacher.	
g. The teacher hands out the model text.	
h. Students write the first draft of their text.	
i. The teacher highlights one or two features of the model text (e.g. paragraphing, linking devices) by means of a discovery task.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

The suggested procedure above follows what is generally understood to be a ‘product approach’ to writing, in that the teacher aims to get the students to *produce* a piece of written text. This is not the only approach (see the related lesson on process writing), but it can be useful when teaching exam classes where students need to be able to deploy specific genres.

Task 4 – Specific activities



Numbers 1 to 8 below describe some specific activities that teachers can use in the classroom to focus on features of written language. Sort these activities into the two categories in the box below, thinking about whether they focus on language accuracy, or on the text as a whole.

Focus on language accuracy	Focus on the text as a whole

Activities

1. Ask students to make a more complex sentence from two simple sentences using a linking device.
2. Get students to organise cut up parts of a model text so that it follows the correct format and layout.
3. Get students to think very clearly about who will read the text.
4. Ask students to organise a continuous stream of text into paragraphs.
5. Give students a text with spelling mistakes and ask them to identify and correct these. Set a time limit and allow limited dictionary support.
6. Ask students to think about why they are writing a particular text – what is its purpose?
7. Give students a text with no punctuation and ask them to add full stops, capital letters, commas etc.
8. Ask students to find out what different pronouns refer back or forward to in a text.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Writing 1: A product approach and features of written language: Unit 3 g)

Thinking about your teaching ...

It is easy to think of the kind of texts that students need to be able to write when they are studying in exam classes. However, what about when they are studying general English at a lower level? Over a period of time, conduct an on-going needs analysis with students who are not in exam classes. Get them to tell you what kind of texts they feel they would like to write.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

The approach described in task 3 is only a suggested approach. It is also possible to start with the product and work backwards. You can ask your students to write a text without having read a model or example. Having done this, students could look at a model and notice differences between their first drafts and the model text. They could then re-write the first draft incorporating features they have noticed. This approach is similar to a task-based model of teaching and learning.

Want to find out more ... ?

Pages 323 - 342 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) contain more ideas for focusing on both language accuracy and the whole text in writing lessons.

Pages 192 – 205 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005) include further reading on staging successful writing lessons.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to writing lessons:

- **Unit 3 h) Writing 2: a Process approach** (*a useful follow-up to this lesson*)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) d
- 2) c
- 3) e
- 4) a
- 5) f
- 6) b

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) e
- 2) g
- 3) b
- 4) i
- 5) d
- 6) a
- 7) h
- 8) f
- 9) c

Task 4 – Feedback

Language accuracy: 1, 5, 7, 8

Whole text: 2, 3, 4, 6



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Do you sometimes wonder what people mean when they talk about ‘process writing’? This lesson looks at a **process** approach to writing and shows how it differs from a very strictly **product** approach. It describes a procedure for process writing and gives some teaching ideas. Before you complete this lesson, it may be useful to have looked at *Writing 1: A product approach and features of written language*.

Task 1 – A process quiz



What are your beliefs about how we structure and manage writing lessons? Take this short quiz to find out. Write ‘yes’ or ‘no’ next to each statement, then check your ideas with the answer key below.

Statements	Yes/No?
1. Students should learn to write correct sentences and build them up into a text.	
2. In writing classes, there is a strong emphasis on correct grammar.	
3. In writing classes, you should focus on what the student produces at the end of the lesson.	
4. Classroom writing is by its nature ‘inauthentic’ and it is impossible to make it real.	
5. Writing in the classroom takes a lot of time and is often a waste of time.	
6. Students have to work alone on writing activities.	
7. Teachers should mark all the grammar mistakes that students make.	
8. All written language can be considered formal language.	

Task 1 Feedback

- If you answered all these questions with **'yes'**, then your view of developing writing skills is strongly product-orientated, and it might be interesting for you to explore the different approach outlined in this lesson.
- If you had a lot of **'no'** answers, then you probably already have some awareness of a process approach, but it might be useful for you to look at the ideas in this lesson and see if you can develop techniques further.

Key Skill

A central idea in process writing is to move away from the view that written texts are a collection of grammatically correct sentences. Process writing is connected with the different sub skills that first language writers of English use when they write.

Task 2 – Some alternatives



Numbers 1 to 8 repeat the descriptions of a product approach to writing in task 1. Letters a to h describe some alternatives to this view that are usually associated with the process approach. Match the alternatives to the descriptions.

Descriptions of a product approach	Process approach
1. Students should learn to write correct sentences and build them up into a text.	
2. In writing classes, there is a strong emphasis on correct grammar.	
3. In writing classes, you should focus on what the student produces at the end of the lesson.	
4. Classroom writing is by its nature 'inauthentic' and it is impossible to make it real.	
5. Writing in the classroom takes a lot of time and is often a waste of time.	
6. Students have to work alone on writing activities.	
7. Teachers should mark all the grammar mistakes that students make.	
8. All written language can be considered formal language.	

Alternatives associated with the process approach

- a. In class, students can write a letter or e-mail message to an organisation or publication that exists and send the letter or message.
- b. Teachers' feedback should refer to the ideas expressed in a text and the way in which they are organised.
- c. When students brainstorm and plan written work, they also get useful speaking practice.
- d. It helps students to look at an example model text of what they are writing so they can understand how this works as a whole.
- e. Teachers should expose students to a range of different written genres because they will be writing using different registers.
- f. From the outset, teachers should encourage students to think of a piece of writing as a piece of communication that gets a message across.
- g. A lot of writing activities such as brainstorming, planning and revising can be done in pairs or small groups.
- h. An important part of writing lessons is to get students to understand that the writing process is made up of many sub skills that can help them to create texts.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

The process approach means that students begin to see writing as a communication tool. This means it is important to think about *why* the text is being written and *who* is likely to read it. It also shows that the writing of a text is not a one-off event, but a process made up of several steps.

Task 3 – A procedure for process writing



Letters a to h show typical stages or steps in a process writing lesson. Place these in a logical order.

Stages in a Process Writing Lesson	Order
a. Students get feedback from their peers or from the teacher on what they have written.	
b. Students reformulate some of the language in the text.	
c. The teacher asks students to talk about the purpose of the text they will write.	
d. Students brainstorm ideas and/or, if necessary, do some research on the topic of the text.	
e. Students write a first draft of the text.	
f. Students write a final draft of the text.	
g. Students reconsider some of the ideas in the text and revise their organisation.	
h. Students think about and discuss how their ideas can most effectively be organised.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

The procedure outlined in task 3 could take place over an extended period of time rather than in the course of one individual lesson. For example, students might do brainstorming and discussion of the purpose and organisation of the text in class and then write the first draft as homework. The revising and reformulating might take place two or three days after that.

Task 4 – Individual tasks



Numbers 1 to 8 repeat the steps in a process writing lesson, but this time they are in the correct order. Letters a to h provide examples of a classroom activities. Match the activities to the steps. 

Steps in a process writing lesson	Activities
1. Students brainstorm ideas and/or, if necessary, do some research on the topic of the text.	
2. The teacher asks students to talk about the purpose of the text they will write.	
3. Students think about and discuss how their ideas can be organised.	
4. Students write a first draft of the text.	
5. Students get feedback from their peers, or from the teacher, on what they have written.	
6. Students reconsider some of the ideas in the text and revise their organisation.	
7. Students reformulate some of the language in the text.	
8. Students write a final draft of the text.	

Classroom activities

- a. In pairs or small groups, students look at their notes and discuss how they can be organised into paragraphs.
- b. Students decide whether they need to cut or add information to their text and review the paragraphing.
- c. If the topic of the text voices a personal opinion, students should write alone. However, if the topic is not personal, students could write in pairs or small groups.
- d. Students look at the teacher's language feedback and change the grammar and vocabulary if necessary.
- e. The teacher encourages the students to use mind maps and provides articles that might be of use.
- f. This can be word processed for the sake of final presentation.
- g. The teacher asks the students to discuss and note down who will read the text and what the reader will need to do as a result of reading the text.
- h. One pair should exchange their draft with another pair. The teacher can monitor and make suggestions.

Thinking about your teaching ...

Try doing some writing lessons that follow a process approach to developing writing skills. As you work through these lessons, note students' reactions to different parts of the process. Where do they have strengths? Where do they have weaknesses? Why do you think this is the case?

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

The one step that students (and teachers) tend to forget about in this process is the second one where students should think of the audience of the text and the outcome (if there is one). Try and make this a standard feature of any writing lesson that you do.

Want to find out more ... ?

Pages 300 to 312 of *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom* by Tricia Hedge (Oxford University Press 2000) contain extra reading on process writing.

Pages 325 - 326 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) discuss the differences between a product and a process approach.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to writing lessons:

- **Unit 3 g) Writing 1: a product approach and features of written language**
(a useful precursor to this lesson)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) d
- 2) f
- 3) h
- 4) a
- 5) c
- 6) g
- 7) b
- 8) e

Task 4 – Feedback

- 1) e
- 2) g
- 3) a
- 4) c
- 5) h
- 6) b
- 7) d
- 8) f

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) d
- 2) c
- 3) h
- 4) e
- 5) a
- 6) g
- 7) b
- 8) f



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Do some of your low level learners seem to have problems with reading and writing? This lesson looks at kinds of literacy problems that students can have and makes some suggestions on how you can deal with these.

Task 1 – An unusual student

Joshua has a student called Tony in his pre intermediate class. Tony is very communicative and, for his level, speaks English well. However, Joshua has noted that Tony is reluctant to copy examples of new language from the white board. He sometimes seems to struggle with reading, but can often give answers to tasks after student-centred feedback. Joshua wonders whether Tony might have literacy problems.



What do you think?

Jot down your ideas on a notepad, then check the answer key below. 



Task 1 Feedback

It is quite possible that Tony does have literacy issues. Students who find reading and writing difficult can often be good at listening and speaking and can hide their literacy problems with a series of coping strategies. For example, Tony might not be able to read texts at all, but is able to pick up answers to reading tasks from his partner during student-centred feedback.

Key Skill

In English language classrooms, literacy problems can arise because a student's first language does not have a Roman script and they need to learn this. However, in other cases, students may have literacy issues in their first language and learning English may mean they are having to deal with written and spoken language for the first time.

Task 2 – What kind of problem is it?



Numbers 1 to 8 describe typical literacy problems for students. Sort the problems into ones primarily associated with reading and ones associated writing.

Reading problems	Writing problems

Typical literacy problems

1. Students can't spell words.
2. Students have problems dealing with left to right orientation of texts.
3. A word written in cursive and the same word written in italics seem like two different words.
4. Students find it difficult to hold a pen correctly.
5. Students are unsure whether they should use upper or lower case for certain words.
6. Students cannot see where a word begins and ends when it is placed in continuous text.
7. Students are unable to form letters in Roman script.
8. Students find it difficult to work out where sentences begin and end in continuous text.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

While the problems described above seem very basic, it is useful to consider how well native English speakers would cope with a non-Roman script that is not familiar to them, for example, Arabic. In this situation, being able to perform simple tasks such as recognising the correct number on a bus becomes extremely difficult.

Task 3 – Getting started



Below are some general ideas for when you get started with helping students with literacy problems. Choose the best alternative a) or b) for each idea.

Ideas to help students with literacy problems	
1.	<p>a. You should use small fonts for words and texts</p> <p>b. You should focus on large fonts for words and texts.</p>
2.	<p>a. You should begin with listening and speaking then lead to reading and writing.</p> <p>b. You should begin with reading and writing then lead to listening and speaking.</p>
3.	<p>a. Start out by focusing on individual words.</p> <p>b. Start our by focusing on short and simple sentences.</p>
4.	<p>a. You should try and use visuals together with words and text as much as possible.</p> <p>b. You should try and avoid using visuals with words and texts.</p>
5.	<p>a. It helps to use a published picture dictionary.</p> <p>b. It helps for students to build up and create their own dictionary.</p>
6.	<p>a. When it's time to deal with sentences, students should try and create their own.</p> <p>b. When it's time to deal with sentences, students should copy examples.</p>

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

A general principle when teaching literacy is to move from reading and writing to listening and speaking, and to begin with letters and words. It is difficult to get students to reproduce what they cannot perceive. Secondly, it is not a good idea to expect creativity too soon in the literacy development process.

Task 4 – Some specific activities



Below is a list of some specific activities to help develop literacy (1-12). Decide if each activity will help develop reading skills or writing skills.

Reading skills	Writing skills

Activities to help develop literacy

1. Give regular spelling tests.
2. Students do dot joining and tracing tasks to create letters.
3. Students match the same word written in two different fonts.
4. Students recognise and/or match letters words written on flashcards.
5. Students match words to pictures.
6. Students copy written work that has been rewritten and reformulated by the teacher.
7. Students are given words from a simple sentence to order.
8. Students are asked to identify very simple texts such as a bank deposit slip or a bus timetable.
9. Students complete simple gapped sentences.
10. The teacher highlights core spelling rules and patterns.
11. Students labels pictures and diagrams.
12. Students complete simple forms.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Try learning the alphabet (or characters) and some words in a language that has a script that you are not familiar with. What frustrations do you experience? How does this experience inform the way you can deal with students who have literacy problems.

Note your observations in your Teaching log.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Often learners with literacy problems are placed in classes with students who do not have these problems. This will mean adapting materials that you use and providing these students with a bit of extra support. For example, rather than getting them to do a controlled written practice task, you could ask them to copy the correct answers.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 323 - 325 of *Learning Teaching* (2nd edition) by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on literacy.

Answer Key**Task 2 – Feedback**

Reading problems: 2, 3, 6 and 8

Writing problems: 1, 4, 5 and 7

Task 3 – Feedback

1. **b.** You should focus on large fonts for words and texts.
Comment: Larger typeface is clearer and easier to read.
2. **a.** You should begin with listening and speaking then lead to reading and writing.
Comment: This means you move from what students can already do to what is new for them.
3. **a.** Start out by focusing on individual words.
Comment: Students needs to become familiar with words first so they can then begin to recognise word boundaries in a sentence.
4. **a.** You should try and use visuals together with words and text as much as possible.
Comment: Visuals are a very straightforward and concrete way of conveying the meaning of new language items.
5. **b.** It helps for students to build up and create their own dictionary.
Comment: Words students have collected are likely to be more meaningful for them.
6. **b.** When it's time to deal with sentences, students should copy examples.
Comment: For students to create their own sentences puts pressure on the grammatical ability when they are still trying to deal with the way in which we record language in a written form.

Task 4 – Feedback

Reading skills: 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 10

Writing skills: 1, 2, 6, 9, 11, and 12



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Do you sometimes feel unsure about teaching pronunciation? Do you wonder when you should teach it and how to go about it? This lesson aims to explore these issues by investigating general principles associated with the teaching of pronunciation and then looking at ideas of when and what to teach.

Task 1 – A difference of opinion.

The following discussion took place in the staffroom between Tom and Liz:

Tom: I was doing a pronunciation lesson and most of my students just couldn't get it.

Liz: Couldn't get what?

Tom: Just the right sound.

Liz: How right did you want them to sound?

Tom: As near as possible to a native speaker.

Liz: Why bother? So long as they can be understood.

Tom: But they just sound so foreign.

Liz: I don't agree.



Whose opinion do you agree with, and why? Jot down your answer on a note pad, then check the answer in the key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

Tom seems to want his students to sound like native speakers of English, while Liz thinks that intelligibility is a more acceptable standard. Many students find it hard achieving a native-speaker like sound, and many have no wish to lose their accent. Current thinking on this topic suggests that Liz's point of view is preferable because it is more realistic and takes into account learners' wants and needs to a larger degree.

Key Skill

While aiming to get students sounding like native speakers may be an unrealistic goal, ensuring that you have some explicit focus on pronunciation is a key (and often neglected) aspect of an English language programme. Areas to focus on are: sounds, word stress, sentence stress, connected speech and intonation.

Task 2 – Some general principles



Numbers 1 to 6 outline some general principles associated with the teaching of pronunciation. Letters a to f are a series of rationales for the principles. Match the rationales to the principles.

General Principles	Rationales
1. In a pronunciation lesson it is a good idea to get students listening before they speak.	
2. Teachers need to model pronunciation features clearly before they ask students to repeat.	
3. It helps students if you provide a white board model of the features that you have practised.	
4. Sometimes it is a good idea to get learners to analyse the pronunciation of an utterance in pairs.	
5. Having heard or analysed a pronunciation feature, students need plenty of oral practice.	
6. Teachers need to give students plenty of feedback on their pronunciation.	

Rationales

- a. This might lead to students being able to work out a rule that is applicable to other language.
- b. This encourages students to listen carefully to sounds.
- c. This means that you are able to target very specific problems that individual learners of different nationalities have.
- d. Some learners need this kind of visual support because they do not have an 'aural memory'.
- e. Pronunciation is something that learners need to actively do rather than passively study.
- f. At low levels there are some sounds and intonation patterns that non-native speakers cannot hear so they need plenty of exposure to them.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Pronunciation is something that students need to experience rather than think about too much. Teachers can help them do this by ensuring that they focus strongly on listening and speaking skills in pronunciation lessons. Some written analysis is useful, but it should always lead to productive practice.

Task 3 – When to teach pronunciation



Numbers 1 to 5 describe different situations in which teachers can focus on pronunciation. Letters a to e briefly describe classroom activities associated with the teaching of pronunciation. Match the activities to the situations.

Situations	Activities
1. The teacher includes a separate pronunciation spot within a normal lesson.	
2. The teacher focuses on pronunciation at the same time as they are teaching grammar or vocabulary.	
3. The teacher gets students to focus on a feature of pronunciation in a text after doing listening skills practice.	
4. The teacher devotes an entire lesson to some aspect of pronunciation.	
5. The teacher gives feedback on some language that students have produced.	

Classroom activities

- a. Students read and listen to a short excerpt and mark features of connected speech on the audio script.
- b. After a freer communication activity the teacher notes pronunciation problems on the white board for students to correct.
- c. The teacher does a 20-minute warmer activity that focuses on the difference between two sounds e.g. /i:/ vs. /I/.
- d. The teacher uses prompts to elicit, model and drill the target structure.
- e. Students listen to, analyse and do a variety of practice activities, focusing on different intonation patterns.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

The different situations outlined in task 3 can be summarised under two headings – whether pronunciation should be taught in isolation or whether it should be integrated into other lessons. Ideally teachers should try to include both approaches in their teaching programmes.

Task 4 – Specific activities



Numbers 1 to 5 in the box are features of pronunciation. Letters a to j are specific activities. Match the activities to the features. Each feature has two activities.

Features of Pronunciation	Activities
1. sounds	
2. word stress	
3. utterance or sentence stress	
4. connected speech	
5. intonation	

Activities

- a. Drilling students in ways of making requests and ensuring that they sound polite.
- b. A student gives another student an incorrect piece of information. The second student corrects the first student by repeating the initial sentence with the correct information.
- c. The teacher shows students a diagram of the mouth and different positions for the speech organs.
- d. The teacher asks students to listen to three sentences from a listening text and count the number of weak forms /ə/ they hear.
- e. The teacher models and drills new vocabulary.
- f. The teacher gives students a series of messages in note form. Students have to practise saying these as fully formed utterances.
- g. Students have to listen for the difference between minimal pairs of words, for example, 'ship' versus 'sheep'.
- h. The teacher asks the students to listen for the speaker's attitude in a dialogue.
- i. The teacher models and drills a new utterance, highlighting sounds that disappear and run into each other.
- j. The teacher asks students to sort vocabulary into different categories according to their pronunciation.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Over the course of a term, note how often you focus on teaching pronunciation. Also consider whether your focus on pronunciation is mostly integrated into language lessons or whether it is isolated. Evaluate whether you think you are doing enough pronunciation. Do you need to integrate more? Or, do you need to do more one-off pronunciation lessons?

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Often teachers forget to analyse the pronunciation of new grammar structures or functions that they teach. Try doing this on a regular basis. Look at your example sentences and work out the main stresses, look for features of connected speech and decide whether intonation is important or not. It sometimes helps to do this together with a colleague. It might make your drilling more effective.

Want to find out more ... ?

Pages 248 to 264 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) contain extra reading on teaching pronunciation.

Pages 284 to 297 of *Learning Teaching (2nd Edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005) also contain extra reading on teaching pronunciation.

See also section 5 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) f
- 2) b
- 3) d
- 4) a
- 5) e
- 6) c

Task 4 – Feedback

- 1) c and g
- 2) e and j
- 3) b and f
- 4) d and i
- 5) a and h

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) c
- 2) d
- 3) a
- 4) e
- 5) b



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Are you sometimes unsure about the best way to deal with vocabulary in different kinds of lessons? This lesson will help you make better decisions on different approaches.

Task 1 – Emily’s pace

Student feedback

Emily prepared her vocabulary lesson thoroughly. She taught 12 new words associated with the topic of ecology and prepared good questions to elicit words and check their meaning. During the lesson, she felt things dragged a little bit. After the lesson, one of the students told her in the nicest possible way that it seemed to take a long time to learn the new words.



How could Emily have made the vocabulary lesson more interesting for her students and improved the pace? Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️

Task 1 Feedback 🗝️

It seems that Emily elicited each word individually. Twelve is quite a large number of words with which to do this and it probably meant she had a very long teacher-fronted stage in her lesson. Because all the words were on the same topic it might have been better to use a student-centred worksheet for the vocabulary. For example, students could have matched words to definitions or labelled a diagram or something similar. This means that learners would be more actively engaged in learning the words and would determine their own learning rate rather than being fully dependent on the teacher.

Key Skill

There are 3 key ways of teaching vocabulary to students: 1) by means of teacher-fronted elicitation or explanation; 2) by means of a student-centred vocabulary task; 3) by getting students to work out the meaning of new words they find in a text using the context to help them.

Task 2 – What’s the best way?



Letters a to h describe different teaching or learning situations that involve vocabulary. Decide which of the following approaches is the most suitable, and circle the correct letter.

Approaches

T = teacher fronted explanation or elicitation

S = student-centred task

C = use the context to work out the meaning

Teaching / Learning Situations for vocabulary	Approaches
a. 2 new words before a speaking activity.	T S C
b. 4 words in a reading text that are not important for an understanding of the text.	T S C
c. 8 words from a listening text that are important to an understanding of the text.	T S C
d. A set of about 10 words based around a topic or theme (e.g. crime words).	T S C
e. A couple of words that crop up unexpectedly in the lesson.	T S C
f. 3 words that are included in a grammar practice activity.	T S C
g. A list of verbs and nouns that go together (collocation) e.g. nouns that go with 'make and 'do'.	T S C
h. 4 words that are specific to a particular kind of written language e.g. legal words.	T S C

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Your approach to teaching vocabulary will vary depending on the type of lesson you are teaching. Course books often use student-centred tasks before reading or listening texts. Using the context to work out meaning is often done after reading or listening tasks.

Task 3 – Teacher-fronted vocabulary teaching



A teacher fronted approach is often used when the main lesson aim is to clarify a lexical set of vocabulary. Letters a to f are steps in the procedure for eliciting a word. Numbers i to vi give a rationale for each step. Put the steps in their correct order in the table below, then find the rationale that matches each step.

Steps for eliciting a word

- a. Check that students understand the meaning of the word by asking a concept question.
- b. Write up the word on the white board and provide grammar information.
- c. Drill the word.
- d. Provide the word, if students do not know it
- e. Elicit the word
- f. Convey the meaning using a picture or an oral definition.

Rationale for each step

- i. Students need to learn the spelling and part of speech of the word.
- ii. It is easier for students to start with the concept rather than the word itself.
- iii. If the students clearly do not know the word, then the teacher has to give it.
- iv. This allows students to contribute the word if they know it.
- v. It is a good idea to ensure students are sure about the meaning of the word before you ask them to say it.
- vi. Because English spelling is often strange, it is better for students to learn the sound of the new word before they see how it is written.

Steps	Rationale


Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

There is often more than one way to convey the meaning of any given word. It's the teacher's job to choose the most effective method for each word.

Task 4 – Getting the meaning across



There are different ways that the teacher can convey the meaning of a word in order to try and elicit it. In the left-hand column below there are 8 words. Letters a to h describe different methods of getting the meaning of words across. Choose the best method for each word. 

Words	Methods
1. hop (v)	
2. viability (n)	
3. exhausted (adj)	
4. kiwifruit (n)	
5. bitter (adj)	
6. imitate (v)	
7. skyscraper (n)	
8. rarely (adv)	

Method for getting meaning across

- a. Showing students a physical object of some kind – sometimes called 'realia'.
- b. Doing a mime or action.
- c. Explaining the meaning by giving an oral definition of the word.
- d. Asking students to think about the opposite meaning of a word they already know.
- e. Using a cline or diagram.
- f. Using a picture of something.
- g. Telling a short, personal story to give an example of the meaning.
- h. Getting students to read a short written text that acts as a context for the word.

Thinking about your teaching ...

Try different approaches to teaching vocabulary in the classroom and note how your students respond to the different approaches. Try to evaluate each approach in terms of the clarity for students and their motivation to learn.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Choose one of the approaches described in the tasks above that you are less familiar with. Try using this approach with your students and evaluate its effectiveness.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 226 to 236 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is reading on vocabulary (called 'lexis' in the text) and how to deal with it in the classroom.

On pages 229 to 234 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further reading on introducing vocabulary.

See also section 4 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 4 c) Teaching vocabulary 2: Concept checking** (*recommended as a follow-up to this lesson, focusing on clarifying meaning of new lexis in more depth for learners*)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- a) T
- b) C
- c) S
- d) S
- e) T
- f) T
- g) S
- h) C

Task 4 – Feedback

- 1) b
- 2) h
- 3) g
- 4) a
- 5) d
- 6) c
- 7) f
- 8) e

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) f and ii
- 2) e and iv
- 3) d and iii
- 4) a and v
- 5) c and vi
- 6) b and i




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Do you feel that sometimes you should check that students have understood new vocabulary more systematically? Do you sometimes forget to ask concept questions? If that's the case, this lesson will give you some useful pointers for writing effective concept questions for vocabulary. It will also give you some practice. Before you complete this task, it may be helpful to have looked at *Teaching Vocabulary 1: Different approaches*.

Task 1 – Was matching enough?

Pat: "I did a reading lesson with my students the other day. There were some difficult words in the text, so I made a task where students had to match the words to the definitions. Students got one or two words wrong, but during feedback, they mostly had correct answers. However, when they came to read the text, they still had problems with the words in the task. I don't understand why."



Can you help Pat? Jot down your ideas / suggestions on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 



Task 1 Feedback

Matching a new word to a definition will not always check students' understanding of that word in enough detail. Beyond the matching task, it is a good idea to use concept questions to make sure students have a firm grasp of the meaning.

Key Skill

Concept questions are questions that focus on the meaning of a new word or phrase, for example, all aspects of the definition, the level of formality and sometimes the context in which you can use a word. They help students to consider words in more depth.

Task 2 – Advice on concept questions



Numbers 1 to 8 show advice on concept questions. Decide whether you think the advice is good or bad, then give a reason for your decision.

Advice	Good or Bad?	Reason
1. “Do you understand?” is not an effective concept question and should be avoided.		
2. If you explain words in a lot of detail, it is often possible not to ask concept questions.		
3. Whenever possible it pays to prepare concept questions in advance.		
4. It’s not a good idea to use a dictionary when preparing concept questions as the definitions can be confusing.		
5. When students repeat the word back to you, it’s an indication that they have understood the meaning.		
6. Concept questions need to be simple and specific rather than being very general.		
7. It is efficient to check all meanings of a word at the same time.		
8. The answers to concept questions need to be as short as possible.		

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Concept questions need to be clear and easy for students to understand. They should have short, simple answers. It pays to check just one concept at a time. Good concept questions are difficult to think of on the spot so it’s a good idea to prepare your questions in advance.

Task 3 – Relevant concept questions



Below are 8 words, each is followed by 4 concept questions and their anticipated answers in brackets. One of the concept questions in each set of 4 is not really relevant or necessary to checking the meaning of the word. Decide which concept question can be deleted from each set.

Words and concept questions

1. fade (adj)

- a) If something fades, does it become more or less clear? (less clear)
- b) Does this usually happen quickly or slowly? (usually slowly)
- c) Can colours in clothes fade? (yes)
- d) Do clothes designers like colours that fade? (not usually)

2. shuffle (v)

- a) Is this a way of walking? (yes)
- b) Do you wear special shoes when you shuffle? (no)
- c) Do you walk quickly or slowly? (slowly)
- d) Do you lift your feet when you shuffle? (no)

3. make off (phr v.)

- a) Do you leave quickly or slowly? (quickly)
- b) Is it because you did something wrong? (yes)
- c) Did you have another appointment to go to? (no)
- d) Did you do something wrong before or after leaving? (before)

4. critique (n)

- a) Do you give your opinion? (yes)
- b) Do you write your opinion down? (not necessarily)
- c) Is your opinion always negative? (no)
- d) Is this a more formal word? (yes)

5. despondent (adj)

- a) Do you feel happy or unhappy? (unhappy)
- b) Does your present situation make you feel unhappy? (yes)
- c) Do you think the situation will improve? (no)
- d) Are you worried about money? (perhaps)

6. stand off (n)

- a) Is a stand off between 2 people or 2 groups of people (could be either)
- b) Do people stand up when they disagree? (not always)
- c) Do people sometimes have a fight before a stand off? (yes)
- d) Can either person do anything to win? (no)

7. incoherent (adj)

- a) Did the writer think about the text carefully before writing it? (probably not)
- b) Is the text well written? (no)
- c) Is it easy to understand? (no)
- d) Is it badly organised (yes)

8. mope (v)

- a) Do you feel bored and perhaps unhappy? (yes)
- b) Do you show that you are interested in things? (no)
- c) Do you want to do things when you mope? (no)
- d) Do dogs mope? (they could)

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

It is important to focus on core meaning of words when writing concept questions and not introduce unnecessary questions that could confuse students. Using examples of how the word is used can be useful, but the examples do need to be relevant to the context in which the word is being presented.

Task 4 – Writing concept questions



Write concept questions and answers for the vocabulary items a – h below. For each item no more than four concept questions.

Vocabulary items

- a. embarrassed (adj)
- b. put up with (v)
- c. barracks (n)
- d. justify (v)
- e. substitute (n)
- f. mercenary (adj)
- g. reclaim (v)
- h. let the side down (idiom)

The feedback provides *suggested* answers and variation is possible. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

It is interesting to work out whether concept checking leads to passive recognition only or productive use of new vocabulary items. Try teaching 5 or 6 words then an hour or so later, see if students can remember the meanings when they encounter those words in a text. A few days later, teach a different set of words and then an hour later give them a gap fill task in which students need to be able to use these words (e.g. a gapped text). Which is easier for students?

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

With students from intermediate level upwards, it could be an interesting exercise to get them to teach each other vocabulary and use concept questions. You will need to provide them with mono-lingual dictionaries and allow them plenty of time. However, it means that students will deal with the meaning of the words they teach in a lot of detail.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 246 - 251 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on dealing with the meaning of new vocabulary and the full extent to which this needs to be considered. This will help in the writing of concept questions.

See also section 4 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 4 b) Vocabulary 1: Different Approaches**
(recommended as a precursor to this lesson)
- **Unit 4 g) Teaching Grammar 4: Concept-checking grammar**
(looks at how to check meaning of grammar with learners by using oral concept questions)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

1. Good advice.

Reason: *Students will usually answer this question with the word ‘yes’ in order to save face or avoid any further complications even if they don’t understand the word.*

2. Bad advice.

Reason: *Students will often not understand the detailed explanation, so there is no guarantee that this will make things clearer for learners. Detailed explanations do not check understanding of new language.*

3. Good advice.

Reason: *Concept questions are not always straight-forward and easy to create. If you know you have got new vocabulary items in a lesson, then it makes sense to prepare concept questions for these words in advance. It makes life easier in the classroom. Clearly, it is not possible to pre-prepare for words that crop up in a lesson. You need to do those spontaneously as well as you possibly can.*

4. Bad advice.

Reason: *Dictionaries are really useful tools when preparing concept questions because they help you see all aspects of a definition that need to be checked.*

5. Bad advice.

Reason: *This involves repetition of the sound of the word and is not an indication that students know what the word means.*

6. Good advice.

Reason: *The language of the question needs to be easy for students to understand and it pays to focus on the specific meaning of a word in one particular context.*

7. Bad advice.

Reason: *This is likely to confuse the students and it pays to check one meaning at a time.*

8. Good advice.

Reason: *They should be words or phrases that students can say quickly and easily. Long-winded answers are difficult for students to formulate, even when they do understand the meaning of the word.*

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) d
- 2) b
- 3) c
- 4) b
- 5) d
- 6) b
- 7) a
- 8) d

Task 4 – Feedback

a. embarrassed (adj)

question 1: Is this a good feeling? (no)

question 2: Are you worried about what other people will think? (yes)

question 3: Does your face sometimes go red? (yes)

b. put up with (v)

question 1: Do you 'put up with' with a thing or a person or both? (both)

question 2: Do you like this thing or person (no)

question 3: Do you accept the thing or person (yes)

question 4: Are you patient or impatient? (patient)

c. barracks (n)

question 1: Are 'barracks' one building or a group of buildings? (a group of buildings)

question 2: Who lives in 'barracks'? (soldiers, people from armed forces)

question 3: Do they work there too? (yes)

d. justify (v)

question 1: If you 'justify' something, do you think some people have the wrong idea about that thing? (yes)

question 2: Do you believe there is a good reason why your idea is better? (yes)

question 3: Do you say or do something directly or indirectly? (directly)

question 4: Do you use examples? (possibly)

e. substitute (n)

question 1: If you need a 'substitute', can you use what you normally use? (no)

question 2: Do you use something new and different? (yes)

question 3: Is it the same as the original? (no)

question 4: Can a person be a substitute as well as a thing ? (yes)

f. mercenary (adj)

question 1: Does this word describe people or things? (people)

question 2: Do 'mercenary' people have a positive attitude? (no)

question 3: Are they interested in money they can get? (yes very)

question 4: Do they also want other advantages for themselves from a situation? (yes)

g. reclaim (v)

question 1: Did someone take something from you in the past? (yes)

question 2: When you 'reclaim' some thing, do you want to get it back? (yes)

question 3: Can you 'reclaim' something that someone borrowed? (yes)

question 4: Can you reclaim land? (yes)

h. let the side down (idiom)

question 1: Do we say this about people or things or both? (both, but most often people)

question 2: If you 'let the side down', do you work less hard and make mistakes? (yes)

question 3: Does this affect other people? (yes)

question 4: Do we use this more in speaking than writing? (yes)



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Do you sometimes feel you teach grammar in the same old way? This lesson will give you some ideas for new ways to deal with grammar in the classroom.

Task 1 – Jessica’s Lesson

Jessica spent a lot of time preparing a grammar lesson on how to use articles (definite, indefinite and zero) with her intermediate level students. She used a variety of sentences that provided examples of different rules and explained these to students. They then completed some gap-fill sentences, which they all got correct. A few days later, Jessica collected in some essays from her students. This work contained a lot of mistakes, particularly mistakes in the way her students used articles. Jessica felt a bit frustrated because her carefully prepared lesson hadn’t seemed to be of any use.



How could you help Jessica? What do you think was wrong with her lesson? Jot down your ideas on a note pad, then check the answer key. 🗝️



Task 1 Feedback

First of all, it should be noted that teaching the article system in English can be very complicated and Jessica’s expectations might be a little unrealistic. However, it is also worth noting that Jessica used sentence level examples when she taught the lesson, but then found that students had problems using articles correctly in continuous texts. This suggests that Jessica perhaps needed to use extended texts and not just sentences as her context for teaching articles. This context is a closer match to how she expects students to be able to use articles correctly.

Key Skill

There are many different ways of teaching grammar. No one individual method suits all grammar points and all students. It is good to vary your approach to teaching grammar as it gives your students more variety and is likely to cater for different learning styles.

Task 2 – What contexts can you teach grammar from?



Numbers 1 – 4 are descriptions of four different ways of giving students examples of grammar points. Letters a – d describe the benefits of these different sources, while numbers i – iv mention possible drawbacks. Match the benefits and the drawbacks to their sources.

Sources of Grammar	Benefits	Drawbacks
1. Using texts as a source for a grammar point.		
2. Using examples of (in)correct student language produced during a speaking activity.		
3. Using examples that arise from a context (e.g. a picture story) together with students.		
4. Using sentences that are examples of the grammar point.		

Benefits

- a. A freer practice activity will tell you how well students know the grammar point and provide you with many examples of their language that you can use to correct and clarify the grammar.
- b. These are easy to create and are often simple and clear for students.
- c. Often these situations can involve pictures and this helps students with a visual learning style. The stories you can create can also be entertaining.
- d. Using reading or listening as a basis for clarifying a grammar point should provide you with plenty of examples.

Drawbacks

- i. It can be hard finding a situation that generates the language naturally and easily.
- ii. You need to be sure that what you use is either authentic or close to natural authentic language.
- iii. This approach can mean that the context is not rich enough and the isolation of examples can make some grammar rules difficult to understand.
- iv. The context of the activity needs to be communicative to be sure that it allows students to speak and produce a lot of language examples.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

A key consideration for all approaches is that the examples come from a context that is as authentic and as communicative as possible. In other words, try and avoid examples and contexts that native speakers themselves would not use.

Task 3 – Which approach can you use?



Numbers 1 and 2 are two approaches to clarifying a grammar point: an inductive versus a deductive approach. Letters a and b are definitions of these approaches, while i to vi are examples of these approaches. Match the definitions and the examples to the correct approach.

Two Approaches	Definitions	Examples
1. Inductive approach.		
2. Deductive approach.		

Definitions

- a. The teacher gives the rules of the grammar point.
- b. The student works out the rules of the grammar point.

Examples

- i. The teacher asks oral questions that check students' understanding of the meaning of the grammar point and its form.
- ii. The teacher provides students with written examples of their errors together with some questions that get students to correct the errors and work out the meaning and the form of the grammar point.
- iii. The teacher provides a translation of the grammar point into the students' first language. This is only possible in a monolingual situation.
- iv. The teacher asks students to read some grammar reference materials in order to understand the meaning and form of the grammar point.
- v. The teacher provides the students with a written task that guides students to understanding the meaning and the form of the grammar point.
- vi. The teachers gives an oral explanation of the meaning and the form of the grammar point.

Check your ideas in the answer key.



Key Skill

Whether you use one approach or another will depend on your students' learning style, their needs, the nature of the language point itself and the need for variety in a language programme. Current methodology has a preference for a more inductive / guided discovery approach as it tends to be more student-centred.

Task 4 – Evaluating approaches



Below are a series of statements that highlight the strengths of both the inductive and the deductive approaches to clarifying a grammar point with students. Read the statements and decide which approach they are talking about. Write 'I' for inductive (student works out the rules) and 'D' for deductive (teacher gives the rules).

Strengths	I or D?
a. It can give students a sense of security.	
b. It encourages the students to refer more often to the context of the grammar point.	
c. Students can learn at their own rate, rather than that of the class.	
d. The teacher can get straight to the point.	
e. It is more student-centred.	
f. It allows the students to take a more gradual step-by-step approach to different aspects of the grammar point.	
g. It suits students who have a strongly accuracy-focused learning style.	
h. It gives students time to think about the grammar point.	
i. It can mean that students get extra speaking practice when they discuss the grammar with each other or with their teacher.	
j. It gives the teacher a clear sense of having taught something.	
k. It can help make students more independent in their learning.	
l. It means a bit more mental effort for students and this can have the result that they engage more fully with the language.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Over the next few weeks, make a note of different ways you use to teach a grammar point. After each lesson, think about how successful it was from the students' point of view. You could ask them to give you feedback on the approach.

Make a note of this record in your *Teaching Log* and decide whether you need to vary your approach to teaching grammar.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Try experimenting with a new approach to teaching grammar with your students. If you need to read up on a different approach in more detail see *Want to find out more ...?* below. Aim to build up an extensive repertoire of approaches to teaching grammar.

Want to find out more ... ?

Chapters 3 and 4 of *How To Teach Grammar* by Scott Thornbury (Longman Pearson 1999) contain clear practical examples of different approaches to teaching grammar that you can try out.

See also section 6 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to the teaching of grammar:

- **Unit 4 e) Teaching Grammar 2: Grammar from texts**
(*outlines a procedure for a text-based approach to grammar lessons*)
- **Unit 4 f) Teaching Grammar 3: Using communicative activities**
(*looks at how to use communicative activities to focus on grammar*)
- **Unit 4 g) Teaching Grammar 4: Concept-checking grammar**
(*looks at how to check meaning of grammar with learners by using oral concept questions*)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) d and ii
- 2) a and iv
- 3) c and i
- 4) b and iii

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) b - i, ii and v
- 2) a - iii, iv and vi

Task 4 – Feedback

- a) D
- b) I
- c) I
- d) D
- e) I
- f) I
- g) D
- h) I
- i) I
- j) D
- k) I
- l) I




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How easy do you find it to teach grammar from texts? Do you feel that your lessons sometimes get bogged down by the course book material? This lesson outlines a procedure that may help motivate your students in text-based grammar lessons.

Task 1 – Andy’s frustration

Andy: “I was teaching the past perfect the other day. I found this really good reading text full of lots of examples. I pointed out the examples and then explained the use of the past perfect. I asked students if they had understood my explanation and they all said they did. However, when I gave them a practice activity to do, very few of them could use the past perfect correctly. It was very frustrating. I felt like I’d been wasting my time.”



Can you help Andy? Think of possible reasons why Andy’s students didn’t understand. Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

It is possible that Andy’s approach to teaching his grammar point didn’t motivate his students. His explanation could have been quite long-winded and perhaps students didn’t understand. When he asked students if they understood the grammar, they may have said “yes” to save face, when in fact they didn’t really understand.

Key Skill

When teaching grammar from text, it is a good idea to engage learners as much as possible by getting them to discover the language and think about what it *means*, how it is *used* and how it is *formed*. Teacher explanations can often be ineffective at doing this because the teacher talks too much and the learners switch off.

Task 2 – Steps in a text-based grammar lesson



Letters a to f outline key steps in a text-based grammar lesson. Numbers i to vi are aims that match each stage. Put the steps in their correct order into the table below, then find the aim that matches each step.

Steps
a. Students check the form of the target grammar.
b. Students highlight the target grammar in the text.
c. The teacher provides controlled to freer practice of the target grammar.
d. Students read (or listen to) the text that contains the target grammar.
e. The teacher highlights the pronunciation of the target grammar (if it is typically used for oral communication).
f. Students check the meaning of the target grammar .

Aims
i. To focus students on the grammar that is to be clarified.
ii. To provide opportunities for the students to use the new language in a variety of contexts.
iii. To check students' understanding of the context that the target grammar comes from.
iv. To give very controlled oral practice of phonological features of the grammar.
v. To ensure students understand concepts associated with the grammar (e.g. time reference, intention etc.) and the way it is used in native speaker language.
vi. To ensure students understand the component parts of the grammar and how it is put together.

Steps	Aims
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

It is important that students understand the context of the target grammar because this will help them understand the meaning. It is better to study the *meaning* of the grammar before looking at the *form* because examining how something is made without understanding what it means can be frustrating.

Task 3 – How to achieve the aims



Numbers 1 to 6 below repeat the stages in a text-based grammar lesson. However, this time they are in the correct order. Letters a to f describe activities for each stage. They are in a different order. Match the activities to the stages.

Stages	Activities
1. Students read (or listen to) the text that contain the target grammar.	
2. Students highlight the target grammar in the text.	
3. Students check the meaning of the target grammar.	
4. Students check the form of the target grammar.	
5. The teacher highlights the pronunciation of the target grammar (if it is typically used for oral communication).	
6. The teacher provides controlled to freer practice of the target grammar.	

Activities

- a.** The teacher provides an oral model of the target grammar point and then drills students chorally and individually.
- b.** The teacher gives comprehension questions that check the information in the text.
- c.** The teacher elicits information about how the target grammar is made using the white board. Alternatively, students can work on a student-centred task.
- d.** The teacher sets up a variety of activities, both spoken and written, that allow students to use the target grammar.
- e.** Students are asked to underline examples of the target grammar or the teacher might point them out. If using a listening text, you can isolate examples of the target grammar on the tape.
- f.** The teacher gives learners a student-centred task that guides them towards an understanding of the use of the target grammar. The task might include questions, or clines, or grids. An alternative is for the teacher to ask oral concept questions about the target grammar.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Whenever possible, it is worth considering providing a student-centred task to clarify key aspects of grammar: meaning and form. These tasks should guide students to an understanding of the target grammar and should mean the teacher does not need to use long-winded explanation.

Task 4 – Evaluating text-based grammar lessons



Decide if the following statements are a correct or an incorrect evaluation of text-based grammar lessons. Write 'C' for correct and 'I' for incorrect in the right-hand column of the table.

Statements	C or I?
1. Text-based grammar lessons allow you to focus on all uses of a particular grammar point.	
2. Text-based grammar lessons follow a guided discovery approach and students are able to find out about the language themselves.	
3. The use of texts means that students can see examples of target grammar points in context.	
4. When planning text-based grammar lessons, teachers should create as many of their own texts as possible.	
5. Text-based grammar lessons are likely to appeal to students who like a clearly structured approach to learning grammar.	
6. Student-centred meaning and form tasks give students useful thinking time and allow them to process information about the language.	
7. The lack of teacher explanation might mean that some students switch off or get distracted.	
8. The approach is suited to working with course books as they often present new language in texts.	
9. The fact that the language is presented in a reading text means you shouldn't drill it.	
10. A text-based approach may help some students to think about texts they find outside the classroom as a source of grammar.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

How does a text-based approach to teaching grammar compare with other approaches you have used? Consider the pluses and minuses of this approach from the teacher's point view.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

An alternative approach to feedback is to let learners know that you will only confirm the answers to 2 or 3 questions in a task. In groups they have to negotiate and decide which answers they feel certain they have got right and which they are most unsure of. This strategy makes them think harder and it also generates a lot of group discussion as they negotiate.

Want to find out more ... ?

Chapter 5 of *How To Teach Grammar* by Scott Thornbury (Longman Pearson 1999) contains further ideas on how to teach grammar by using texts.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to the teaching of grammar:

- **Unit 4 d) Teaching Grammar 1: Different approaches**
(looks at a variety of approaches to teaching grammar)
- **Unit 4 f) Teaching Grammar 3: Using communicative activities**
(looks at how to use communicative activities to focus on grammar)
- **Unit 4 g) Teaching Grammar 4: Concept-checking grammar**
(looks at how to check meaning of grammar with learners by using oral concept questions)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) d and iii
- 2) b and i
- 3) f and v
- 4) a and vi
- 5) e and iv
- 6) c and ii

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) b
- 2) e
- 3) f
- 4) c
- 5) a
- 6) d

Task 4 – Feedback

1. Incorrect

Comment: Usually texts will focus on only one use of a grammar point. Texts that try to include a large variety of uses can seem contrived and unnatural.

2. Correct

Comment: It is the design of the tasks that 'guides' students to an understanding of the target grammar point.

3. Correct

Comment: This is a key strength of this approach.

4. Incorrect

Comment: It is far easier to use texts in published materials or authentic texts.

5. Correct

Comment: It gives students the feeling that they are working through a step-by-step process. Other more communicative learners might get frustrated by too much of this.

6. Correct

Comment: As a result of this thinking time, students often have questions. The teacher can deal with these questions during monitoring, when students are working on the meaning and form tasks.

7. Incorrect

Comment: The reverse is more likely to be true.

8. Correct

Comment: Some course books will also provide meaning and form tasks that you can use.

9. Incorrect

Comment: Whether you drill or not should depend on whether the target language is typically used in oral communication by native speakers.

10. Correct

Comment: But the teacher may need to point this out to students.



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Do you sometimes feel that you are teaching students grammar they already know? This lesson looks at how you can use communication activities as a springboard to focusing on grammar. It examines the aims and stages of such a lesson and looks at issues and options surrounding this approach to teaching grammar.

Task 1 – What your students say and do



Below are five statements about what students sometimes say and do. Are any true for you?

1. Students often complain that they know all the grammar, but they are still incorrect when they speak.
2. Students often don't see the relevance of learning grammar.
3. Students say they want more feedback on the language they produce.
4. Students say they want to do more speaking in your classes.
5. Students can often do very controlled oral practice activities correctly. However, when they are given a freer practice activity, they will often get the target grammar wrong.

Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 



Task 1 Feedback

If only one of these statements is true for your current teaching situation, then using communication activities for teaching grammar could be a useful skill to learn. If none of the statements are true, then your students must be extremely happy – well done! The following lesson may still be of use to you all the same.

Key Skill

Using communication activities to teach grammar can offer variety to your students and cater to the needs of learners who are keen to develop their ability to use English. It also provides opportunities for teachers to give systematic feedback on students' errors.

Task 2 – What are the different steps?



Letters a to e outline key stages in a lesson that teaches grammar by means of a communicative activity. Numbers i to v are aims that match each stage. Put the steps in their correct order in the table below, then match the correct aim to each step.

Stages

- a. Teacher-led error correction of student language.
- b. Students do a second communication activity.
- c. Teacher evaluation of student language.
- d. Students do a communication activity that requires use of a specific grammar point.
- e. Checking of meaning and form by teacher.

Aims

- i. To determine whether students are able to use the target language point and to listen for their accuracy with other language.
- ii. To clarify how the target language point is used and made.
- iii. To provide an initial opportunity for students to use the target grammar point and to provide speaking practice.
- iv. To provide students with an opportunity to further practise and consolidate the target language point.
- v. To give students feedback on the language they produced and to focus on the target grammar point.

Stages	Aims
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

The point of departure of this lesson is a communication task that involves speaking. This gives teachers an opportunity to hear if students can use the target grammar point. If students are using the language perfectly well, the teacher should give feedback on other errors and not worry about checking the meaning and form of the target grammar point. If students can use this language, they clearly don't need any more work on it.

Task 3 – How to achieve the aims



Numbers 1 to 5 below repeat the stages of a lesson that teaches grammar by means of a communication activity. However, this time they are in the correct order. Letters a to e describe activities for each stage. They are in a different order. Match the activities to the stages.

Stages	Activities
1. Students do a communication activity that requires use of a specific grammar point.	
2. Teacher evaluation of student language.	
3. Teacher-led error correction of student language.	
4. Checking of meaning and form by teacher.	
5. Students do a second communication activity.	

Activities

- a. The teacher writes up the collected errors on the white board. Corrections can either be elicited from learners, or students can be put in pairs or small groups to correct the language and conduct feedback.
- b. The teacher gives students another communication activity that practises the target language point and asks them to do this activity and concentrate on using the target grammar point correctly. Alternatively, students could re-do the original activity.
- c. Having elicited corrections of student language, the teacher uses oral concept questions to check the meaning of the target grammar point, afterwards checking the form by eliciting it and then writing it up on the white board.
- d. The teacher monitors and listens carefully to the language that students are producing, particularly for the target grammar point, or its absence and finds out what incorrect forms students are using in its place. The teacher also notes other examples of incorrect language, noting these down on a piece of paper.
- e. The teacher sets up the communication activity, but makes a point of not mentioning the target grammar point nor asking that students use it.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

In terms of the focus on grammar, stages 3 and 4 are key in this approach. They may not always be completely separate stages. When eliciting the correct version of the white board language, the teacher might check meaning and form at the same time. A variation for the third stage is to put up a mixture of correct and incorrect examples of the target language and get students to decide which versions are the correct ones.

Task 4 – Strengths and challenges



The following statements are about different aspects of lessons that teach grammar from a communicative activity. Some of them indicate strengths of this approach, while others describe challenges. Sort them into the appropriate categories below.

Strengths				Challenges			

Statements

1. This approach heightens the relevance of the target grammar point during the meaning and form stages. If students have had problems with the point, they can see the need to clarify it. They are less likely to complain about having studied the point already.
2. It creates a very natural connection between speaking and communication and grammar, rather than viewing these as separate entities.
3. The teacher needs to listen very carefully when monitoring. This may be a little difficult because of the noise level in the classroom and quietly spoken students may be harder to hear.
4. The teacher needs to be able to respond to unexpected language issues that can arise. These issues may not be connected with the target language point.
5. There is the opportunity to cover more grammar in a lesson. Apart from the target grammar point, the teacher can also deal with other points that arise during the correction stage.
6. If the students do the first activity well and produce the target language, the teacher needs to have an alternative activity ready to use in place of the meaning and form stages.
7. Because the lesson involves a lot of speaking, some students may not feel they are learning grammar in a concrete and tangible way. The teacher may need to point out to them that the error feedback and meaning and form stages do involve an explicit focus on grammar.
8. This approach means that students are getting consistent feedback on the language that they produce. This is likely to appeal to learners who want more error correction from their teacher.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Think about this approach to teaching grammar from the students' point of view. Imagine you are learning a second language and being taught grammar using this approach. What aspects of the approach would you find frustrating, what other aspects would you enjoy? Make a list and then work out whether you would experiment with slight alterations to the approach described above.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Often this approach does not match published teaching materials. The grammar clarification materials might use texts or examples. However, these books often include communication activities that aim to practise grammar points. These are often placed towards the end of a lesson, or at the back of the book. Teachers can use these as their point of departure for teaching grammar, in line with the approach outlined in this lesson.

Want to find out more ... ?

Chapter 7 of *How To Teach Grammar* by Scott Thornbury (Longman Pearson 1999) contains further ideas on using students' errors to teach grammar.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to the teaching of grammar:

- **Unit 4 d) Teaching Grammar 1: Different approaches**
(looks at a variety of approaches to teaching grammar)
- **Unit 4 e) Teaching Grammar 2: Grammar from texts**
(outlines a procedure for a text-based approach to grammar lessons)
- **Unit 4 g) Teaching Grammar 4: Concept-checking grammar**
(looks at how to check meaning of grammar with learners by using oral concept questions)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) d, iii
- 2) c, i
- 3) a, v
- 4) e, ii
- 5) b, iv

Task 4 – Feedback

Strengths = 1, 2, 5, 8
Challenges = 3, 4, 6, 7

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) e
- 2) d
- 3) a
- 4) c
- 5) b



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How can you know if students have understood the meaning of grammar during a lesson? Is asking them if they understand enough? This lesson gives you ideas on how to check grammatical meaning effectively by using clearly focused oral questions.

Task 1 – Susannah’s explanation

Susannah: “I was teaching the difference between the past simple and the past perfect. I explained as clearly as I could and did lots of examples with them on the white board. They were nodding their heads in agreement and it seemed like they were getting it. Then I gave them this practice activity – a text gap fill – and they got everything wrong. At that point, a few students admitted that they hadn’t really understood the grammar.”



How could Susannah have checked students’ understanding more thoroughly before students beginning the practice activity? Jot down your ideas on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️



Task 1 Feedback

Susannah’s approach is to give an explanation and look and see if students have understood. She may also have asked students directly if they had understood the difference in meaning between the two verb forms. However, for a teacher to make sure that students have genuinely understood, they need to ask more searching questions that focus explicitly on grammatical meaning.

Key Skill

Oral concept questions that focus on grammatical meaning are an effective way of checking students’ understanding of new grammar items. They aim to ‘unpack’ the core concepts associated with grammar structures in such a way that students can gradually develop a deeper understand of grammatical meaning.

Task 2 – Some core concepts



Numbers 1 to 8 outline some core concepts associated with different verb forms in English. Letters a to h give the names of these verb phrases, with an example sentence. Match the concepts to the verb phrases.

Core concepts of verb forms	Verb phrases
1. time reference	
2. degrees of obligation	
3. relationship between actions and periods of time	
4. intention	
5. degrees of possibility	
6. identifying the 'agent' (or 'do-er') of an action	
7. duration	
8. reality versus hypothetically	

Names of verb phrases & example sentences

- a. modal auxiliary verbs may, might etc. e.g. *It looks like it might rain tomorrow.*
- b. future forms e.g. *We're going to meet up with them after dinner.*
- c. present and past tenses e.g. *He left school five years ago.*
- d. conditional structures e.g. *If I were the Prime Minister, I'd pay more attention to ecology.*
- e. passive forms e.g. *The book was written by an unknown writer.*
- f. perfect verb forms e.g. *I've had this car for about three years now.*
- g. modal auxiliary verbs must, should etc. e.g. *You should really see a doctor.*
- h. continuous (or progressive) verb forms e.g. *I was waiting at the bus stop when he drove by.*

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Grammar concept questions focus on key ideas of grammatical meaning. Some grammar forms have different uses and when checking grammatical meaning you should check only one use at a time. Normally this will be related to the context you have used to teach the grammar.

Task 3 – Which questions?



Numbers 1 to 5 are example structures from the previous task. Letters a to o are concept questions (and answers) that relate only to the underlined grammar structures in the example sentences. Each structure needs 3 concept questions.

- a) Match the concept questions (and answers) to the example structures.
- b) Put the concept questions in the best order.

Example structures	Concept questions
1. I've <u>had</u> this car for about three years now.	
2. We're <u>going to</u> meet up with them after dinner.	
3. I <u>was waiting</u> at the bus stop when he drove by.	
4. You <u>should</u> really see a doctor.	
5. It looks like it <u>might</u> rain tomorrow.	

Concept questions with answers (in brackets)

- a. Did you decide to do this before speaking or when you were speaking? (before)
- b. Is it only a possibility? (yes)
- c. Do you want the other person to do this? (yes)
- d. When did you buy it? (3 years ago)
- e. Did the action happen in the past? (yes)
- f. Is the speaker talking about now or the future? (now)
- g. Did you own it all that time? (yes)
- h. Is the action in the present or the future? (future)
- i. Did it begin before or after the second action? (before)
- j. Will it definitely happen? (no)
- k. Do you think this is a good idea? (yes)
- l. Do you still have it? (yes)
- m. Did it continue after the second action? (yes)
- n. Is the speaker sure about the action? (yes)
- o. Do you feel very strongly that the other person do this? (no)

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Most structures need at least 3 questions in order to pinpoint the concept. More complex structures may need more than 3 questions. The language should be simple and avoid as much grammar terminology as possible. When you write a concept question, you should also write what answer you expect students to give you.

Task 4 – Writing concept questions



Below are 5 sentences with underlined grammar structures. Write concept questions and their answers for each structure. Write a *maximum* of three questions for each structure. Jot down your answers on a note pad. The feedback provides *suggested* answers and variation is possible.

Sentences

- a. I'm sorry but I've lost my student card. Can I get another one?
- b. When I was a child, I used to play the piano.
- c. He's working part-time at the moment and won't be here until later.
- d. I wish I had an iPod.
- e. It can't be John at the door – he's gone overseas.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Some grammatical concepts will be more difficult to check for some students than others. The students' first language may play a role in the degree of challenge they find with some concepts, or your questions may be too difficult. Make a note of any concepts students seemed to find very challenging. Discuss this with your colleagues and see if they have had similar problems. If you fear that your concept questions are too difficult, give them to a colleague to review and see if they can make suggestions to make them easier to understand.

Taking it to the classroom ...

When concept checking structures that you think your students will find particularly difficult, you could try giving them written concept questions that they can think about and discuss the answers to in pairs, followed by feedback. This will give students a bit more thinking time.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 219 - 221 of *Learning Teaching (2nd Edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on concept questions for grammar.

See also section 6 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

Related TaskBook lessons...

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(looks at a variety of approaches to teaching grammar)
- **Unit 4 e) Teaching Grammar 2: Grammar from texts**
(outlines a procedure for a text-based approach to grammar lessons)
- **Unit 4 f) Teaching Grammar 3: Grammar through communicative activities**
(looks at how to use communicative activities to focus on grammar)

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) c
- 2) g
- 3) f
- 4) b
- 5) a
- 6) e
- 7) h
- 8) d

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) d, l and g
- 2) h, a and n
- 3) e, i and m
- 4) k, c and o
- 5) f, j and b

Task 4 – Feedback

a. I'm sorry but I've lost my student card. Can I get another one?

question 1. *Did you lose the card in the past or the present? (the past)*

question 2. *Do we know exactly when? (no)*

question 3. *Is the result in the present? (yes)*

b. When I was a child, I used to play the piano.

question 1. *Are you talking about the past or the present? (the past)*

question 2. *Did you play piano once or often? (often)*

question 3. *Do you play the piano now? (probably not)*

c. He's working part-time at the moment and won't be here until later.

question 1. *Does he usually work part-time? (no)*

question 2. *Is working part-time something temporary? (no)*

question 3. *Is he working as we speak? (no)*

d. I wish I had an iPod.

question 1. *Do you want an iPod? (yes)*

question 2. *Do you want it very much? (yes)*

question 3. *Do you want it now or did you want it in the past? (now)*

e. It can't be John at the door – he's gone overseas.

question 1. *Is the speaker talking about now or the future? (now)*

question 2. *Is the speaker certain or does he think it's a possibility? (certain)*

question 3. *Is he 100% certain or more like 95%? (more like 95%)*



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Do you sometimes feel like you need to teach more language that is relevant to your students' needs? This lesson helps you do this by exploring an approach to learning language through tasks.

Task 1 – Alison's doubts.

Alison is a little unsure about how task-based learning works. Here are 3 questions that she has:

Question 1: What exactly is task-based learning?

Question 2: Can you focus on grammar in a task-based lesson?

Question 3: Is it true that the way students learn is by just picking up language from each other?



Can you answer any of these questions for Alison?

Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key. 

Task 1 Feedback

Question 1: What exactly is task-based learning?

Answer: *In general, it is an approach to English- language learning in which students learn by doing tasks. However, it is not as straightforward as just doing one task after another.*

Question 2: Can you focus on grammar in a task-based lesson?

Answer: *Yes, you can. The way that you do so is a little different from other approaches, but it is fine to focus on grammar in task-based lessons.*

Question 3: Is it true that the way students learn is by just picking up language from each other?

Answer: *This is one way in which students can learn when working on tasks. However, task-based learning also involves other learning opportunities for students.*

Key skill

Task-based learning provides an alternative approach to focusing on language. It has the key benefit of allowing students some degree of choice in terms of what language they learn while working on tasks. However, it does not mean that grammar and vocabulary are totally ignored.

Task 2 – Who does what?



Numbers 1 to 6 show teacher activity during the stages of a typical task-based lesson. They are in the correct order. Letters a to f describe student activities during these stages. They are not in the correct order. Match the student activity to the teacher activity.

Teacher Activity	Student activity
1. Pre task: The teacher provides information or vocabulary that will help students with the task.	
2. Task: The teacher asks students to perform a task in pairs or small groups with some kind of tangible outcome.	
3. Reporting: The teacher asks each pair or group to prepare and give a report on the outcome of the task.	
4. Model: The teacher provides students with a model of proficient speakers performing the task.	
5. Language noticing: The teacher asks students to study language features in the proficient speaker model.	
6. Practice: The teacher provides students with activities that practise some of the language features in the proficient speaker model.	

Student activity

- a. Students speak or write or both – individually or in pairs.
- b. Students speak in groups and perhaps make notes, then one student speaks alone.
- c. Students read or listen or study new words.
- d. Students study the text.
- e. Students read or listen.
- f. Students speak together and perhaps do some writing or note taking.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key skill

The introduction of the proficient speaker model is an opportunity to focus on language. The general principle is that having done the task themselves, students are usually very interested in seeing how proficient speakers performed the task and what language they used.

Task 3 – What is the rationale for each step?



Numbers 1 to 6 are the correct stages for teacher activity, as in task 2. Letters a to f provide a commentary on each stage. However, they are not in the correct order. Match the commentary to the correct stages.

Stages of teacher activity	Commentary
1. Pre task: The teacher provides information or vocabulary that will help students with the task.	
2. Task: The teacher asks students to perform a task in pairs or small groups with some kind of tangible outcome.	
3. Reporting: The teacher asks each pair or group to prepare and give a report on the outcome of the task.	
4. Model: The teacher provides students with a model of proficient speakers performing the task.	
5. Language noticing: The teacher asks students to study language features in the proficient speaker model.	
6. Practice: The teacher provides students with activities that practise some of the language features in the proficient speaker model.	

Commentary

- a. This stage should ideally include some kind of problem-solving element that gives students a reason to speak.
- b. The teacher can provide a task during this stage that either focuses students' attention on a language point, or the teacher can let students choose what they want to focus on.
- c. This stage is often optional. It depends on what students have done in the previous stage.
- d. These materials shouldn't be too long or detailed or students will lose time before getting on to the following, key stage.
- e. This can either be a recording or a tape script or both.
- f. The teacher should avoid correcting students' language at this stage and focus on the content of what they have to say.



Key skill

Both the first and the last stage are optional. It depends on the nature of the task and the language that appears in the proficient speaker model. Teachers may take in a variety of practice activities for the final stage and let students decide which language point they want more practice in.

Check your ideas in the answer key.

Task 4 – How to prepare a task-based lesson (1)



Letters a to f are some suggested steps in how to plan and prepare a task-based lesson, but they are not in the correct order. Put the steps in the correct order.

Suggested steps for planning a task-based lesson	Order
a. Decide whether you will let students notice the language they want to or whether you will ask them to focus on specific vocabulary or grammar.	
b. Look for reading or listening texts that might be useful at the pre-task stage.	
c. Record a model of the task being done by proficient speakers.	
d. Find a task that has tangible outcomes.	
e. Transcribe the proficient speaker model (or part of it) and look for useful language points.	
f. If you have focused on a specific language point, look for some activities that will provide practice of that language.	

Check your ideas in the answer key.

Task 5 – How to prepare a task-based lesson (2)



Letters a to f are pieces of advice that match the planning steps from the previous task. Match the advice to each step in the planning process. 

Advice	Steps
a. Not only will this provide you with a useful language sample, it will also show you if there are any problems with the task design that need to be fixed before you give it to students.	
b. If there is a particular language point you want to draw students' attention to, your task can focus on any or all aspects of meaning and form associated with that language.	
c. It's best to do this first because this is the cornerstone to the whole approach.	
d. This is usually (but not always) the last step because it can be a useful extra activity rather than an essential one.	
e. These can be a mix of written and spoken tasks. One possibility is to ask students to repeat the original task in different groups.	
f. Your choice here is likely to depend on the language that you find in the proficient speaker model. If there is a language form that occurs consistently in the model, it makes sense to create a language noticing task that focuses on this language point.	

Planning steps

1. Find a task that has tangible outcomes.
2. Record a model of the task with proficient speakers.
3. Transcribe the proficient speaker model (or part of it) and look for useful language points.
4. Decide whether you will let students notice the language they want to or whether you will ask them to focus on specific vocabulary or grammar.
5. If you have focused on a specific language point, look for some activities that will provide practice of that language.
6. Look for reading or listening texts that might be useful at the pre-task stage.

Thinking about your teaching ...

In task-based lessons where students choose the language they wish to focus on, it is interesting to note which language items students want to study. Keep a note of the vocabulary and grammar points they choose and see if it tells you anything about your students' language development. For example, are these language points that students often produce incorrectly?

Note your observations in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Some learner groups may want you to give feedback on their language use after the reporting phase. Try lessons where you do this and try lessons where you don't. Then ask learners which approach they prefer.

Want to find out more ... ?

Pages 71 – 73 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) contain further reading on task-based learning.

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(outlines a procedure for a text-based approach to grammar lessons)
- **Unit 4 f) Teaching Grammar 3: Grammar through communicative activities**
(looks at how to use communicative activities to focus on grammar)

Answer Key



Task 1 - Feedback

Question 1: What exactly is task-based learning?

Answer: In general, it is an approach to English- language learning in which students learn by doing tasks. However, it is not as straightforward as just doing one task after another.

Question 2: Can you focus on grammar in a task-based lesson?

Answer: Yes, you can. The way that you do so is a little different from other approaches, but it is fine to focus on grammar in task-based lessons.

Question 3: Is it true that the way students learn is by just picking up language from each other?

Answer: This is one way in which students can learn when working on tasks. However, task-based learning also involves other learning opportunities for students.

Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) c
- 2) f
- 3) b
- 4) e
- 5) d
- 6) a

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) d
- 2) a
- 3) f
- 4) e
- 5) b
- 6) c

Task 4 – Feedback

- 1) d
- 2) c
- 3) e
- 4) a
- 5) f
- 6) b

Task 5 – Feedback

- 1) c
- 2) a
- 3) f
- 4) b
- 5) e
- 6) d



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Do you feel that your language lessons are overly focused on grammar and vocabulary? Do you find that students sometimes struggle to communicate effectively in some social situations? The answer may be to teach your students more functional language. This lesson outlines some common functions, their characteristics and ways of teaching them.

Task 1 – What’s the real meaning?



Look at the two-line dialogue below and the following exchange between the student and teacher.

John: I can hear the phone.

Sue: I’m having my lunch.

Student: Why does Sue say “I’m having my lunch”?

Teacher: Because she’s is doing it now – at the moment of speaking.

Student: But John is there – he can see she is having her lunch.

Teacher: Exactly. It’s happening now.

Student: But why?

What is the teacher not making clear?

Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️



Task 1 Feedback

The teacher is not focusing on the functional meaning of Sue’s utterance. In this context, Sue is making an excuse – “I’m not going to answer the phone because I’m having my lunch”. Focusing only on the grammatical meaning of the structure Sue uses does not make this clear.

Key Skill

Understanding the underlying social meaning of certain utterances is at the heart of functional language. We often use language because we want to perform some kind of communicative act like make a request or offer advice. The expressions that we use to achieve this are known as functional exponents.

Task 2 – Some typical functions



Numbers 1 to 10 list some common functions. Letters a to j provide examples of functional exponents (ways of expressing each function). Match the functions to the exponents.

Functions	
1. making suggestion	2. inviting
3. giving advice	4. requesting
5. making apologies	6. refusing
7. agreeing	8. regretting
9. offering	10. complaining

Exponents

- a. I can't make it tonight – sorry.
- b. I'm afraid I was disappointed by the service.
- c. I should have left earlier.
- d. We could order in a pizza.
- e. It'd pay to talk to the boss.
- f. I'd go along with that.
- g. I'm really sorry about the vase.
- h. Why don't you come over tonight?
- i. Any chance of a coffee?
- j. I'll pay.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

The examples in task 2 are not in any way comprehensive. There are many other functions in English, and there is a wide variety of exponents that can be used to express each one.



Numbers 1 to 5 below outline some key principles associated with functional language. Letters a to e describe the consequences of these principles in terms of classroom practice. Match the principles with the consequences

Principles

1. One structure can have more than one functional meaning ...
2. The kind of functional exponent that you use changes depending on how well you know the person that you are speaking to ...
3. Pronunciation, in particular sentence stress and intonation, has a key role to play in functional language ...
4. Functional exponents can often vary greatly in terms of their structure ...
5. Some functions can be indirect and subtle ...

Consequences

- a. ... so you sometimes need to highlight the grammatical form.
- b. ... so you need to check their meaning very thoroughly.
- c. ... so in the classroom it is important to establish the relationship between the speakers in examples and practice activities.
- d. ... so it is important that the teacher makes the context clear to students.
- e. ... so it is important to provide students with plenty of controlled oral practice.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Many language structures have more than one meaning. The meaning of an utterance is often difficult to understand out of context. For students to understand the functional meaning of an utterance it is essential that both the context and the relationship between the speakers are made explicit to them.

Task 4 – Activities and aims



Numbers 1 to 8 describe different activities that can be used to teach aspects of functional language. Letters a to h are aims associated with these activities. Match the aims to the activities. 

Activities	Aims
1. The teacher plays a dialogue and asks students to think about where they think it is taking place.	
2. The teacher asks students to read a dialogue and decide on the relationship between the two speakers.	
3. The teacher asks students to read a series of short excerpts from dialogues and decide on possible meanings of certain utterances.	
4. The teacher underlines key words in examples on the white board.	
5. The teacher drills from prompts focusing on stress and intonation.	
6. The teacher uses prompts to elicit a four-line dialogue that exemplifies a functional exponent and gets students to practise it in pairs.	
7. The teacher asks students to rewrite a scrambled dialogue containing functional language so that it is in the correct order.	
8. The teacher asks students to perform a role play that offers an opportunity to use functional exponents.	

Aims

- a. To provide pronunciation practice.
- b. To highlight the form.
- c. To provide controlled written practice.
- d. To check language appropriateness.
- e. To provide freer oral practice.
- f. To check understanding of the context.
- g. To check functional meaning.
- h. To provide controlled oral practice.

Thinking about your teaching ...

Over a period of two or three weeks, listen to friends and colleagues and try and tune in to the way they use language. Listen for examples of functional language and think about how clear the meaning would be to a non-native speaker.

Note your observations in your *Teaching log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

When focusing on dialogues that contain functional language, there are three useful questions that will help students to think about and analyse the target language:

- Where is the conversation taking place?
- What is the relationship between the speakers?
- What does speaker A / B want to do / say?

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 221 to 225 of *Learning Teaching (2nd Edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005) there is further reading on teaching functional language.

On pages 231 and 232 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th Edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) there is a description of a functions lesson focusing on the function of 'inviting'.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

1. d
2. h
3. e
4. i
5. g
6. a
7. f
8. c
9. j
10. b

Task 3 – Feedback

1. d
2. c
3. e
4. a
5. b

Task 4 – Feedback

1. f
2. d
3. g
4. b
5. a
6. h
7. c
8. e




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Do you sometimes feel that you use course books as a crutch rather than a point of departure for learning? If that's the case, you may need to include more lessons based around authentic material in your teaching programme. This lesson looks at the pros and cons of this kind of material and outlines a procedure of how to exploit authentic materials for classroom use.

Task 1 – Jan's mixed feedback

Jan used an authentic newspaper article with her learners. Some students said they really enjoyed reading some "real English". However, others said they found the text too hard and indicated they would like to stick to the course book in future.



Can you help Jan? What should she do? Jot down your ideas and suggestions on a note pad, then look at the answer key below. 



Task 1 Feedback

Sticking to the course book is the easy option. Trying to use authentic material again is going to be more challenging as many students will be resistant to it. It is possible that the task that Jan used with the article was too challenging and she may need to consider making the task more straightforward for weaker students. It might also pay to let students know why she is using authentic material. In other words, she might need to "sell" it to some degree to the students in the class who felt challenged by the text she used.

Key Skill

Using authentic material with learners can add variety to a teaching programme. However, if students are not used to working with material of this nature, it needs to be introduced gradually and carefully. The next task will give you ideas on how you can "sell" authentic material to your students.

Task 2 – The pros and cons



Numbers 1 to 4 below are features of authentic material. Letters a to h are pros and cons that match the features. For each feature there is one pro and one con. Match the pros and cons to the features.

Features	Pros	Cons
1. Authentic texts often contain cultural information.		
2. Authentic texts are often quite long.		
3. Authentic texts can be very topical.		
4. Authentic texts can be used regularly in the classroom.		

Pros & cons

- a. It can be difficult to fit them into the timeframe of a 90 or 120 minute lesson.
- b. It can make the teaching programme appear ‘bitsy’ and students don’t get a feeling they are working through a coherent syllabus.
- c. Students are often very interested in this kind of information and they find it very motivating.
- d. This means the material can date very quickly.
- e. This kind of background information can sometimes be more difficult to understand than the language.
- f. It can make a good break from the course book.
- g. This means students can get good extensive reading or listening practice.
- h. This can make your classroom material very relevant to students.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

There are arguments against using authentic material, certainly if you use too much of it. However, teachers can often anticipate problems and deal with these when they plan authentic materials. For example, difficult cultural information can be dealt with when leading in to an authentic text and longer texts can be edited to accommodate lesson time. One issue not indicated in task 2 is that of copyright. This differs from country to country and from one institution to another. However, it is important to ensure you have copyright clearance on a piece of material before you use it.

Task 3 – Authentic texts and their uses



Numbers 1 to 8 describe different kinds of authentic text. Letters a to h describe aims that relate to these texts. Match the aims to the texts.

Authentic texts	Aims
1. A TV guide for one day's viewing.	
2. An e-mail message between friends.	
3. A radio weather forecast.	
4. A series of magazine advertisements.	
5. An editorial from a newspaper.	
6. A recording of someone speaking about a childhood memory.	
7. A reality TV show.	
8. A timetable for a package holiday.	

Aims

- a. To provide practice in inferring meaning from a discursive text.
- b. To provide practice in listening for narrative gist.
- c. To clarify and practise the first conditional used for making promises.
- d. To highlight the way in which body language and gesture supports oral communication.
- e. To clarify some key features of informal written communication.
- f. To provide less controlled oral practice of the present simple used to talk about future itineraries.
- g. To provide practice in scan reading.
- h. To provide practice in scan listening.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Authentic texts can be used to practise a variety of reading and listening skills. In these kinds of lessons, it is a good idea to include a stage in the lesson that gets learners to reflect on the skills they have practised and think about how they can transfer these skills when reading and listening to texts outside the classroom. It is also a good idea to remember that authentic texts can provide good examples of language in real contexts.

Task 4 – An approach to planning lessons with authentic material



Letters a to g below describe a series of steps that can be followed when planning a lesson based around authentic materials. Place these steps in a logical order.

Planning Steps	Order
a. decide how you will focus on the language.	
b. create reading/listening tasks for receptive skills practice and to ensure comprehension of the task.	
c. edit the text, if necessary – this might mean cutting out some difficult vocabulary or deciding to use only part of the text.	
d. read the text carefully and decide if it is about the right language level for your learners.	
e. think of a follow-on speaking activity you could do after reading the text.	
f. read the text and decide if it will be of interest to your students.	
g. look for useful vocabulary and/or grammar that you can highlight in this text.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 🗝️

Thinking about your teaching ...

Over a period of a term, try using different kinds of authentic material. Each time you use it ask your students to evaluate the material in terms of level of difficulty and interest. Keep a record of their comments and at the end of the term, see if you can determine any patterns in their feedback.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

A lot of authentic material produced by teachers is based around magazine or newspaper articles. Try creating a lesson based around something very different. And remember that authentic material can include listening material.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 67 to 69 of *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom* by Tricia Hedge (Oxford University Press 2000) there is extra reading on authentic materials.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to the use of authentic material:

- **Unit 3 a) Listening 1: Listening sub-skills and a typical lesson** (*looks at different listening sub-skills and how to practise them*)
- **Unit 3 b) Listening 2: Learner-friendly listening lessons** (*looks at how to make listening lessons more manageable for your learners*)
- **Unit 3 c) Reading 1: Knowing about strategies and sub-skills** (*provides an introduction to different reading sub-skills and strategies*)
- **Unit 3 d) Reading 2: Setting tasks for reading texts** (*looks at creating tasks to help learners develop and practice different reading sub-skills*)
- **Unit 5 c) Using Songs: Songs are a rich source of authentic material and this lesson looks at how songs can be integrated into your lessons.**

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) c and e
- 2) g and a
- 3) h and d
- 4) f and b

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) g
- 2) e
- 3) h
- 4) c
- 5) a
- 6) b
- 7) d
- 8) f

Task 4 – Feedback

- 1) f
- 2) d
- 3) g
- 4) c
- 5) b
- 6) a
- 7) e



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Do you create weekly or monthly plans for your classes? This lesson looks at some of the reasons why this can be useful for you and your students and gives you an idea of what to look for when you plan over longer stretches of time.

Task 1 – A questionnaire



Look at the different ways of planning on a day-to-day basis and decide which approach is closest to your own.

1. I arrive at school and spend a long time working out what I'm going to teach each day – nothing seems quite right.
2. I just do whatever is next in the course book.
3. I don't really bother planning at all – I just go into the classroom and see what happens.
4. I use the same lessons from the last time I taught the level I am teaching now.
5. I grab an authentic text - usually something in the newspaper - and use that.
6. Nothing here reflects the way I plan.

Then check the answer key below. 



Task 1 Feedback

1. If you chose this approach, you could save yourself a lot of time and trouble on a day-to-day basis by working out an overview for each class and decide, in a general sense, what you plan to cover each day.
2. This can get a bit boring and predictable. It also raises the question of whether everything in the course book is suitable for your students.
3. While you could argue that you are very responsive to your students, are you sure that you are providing them with balance and variety?

Task 1 Feedback (cont'd)

4. This makes your planning easier to manage on a daily basis, but is every group of students the same? Don't some things need to change with a new group?
5. This probably means that your teaching programme contains a lot of topical material, but you perhaps run the risk of overemphasising reading skills.
6. Perhaps you have a more varied approach to planning, which is a good thing. However, do you plan on a day-to-day basis? Could you benefit from creating an overview of what you want to cover over a longer stretch of time.

Key Skill

The skill of planning an overview of lessons (sometimes known as “a scheme of work”) that you will teach over a longer stretch of time (e.g. a week on an intensive course, or a month on a part-time course) is often known as timetabling. If you can train yourself to timetable, your day to day planning is very likely to become easier.

Task 2 – Why should I bother timetabling?



Numbers 1 to 8 are a series of verbs associated with timetabling. Letters a to h are ideas. Match the ideas to the verbs to create a list of reasons that outline the value of timetabling.

Verbs	Ideas
1. motivates ...	
2. allows you to achieve a ...	
3. makes you think about ...	
4. encourages ...	
5. provides ...	
6. looks ...	
7. ensures ...	
8. saves ...	

Ideas

- a. ... continuity for students if you are away for a day or two
- b. ... a sense of direction for students
- c. ... professional to students and colleagues
- d. ... students if they know where they're going on a weekly or monthly basis
- e. ... a critical evaluation of the course book as you use it
- f. ... lesson planning time on a day-to-day basis
- g. ... having a variety of materials and topics
- h. ... balance of language input in relation to language skills practice

Check your ideas in the answer key. 🗝️

Key Skill

While there are many administrative reasons for timetabling which benefit teachers and their colleagues, the main benefactors are the students. Giving more thought to the overall shape of their programme is likely to result in better learning opportunities and, as a result, increased student motivation.

Task 3 – What you should keep in mind?



Numbers 1 to 8 are points you should keep in mind when you are creating a timetable. Letters a to h are questions that go together with these points. Match the questions to the points.

Points to keep in mind	Questions
1. students' learning pace	
2. the length of the lesson	
3. the time of day of your lessons	
4. the course book	
5. materials that can supplement the course book	
6. sequencing of activities	
7. balance of materials	
8. topics	

Questions

- a. What kinds of activities should you do first in the lesson if students are likely to be tired?
- b. Do the lessons have the same theme running through them?
- c. Is there a logical progression from one activity to the next?
- d. How much material can your students cope with?
- e. Have you got enough or too much language input in relation to skills work?
- f. What are achievable aims in the allocated time?
- g. Is there something you can substitute or add to increase student motivation?
- h. If students have paid for it (or it is included in the fees), can you reject it out of hand?

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Task 3 could be summarised in one phrase: as you timetable, keep the students in mind. You need to think about them in their learning context and think about how you can exploit the teaching materials you have available to you so that you motivate your students to learn as much as possible.

ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook

Timetabling a sequence of lessons: Unit 5 b)

Task 4 – Evaluating a timetable



Below is an example three-day timetable for a pre intermediate level class. They are studying on an intensive part-time course in the evening from 6.00pm until 8.00pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The page numbers refer to the course book students are using. There are some problems with this timetable.

Look at it carefully and write your evaluation on a note pad. Say what the problems are and what changes you might make. Check your ideas in the answer key. 🗝️

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Reading MP3 Revolution p. 61	Grammar 'will' for spontaneous decisions (deciding about food) p. 64	Vocabulary / Speaking Talking about your favourite food p. 65
Speaking Restaurant role play p. 63	Functional Language / Pronunciation Requests: e.g. 'Could / Can I have ...?' p.63	Listening People describe different food p. 65

Thinking about your teaching ...

You can sometimes timetable together with one or two other colleagues. Your students are likely to be different, but often they are similar enough to make this feasible. It is a good way of brainstorming and sharing ideas. Try setting this up and see what benefits and insights you gain from working collaboratively.

Note your conclusions in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Not all teachers give their students a copy of their weekly or monthly timetables. However, students usually appreciate it if you do. At the end of each week or month, you can ask them to evaluate the timetable. You can talk about what you have and haven't done (it's not always possible to do everything!) and ask them for feedback on what they would like more or less of the following week or month.

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 109 - 145 of *Learning Teaching* (2nd edition) by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on planning lessons and courses.

Pages 375 to 378 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4th edition) by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) contains extra reading on timetabling (here referred to as "planning a sequence of lessons").

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) d
- 2) h
- 3) g
- 4) e
- 5) b
- 6) c
- 7) a
- 8) f

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) d
- 2) f
- 3) a
- 4) h
- 5) g
- 6) c
- 7) e
- 8) b

Task 4 – Feedback

Across the 3 days, there is a good range of language input and skills practice. At first glance, the timetable seems quite varied. However, closer inspection reveals the following issues:

- The teacher seems very stuck in the course book, and, with one exception (Wednesday) seems to follow the page order of the book.

- On Monday, the reading and the speaking seem to have no thematic connection with each other. Perhaps the reading comes from one unit and the speaking from the next unit. It would be a good idea to think of a speaking activity that relates to the reading; for example, students could create and conduct a questionnaire on MP3 use.
- On Wednesday, there is a lot of language input: grammar, functional language, pronunciation. Most of this language seems to be related to Mondays' speaking activity. One approach would be to do the speaking activity on Wednesday and in the second hour, the teacher could focus on either 'will' or the functional language, depending on what students found most difficult when doing the role play.
- If, for example, the teacher does the restaurant speaking and the 'will' grammar input on Wednesday, they could then focus on the functional language on Friday and find another speaking activity that gave practice of this language in another context.
- If the teacher decides to keep Friday as a speaking and listening lesson, it might be a good idea to think about doing the listening in the first hour. Students will be quite tired by 7.00pm on Friday evening and listening requires a lot of concentration and effort.




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Have you ever tried using a song with your students? Would you like to use songs more often, but are unsure about the different activities you can do with them? This lesson looks at how songs can be a welcome addition to your teaching programme. It outlines what language and skills practice they can provide and suggests some activities that work well for most songs.

Task 1 – A questionnaire



Which description best describes the frequency with which you use songs with your students? Choose the one(s) that are closest to what you do, then look at the answer key below. 

1. Never.
2. Once every three or four months.
3. Once a month.
4. Once a week.
5. Only at the end of the week.
6. Two or three times a week.
7. Every day.



Task 1 Feedback

There is no right or wrong answer to the frequency with which you should use songs in the classroom. It depends on how often you see students and it depends on their interests and their needs. Overuse can make students feel jaded about them, while never using songs can mean that you are not offering variety in your teaching programme and not appealing to students who are very motivated by popular music and popular culture.

Key Skill

Judicious use of songs with a group of learners can greatly enhance motivation and offer learning opportunities not always found in course books. However, it is interesting to note that some course books now include songs as part of their syllabus. This is perhaps a sign that students expect lessons based around songs at some stage in their course.

Task 2 – What are the issues?



Numbers 1 to 5 outline some supporting ideas for using songs. Letters a to e outline contrary ideas that balance the supporting ideas. Match the contrary ideas to the supporting ideas.

Supporting ideas	Contrary ideas
1. Most students find popular songs very motivating, but...	
2. Songs generally lighten the mood of a class, but...	
3. Music appeals to the senses and is always perceived as enjoyable, but...	
4. Songs are a great source of popular culture, but...	
5. Songs provide many examples of colloquial language that many students are keen to learn, but...	

Contrary Ideas

- a. ... some students might think it will lead to singing and for them, this is less enjoyable.
- b. ... in some contexts this might be seen as invasive or inappropriate.
- c. ... this can depend very much on musical taste and more mature learners might not be so keen to learn from songs.
- d. ... this idiomatic language is often difficult to understand.
- e. ... some students may perceive them as being superficial and not concerned with real learning.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

On balance, the advantages probably outweigh the disadvantages. However, it is a good idea to be aware of different issues that surround the use of songs and not assume that all students will love working on a song. Also don't assume that students will have your taste in music. What you perceive as "boring folk music" they might find not only melodious, but also easy to understand, and vice versa!

Task 3 – What are the aims?



Numbers 1 to 9 outline very broad language and skill aims for using songs. Letters a to i provide more detail for these aims. Match the detail to the aims.

Aims	Detail
1. To practise listening ...	
2. To practise listening ...	
3. To practise reading ...	
4. To practise reading ...	
5. To practise speaking ...	
6. To practise writing ...	
7. To clarify or highlight vocabulary ...	
8. To clarify or highlight grammar ...	
9. To clarify or highlight pronunciation ...	

Detail

- a. ... by scanning for specific words in the lyrics of the song.
- b. ... by focusing on idiomatic language in the song.
- c. ... by focusing on example structures in the song.
- d. ... for a gist understanding of the song.
- e. ... by creating new lyrics for the melody of the song.
- f. ... for a more detailed understanding of the song.
- g. ... by discussing the content of the song.
- h. ... by matching together words from the song that rhyme.
- i. ... for an implied message in the lyrics of the song.


Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

In effect, a song is just another text and can be used in exactly the same way as you would any other text. However, there are some specific activities that go well with songs. Task 4 looks at some examples.

Task 4 – Example activities



Numbers 1 to 16 are example activities that can be used with most songs. Sort them into the following categories that match the stages of a lesson: first listening, subsequent listening(s) and post listening. 

First listening	Subsequent listening(s)	Post listening

Activities

1. Students listen and order the lines of the song that have been mixed up.
2. Students listen and decide what kind of song it is – romantic? song with a message?
3. Students listen and select the best of 3 possible titles for the song.
4. Students listen and complete a copy of the lyrics with gaps.
5. Students find and underline examples of a particular grammar point in a song.
6. Students study two or three unfamiliar idioms from a song and try to work out what they mean.
7. Students listen and decide which one of three pictures best represents the song.
8. Students listen and answer True/ False or multi-choice questions.
9. Students rewrite the lyrics of a song, trying to fit their words to the melody.
10. Students listen and select the best of 3 one-sentence summaries of the song.
11. Students listen to confirm their predictions about the content of a song based on having looked at 5 key vocabulary items from the lyrics.
12. Students listen and answer comprehension questions about the song.
13. Students do a role play based on characters or a situation from the song.
14. Students sing the song together as the CD plays.
15. Students listen in order to identify and correct a wrong word in each line of the song.
16. Students are given a list of words from the song. They match together the words that rhyme, then listen and complete a gap-fill of the lyrics using those words.

Thinking about your teaching ...

A line from a song will often get stuck in your memory. It is possible to compare it with a set lexical phrase. How much do you think learning these sets phrases (sung or spoken) help with language learning?

Note your thoughts in your *Teaching Log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Try out one of the activities in task 4 that is new to you.

Want to find out more ... ?

The following book is an excellent source of ideas for using songs: *Music & Song* by Tim Murphey (Oxford University Press 1992).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to the use of songs:

- **Unit 3 a) Listening 1: Listening sub-skills and a typical lesson** (*looks at the different listening sub-skills that students need to practise*).
- **Unit 3 b) Listening 2: Learner-friendly listening lessons** (*looks at strategies for making listening lessons more manageable for your students*).
- **Unit 5 a) Using authentic materials:** *Looks at the pros and cons of using authentic materials and outlines a procedure of how to exploit them in the classroom.*

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

- 1) c
- 2) e
- 3) a
- 4) b
- 5) d

Task 3 – Feedback

- 1) d
- 2) f
- 3) a
- 4) i
- 5) g
- 6) e
- 7) b
- 8) c
- 9) h

Task 4 – Feedback

First listening: 2, 3, 7, 10, 11

Subsequent
listening: 1, 4, 8, 12, 15, 16

Post listening: 5, 6, 9, 13, 14



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Do you sometimes shy away from using computers with your learners? Are you not sure what to do with them? This lesson gives an introductory overview of materials and activities that are central to using computers with English language students.

Task 1 – Melissa and the computer suite.

Melissa: I took my students into the computer suite the other day for the first time. I suggested that they do some writing, but all they ended up doing was logging on to their e-mail and sending messages to friends. And they weren't in English. I think it's probably better just to keep them in the classroom.



Do you agree with Melissa?

Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

The situation that Melissa describes is typical. During class time, students will often use computers for personal activities rather than learning activities. However, part of the problem is perhaps that Melissa didn't provide her students with a specific aim or learning outcome, which means they weren't motivated to do any kind of learning activity. If students want to use e-mail, she could perhaps suggest that students e-mail each other in English. However, she would need to set this up carefully in the classroom before going to the

Key skill

There is no doubt that computers are a useful learning tool in the English language classroom. However, as with any learning tool, teachers need to think carefully about how to use computers effectively so that students get benefit from them. Classroom activities using computers need to have a specific focus.

Task 2 – What does it take?



Below is a list of resources that it is useful to have available to students for the purposes of computer assisted language learning. Sort them into two groups: IT resources and learning resources.

List of resources

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. computer work stations | 2. headphones |
| 3. CD-Rom dictionaries | 4. microphones |
| 5. language learning software | 6. a word processing programme |
| 7. an e-mail programme | 8. a printer |
| 9. fast access band width | 10. a projector |
| 11. DVDs | 12. internet web sites |

IT resources	Learning resources


Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key skill

Different institutions will have different resources. Many schools have a computer suite, while others might have one or two stand alone computers in each classroom. Providing internet access is a good idea, but, if you only want the computers used for learning activities, it might pay to block some sites, for example, sites that allow students to access personal e-mail.

Task 3 – Evaluating computer learning materials



Numbers 1 to 8 below are a series of questions that teachers need to ask themselves when they are thinking about preparing lesson using computer-based materials (e.g. language learning software, web-based tasks). Letters a to h are example answers to the questions. 

Questions

1. Is the material-learner interface appealing?
2. Can I do a whole class demonstration of the material?
3. Will students find this material motivating?
4. Is the language level of this material appropriate for my students?
5. Are my learning objectives clear in using this material?
6. Is this material good for individual study?
7. Does the material include some kind of guided discovery activity?
8. Do students get feedback on their work?

Example answers

- a. Yes, this material will help students revise the simple past.
- b. Yes, the design of the material makes it feel like a game where they score points.
- c. Yes, there are language problems for students to think about and solve.
- d. Yes, the programme is colourful, clear and easy to navigate.
- e. Yes, there are probably only three or four words they won't know in the material.
- f. Yes, I can use the projector to show everyone the screen and show them how to use the material.
- g. Yes, they can click on the 'answers' icon which tells them what is correct and makes a useful suggestion if they get an answer wrong.
- h. Yes, there's even a practical on-line help facility if students have a problem navigating the material.

Key skill

There are many different answers to these questions. The core issue here is that teachers need to ensure that students engage with materials with the same degree of motivation that we hope they engage with paper-based learning materials. Clearly, if a teacher is using computer for word processing or for some kind of internet research many of the questions in task 3 won't apply.

Task 4 – Some teaching ideas for the Internet



Letters a to d describe 4 teaching ideas that use the internet. Numbers 1 to 12 are specific tasks that go together with these teaching ideas. Match the tasks to the ideas.

Teaching ideas

- a. Students are directed to the web site of a newspaper (for example, The Guardian)
- b. Students work on a project of planning a holiday in an English speaking country. They are given a budget and have to find out how they can get around, where they will stay and what they will do.
- c. Students are directed to the students' pages of an English language teaching publisher's web site.
- d. Students create their own web page to put on a school intranet.

ESOL Teaching Skills Taskbook

CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning: Unit 5 d)

Tasks

1. Students scan and skim read different sites looking for the information they need.
2. Students do an on-line exercise that focuses on some up-to-date idioms.
3. Students get fluency speaking practice discussing the results of their research.
4. Students get gist and detailed reading practice of a variety of texts.
5. Students write short articles and news items.
6. Students can download language practice worksheets in PDF format.
7. Students can listen to podcasts on recent events.
8. Students get speaking practice discussing the content of the page.
9. Students get writing practice by adding a comment to a blog.
10. Students get writing practice by writing e-mail messages to request detailed information on things such as prices.
11. Students get speaking practice recording audio files to be uploaded.
12. Students can find language puzzles and quizzes that they can download.

Teaching ideas	Tasks
a. newspaper	
b. holiday project	
c. publisher web site	
d. creating a class web page	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Conduct a survey and review of English language teaching web sites. Try to focus on materials that are available for students or to use with students, rather than those with teaching tips. Decide how motivating these materials are and how effective they would be in terms of student learning. Does the material make students think or do they mindlessly click on icons?

Note your findings in your *Teaching log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

When you go into a computer suite, students often need to interact in different ways (alone, pairs, small groups). Just as you would with a normal lesson, make sure you plan these different interactions and think carefully about the physical space you have to work in. See the *Related Taskbook lessons* below

Want to find out more ... ?

On pages 187 - 199 of *Learning Teaching (2nd edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on using computers and the Internet with English language learners.

On pages 354 - 357 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4th edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there is further reading on using computers with English language learners.

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 1 b) Student Interaction patterns and teacher roles:** Describes different ways of arranging students in your learning space and what roles a teacher plays within different arrangements.
- **Unit 5 a) Using authentic materials:** Looks at the pros and cons of using authentic materials and outlines a procedure of how to exploit them in the classroom.

Answer Key



Task 2 feedback

IT resources	Learning resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. computer work stations 2. headphones 4. microphones 8. a printer 9. fast access band width 10. a projector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. CD-Rom dictionaries 5. language learning software 6. a word processing programme 7. an e-mail programme 11. DVDs 12. internet web sites

Task 3 feedback

1. d 2. f 3. b 4. e 5. a 6. h 7. c 8. g

Task 4 feedback

Teaching ideas	Tasks
a. newspaper	4. Students get gist and detailed reading practice of a variety of texts.
	7. Students can listen to podcasts on recent events.
	9. Students get writing practice by adding a comment to a blog.
b. holiday project	1. Students scan and skim read different sites looking for the information they need.
	3. Students get fluency speaking practice discussing the results of their research.
	10. Students get writing practice by writing e-mail messages to request detailed information on things such as prices.
c. publisher website	2. Students do an on-line exercise that focuses on some up-to-date idioms.
	6. Students can download language practice worksheets in PDF format.
	12. Students can find language puzzles and quizzes that they can download.
d. creating a class web page	5. Students write short articles and news items.
	8. Students get speaking practice discussing the content of the page.
	11. Students get speaking practice recording audio files to be uploaded.



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Are you keen to use DVD or video in your lessons? This lesson highlights some of the benefits of supplementing your teaching programme with this type of material. It also lets you know what you have to think about in order to get started, and then gives some ideas for activities.

Task 1 – Rose’s DVD lesson

Rose: Everyone told me that using DVD was a fun way of learning. I showed my intermediate class a film last Friday. I thought it'd be a nice end-of-week activity. However, afterwards the students said they'd rather use the course book, so I am not sure if using DVD is a good idea after all.



What do you think?

Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

It seems as though Rose merely let students watch a whole film. This use of DVD is quite passive and a whole film could be difficult for intermediate learners to understand. If the students are studying in an English speaking country, they could go and watch a film at a cinema. If they are not, they could probably have hired their own English-language DVD and watched it at home. As a result, the students may not have found this a motivating classroom experience.

Key Skill

Teachers can sometimes approach the use of DVDs or videos as having a kind of “babysitting” function. In other words, it is something that requires minimum preparation that easily kills 90 minutes of classroom time. This tends to put the students in a very passive role. The successful use of DVDs or videos requires much more active participation from both the teacher and students.

Task 2 – Why use DVDs or videos?



Numbers 1 to 6 provide one word reasons for using this kind of material with students. Letters a to f give more detailed explanations of these reasons. Match the explanations to the reasons.

Reasons	Explanations
1. variety	
2. culture	
3. motivation	
4. speaking	
5. language	
6. visuals	

Explanations

- a. Watching TV programmes or films can motivate students to discuss what they see and therefore generate a lot of oral language.
- b. We now live in a world of sophisticated images and students expectations are that this world can also be found inside the classroom.
- c. Using DVDs and videos makes a change from the course book and is an opportunity to include some authentic material in the teaching programme.
- d. Excerpts from TV programmes or films can provide an authentic and rich context for grammar and vocabulary. Some commercially produced ELT videos are created to target specific language structures.
- e. DVDs and videos have an association with the word 'entertainment' which means that students are often keen to work hard in lessons based around this kind of material.
- f. Excerpts from films and TV programmes can bring the real world into the classroom and can illustrate background information associated with language and English-speaking life.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 🗝️

Key Skill

Used well, DVDs and videos can be highly motivating and useful learning tools in the classroom. The visual support provided in this kind of material can help learners understand spoken language more easily than listening to dialogues on CDs or tapes.

Task 3 – Getting started



Before you begin using DVDs or video, there are some important questions you should ask yourself. Sort questions 1 to 8 below into one of the two categories: equipment or materials.

Questions

1. Will I be infringing on any kind of broadcast copyright by showing this material in the classroom?
2. Am I able to freeze the frame to focus on one image?
3. Does the DVD or video player work and can I operate the machine efficiently?
4. Is this topic or genre motivating for the students I am teaching?
5. Is there a trouble shooting guide to help me get out of any problems?
6. Is the level and the speed of the language manageable for my learners?
7. Is there a counter on the DVD or video player cue the segment I want to use?
8. Is the excerpt about the right length when I take into account the activities I want to do and the time I have available?

Equipment	Materials

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

It is surprising how little DVD or video material you need for a lesson. It is possible to plan an hour long lesson around a 1 minute excerpt from a film or TV programme. The key to using this kind of material as actively as possible is exploiting what you use as fully as possible. DVD and video have far more potential than “listening-with-pictures”. They are often a very useful source of language and can be used as a stimulus for developing speaking skills.

Task 4 – Some teaching ideas



Numbers 1 to 4 below describe some DVD or video materials that you can use. Letters a to d describe key techniques for working with video, while number i. to iv. are suggested activities. Match the techniques and activities to the materials.

Material	Technique	Activity
1. An excerpt from a TV discussion or debate programme.		
2. A short excerpt from a crime story that includes dramatic music.		
3. The same day's TV news broadcast on different channels.		
4. An excerpt from a film.		

ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook

Using DVD or video: Unit 5 e)

Techniques

- a. Divide the class into 2 groups for split viewing and listening.
- b. Viewing with no sound.
- c. Extensive viewing and listening.
- d. Listening first with the images covered, then again with the images revealed.

Activities

- i. Students get practise at listening for gist and following the main narrative of a story.
- ii. Students listen and view trying to infer any bias in what they see, then report this to another student.
- iii. Students describe the screen they imagine to each other then compare their ideas with the excerpt.
- iv. The teacher asks students to focus on body language and gesture and what this tells them about the people they see.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Find a film or TV programme in a language that you are not familiar with, or have very limited understanding of. Cover or turn off any on-screen subtitles and see what you can infer about the people, the situation and the story of an excerpt from this material. How much could you understand? How successful were you at extracting some kind of meaning?

Note your findings in your *Teaching log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Try one of the techniques from task 4 that is new to you.

Want to find out more ... ?

The following book is full of good ideas on using DVD or video material: *Using Authentic Video in the Language Classroom* by Jane Sherman (Cambridge University Press 2003).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 3 a) Listening 1: Listening sub-skills and a typical lesson** (*looks at different listening sub-skills and how to practise them*).
- **Unit 3 b) Listening 2: Learner-friendly listening lessons** (*looks at how to make listening lessons more manageable for your learners*).
- **Unit 5 a) Using authentic materials:** (*looks at the pros and cons of using authentic materials and outlines a procedure of how to exploit them in the classroom*).

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

1. c
2. f
3. e
4. a
5. d
6. b

Task 3 – Feedback

Equipment: 2, 3, 5 and 7

Materials: 1, 4, 6 and 8

Task 4 – Feedback

material	technique	activity
1. An excerpt from a TV discussion or debate programme.	b. Viewing with no sound.	iv. The teacher asks students to focus on body language and gesture and what this tells them about the people they see.
2. A short excerpt from a crime story that includes dramatic music.	d. Listening first with the images covered, then again with the images revealed.	iii. Students describe the screen they imagine to each other then compare their ideas with the excerpt.
3. The same day's TV news broadcast on different channels.	a. Divide the class into 2 groups for split viewing and listening.	ii. Students listen and view trying to infer any bias in what they see, then report this to another student.
4. An excerpt from a film.	c. Extensive viewing and listening.	i. Students get practise at listening for gist and following the main narrative of a story.



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Do you think you need to include more fun activities in your lessons? Or do you think you use too many? This lesson outlines the aims of using games in English language learning and examines the strengths and weaknesses of these kinds of activities.

Task 1 – Andrew’s unhappy student

Andrew is a popular teacher in his school. He has a great repertoire of games and his lessons are always a lot of fun. He was quite surprised when a couple of his students asked to move out of his class. They said they didn’t feel like they were making progress.



Why do you think this is the case?

Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 

Task 1 Feedback

It seems that Andrew uses games a lot. They can often have a beneficial effect on lessons in terms of upping the enjoyment factor. However, if games are used too often, they can make the lesson appear like a collection of practice activities without clear aims.

Key Skill

Language games offer students interesting and motivating ways of practising grammar and vocabulary. It is important for teachers to use these games judiciously and have a clear idea of their aims for using these kinds of activities.

Task 2 – When and why to use language games



Numbers 1 to 5 in the box below are planning decisions. Letters a to e are activity types and numbers i to v are aims. Match the planning decisions with the correct game and aim using the grid below.

Planning decisions <i>The game is placed at...</i>	Activity types <i>The game is used as...</i>	Aim <i>The game aims to...</i>
1. ... the beginning of a new course.		
2. ... the beginning of a lesson.		
3. ... the beginning of a lesson.		
4. ... a midway point in the lesson.		
5. ... the end of a lesson.		

Activity types
a. a language practice activity.
b. revision of previously taught language.
c. a winding down, “cooler” activity.
d. “getting to know you” activity.
e. as a warm up activity.

Aims
i. provide motivation for the next lesson.
ii. foster a good class dynamic.
iii. add variety to the lesson.
iv. consolidate prior learning.
v. motivate students for the lesson.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

Sometimes aims for using language games are linguistic, but at other times they are more motivational. It is a good idea to stagger the use of these games over a period of time. It would probably not be a good idea to do the following in one lesson: begin with a game to warm students up, then do another game as a revision activity, then do a third game as a language practice activity, then finish with a fourth cooling down game. In order for games to appear special to learners, they need to be used occasionally rather than all the time.

Task 3 – Student perceptions and what you can do



Numbers 1 to 6 below describe negative perceptions that students can have of language games. Letters a to f are actions teachers can take to help change the perceptions. Match the actions to the negative perceptions.

Negative student perceptions	Actions
1. Students can feel foolish or ridiculous as a result of playing the game.	
2. Students can feel that the game is too competitive and creates a bad atmosphere in the classroom.	
3. Students can feel lost because the rules of the game seem more complicated than the language it aims to practise.	
4. Students might feel that the teacher’s reliance on games means he or she is unprepared or lazy.	
5. Students might get bored midway through a game because it goes on for too long.	
6. Students feel that they don’t learn anything from playing language games.	

Teacher actions

- a. Make sure you set up the game clearly by giving clear instructions and perhaps doing an example with a strong student.
- b. If you give feedback on the language that students used while playing the game, they are more likely to see games as being of value.
- c. If this is the case, it is probably better to abandon the game all together.
- d. Make sure that you monitor learners carefully during the game and manage the activity efficiently so that it keeps moving forward.
- e. In this case, it pays to clearly outline the linguistic aims of the game so that students can see it is of value.
- f. Look for games that are played in groups and involve students co-operating with each other.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

The kinds of games you can play and the frequency with which you can play them will differ from one group of students to another. Some groups respond to them well, while others are less motivated by them. It is always a good idea to briefly outline what linguistic benefit students get from the game, for example, skills practice or practice of some target language.

Task 4 – Planning a game

A popular ELT game is “backs to the board”. The teacher divides the class into two or more teams. One team member sits with his or her back to the white board. The teacher writes up a word. The rest of the team (who can see the word) give definitions. The first student with his or her back to the board who says the correct word wins a point. Each team member takes a turn at sitting with their back to the board. The team with the most points wins.



Question 1-4 below can help teachers to analyse games. Fill in the missing words in the answers to the questions. Use one word from the box for each gap.

meaning	organiser	make	vocabulary	two
time	provider	same	communication	teams
students	monitor	sure	taught	competitive
	winning	cannot	different	

Analysing a game

1. What are the aims?

To revise _____ that students have been recently _____ ;
to practise _____ strategies of conveying _____.

2. What makes this game motivating?

Having _____ provides a _____
element that students enjoy.

3. What is important about the management of the game?

It is important that the _____ with their backs
to the board _____ see the word.

The teacher also needs to _____ that the word is
revealed at the _____ to all teams.

4. What roles does the teacher take during the game?

She is the _____ of vocabulary. She is the _____ of both teams and she is the _____ who observes both teams closely to make sure she spots the _____ team.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Have you ever used the questions like the ones in task 4 to analyse a game? Try doing this with some games that you already play or with some new language games. Does this help you to manage the game in the classroom more effectively?

Note your observations in your Teaching log.

Taking it to the classroom ...

When you use a game, make a point of getting feedback on it from students. Ask them if they enjoyed it and see if they have any suggestions for improving the game. You can also get feedback from students about how often they would like to play language games.

Want to find out more ... ?

The following book has many ideas for games: *Games for Language Learning* (3rd edition) by Andrew Wright, David Betteridge and Michael Buckby (Cambridge University Press 2006).

On pages 223 & 224 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (4th edition) by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007), there are some examples of grammar games and on pages 349 and 350 there is some discussion of communication games, with examples on pages 353-4, 355 and 356.

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

Planning <i>The game is placed at ...</i>	Activity <i>The games is used as ...</i>	Aim <i>The games aims to ...</i>
1. ... the beginning of a new course.	d. ... “getting to know you” activity.	ii. ... foster a good class dynamic.
2. ... the beginning of a lesson.	e. ... as a warm up activity.	v. ... motivate students for the lesson.
3. ... the beginning of a lesson.	b. ... revision of previously taught language.	iv. ... consolidate prior learning.
4. ... a midway point in the lesson.	a. ... a language practice activity.	iii. ... add variety to the lesson.
5. ... the end of a lesson.	c. ... a winding down, “cooler” activity.	i. ... provide motivation for the next lesson.

Task 3 – Feedback

1. c 2. f. 3. a 4. e 5. d 6. b.

Task 4 – Feedback

Analysing a game
<p>1. What are the aims?</p> <p>To revise vocabulary that students have been recently taught; to practise communication strategies of conveying meaning.</p>
<p>2. What makes this game motivating?</p> <p>Having different teams provides a competitive element that students enjoy.</p>
<p>3. What is important about the management of the game?</p> <p>It is important that the two students with their backs to the board cannot see the word. The teacher also needs to make sure that the word is revealed at the same time to all teams.</p>
<p>4. What roles does the teacher take during the game?</p> <p>She is the provider of vocabulary. She is the organiser of both teams and she is the monitor who observes both teams closely to make sure she spots the winning team.</p>



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Do you sometimes feel that the speaking tasks you do with learners are not as interesting as they could be? This might mean you need to introduce an element of drama into these activities. This lesson lets you know what extra qualities drama can provide for students while outlining some key ingredients and ideas for using drama successfully in the classroom.

Task 1 – Bad memories

Harry and Lee are talking in the staffroom.

Harry: I need some new ideas for speaking.

Lee: What about using some drama activities?

Harry: Drama? You mean like putting on plays?

Lee: No.

Harry: And lying on the floor imagining that you're a rock or something?

Lee: It doesn't have to be like that.

Harry: I had to do all that at high school – I hated it.



Do you agree with Harry? Why (not)?

Jot down your thoughts on a note pad, then check the answer key below.



Task 1 Feedback

A lot of teachers have very negative associations with the word 'drama' and Harry's attitude is quite typical. However, drama can encompass a wide range of activities beginning with role play, which even a teacher like Harry won't find too threatening!

Key Skill

Two core concepts lie at the heart of successful drama activities: character and conflict. It is useful to apply these concepts to many speaking activities. Students need to know who they are when they do a speaking activity – they need a sense of *character*; and they need to have a reason to speak to one or more students and *conflict* will provide this.

Task 2 – What does drama offer?



Numbers 1 to 6 below are all opportunities that drama provides students with. Letters a to f gives a reason why drama does this. Match the reason to the opportunities.

Opportunities	Reasons
1. Motivation and confidence	
2. Appropriate language use	
3. Meaningful pronunciation practice.	
4. Speaking fluency practice.	
5. Receptive skills practice.	
6. Writing practice.	

Reasons

- a. Drama activities connect language to emotions and feelings. These are often expressed by means of stress and intonation.
- b. A majority of drama activities involve oral interaction of some kind so they ensure that practice in this skill is very much to the fore.
- c. Sometimes students will script a scene before they perform it and focus a little more on the accuracy of the communication.
- d. Drama is an opportunity for shy students to hide behind the mask of another character. They often enjoy this and feel more comfortable speaking than they do when asked to personalise language.
- e. If students are playing different characters, there is a chance the characters will have different social status. Students will need to choose the right language items to reflect their character's status.
- f. Reading or listening texts can provide a stimulus for ideas and act as a good jumping off point for drama activities.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

In summary, it is possible to say that drama activities are very focused on meaningful oral communication. They can be process orientated and involve role plays and games that are threaded through a teaching programme. Alternatively, they can be more product orientated which means work on the activities can lead to some kind of performance in front of peers or other students in your institution.

Task 3 – What does it take?



Letters 1 to 8 outline some of the ingredients that go into making an effective drama-based session for students. Letters a to h provide more detail on these ingredients. Match the details to the ingredients, then sort them into two categories: ingredients that are essential or ingredients that will probably be required.

Ingredients	
1. Some kind of visual stimulus	2. Student willingness to take part
3. Some silent times during the session	4. Group trust
5. An appropriate space	6. Some non-verbal interaction
7. A change in the teacher's role	8. Physical touching

Detail

- a. Drama often involves what is not said and looks, reactions and gestures are important.
- b. This may be awkward or uncomfortable for people from some cultures.
- c. You might need to move all the chairs and tables in your classroom to the side of the room.
- d. This can help generate ideas as can music.
- e. He or she should be more of a “facilitator/participant” and less of a “knower”.
- f. Drama activities are not things that can be forced on students.
- g. Individuals can find some of these activities a bit threatening, so it helps to provide a secure environment.
- h. Students need time to prepare their ideas as well as their language.

Essential ingredients and detail	Ingredients probably required and detail

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Key Skill

A common theme amongst the essential requirements for successful drama activities is that care is taken with interpersonal relationships and roles. Students need to be active and involved in the activities, but respectful and supportive of each other. The teacher has a core role in setting the tone and making the learning environment a constructive one. However, it is also worth noting that this should be the case with any lesson.

Task 4 – A selection of activities



Numbers 1 to 8 are brief descriptions of some typical drama activities (this is an extremely limited selection – refer to the “Find out more” section to get more ideas). Letters a to h are broad aims that can be matched to the activity ideas.

Descriptions	Aims
1. One student is blindfolded and another student guides the blindfolded student through a simple obstacle course of upturned chairs and tables. The leading student may or may not take the blindfolded student’s hand.	
2. Students read a newspaper article that tells some kind of story (e.g. a bank robbery, a wedding ceremony that goes wrong). Students re-enact the story each assuming the role of one of the characters. The re-enactment should be improvised.	
3. Students choose a photograph of a person and build up a character for that person thinking of a background and something that the character wants. The teacher describes a place and students assume the role of their character to improvise a scene with one or two other students.	
4. Students watch a scene from a TV drama or soap opera that they are not familiar with. The sound is turned off. Students work on writing the dialogue for the scene, then they can act it out before listening to the original version.	
5. Two students stand opposite each other. One is nominated as the “leader” He or she begins moving. The other student follows the leader’s movement. Both students should ensure they maintain eye contact.	
6. Students work in small groups. One student mimes a story (her own or one provided by the teacher) and the other students in the group tell the story. The student who mimes only accepts a correct version of her story.	
7. Students are given a script of a scene – either from a play or something the teacher has written. They rehearse the scene for presentation. If time allows, they could try and memorise the lines of the scene.	
8. Students improvise some kind or role play “in tune” with different pieces of music. Their interaction should alter in reaction to the rhythm and melody of each piece of music.	

Aims

- a. To provide practice in developing a character and his/her motivation in a scene.
- b. To develop spatial and physical awareness in students.
- c. To provide opportunities to work on pronunciation, in particular stress and intonation, and link it clearly to meaning.
- d. To develop awareness of dramatic light, shade and texture.
- e. To build trust between students for other drama activities.
- f. To provide practice in multi-character dramatic story telling.
- g. To develop awareness of gesture, expression and body language as a means of communication.
- h. To provide practice in creating dramatic structure through language.

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Thinking about your teaching ...

Think over different speaking activities you have done over the past few months. Did some of them involve some element of drama, for example, a role play of some kind? Think about some of the ideas you have explored in this lesson and work out if there is any way you could have increased the sense of drama in these activities.

Note your observations in your *Teaching log*.

Taking it to the classroom ...

Try out one of the activities in task 4 that is new to you.

Want to find out more ... ?

The following book is an excellent source of ideas for drama activities: *Drama Techniques: A Resource Book of Communication Activities for Language Teachers (3rd edition)* by Alan Maley and Alan Duff (Cambridge University Press 2005).

Related TaskBook lessons...

You may be interested in the following lessons in the ESOL Teaching Skills TaskBook series, relating to this topic:

- **Unit 3 e) Speaking 1: Fluency:** *Discusses how different kinds of speaking activities can help get your students talking.*
- **Unit 3 f) Speaking 2: Strategies:** *Discusses useful skills and strategies associated with successful oral communication.*

Answer Key



Task 2 – Feedback

1. d
2. e
3. a
4. b
5. f
6. c

Task 3 – Feedback

essential ingredients and <i>detail</i>	ingredients probably required and <i>detail</i>
<p>2. Student willingness to take part <i>f. Drama activities are not things that can be forced on students.</i></p> <p>4. Group trust <i>g. Individuals can find some of these activities a bit threatening, so it helps to provide a secure environment.</i></p> <p>5. An appropriate space <i>c. You might need to move all the chairs and tables in your classroom to the side of the room.</i></p> <p>7. A change in the teacher's role <i>e. He or she should be more of a "facilitator/participant" and less of a "knower".</i></p>	<p>1. Some kind of visual stimulus <i>d. This can help generate ideas as can music.</i></p> <p>3. Some silent times during the session <i>h. Students need time to prepare their ideas as well as their language.</i></p> <p>6. Some non-verbal interaction <i>a. Drama often involves what is not said and looks, reactions and gestures are important.</i></p> <p>8. Physical touching <i>b. This may be awkward or uncomfortable for people from some cultures.</i></p>

Task 4 – Feedback

1. e
2. f
3. a
4. h
5. b
6. g

7. c

8. d



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