Supplementary activities for English language teaching:
large classes and low resource contexts

Authors: Anna Hasper and Jonathan Hadley

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Welcome! We hope you find this supplementary resource useful.

Who is this book for?
This resource is for secondary school English teachers working in Sub-Saharan African countries. The book has been developed as part of the British Council *English Connects* programme.

What is the English Connects programme?
English Connects aims to improve the quality of English language teaching and learning, particularly in French- and Portuguese-speaking countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The goal of this programme is to help create opportunities for young people to increase their potential to study and improve their employability and networks.

As of 2021, the *English Connects* programme is active in 12 countries: Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Congo DRC, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea (Conakry), Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire), Mali, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal.

What is the rationale for this book?
The philosophy behind this book is that, as teachers, our job is not only teaching but, more importantly, *making learning happen.* This resource therefore aims to help you create learning opportunities for your students so that they can actively engage with English in the classroom and improve their English skills as a result.

The key principles which lie at the heart of the materials are:
● putting students at the centre of each lesson and every activity
● getting them to use language in a meaningful way
● and maximising their chances to speak and interact effectively in English.

What is special about this book?
A unique feature of the book is that it has been specifically created to enable learning to happen in large classes with little or no resources or technology.

To ensure that the ideas and activities given are relevant for this context, the book has been produced in consultation with local trainers and teachers in all the partner countries of the *English Connects* programme. These educators have very kindly provided valuable input and feedback throughout the writing process.

We all know large classes can be a huge challenge, but we believe that even small changes can make a difference and that, over time, many small changes can make a big positive difference for students.

We acknowledge that certain topics, cultural references and even approaches may work better with some learners than with others. Thus, we encourage you, as the expert in your context, to dip into this resource and select whatever is relevant and useful for your lessons.

Each activity allows students to engage with the language and there is a particular emphasis on speaking and groupwork to generate meaningful communication and collaboration. In large classes, the teacher cannot possibly be everywhere, all the time, observing each student.

Our activities therefore aim to encourage students to interact with, support and even teach each other so that every learner is using the language and the lesson is less teacher-fronted and more student-focused.

We have tried to include activities that will work with:
- class sizes of more than one hundred students
- students whose spoken English ranges from A0 to A2 levels on the CEFR
- a mixed-ability environment.

As it can be easy for a student to 'get lost' in a large class, we have also designed stages for individual action and reflection so that each student has opportunities for personalisation and self-reflection.

What is the structure of the book?

Section A contains ideas, techniques and strategies for the teacher to plan and deliver more student-centred lessons.

Section B gives details of 20 activities suitable for giving students creative and communicative practice with new language and for energising skills-focussed lessons.

Inside the book, you will find the following.
- Each unit contains three sets of questions to help the teacher reflect on the language learning process and his or her current teaching methods and beliefs. This resource is designed to be practical and to encourage self-reflection by the teacher.
- Some current theory on each topic has been provided with Internet references given for further reading.
- Activities and techniques are accompanied by 'useful classroom language' phrases for teachers to use directly in their classes.
- Timing has not been given for individual activities as many factors may influence how long a task takes, for example, the English level of students; the number of questions within the task to be answered by students; the extent to which the activity is further exploited by the teacher. Timing is an important consideration but we leave this to each teacher's judgement.

How can I use this resource?

As the name suggests, this resource contains supplementary teaching activities to complement your coursebook and your syllabus, not replace them. Like a 'lunch or dinner buffet' we recommend you dip in and out of the units to find ideas and activities that you can add to your regular lessons. You do not need to read the units in any particular order.

Select a topic, try out a technique or activity in your classroom and then reflect on how it went. Please share these with colleagues if you find that they work well with your students.

Together, we can continue putting learners and learning at the centre of every lesson.

Who are the authors?

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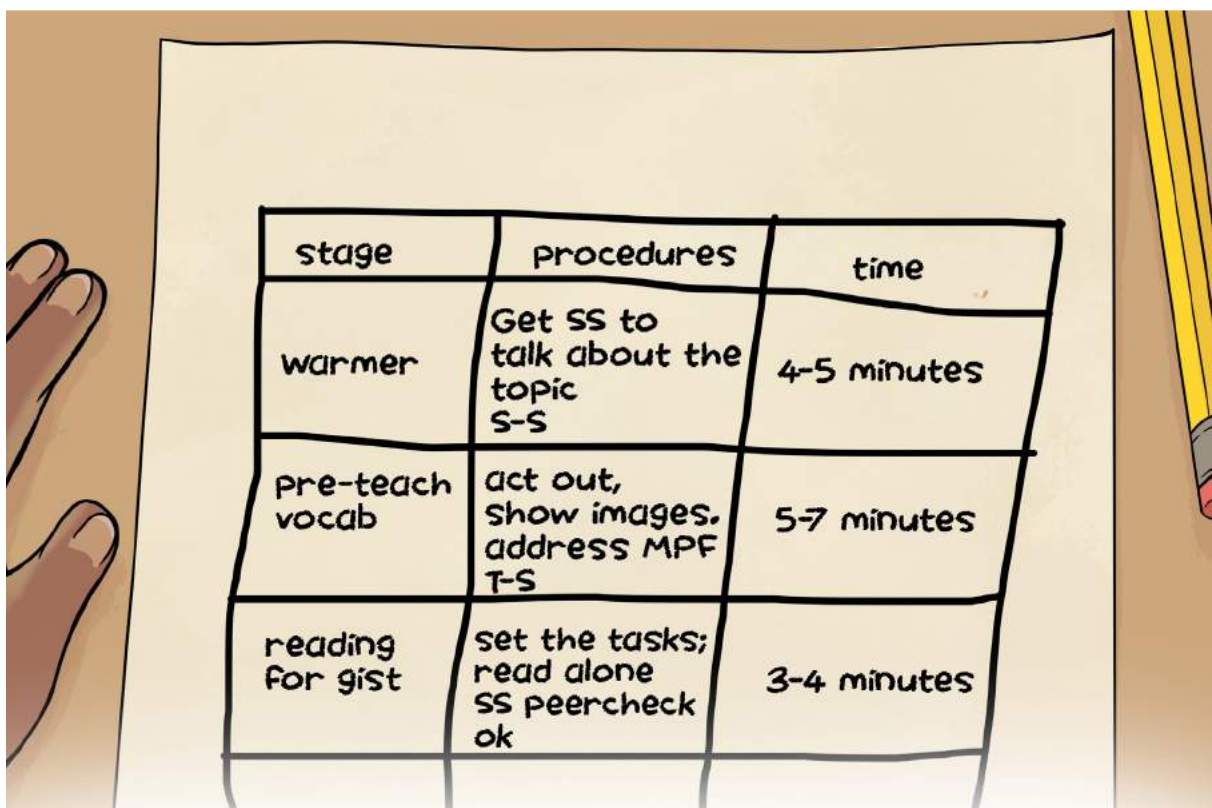
Ask yourself

How much time do you spend planning your lessons and writing a lesson plan?

Why do we plan lessons?

Before a lesson, we need to think about what we, and particularly our students, need to do to achieve the lesson aims. Lesson planning is not the same as teaching each activity on the coursebook page. Remember, the coursebook is not written for our students in our classroom! All classes are different. So planning is thinking about how our learners can achieve the aims *before* we go into class. Then, during the lesson, we can manage the learners and their learning. Planning does not mean our lesson will be perfect, but we are giving the students the best opportunity to succeed. By contrast:

'Failing to plan is planning to fail' [1]

stage	procedures	time
warmer	Get SS to talk about the topic S-S	4-5 minutes
Pre-teach vocab	act out, Show images. address MPF T-S	5-7 minutes
reading for gist	set the tasks; read alone SS peercheck ok	3-4 minutes

[1]Often attributed to Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

What do we need to consider when planning?

The focus of each lesson should be on the learners and their learning, not so much on the teacher and the teaching. Here are four key questions for each lesson:

- Where do we want the learners to go? ► What are my lesson aims?

- Where do the learners start? ► What is the level of my students?

- How do we get the learners there? ► What activities move my students from where they are now to achieving the lesson aims?

- What can we use? ► What resources are available for me and the students?

(See Unit 2 Classroom management)

When planning, we should also think about:

- how the students can best acquire the teaching point *(e.g. the grammar or the skill)*
- what the students need to do and what the teacher needs to do in the lesson *(procedure)*
- what language we will use so that students understand *(e.g. instructions for the task; giving an example or demonstration: modelling; questions for checking students' comprehension)*
- how to order the activities *(staging)*
- when is best for students to work alone, in a pair or in a group *(grouping)*
- how long activities and feedback will realistically take *(timing)*
- how to adapt an activity to meet the needs of all our learners *(support or extend)*
- what to write on the board and where to write it *(board plan).*

How do we use a lesson plan?

An effective lesson plan is like a roadmap: it has a clear starting point and end point. We want students to achieve the aim before the lesson itself finishes. Planning carefully is important, but remember:

'in class, teach the learners, not the plan' [2]

If students have difficulty, respond to their needs. Adapt the lesson. Don't just move on because of the plan. This will not help students' learning.

Speaking personally

- What do you write in your plan? Grammar analysis, instructions ...? Do you follow exactly what is in the coursebook?
- Do students always have enough time in class for every activity? What about the final activity?

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[2] Scrivener, J. (2011) *Learning Teaching 3rd ed*. Oxford: Macmillan. p123.

Enabling students

● To achieve your lesson aim and give students enough time to learn, try planning backwards.
 	
  ○ Write down the key learning activity of the lesson (e.g. a debate).
  ○ Then think about what students need to know/do before this activity (e.g. know useful language for debating).
  ○ Break the lesson down into small steps (stages) and give *realistic* time for each stage (don't forget to plan enough time for students to think, work in pairs/groups and then share in whole class).
  ○ Check that each stage is a stepping stone to the next stage, e.g. 1. brainstorming ideas for the debate; 2. learning useful language for debating; 3. carrying out the debate.
 	
● Check that activities in the book are at the right level for *all* students. This way students can complete the learning activities you give and stay motivated during the lesson.
 	
  ○ If too easy, make them more challenging.
  ○ If too hard, support (e.g. plan an extra stage: elicit and write useful language for the debate on the board).
 	
● Make sure you share the lesson aim(s) with the students too!
	Useful lesson planning language
	
	Language lesson aim:
	By the end of the lesson, students will have used and understood (grammar item/ vocabulary related to …) in the context of …
	Receptive skills lesson aim:
	By the end of the lesson, students will have developed their skills in (reading/listening for gist and specific information) in the context of …
	
	Support/extend
	See the units in Section B for examples of how to adapt activities to students' level (differentiation).

Tips:
● Find out how much students already know about the topic you are going to teach.
● Identify the 'knowledge gap' and design the lesson around this.

Engaging students

	Useful lesson planning language
● Plan for each lesson to start with an activity that: ○ gets students interested in the lesson ○ explores what they already know ○ gets *all* students actively participating. ● For example, engage students at the start with the KWL (Know – Want to know – Learned)[3] activity. ○ Ask students to share with others what they **know** about the topic. ○ Ask them what they **want to know** about the topic, by getting them to write questions. ○ At the end of the lesson, review what students have **learned** (including, checking to see if they now have answers to their original questions). ● In every lesson, try to plan for variety in: ○ how students work (alone, in pairs, in groups or whole class); students can work together to discuss ideas, check answers and give peer feedback ○ who students work with (different partners) ○ the kind of activities students do ○ the skills students practise (e.g. include some speaking before the main reading activity).	*Stage 1 in lesson:* warmer/lead-in *KWL activity sentence starters:* I know … I want to know … I have learned …

Tips:
- We need to set tasks for students that are of the right level (so they can succeed). So, help students to build on what they already know.
- Don't just include a learning activity (e.g. a warmer) because it is fun. It should have a useful purpose, connect to the topic of the lesson or revise/recycle a previous lesson.

[3] Ogle, D. (1986) *K-W-L: A Teaching Model That Develops Active Reading of Expository Text. The Reading Teacher*, 39, 564-570.

Exploring the new language or skill

● When planning a language lesson (to teach new grammar, vocabulary or functional language), make sure you include stages for:
  ○ teaching meaning, form (e.g. write the spelling/structure on the board) and pronunciation (MFP)
  ○ practising the new language in different ways (see Unit 10 Practising new language); plan for at least two practice activities.
 ● When planning a skills lesson, make sure you include stages for:
  ○ pre-teaching any useful vocabulary (if needed)
  ○ students to repeat a task (e.g. reading/ listening more than once; writing a second draft)
  ○ students to give some personal reflection on the topic (e.g. giving their opinion about the topic through writing or speaking).
 ● Plan your board in advance so key information can stay in place for students during the lesson.
	Useful lesson planning language

	Possible stages for a language lesson: warmer/lead-in language focus (MFP) controlled practice semi-controlled practice freer practice *Possible stages for a receptive skills lesson:* warmer/lead-in pre-teach vocabulary reading/listening for gist reading/listening for detail reflection on topic

Tips:
- Try to make sure your plan has a balance of activities, skills, materials, grouping of students and pace.
- Think about how you can actively engage students in every stage.
- Instead of 'telling students', can you 'elicit from students'?
- Instead of 'teaching' students to do/know something, can students 'find out for themselves'?

Expecting problems and preparing solutions

• Plan for possible problems your students may have with:
    ○ the new language (e.g. they will add 's' to 'can' with 'he/she') or
    ○ the skills focus (e.g. the listening text has some unknown words).
• Plan for possible problems you may have with:
    ○ timing
    ○ the language of a text (many unknown words?)
    ○ the tasks you are asking students to do
    ○ the layout of the room
    ○ noise/heat
    ○ equipment/electricity.
• Prepare solutions ('just in case') to use in the lesson.
    ○ Write 'he/she cans' on the board and, using a different colour, cross out 's' after 'can'.
    ○ Pre-teach some of the unknown words before you begin the listening task.
    ○ Have an extra activity 'up your sleeve'.
    ○ Be prepared to omit an activity (if no time or not needed).
    ○ Check equipment is working before class and have an alternative if it does not work.
	Useful lesson planning language

Tips:
- Build flexibility into your lesson plan.
- Look at the plan from your students' point of view: focus more on what *they* will be doing and less on what *you* will be doing (this is learner-centred planning).
- Remember: *less* is *more* (it is often better to do fewer activities in depth, with suitable timing and responding to students' needs than rush through many activities).
- Plan a time range for each activity (two to three minutes, not just two minutes) so that you can be flexible inside the classroom.

Evaluating the learning

	Useful lesson planning language
● Plan enough time for feedback. Students need to know that they have the right answers after each activity. If you have no time for feedback, the practice activity has no use (see Unit 5 Giving and getting feedback). Allow time for: ○ getting students to check their partner's answers ○ writing the answers on the board (but remember you can save time by doing this while students check answers in pairs) ○ whole class feedback (for those questions that seem problematic for a majority of the students). ● Plan time for a short reflection stage at the end of the lesson. ○ Ask students to evaluate/reflect on their own learning. ● After the lesson, take some time to evaluate or reflect on your teaching. Revisit your plan to see: ○ what worked well and why ○ what did not work so well and how you could adapt this stage/activity in future.	*Feedback at the end of an activity:* delayed correction *Reflection stage:* an 'exit' task, e.g. Tell your partners (or write down) one thing you have learned today, or one question you still have.

Tips:
* A lesson plan is a working document. Make changes after teaching the lesson so that, next time, your lesson will be even better.
* Keep the lesson plans safe and perhaps share with your colleagues.

End of unit reflection

* How can lesson planning make your lessons more student-centred and communicative?
* Would it be useful to plan with other teachers who have classes at the same level?
* What might you now change in your planning after reading this unit?

Further reading:
Budden, J. (2008) *Lesson planning*
Available at: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/lesson-planning

Bertrand, J. *Lesson plans*
Available at: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/lesson-plans

2 Classroom management

Ask yourself

When you hear the term 'classroom management', what do you think of?

What is classroom management?

Some people think classroom management is keeping order and controlling learners: in other words, discipline. However, there is much more for teachers to manage. According to Scrivener:

'Your classroom management is the way that you manage the students' learning by organising and controlling what happens in your classroom …' [1]

This means managing:

● the learning environment	How do I create a positive atmosphere? How do I make a classroom community? How do I organise the desks? What can I put on the classroom walls?
● the learners	How do I manage students' behaviour? How do I keep them actively learning? When do I put them in pairs/groups? How can I stop them talking? How can I help *all* learners?
● the lesson	How do I start the lesson? How do I manage the time for an activity? How can I use the blackboard effectively?
● the learning process	How do I make sure students are on task? How do I monitor them? What feedback do I give?
● ourselves	Where do I stand? What do I say and what do I *not* say? How loudly do I speak and can I be silent? How can I get their attention?

We can plan some of these before the lesson (e.g. the grouping of students); others we decide on the spot (e.g. when to stop an activity).

[1] Scrivener, J. (2012) *Classroom Management Techniques.* Cambridge University Press. p1.

Why is classroom management important?

Classroom management is an essential part of teaching, especially in a large classroom. As teachers, we make decisions and take actions to help create the best conditions for our students so that they can move forward in their learning. The behaviour of engaged and motivated learners will facilitate the learning process.

In contrast, if a teacher has not planned the instructions, it might be unclear for students what to do. As a result, learners might lose interest in the lesson. When students are not doing what we want them to do, lesson aims will not be met.

Without effective classroom management, very little learning can take place.

Where do we start?

We should start by building a positive relationship at the beginning of the year:

teacher - students *and* students - students

Only when there is respect and trust (*rapport*) between the teacher and students can learning happen. If learners do not feel physically and emotionally safe in the classroom, their brains will be full of worries and nervousness with only limited space for learning.

A teacher who cares about the students has students who are usually more motivated, better behaved and who ultimately perform better.

Speaking personally

- What do you feel are the biggest challenges in managing your classroom?
- What do you do to build rapport with your learners?

Suggested techniques and strategies

Managing the learning environment: building and maintaining rapport	

● Allow learners to get to know you (GTKY) and to connect with you at a human level. This will help build a relationship of trust and respect. There is no specific technique for building rapport but:
 	
  ○ share personal stories/experiences
  ○ personalise activities
  ○ be genuine: be you!
  ○ do some GTKY activities (e.g. '3 truths and 1 lie').
 	
● Show care and a genuine interest in your learners. Students don't care what you teach until they know how much you care about them.
 	
  ○ Ask questions to find out more about them.
  ○ Listen with attention to their answers.
  ○ Respond as a human: listen for content (ignore the errors) and show empathy.
  ○ Be encouraging, respectful and show you believe in them.
 	
● Make sure students know you *see* them. Each class is made up of individuals.
 	
  ○ Learn their names.
  ○ Use their names when possible.
	Useful lesson planning language

	Instructions for '3 truths and 1 lie': These four sentences (point at the board) are about my life. Three are true and one is false. Discuss with your partner which ones you think are true and which one is false. *Asking questions and responding:* Ah ... that's very interesting. Thanks for sharing Patience. *Encouraging:* Well done, Yacouba! Do you want to try number two, Nafissa?

Tips:
- You can use various GTKY activities for students to get to know you before they use the same activities in their pairs/groups to get to know each other.
- Building rapport does not mean becoming friends with your students: it is about being friendly but keeping a professional distance.

Managing the learners: engaging and motivating them

	Useful lesson planning language

● Actively involve students in the lesson.
  ○ Elicit from students: instead of the teacher giving every answer, ask learners to give their ideas/ answers first; nominate who can answer by using names or you can elicit from a group or the whole class (choral answer).
  ○ Give students time to think (wait time) before you elicit answers.
  ○ Ask questions to keep learners involved; you can ask factual questions (describe, how many ...?, what colour, etc?) or more challenging evaluative questions ('Do you think it is a good idea to …?').
● Provide opportunities to collaborate.
  ○ Include pair work (PW) or group work (GW) at least once in each lesson; collaboration engages learners and provides an opportunity to actively use the language together.
  ○ First, group students and then set the task, making sure you have their full attention.
  ○ In groups, give students roles to manage themselves (e.g. student A: keeps an eye on time; B: monitors the noise; C: takes notes; and D: reminds the group to use English).
  ○ Agree on a signal to indicate when students need to stop (e.g. ring a bell).
● Enable *all* learners to participate and succeed.
  ○ All classes have students with different abilities (*support* those who need help and *extend* for those who need more challenge).
  ○ Ask open questions (e.g. 'Can you tell me about your hobbies?') so that all learners can answer to the best of their ability.
  ○ Provide some choice so that students can select what they can do.
  ○ Get learners to do as much as they can in a set time; this avoid students saying 'I'm not finished *yet*….!' or 'Teacher, I'm finished!'
	Eliciting:
	Thanks, Cherif, for your answer. Does anyone else want to share their idea?
	
	Signalling the end:
	When I ring the bell like this (Teacher rings bell three times), you have to stop.
	
	Providing choice:
	Here are six new words (Teacher points at the board). You choose.
	● Write six sentences.
	● Write three sentences, each sentence using two of the words.
	● Write a short paragraph using all words.
	
	Encouraging:
	Don't worry, you are trying hard and are just not there *yet*. But if you keep trying you can do it!

Tips:
- Nominate (use the name) after you have given all students the question. This means every student will have to think about the answer/ideas.

- Be supportive and encourage students to try. If their performance isn't great, let them know that is OK. They are learning and are just not there *yet*!

Managing the lesson


● Start the lesson with enthusiasm.
  ○ Welcome your students.
  ○ Have a quick activity on the board ready for learners to complete as others are arriving/getting ready (e.g. complete a riddle; 'break the code' (see Unit 9 Writing); do a word puzzle).
  ○ Get all the learners' attention before you start talking (e.g. clap, use a bell, give a time warning or stand in a certain place (*plenary position* - see below).
	Useful lesson planning language

● Use the board effectively.
  ○ Write clearly and think about students at the back - can they read it? (walk to the back of class to check they can).
  ○ Plan your board: an area for work in progress in the centre; columns on the left and/or right to record new/useful language; space for the admin (e.g. today's date; the lesson aims; homework tasks, etc.).
  ○ If possible, use different colours, shapes, or underlinings to highlight important information (e.g. tricky spelling/ pronunciation).
● Be realistic with times in your planning (see Unit 1 Lesson planning) and make changes, if necessary, during the lesson.
  ○ Check your pace is not too slow or too fast.
  ○ Be aware of your students' needs (e.g. have they finished and are staring at you? or are they still writing?).
  ○ Before asking students to stop, give a time warning so they know they need to move on and get ready to finish.
  ○ Adapt activities on the spot if you don't have enough time (e.g. tell students to only complete sentences 1–4).
	Welcoming students:
	Welcome everyone! How are we feeling today?
	
	Board work:
	Can I clean the board?
	
	Pace:
	Right, it looks like most of you are done. So, let's look at the answers together …
	
	Time warning:
	You've got two minutes left for exercise ...
	
	Adapting because of insufficient time:
	For exercise ... only complete sentences 1–4.
	
	Checking new instructions:
	So, do we do all the sentences? (Answer: No, only 1–4)

Tips:
- Don't forget to check with your learners if it is OK to clean the board. Copying can take longer than you think!
- Avoid writing on the board for too long as students are just watching your back. Could you prepare longer text on paper or cardboard in advance and then fix this to the board?
- End each lesson with a quick reflection activity (see Unit 6 Assessing formatively).

Managing the learning process: the task cycle

Try to follow the task cycle:	Useful lesson planning language

Try to follow the task cycle:

Instructions → Monitor → Feedback → Instructions
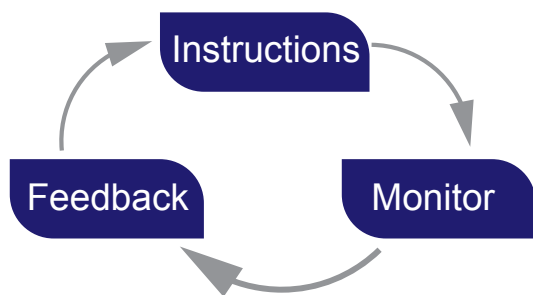
- Give clear instructions as you set the task.
  - Get all students' attention.
  - Give instructions for the task using graded language (keep your sentences short and simple; use commands with 'please').
  - Model or demonstrate what you want students to do (e.g. 'Do the first sentence on the board together.'); or ask two stronger students to show the activity (e.g. role play) in front of the class.
  - Check all students have understood the instructions.
    - Ask a student to repeat the instructions. *or*
    - Ask a student to translate it in the L1 *or*
    - Ask short and simple instruction checking questions (ICQs) (see Useful lesson planning language).
  - If students need a worksheet or to open their books, only now hand out the worksheet or say the page number (if you do this first, students will get distracted and not focus on your instructions).
- Monitor as students do the task.
  - Look around the room and give students some time to process the instructions and get started.
  - When students have started, walk around and check if they are on task; if not, guide them.
  - Be available to support students as needed.

Useful lesson planning language

Setting the task – simple, direct language with visual support:
Write three sentences in your notebook. Use these words (point at the board).

Modelling the task:
Let's do number 1 together (Teacher writes an example on the board).

Checking the instructions – Instruction checking questions (ICQs):
OK, so how many sentences are you writing? (Answer: three, OK) Which words are you using? (point to the board).

Instructions first and then:
Now you can open your book to page ... and start exercise ...

Monitoring – keeping students on task:
Turn to page 1. You need to do this exercise (Teacher points at the right exercise).
Are we writing? Put your pen down and talk to Ray. No need to write.

Managing the learning process: the task cycle

- ○ Monitor closely when students are working on a controlled practice activity (language); feel free to question/point at answers they need to change.
- ○ Do not interrupt:
    - − when students are peer-checking answers after a reading or listening task
    - − if students are reading or listening (this will disturb their concentration)
    - − when students are speaking or writing for fluency (take notes for feedback later).
- ● Give feedback after the task.
    - ○ At the end of an activity always allow time for feedback (see Unit 5 Giving and getting feedback).
    - ○ Make the focus of the feedback what you learned while monitoring.
    - ○ Focus on areas your students need more help with.
    - ○ Remember: without feedback (language and/or content) students might wonder why they did the activity!

Tips:
- ● If needed, plan your instructions and ICQs before class. In case of more complex tasks, you can also write the instructions on the board.
- ● If students are not on task, be patient. It is often not the students' fault. They are still learning the language so maybe the instructions were not clear.
- ● When monitoring, avoid participating in activities with the students. Use the time to see what is going on around the classroom.
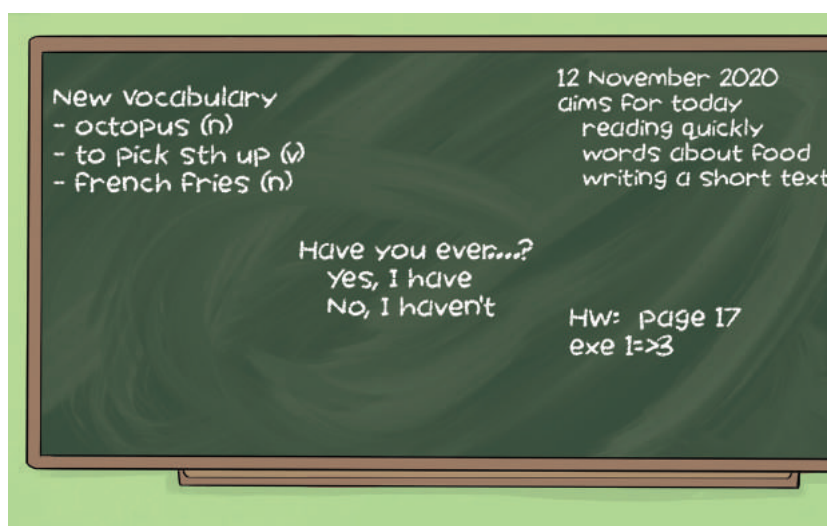
Managing ourselves: the teacher in the classroom

- Think about your position in the classroom.
  - Make sure all students can see you when you speak to the whole class (*in plenary*).
  - Stand in the same spot each time so students learn to focus when you move to your plenary position.
- Speak clearly and use volume wisely.
  - Vary your volume – sometimes louder, sometimes quieter.
  - Don't forget to use silence: standing in your plenary position and not speaking (as students would expect) can get students quiet and make them focus on you.
  - Think about using simple (graded) language and use gestures/body language to support your message (using the same gestures each time will help students' understanding).
- Before you talk, think – is it necessary? Teacher talk can be productive (e.g. when giving feedback) but in class we want students to talk and reduce teacher talking time.
  - Avoid repeating instructions (give a demonstration instead).
  - Avoid repeating students' answers (get a student to repeat).
  - Avoid reading answers from the board (if students can read them …).
  - Use positive language to maintain students' willingness to try and communicate in English.

Useful lesson planning language

Using gestures to support students' understanding:
Yesterday (Teacher waves hand over her shoulder to indicate the past) we went to …
Please say the whole sentence (Teacher opens arms in front of waist).

Using positive language:
Can you use your quiet voices, please?
Who can help Mona with answer the answer?
Thank you, Joao, but let's see if someone else can answer this!

Tips:
- Even though you might not be able to make eye contact with all learners in large classes, move your gaze around the classroom to make sure all students feel that they are seen and valued.
- Remember the louder you talk, the louder students will talk! When they raise their voices, lower your volume. They will have to stop talking to hear you.

End of unit reflection

- With a large class, what strategies can help you to learn students' names?
- What strategies can help you make sure that all students are involved?
- What are some of the challenges of pair work and group work that you need to be prepared for?

Further reading:
Darn, S. *Eliciting*
Available at: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/eliciting

Darn, S. *Monitoring*
Available at: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/monitoring

3   Encouraging English

Why might students use their L1 in the English classroom?

It can be frustrating for English teachers to get no response from their students or to hear their students speaking in their first or national language in the English classroom. This is not usually a sign of students behaving badly but often because:

- they hear the teacher speaking in the L1 so they do the same
- they don't have the language they need to express themselves in English
- they are not interested in the topic or task and have nothing to say
- they are embarrassed or shy about speaking in English, especially in front of the whole class
- they don't understand the task and are checking with peers in L1
- or, in contrast, they are so excited about the topic that they switch to L1 so that they can express themselves quickly.

When is it OK to use the L1 in the English classroom?

We want to encourage as much English as possible even if students are not using it correctly yet. The English classroom may be the only chance for them to hear and try to speak English so we should maximise this opportunity and welcome their efforts to use it. But using L1 can sometimes also be useful in:

- helping students (especially low-level students) understand or express a complex idea
- giving a quick explanation to save time and to move everybody on to using English
- contrasting how the L1 and English are similar or different (e.g. vocabulary or grammar)
- building a strong relationship with students and showing you value their own language/culture
- developing the skill of translation (writing) or interpreting (speaking): L1 – English – L1.

As Philip Kerr argues:

'not only is a policy of English-only unachievable in many contexts,
but it may also be undesirable' [1]

Again, it is important to stress that we should not rely too much on L1. It is often possible to use English to achieve the same goals.

Speaking personally

- What is your L1? Is it the same as your students' L1? Does this make any difference in class?
- Which do you think is more important: to have 'native speaker competence' or to be able to 'survive' in English?

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[1] Kerr, P. (2017) *How much time should we give to speaking practice?* Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series. (pdf) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Available at: www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/

Suggested techniques and strategies

Providing classroom language	
● Teach useful classroom expressions to your students at the start of the year. 　○ Make sure students understand the meaning. 　○ Model the pronunciation. 　○ Then get students to repeat (whole class, in groups or pairs, individually). ● Teach a few expressions at a time and review regularly in the first few weeks. ● Put these expressions next to the board or on the classroom walls. If a student says the same expression in L1, point to the English translation and encourage them to say it.	Useful lesson planning language
	What's (L1 word/expression) in English? How do you spell that? I'm sorry, I don't understand. Could you repeat that, please? What's the meaning of …? Can I (leave the room)?
Tip: ● Disappearing text: Write the expression on the board. Delete a word and get students to repeat the whole expression (including the missing word). Delete more words, until students can say the whole expression without any written support.	

Sharing expectations

● Have a conversation with students about why it is important to use English as much as possible in the classroom.	Useful lesson planning language

○ This conversation can be in L1 with low level learners.
○ Elicit reasons from the students instead of telling them (you may discover they already know why).
● Set clear aims for the lesson and share these with students at the start of the lesson (students may think the task in English is more challenging than it really is).
● Use WALTs and WILFs.[2] You can quickly explain these (possibly in L1) or write these on the board in simple English.
  ○ **We** **a**re **l**earning **t**o/about … (the aim of the lesson).
  ○ **W**hat **I**'m **l**ooking **f**or … (the success criteria – what students must do to show they have learned).
	Sample WALTs:
	Today, we are learning to describe (people) in writing.
	We are learning about adjectives that describe (people) in writing.
	
	Sample WILFs:
	What I'm looking for: a paragraph with a topic sentence.
	What I'm looking for: six sentences about your last holiday using the past simple.

Tip:
● Students don't know your lesson plan. The lesson plan is not a secret. Share with them what they are doing today and why. Secondary students appreciate it when the teacher talks to them as 'adults'.

[2] Terms invented by Shirley Clarke
Available at: www.shirleyclarke-education.org/what-is-formative-assessment for further information

Providing language for the tasks

|	Useful lesson planning language

● Prepare students with the language they will need to carry out the task.
 	
  ○ First, elicit language from students (to activate their prior knowledge).
  ○ Then, pre-teach new useful language (so that students are learning something new).
  ○ Write all this on the board so that students can refer to it when they need it.
 	
● Model the language you expect to hear and give a demonstration of the task. Use stronger students to help you.
 	
● When students speak to you in L1, repeat what they said (or reply) in English (giving them a model of the English you want).
	Modelling the language:
	Let's just check pronunciation.
	Please repeat after me ...
	
	Checking students' understanding:
	Can anybody remember (the word/what I did)?
	
	Asking for a translation:
	How do you say this in English?

Tip:
● When we are building a house, we support the growing structure with scaffolding. We need to do the same with our students as they build their English. The 'scaffolding' can be models of language, ideas for content or a demonstration of what to do.
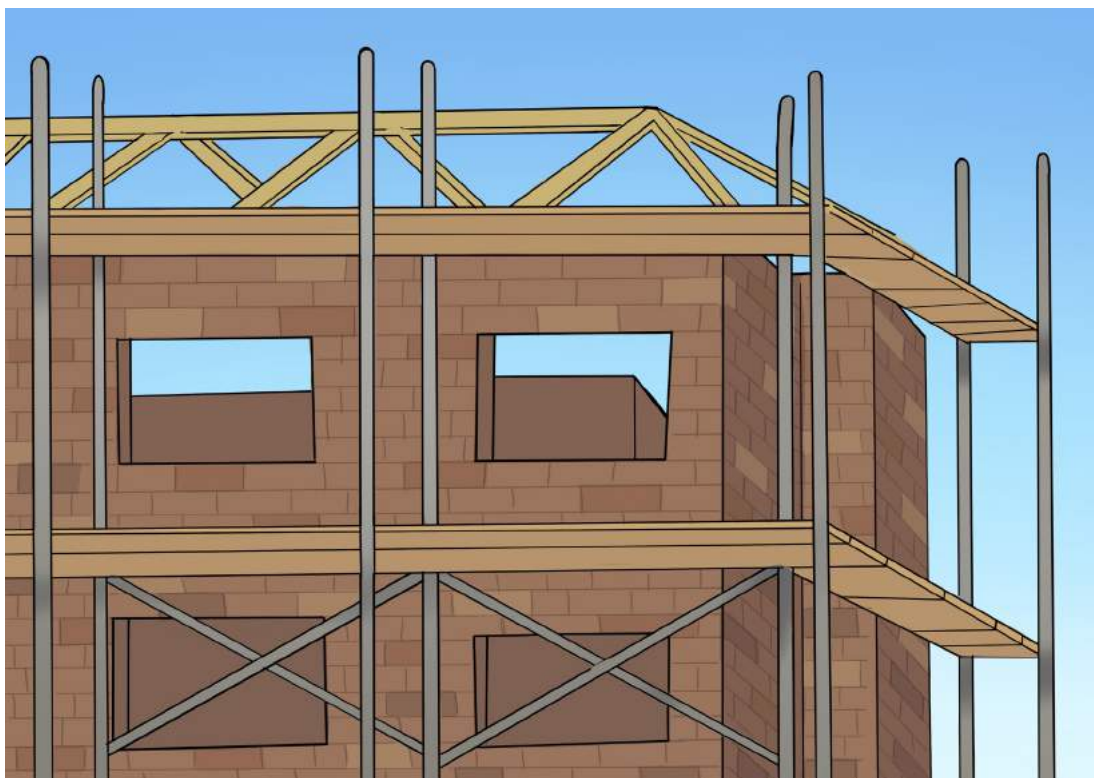
Monitoring

● Observe students as they carry out a task. If they can't find the English and start to use L1, give them the language they need.	Useful lesson planning language
● Give students time to think and find the English they need – wait time. ○ Silently count to five before you ask for an answer. *(See page 20 for reference)* ○ Do a Think-Pair-Share. Ask the question; encourage individual thinking time; then checking with a partner; and finally sharing with the class (see Unit 3 Encouraging English). ● Ask one student in each group to be the 'English monitor' for an activity. This monitor can be your 'eyes' and 'ears', encouraging everybody to use English and not L1.	In English we say … *Think-Pair-Share:* Here's my question. Think about it on your own first. Check your answer with your partner. OK, who can now tell me the answer?

Tips:
- Make sure that you choose different students to be monitors so that everybody gets a chance, including weaker students.
- Remember to praise students who use English, even if they make mistakes.

Keeping students' attention

● Choose topics that are interesting to students (not just the teacher!).	Useful lesson planning language
● Design tasks that keep all students active and engaged (keep 'teacher–one student' question and answer time to a minimum). ● Make sure tasks: ○ are meaningful ○ are at the right level for the students ○ give students some choice.	*Giving students choice:* Here are three topics to talk about. In your pairs, please choose one.

Tips:
- Be realistic about how much English you want to hear in your class.
- Encourage English-only blocks of time. Start small: five minutes today! And then increase this amount from week to week. You can also give short L1 blocks of time (so that students know they can have a quick mental break).

End of unit reflection

- How do you 'reward' students for trying to use English?
- What could you put on the walls and bring into the classroom to encourage an English environment?
- Realistically speaking, how much English would you like to hear in your class? And when do you most want students to use it?
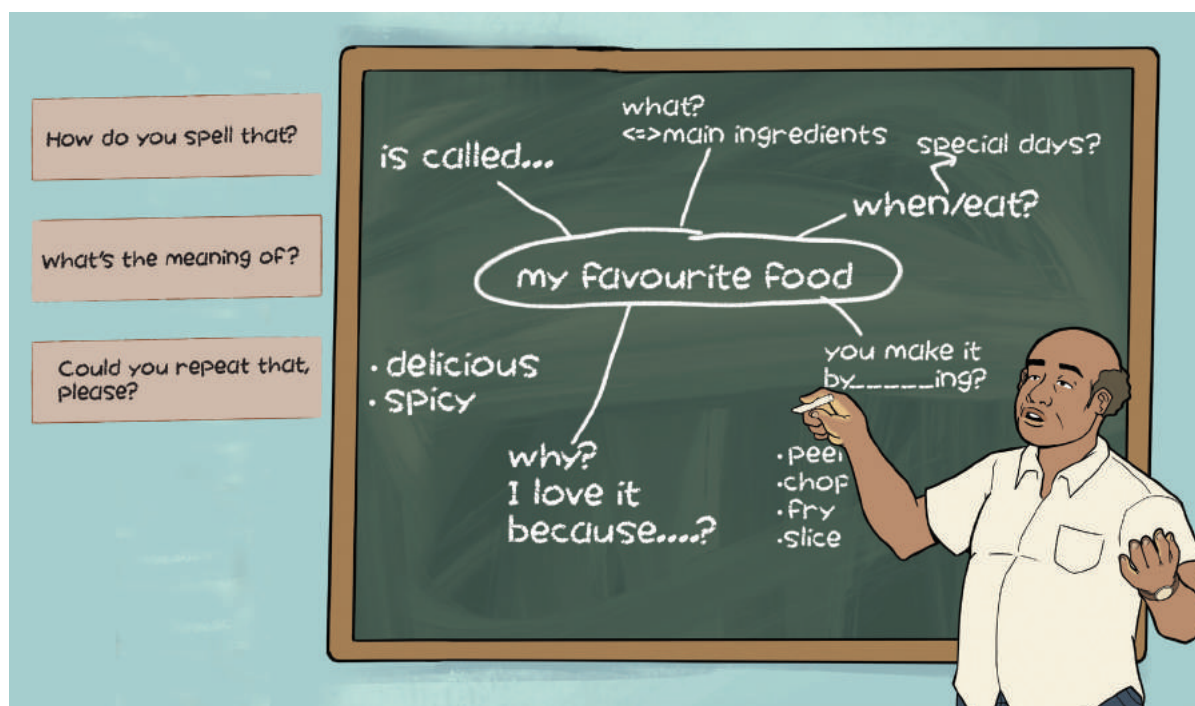
Further reading:
Kerr, P. (2019) The use of L1 in *English language teaching*. Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series. (pdf) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
Available at:
https://languageresearch.cambridge.org/images/CambridgePapersInELT_UseOfL1_2019_ONLINE.pdf

4   Presenting new language

Ask yourself

Read the text below:

'Today we are going to learn about the present continuous.' Teacher writes on the board and continues explaining … 'We make the present continuous using 'be' and the gerund. We use it for actions happening now. So, 'I am cooking now'. 'He is riding his bicycle now'. Now please open your books and complete exercise 1 ...'

Why might this *not* be the most effective way to present new language?

Why do we present new language?

Students need to learn new language (e.g. grammar, vocabulary and functional language) in order to move forward on their English language learning journey. Presenting is the first stage in helping students understand the new language and it needs to happen before *practising* the new language (see Unit 10 Practising new language).
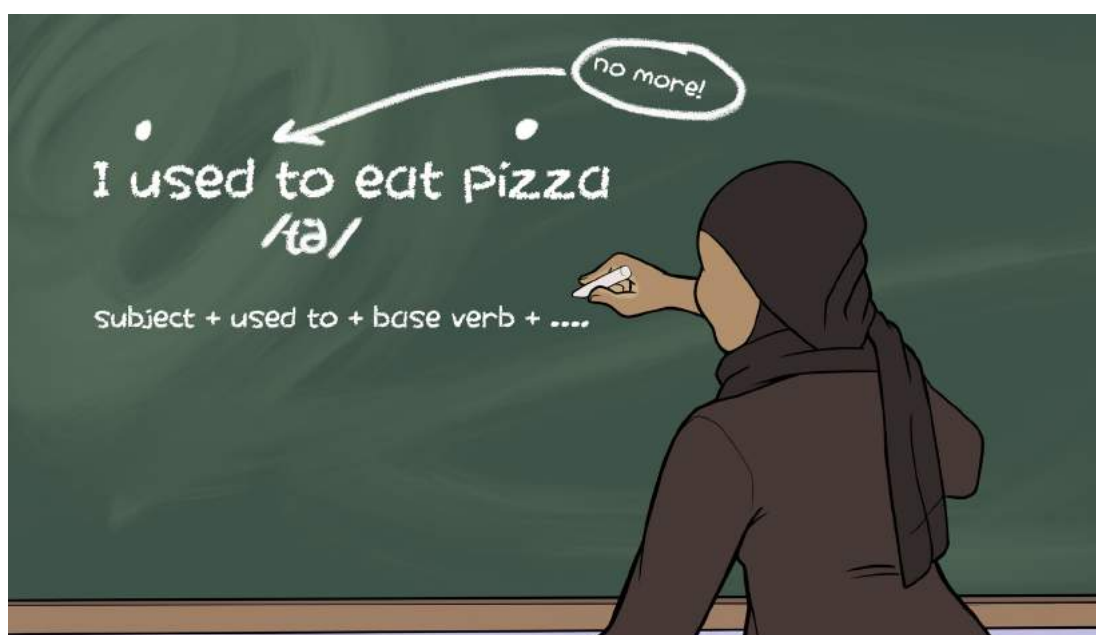
Who presents new language?

Usually it is the teacher who presents. However, students can also discover new language for themselves with the teacher's help (a guided discovery approach). We can also test them first to find out what they know/don't know about the new language and then just present what is really new for them (a test-teach-test approach).

What do we present?

The following information about new language is usually presented and clarified:

- meaning/use
- form (pattern or spelling)
- pronunciation.[1]

How do we present new language?

It is important that new language is presented in a relevant and meaningful context. Furthermore, as Scott Thornbury states in relation to grammar:

'[It] should be presented in as efficient a manner as possible' [2]

This means first helping students to *understand the meaning/use* so that they can then make meaningful connections to form and pronunciation.

Introduce the Target Language in context	Establish & check the **meaning**/use	Raise awareness of **form** (pattern or spelling)	Model the **pronunciation** before SS repeat
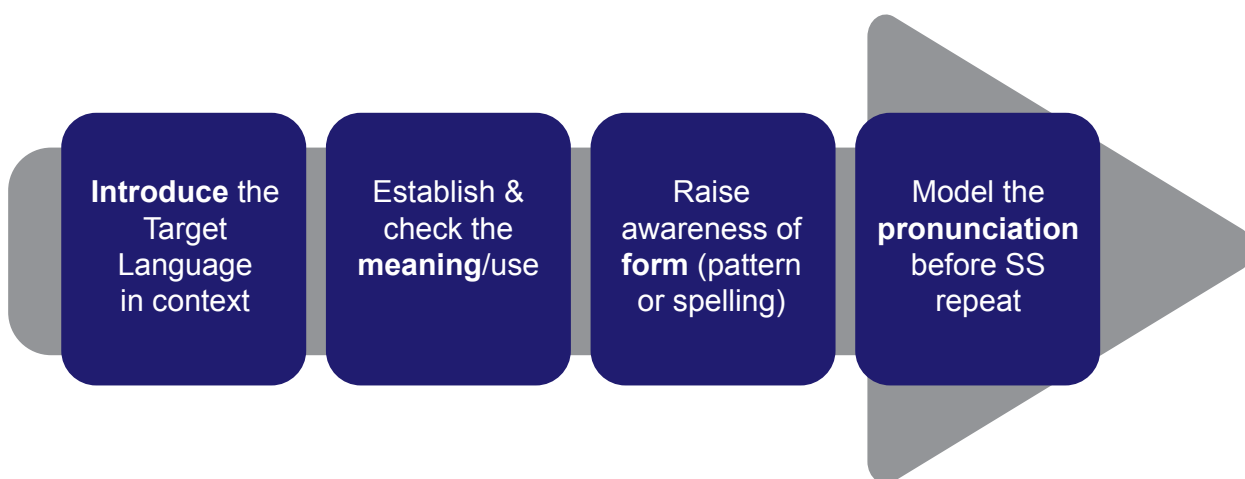
There are different ways to present the new language and clarify the meaning.

- Show realia (e.g. when you teach 'a glass', show students a real glass).
- Use visuals (e.g. when you teach 'a bird cage', show a picture/drawing).
- Create your own situation/context to elicit the target language (e.g. when you teach past. simple, tell a short story about when you were a child using past simple verbs).
- Use mimes and gestures (e.g. when you teach sports, act out each sport).
- Use a listening or reading text that contains the target language.

Speaking personally

- Which of these presentation techniques do you use in class?
- What do you present first in class: meaning, form or pronunciation?

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[1] Sometimes we also clarify if the new language is used in formal or informal situations (appropriacy).

[2] Thornbury, S. (2019) *Teaching Grammar to Adults*

Suggested techniques and strategies

Presenting new language in context	
● Teach new language from a listening or reading text (*text-based language clarification*). Check the text contains examples of the target language (TL).	Useful lesson planning language
○ Get learners to answer two or three short comprehension questions about the text. ○ Make students notice the TL (e.g. ask them to underline all verbs). ○ Then ask concept checking questions (CCQs) to check students understand the meaning of the TL in the context. *Or* ● Teach the new language from a context/ situation you create that generates examples of the TL (*situational presentation).* ○ In class, create a context using, e.g. visuals or word prompts. ○ Ask students questions (e.g. 'What happened?') to try to elicit answers containing an example of the TL. Or, orally, give an example of the TL (without writing it on the board yet). ○ Ask concept checking questions to check students understand the meaning/ use of the TL before writing example sentences.	*Instructions for comprehension of text:* Read the paragraph and answer questions 1 and 2. *Instructions for analysis of TL in text:* Now, underline all verbs in the text. (Do an example with the students) *Example (checking use of past simple):* OK, so the story is about his childhood. Is that past, present or future? (Past) *Further concept checking of past simple:* Is his childhood finished? (Yes)

Tips:
- These are ways to more actively involve students in the presentation stage. Just remember students need to have some English language knowledge if you want to elicit ideas about the meaning from students!
- Get them to Think-Pair-Share about the meaning before you elicit (see Unit 3 Encouraging English). This helps you build on what students already know and keeps them motivated.

Test-Teach-Test

● Before class, select or create a *controlled practice activity* that contains the TL.
 	
   ○ In class, ask learners to complete the controlled practice activity individually (*Test 1 Stage*). Monitor how students are using the TL and note down errors or confusion.
   ○ Write answers on the board (some correct, some incorrect using the TL) and ask learners to help you correct the sentences. Make sure you get the correct answers on the board!
 	
● Make students notice the TL (e.g. underline/circle it). Then ask concept checking questions to check students understand the meaning/use of the TL. If needed, clarify the form of the TL on the board (*Teach Stage*).
 	
● Tell students to do the first controlled practice activity again or give a very similar practice activity to complete (*Test 2 Stage*). This 'test' will now confirm if students understand the TL better.
	Useful lesson planning language

	Instructions for Test 1 stage: First, complete exercise 1 in your book. If you are not sure, don't worry. Just see what you already can do. *Finding out what students know already about TL (Test 1 stage):* Let's look at the answers on the board. Can you help me check if they are all correct? *Clarifying TL during Teach stage:* Now, look at sentence 1. Is he talking about his life now or in the past? Is this (point at verb on board) finished? Yes. Good – past time – that is why we use the past simple.

Tips:
● The controlled practice can be written or oral; however, it might be easier to monitor what students already know when it is written.

● The controlled practice can focus on the meaning/use of the TL or how to form/structure it. It all depends on what students already know and need.

Presenting and checking meaning

• Before class, write the meaning of the TL in simple language (a student dictionary can help you).	Useful lesson planning language
○ Turn this into two or three simple concept checking questions which require short answers (e.g. yes/no; past/present/ future). ○ Write the correct answers (so that you can refer to them in class). Example 1 (vocabulary: manage): 'She <u>managed to</u> open the door.' means that she opened the door but it was difficult. ○ Is this about the past, present or future? (Past) ○ Did she open the door? (Yes) ○ Was it easy? (No) Example 2 (grammar: used to): 'I <u>used to play</u> football.' means that 'I played football regularly but have now stopped.' ○ Did I play football in the past? (Yes) ○ Once or many times? (Many times.) ○ Do I play football now? (No, I've stopped.) • Before you use the CCQs in class, make sure you have provided a context that helps students notice and understand the meaning of the TL. • Ask students the CCQs to check they have understood the meaning/use. If they give the wrong answers, clarify the TL again.	*Sample CCQs:* Is it (point at the language) about the past, present or future? Does this adjective (point at the new vocabulary) have a positive meaning or a negative meaning? *Clarifying further if students understand TL:* Can you give me an example of ... ?

Tips:
- Effective CCQs help to show what students do not understand.
- 'Is it clear?' is not a good question. Students will probably say yes but we still don't know what they (mis)understand.
- Using L1 can be beneficial for learning, but only translate the meaning into L1 after trying all other methods!

Presenting and checking form

	Useful lesson planning language

● After checking meaning, write the TL on the board. The focus now is on:
 	
   ○ the spelling of a word
   ○ the pattern of a grammar structure
   ○ the parts of functional language.
● Ask students to help you analyse the form of the TL by asking questions about the structure.
● For grammar and functional language:
 	
   ○ write the TL in a sentence (= context)
   ○ break down the structure of the TL and write this clearly underneath the sentence
   ○ ask students to copy both the sentence and form in their notebook.
   ○
Example sentence: 'I used to play football' form:
 	
● Try to use different colours or use underlining/a circle/a square to make the different parts of the form clear to students.
	Checking structure of sentence:
	Now, 'I' is what? Subject. Good. (write 'subject' under 'I')
	OK, what is next? (T points at used to and writes under the sentence '+ 'used to'.)
	And what comes after? ('play football'). Good. What kind of verb is 'play'? (base form verb) Good. (Teacher writes '+ base form verb')

Tips:
● When teaching vocabulary, model and drill pronunciation (see below) after checking meaning. Then ask students to help you with the form (spelling) or write the spelling on the board for students to copy. This prevents the spelling influencing students' pronunciation.

● With vocabulary, tell or elicit what part of speech it is (e.g. noun, verb, adjective, etc. – make sure students understand these terms). Show this on the board. Ask students if they can recall any pronunciation features (e.g. word stress or silent sounds) and show these too for students to copy.

Presenting and checking pronunciation

	Useful lesson planning language
● Make sure students know the meaning of the TL before presenting the pronunciation.	

○ First say (*model*) the TL twice while students listen.
○ Model it again, then ask all the students to repeat after you (*choral drill*).
○ Next you can ask groups to repeat (*group drill*) and/or some individuals (*individual drill*). You can drill:
  − a word (*football*)
  − a phrase (*play football*)
  − a sentence. (*I play football at the weekend.*)
○ Or you can chant. A chant is a drill with a beat (musical rhythm).
  He likes burgers,
  She likes sandwiches.
  They like fruit,
  They like fruit.
● When students say the TL, listen carefully and correct their pronunciation if needed: say it again and highlight the problem.
 	
● Highlight the pronunciation features and show them on the board (e.g. word stress, silent letters, sentence stress, linking, etc.)
	Instructions for drilling:
	Listen carefully. Then repeat after me.
	Say it again ... Good, one more time!
	
	Checking pronunciation features:
	Now listen carefully. Where is the stress?
	'Do you like swimming?' T elicits and draws stress bubble on the board above *like/swimming* (*see illustration*).
	
	What happened to 'Do you' when we said 'Do you like swimming?', Good, they become one word! (teacher shows linking and weak vowels) (*see illustration*).

Tips:
● For variety when students repeat, ask:
  ○ half the room; followed by the other half (50:50)
  ○ students one after another (chain); start at different places in the room so that you have many chains
  ○ random individuals
  ○ pairs.
● You can use your hands or clap to show the stress as you model.
● When you add rhythm, clapping, or snapping fingers you can make drilling more engaging.
● Get students to change part of the model sentence when repeating the model into what is true or relevant to them: 'I used to play football' ► 'I used to live in the countryside/go fishing with my grandfather.' (substitution drill).

- Which strategy would you like to try out in your classroom? Why?
- How much pronunciation teaching do you do?
- Could Test-Teach-Test be a successful approach with your students?

Language Analysis

- Context: a story I tell
- Sentence: Do you like swimming?
- Language point: Qs with 'do'
- Meaning: Finding out about someone/ something
- Form: Do you + b.v + ...-ing?

- Pron.: Do you like swimming?
/dəjə/
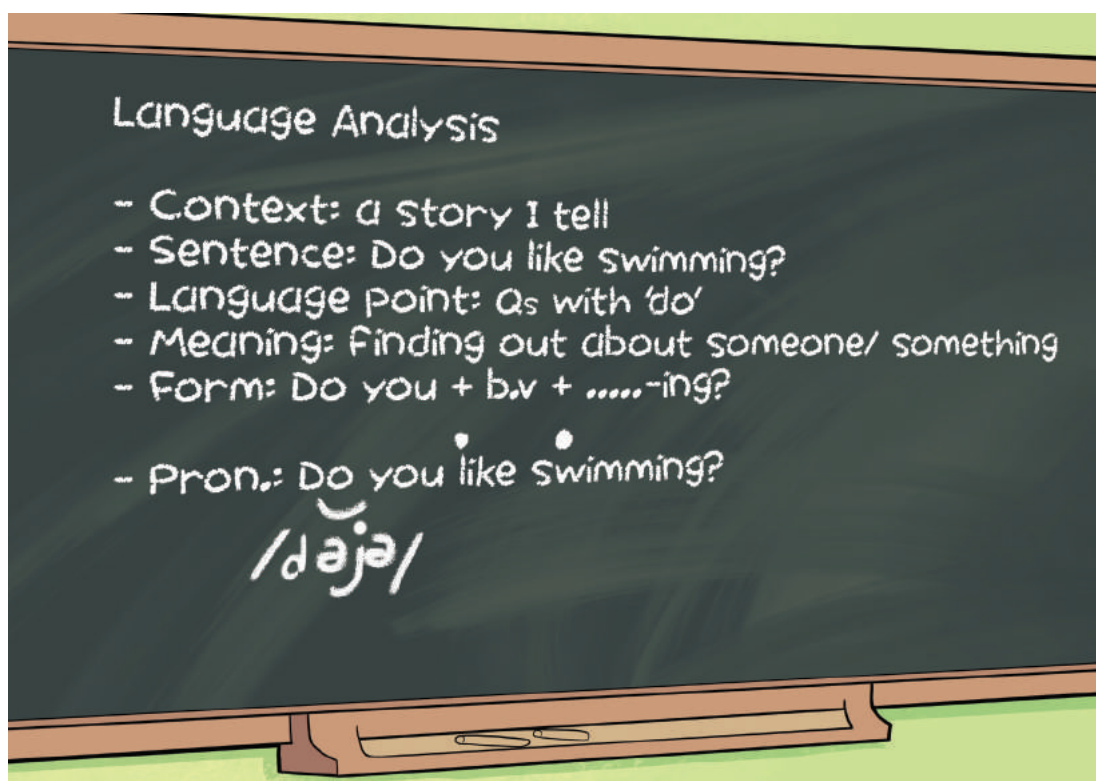
Further reading:
Peachey, N. *Conveying Meaning*
Available at: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/conveying-meaning

Thornbury, S. (2019) *Teaching grammar to adults.* Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series. (pdf) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
Available at:
https://www.cambridge.org/us/files/7815/8106/3284/CambridgePapersInELT_TeachGrammarAdults_2019_ONLINE.pdf

Tice, J. *Drilling*
Available at: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/drilling-1
Available at: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/drilling-2

5   Giving and getting feedback

Ask yourself

What feedback did you like/dislike when you were a student?

What is feedback?

The comments teachers give to students when they complete a task.

- What students are doing well.
- What students need to improve.
- How students can get better.

Feedback can be immediate (e.g. while a student is speaking in English, the teacher corrects an error) or delayed (e.g. the teacher writes comments on an essay that a student wrote for homework).
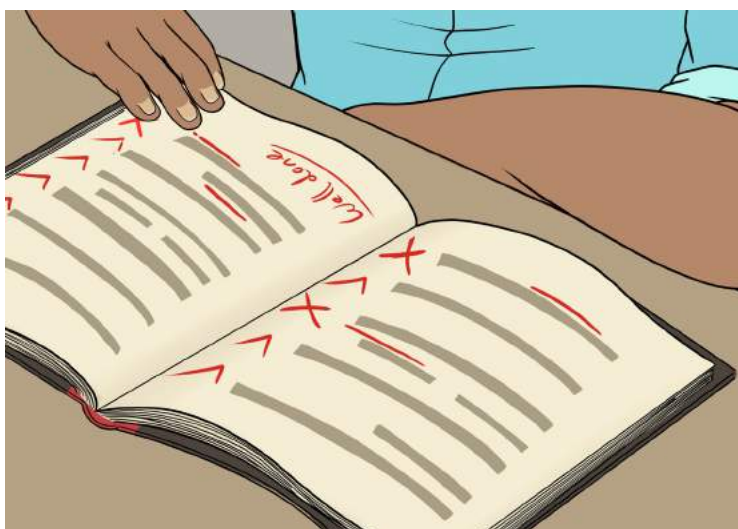
Who gives feedback?

- Teacher to student(s)
- Student to student: peer feedback/peer evaluation
- Student on own work: self-evaluation
- Student(s) to teacher, e.g. about what they liked/disliked in the lesson

Why is feedback important?

It's important because students (and teachers) need to know what they are doing successfully (this can motivate) and what they need to develop in order to progress in their learning:

'feedback is critical to raising achievement'[1]

A positive learning environment is a classroom that welcomes errors. Mistakes and errors are all part of the learning process. They inform feedback for both the learner and the teacher, pushing each to improve their performance.

Feedback should:

- be directly connected to the aims of the lesson
- feed 'forwards' into the next stage of the learning process or the next lesson
- inform the students of their strengths and what they need to work on
- inform the teacher where a student needs more help
- motivate the student (and teacher!) to get better.

Feedback should:	Feedback should not:
✓ respond to a student's ideas and message ✓ be specific: comment on what they did and how they did it	✗ just focus on errors in language production ✗ be personal ('You're a great student, Elizabeth')

In a large class, it may not be possible to give detailed feedback to every student all of the time but we can try to reach all of our students at least some of the time. We can also increase feedback opportunities by encouraging self- and peer-evaluation, reducing the pressure on the teacher and developing the independence of our students.

Speaking personally

- Do you think your students want you to correct them?
- Do your students like standing up in front of the class to give an answer? How do you know?

[1]Hattie, J. (2011) *Feedback in schools*

Suggested techniques and strategies

Giving positive feedback	
● Don't just tell students about their errors. Praise them for their efforts and respond to the message they are trying to communicate (in their speaking and writing).	Useful lesson planning language
● Use a 'feedback sandwich': ○ (bread) say something positive ○ (filling) comment on an error and provide a solution ○ (bread) end with something positive. ● Or try 3 stars and 1 wish: ○ three things you like about their English ○ one thing you wish they could improve. ● Remember to give *fast* feedback: ○ in a *friendly* way ○ connected and specific to the aim of the lesson ○ in *student-friendly* language ○ focussed on the *task* not the person.	*Sample feedback:* Great improvement in your (paragraph writing). Careful with your (spelling). These are interesting ideas!

Tip:
● Give less feedback on the person, e.g. 'Well done, Marie!', and more feedback on the task, e.g. 'You used the present perfect correctly – good job!'

Giving feedback on textbook tasks

	Useful lesson planning language
● Encourage students to check answers with a partner before whole class feedback (peer checking). When a student answers, ask what other students think before you give the final comment. ● When asking for the answer, give students time to think: *wait-time*. Then wait for five to ten students to raise their hands before choosing one student. Call the student by name, if possible, and choose a different student each time. ● Give the answers to a group leader so that students can check in their groups. They can then check with you if there is an answer they don't understand.	*Asking what other students think:* Was that the correct answer? Has anybody else got an idea? How else can we say that? Do you agree with the answer?

Tips:
● If possible, let students remain seated while answering. Encourage them to speak loudly. Standing up in front of others may be embarrassing. It also wastes time.

● When a student gives an answer, students at the back or side might not hear. Instead of asking the same student to repeat, ask a different student to repeat the message. This will encourage students to listen to their peers.

Giving feedback on speaking

	Useful lesson planning language

● Before you give feedback, think: is the aim of the task accuracy or fluency? If accuracy, you may want to interrupt and correct them. If fluency, it may be better to collect errors and correct them with the whole class at the end.
 	
● If you collect errors from students, try the following activity at the end.
  ○ Write on the board three examples of correct English and three examples of incorrect English.
  ○ Ask students in pairs to decide which are incorrect and to correct them.
  ○ Check answers with whole class.
● To help students self-correct, give feedback through body language.
  ○ Raising your eyebrows means there's a problem.
  ○ Pointing behind you means 'change the verb into the past'.
  ○ Crossing your hands/arms means 'change word order'.
	Prompting students to self-correct:
	What else could you say?
	What other word could you use?
	What verb do we use in the past?
	
	Giving a correction in a positive way:
	That sounds OK but it might be better to say …

Tips:
● Help students understand each body movement first; use the same movements every time so that students recognise them, and then use them regularly during feedback to try and elicit the corrections from the students.

Giving feedback on writing

	Useful lesson planning language
● Always tell students *before they write* what your feedback will be on, e.g. spelling or correct use of past simple or layout of letter.	

● Before students hand in writing, encourage peer feedback.
 	
   ○ Tell students what errors to look for and write this 'checklist' on board (e.g. *verbs, punctuation*).
   ○ Ask students in pairs to swap papers, mark errors and offer corrections.
   ○ Give students time to write a second draft before you mark.
● Use a simple correction code (symbols) to show errors so that students can self-correct (e.g. sp = spelling; T = tense; ww = wrong word).
	Telling students about an error in a positive way:
	That wasn't quite right.
	What's wrong with this sentence?
	Is there another way of saying it?
	You've missed the (verb) out.

Tips:

● For peer feedback to be successful, you need to train students in *why* they are doing this (to become independent learners) and help them to give useful feedback (e.g. checklist).

● With large classes, it is hard to give lots of feedback to each student all the time. If you collect writing every week, try to give 25 per cent of students some detailed feedback (not everything but just the areas you told students you would focus on) and for the other 75 per cent give feedback on one area. Each week choose different students for detailed feedback, so that everybody gets this once a month.

Getting feedback from students

	Useful lesson planning language

● Avoid saying 'Do you understand?' as the answer 'yes/no' from students probably does not give you much useful information.
 	
● Ask questions that are more specific in order to check students' understanding of a language point or an instruction. Encourage students to give feedback on their own learning (and your teaching) at the end of a lesson.
  ○ Take one lesson aim and turn it into an 'I can …' statement, e.g. 'I can describe my home town'.
  ○ Say the 'I can …' statement and ask students to respond: thumb up (Yes, I can.); thumb down (No, I can't yet.); thumb in the middle (I can do it but want more practice.).
	Checking a language point:
	Is this sentence about the past or the present?
	
	Checking instructions:
	Do you do this individually or with a partner?

Tips:
● Help students to understand the importance of self-evaluation (part of learner independence). Encourage them to be honest. Tell them you also want to learn from them about what is working/not working in the lesson so that you can better support their learning.

End of unit reflection

● What percentage of your feedback is on language and what percentage on content?
● How much of your feedback encourages students?
● How often do you get feedback from students on your teaching?

Further reading:
Hattie, J. (2011) *Feedback in schools*
Available at: www.visiblelearning.com/sites/default/files/Feedback%20article.pdf

6 Assessing formatively

What types of assessment are there?

When we talk about 'assessment', we often think of tests, quizzes, national assessments and international exams like TOEFL[1] , IELTS[2] or PISA[3].

Such assessments are designed to evaluate a student's learning at a specific moment in time and they are often referred to as *summative assessments,* e.g. an end of unit test, a mid-semester exam or a high school national exam for graduation. These assessments *of* learning measure the level of success or proficiency of the student at the end of a particular period of teaching and students are often compared to a standard (or benchmark). Individual teachers may not always have input into the design of these assessments.

As teachers, though, we may be more interested in assessment *for* learning (AfL). These assessments provide information about the performance of both students and the teacher which can then be used to inform what both need to do next. These are often referred to as formative assessments:

'Formative assessment is the process used by teachers and children to recognise and respond to pupil learning, in order to enhance that learning during the activity or task.' [4]

[1] Test of English as a Foreign Language

[2] The International English Language Testing System (TOEFL and IELTS are the two major international standardised tests of English language proficiency in the world)

[3] The Programme for International Student Assessment (a worldwide evaluation of secondary school students' performance in maths, science and reading, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)

[4] Cowie and Bell (1999) quoted in Clarke, S. (2005) *Formative assessment in the secondary classroom.* Hodder Education: UK. p1.

What are the benefits of formative assessment?

Formative assessment is not about grading students as 'B' students or labelling them as 'failing' students but using the data 'to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go next and how best to get them there.'[5] It informs us about the current level of students' understanding. It also identifies the gap between where students are now and where they need to get to, as well as any misunderstandings they might have. Then we, with our students, can immediately act to solve them. In reality, any activity can be used for formative assessment if the data collected is then used to improve the learning process and to decide what to teach next.

Formative assessment can also be used to improve the teaching process. The teacher plans the lesson and teaches it. The information received from assessing how students responded to the planned activities is then reviewed and used to inform the planning of the next lesson in a teaching and assessment cycle:
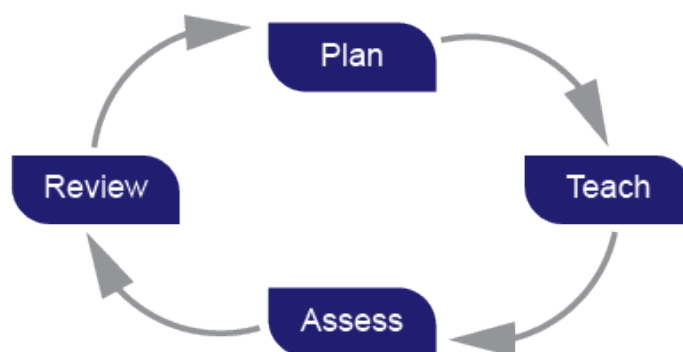
Overall, an education system needs a good balance of both summative and formative assessments as AfL can help students perform better in their summative assessment tasks and summative assessment can show the impact of AfL.

How do we assess large classes?

With a class of 50-100+ students, assessment is a very big challenge for the teacher: monitoring when there is limited space to move; giving feedback to every student on every task; marking and commenting on written work; responding to each student's needs.

Unfortunately, there is no easy solution. A practical step is to implement *some* techniques and activities, perhaps only *some* of the time with *some* of the students. Something is better than nothing! This may mean adopting a policy of 'rolling' assessment: focus on a smaller group of students each week and move to a different group the next week with the idea that all students will be assessed equally and on a continuous basis.

Speaking personally

- When you were a student, did you like taking tests?
- What kind of assessments do you carry out with your students?

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[5] The Assessment Reform Group (2002). *Assessment for Learning: 10 Principles.*
  Available at: www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/SBA/HKDSE/Eng_DVD/doc/Afl_principles.pdf

Suggested techniques and strategies

Assessing formatively BEFORE an activity	
To find out how much students know about the topic/teaching point before you start teaching it.	Useful lesson planning language

• Carry out a 'buddy buzz'.[6]
   ○ Ask students in pairs to quickly (two to three minutes) share what they already know about the topic orally.
   ○ Observe a few pairs from a distance and note what they know/don't know.
   ○ Option: support students by writing sentence starters or prompt words on the board to guide them in their quick discussion.
• Ask yes/no questions or give true/false statements about the topic and ask students to hold up True/False or Yes/No answer cards when answering.
• Present students with an 'error correction' task. Write both correct and incorrect information about the topic or language point (e.g. incorrect grammar or spelling) on the board and ask students to tell you if there is a problem with what you have written.
• These are all suitable for skills and language activities.
	Sample sentence starter:
	The most interesting thing about (topic) is ...
	We use (grammar structure) to talk about …
	We make (grammar structure) by using …
	I think (vocabulary) means …
	
	Instructions for error correction task:
	There are some errors in this (pointing to the board). Can you find them for me?
	
	Cross-reference with: Unit 4: Presenting new language: Test-Teach-Test; Unit 7 Reading and listening: Predictions and anticipation guide; Unit 1 Lesson planning: KWL activity.

Tip: • Ask students to draw in large letters (that the teacher can see from the front) T (for True), F (for False), Y (for Yes) and N (for No) on separate pages at the back of their notebook. They can then use these in every lesson.	

[6] Your friend is your buddy; buzz is the noise of bees moving quickly and busily *or* with this activity, the noise as students quickly and actively discuss in pairs.

Assessing formatively DURING an activity

To find out how well students are progressing with the topic/language item that you are currently teaching:	Useful lesson planning language

● Pose-Pause-Pounce-Bounce.[7]
 	
  ○ Ask ('pose') a question to all students.
  ○ Pause to let all students think.
  ○ Choose ('pounce' on) one student to answer.
  ○ Pass ('bounce') the question to another student to respond to, or build on, the previous answer.
  ○ Continue 'bouncing' the question to a few more students before you finally comment yourself.
● Carry out 'numbered heads together'.[8]
 	
  ○ Form groups of three with each student numbered 1, 2 or 3.
  ○ Ask one or more questions to all students.
  ○ Encourage students to discuss possible answers in their groups.
  ○ Ask for an answer from, e.g. number 2s (just elicit from a few number 2s).
The above are both suitable for skills and language activities.
● During process writing (see Unit 9 Writing), sometimes *only give comments* as feedback *not* marks or grades.
 	
  ○ Comments should be linked to success criteria (that were shared with students when setting the task) and should show students how to improve.
  ○ Students can use your comments to write a second draft or refer back to them when writing their next task.
	Instructions for P-P-P-B:
	I'm going to give you one minute to think about (topic) and then ask one of you.
	
	Bounce the question:
	What do you think of that answer, Fatima?
	Tell us more, Ali
	
	Numbered heads together:
	Ask the question(s).
	Nominate the number.
	OK, I'd like an answer on Question 5 from … (pause) ... number 2!

Tips:
- Encourage your students to raise their hands *if they have a question.* Try to move away from only raising hands to *answer* the teacher's questions. Questions will show you what students are unsure about. Asking other students to answer these questions will also reveal what they do/do not understand.

- In large classes, students could sometimes submit a piece of writing as a group (of two or three people). They should indicate which section each person was responsible for.

- If possible, recognise the efforts of students who respond to written feedback andproduce good second drafts by putting this on the classroom walls in a display.

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[7] Activity championed by Dylan Wiliam. Wiliam, D. (2009) *Content then Process: Teacher Learning Communities in the Service of Formative Assessment.* Solution Tree.

[8] Kagan, S. and Kagan, M. (2007) *Kagan Cooperative Learning.* San Clemente: Kagan Publishing.

Assessing formatively AFTER an activity: self-assessment

To give students an opportunity to evaluate their own learning and develop learner independence.	Useful lesson planning language
● Write can-do statements (linked to the lesson aims) on the board and ask students to copy them into their notebooks.	*Sample can-do statements:* I can write two sentences using the past simple. I can write a paragraph about my family.

● Write can-do statements (linked to the lesson aims) on the board and ask students to copy them into their notebooks.

  ○ Next to each statement, students should put a tick if they believe they can fulfil the aim.
  ○ Collect samples of notebooks throughout the week to see how individual students evaluate themselves.
  ○ Option: read out each statement and ask students to respond by holding up the appropriate 'face' card in their notebook (see Tips below).
● Carry out a 'ladder reflection'.

  ○ Get students to draw a three-step ladder in their notebook.
  ○ Next to the top step ask them to write a comment about what they understand; this can be in L1.
  ○ Next to the middle step, write something they did well.
  ○ Next to the bottom step, write something they need to improve.
  ○ Collect samples of notebooks throughout the week to see how individual students evaluate themselves.
● Ask students to show how confident they feel about the topic/teaching point by:

  ○ raising both arms (if they are confident)
  ○ putting their hands on their head (if they feel they need more 'thinking')
  ○ putting their hands on their shoulders (if they are not confident).

Sample can-do statements:
I can write two sentences using the past simple.
I can write a paragraph about my family.

Ladder reflection sentence starters:
Top step:
'I understand…'
Middle step:
'What went well: …'
Bottom step:
'What I need to look at again: …'

Cross-reference with: Unit 1 Lesson planning: KWL Activity; Unit 5 Giving and getting feedback: Thumbs up/down activity.

Tips:
● Give students training on self-assessment and explain the purpose of it (in L1 if necessary); note that some activities ask students to reveal their self-evaluations in public (consider if this is appropriate).

● It takes time for students to value self-assessment and carry it out well; don't give up after one attempt if the result is unsatisfactory – keep trying as it improves with practice.

● Ask students to draw three large faces (that the teacher can see from the front) on separate pages at the back of their notebook: happy face (for 'I understand'/'I can do'), neutral face (for 'I understand a little'/'I need more work on this'), sad face (for 'I don't understand'/'I can't do'). They can then use these in every lesson.

Assessing formatively AFTER an activity: peer-assessment

To develop students' analytical skills and their understanding of success criteria; to give them an opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning and to support others.	Useful lesson planning language

● Set and agree rules with students on how to give feedback before they start assessing each other.
 	
  ○ Rule number 1 ('the golden rule'): be kind!
  ○ Students can draw up their own rules with teacher guidance (a 'collaboration contract').
  ○ The first feedback should always be positive.
  ○ If not sure, students should check with another student or the teacher.
● Ask students, in pairs, to critique and provide feedback to their partner.
 	
  ○ Write on the board a checklist that focuses on three to four areas for assessment (linked to the success criteria given to students before the task).
  ○ If the task is written, get students to swap notebooks.
  ○ The partner should assess if the writing. meets the aims of the task, noting: Yes/No/? (if they are not sure).
● 'TAG it'! When assessing their friend's work, the peer should:
 	
  ○ **T**ell the student something they liked
  ○ **A**sk a question
  ○ **G**ive advice
● The teacher can support students by writing prompts or sentence starters on the board which they can refer to when speaking.
	Sample checklist on the board for writing a paragraph:
	Is there…
	... a clear introduction?
	... a good use of linking words?
	... good spelling?
	... interesting content?
	
	'TAG it'! sample prompts:
	I liked:
	1. ...
	2. ...
	What do you mean by …?
	Next time you could focus on …
	
	Cross-reference with: Unit 5 Giving and getting feedback: 3 stars and 1 wish activity.

Tips:
- Give students training on peer-assessment and explain the purpose of it (in L1 if necessary).
- If possible, try to pair up students of a similar ability.
- Peer-assessment is a useful option when the teacher is unable to give detailed feedback on every piece of writing.

Assessing formatively AFTER an activity: teacher's own performance

Formative assessment not only provides data about the students but also opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own teaching.
 	
● Try to record some information about how each individual student is progressing. Focus on a small number of students each week, then select different groups after that.
 	
● Look at what you have learned about the students, the activities and the way you delivered the lesson.
 	
   ○ At the end of each lesson, take a quick note of what worked/what didn't work (add this to your lesson plan).
   ○ Use this information to inform your future lesson planning.
 	
● Decide if you will move on, in the next lesson, to a new teaching point or re-teach parts of the lesson in a different way.
 	
   ○ Remember that recycling/revising language is always necessary.
   ○ Plan further practice at spaced intervals, with the gaps between each practice getting longer.
	Useful lesson planning language
	
	Cross-reference: Unit 10 Practising new language: Distributed practice activity.

Tips:

● Share your findings from these assessments with other teachers in your school and elsewhere.

● Consider setting up a Professional Learning Network with other teachers (e.g. a WhatsApp group or Facebook group).

● Check the British Council Teaching English website for CPD opportunities:

www.teachingenglish.org.uk

Professional Learning Network: a community of teachers who meet to share ideas, activities and professional concerns (face to face or via social media)
CPD: continuing professional development

End of unit reflection

- How would your students respond to some of these assessment activities?
- What do you do with the information you get from assessing your students?
- What can you do to continue your own professional development?
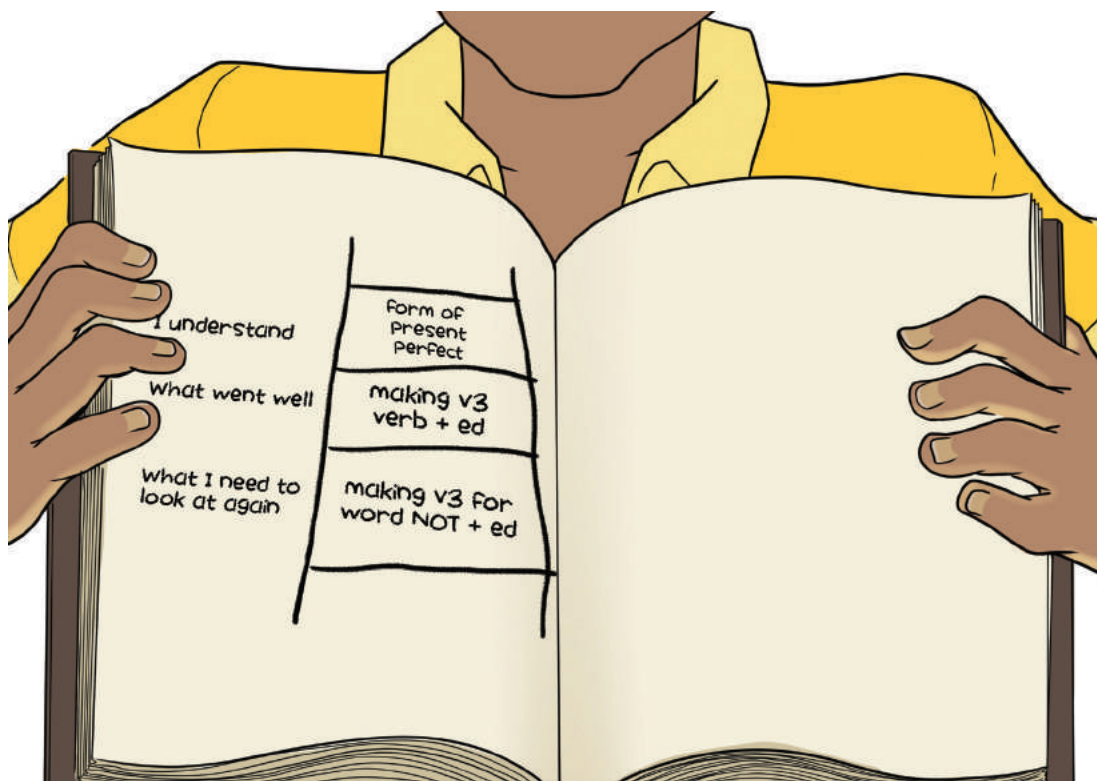
Further reading:
Bullock, D. *Assessment for Learning*
Available at: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/assessment-learning

Education Endowment Foundation (2016). *A marked improvement? A review of the evidence on written marking*. EEF: London
Available at:
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/evidence-reviews/written-marking/

Further viewing:
An example of a teacher introducing the concept of peer assessment to pre-primary and primary students:
Berger, R. (2012) *Critique and Feedback: The story of Austin's butterfly*
Available at: https://youtu.be/hqh1MRWZjms

7 Reading and listening

As a student, did you like reading in class?

What's special about reading and listening?

reading and listening = receptive skills

Students receive information and language created by other people. The task is to understand this information presented in written form (for reading) and in spoken form (for listening). In the English classroom, students can listen not only to the teacher, but also to other students.

receptive ≠ passive

Students must engage with the language and ideas of these texts. They can do this by working actively with other students (and the teacher). A reading or listening activity is not necessarily a silent activity and we can encourage students to speak during certain stages of the lesson.

How can speaking help students' comprehension?

In a receptive skills lesson, there are usually three stages: pre-, while and post-reading/listening. When students read a text or listen to a dialogue, they probably want some quiet time to concentrate and work alone. However, in the stages before and after this – and sometimes even while doing this – it can help a student to work with others to explore the topic, the language, the meaning and their own personal response. The best way to do this is speaking – with purpose – because speaking also develops thinking skills and deepens the learning process:

> *'Oral language, talk, plays a central role in learning; learning how to think and in talking your way into meaning.'* [1]

What kind of speaking?

In a receptive skills lesson, students can orally:

- predict or activate what they already know about the topic
- ask and answer questions about the text
- analyse and show understanding of the language and the message
- give their own reaction to the text
- respond to the reactions of other readers/listeners to the text.

Is reading aloud useful 'speaking'?

When students read aloud, they are speaking – but they are not communicating their own message. Reading aloud is a useful activity when students are still learning to decode words on the page; in other words, as part of a literacy lesson. But once students have learned to read, then it does little to develop their speaking skills. If the teacher still wishes to check a student's pronunciation of a text, then reading aloud is best done after comprehension of this text, one-to-one with the teacher and while other students are busy with a different task.
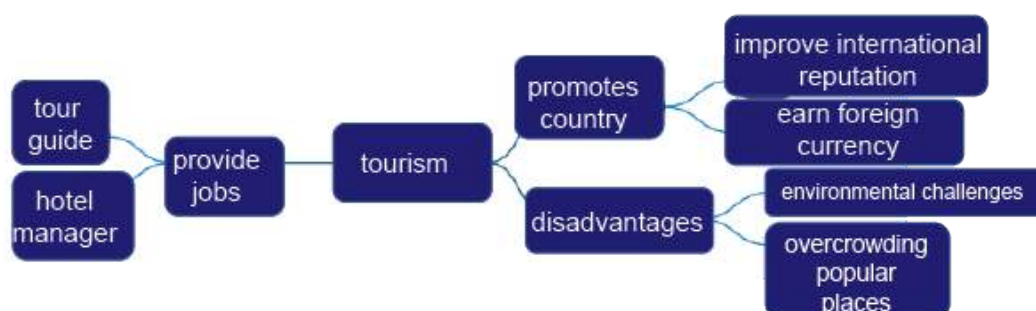
Speaking personally

- Is listening in English more difficult than reading in English? Why/Why not?
- When reading aloud, do you remember most of what the text says?

[1]Edwards-Groves, C. Anstey, M. and Bull G. (2014) *Classroom talk: Understanding dialogue, pedagogy and practice.*

Suggested communicative activities

Pre-reading/listening 1: Predictions

Aim: predicting information about a text	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Write five key words on the board connected to the text. 2. Ask students in pairs to predict the story/content. 3. Students then read/listen to the text and check their predictions. Option: Game – students lose a point for each wrong prediction	*Instructions:* Step 2: In pairs, use the words and say what you think the text is about. Step 3: Now (read/listen to) the text to check your answers. Can you remember what (I/the text) said about …?
	Support: Give students more words or simpler words. Extend: Give students synonyms of key words in text. or Write the topic on the board and start a mindmap; students in pairs copy the mindmap and add more ideas about what they think will be in the text; students then share with another pair; finally, students read/listen to the text and add any missing/extra information to the mindmap or delete incorrect information.[2]

Tip:
● This is an opportunity to recycle vocabulary you have taught before.

[2]Source: Kryszewska, H. (2004) *Language Activities for Teenagers* edited by S. Lindstromberg. CUP.

English Connects: Supplementary activities for English language teaching   © British Council

Pre-reading/listening 2: Anticipation guide

Aim: activating prior knowledge about a text	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Write four to six statements about the text (some true, some false) on the board. 2. Ask students in pairs to discuss these statements (from what they already know about the topic) and respond 'true/false' to each with reasons. 3. In whole class, ask for some comments and reasons about why they agree/disagree. 4. Students then read/listen to the text to confirm answers. 5. Students turn to their partner and together, for each statement, discuss what the text said and correct their first answers (if necessary). Alternative: write questions about the text (or use accompanying questions from textbook) on board for students to ask/answer in pairs before reading/listening	*Instructions:* Step 2: Before we (read/listen), discuss with your partner if you think the sentence is true or false and why. Step 4: Now (read/listen to) the text and see if you can find these ideas. Step 5: Now we have (read/listened to) the text, again discuss with your partner what you found. Change your answer if you want, but say why.
	Support: On the board, write the line numbers (of the reading text) where students can check the statement. For the listening, pause the recording after each section containing the statement. Extend: Give the students the topic and, before reading/listening, ask them to write their own questions for another group/pair; students then read/listen to see if the answers are in the text.

While reading/listening: Read-Pause-Share

Aim: cooperative reading/listening Procedure: 1. Play first section of the listening (or ask students to read the first section/paragraph). 2. Pause and ask students in pairs to discuss in their own words what they think they heard/read. 3. Continue like this with the rest of the text.	Useful classroom language
	Instructions: Step 2: Before we continue, tell your partner what you just (heard/read). Step 3: Let's move to the next part.
	Support: Play the text twice before pausing. Extend: After the pause, students can predict what they think will come next. Or Ask students to agree on the main idea of the section/paragraph and write it down in their own words.

Post-reading/listening 1: Moving reactions

Aim: giving personal response to text	Useful classroom language
Procedure:	
1. Write a sentence starter (connected to the text topic) on the board and ask students to copy it on a piece of paper and complete.	*Instructions:* Please complete the sentence. *Possible sentence starters:* What I know now is … One question I still have is … The most interesting (part/event/person) was... My favourite word is … This (story/text) reminds me of …
2. Students pass the paper to the person on their left who reads and adds a comment or asks a question.	
3. Write another sentence starter on the board and ask students to copy onto the next line and complete.	
4. Students pass the paper again, comment and respond to the next sentence starter. 5. Continue with four to five sentence starters until the paper returns to the original student who can now read all the responses and discuss with the group. Alternative: write three sentence starters on the board; students complete with their own ideas (in their head/on paper); students turn to the person behind/in front/at side to see if they can find somebody with similar idea.	Support: Give the students some jumbled 'Wh-' questions to order. Students then write answers. *Sample jumbled 'Wh-' question:* Tom?/you/Would/do/as/the/same (Would you do the same as Tom?) Extend: Students write their own 'Wh-' questions about the text. They pass them around the group to answer.

Post-reading/listening 2: AEIOU reflection

Aim: giving personal response to text	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Write on the board the letter 'A' and explain you want an 'adjective' to describe the text students have just read/listened to. 2. Ask students to think of their own word and share this in groups. 3. Write the letter 'E' on the board and explain this is 'emotion' and you want to know how the text made students feel. 4. Ask students to share in groups. 5. Continue with 'I' for 'interesting' (something students found interesting in the text); 'O' for 'Oh!' (something surprising about the text or that caught their attention); 'U' for 'Um?' (a question about the text). 6. Get some volunteers to share their words with the whole class.	*Instructions:* Step 1: Think of an adjective to describe the text. Share with your group. Step 3: How did the text make you feel? Share with your group. Step 5: What did you find interesting about the text? What surprised you in the text? Ask your group a question about the text.
	Support: Brainstorm with students possible words for adjectives and emotions. Then only give letters 'A' and 'E'. Extend: Explain the AEIOU task and get students to do the task individually. Then ask students to share their words with people around them and try to find somebody with the same words.

End of unit reflection

In a reading/listening lesson:
- how many stages do you usually have?
- how much speaking do your students do?
- what changes might you now make?

Further reading:
Howarth, P. *Making reading communicative*
Available at: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/making-reading-communicative

8 Speaking

Ask yourself

How did you develop your speaking skills in English?

What is 'speaking' in the English classroom?

There are four kinds of speaking activity.

- Pronunciation work: helping students to produce the sounds of English accurately at word, phrase and sentence level so that, when they speak, they are not misunderstood

- Oral feedback: the focus here is usually asking students to provide, in spoken form, answers to grammar or vocabulary exercises (with accurate use of language), or information in response to a direct question

- Oral practice: getting students to practise new language through oral drills, controlled practice and freer practice activities

- Oral fluency or developing the skill of speaking: the focus here is on communication and teaching students to deliver a message effectively and appropriately (according to the context or spoken genre, e.g. having a discussion or delivering a presentation)

What makes speaking challenging for students?

Speaking is a natural skill, which in our first language develops after listening. However, this does not mean that speaking is easy in a foreign language. For students to communicate effectively, they need:

- ideas and content

- vocabulary, grammar and functional language

- intelligible pronunciation (including knowing where stress falls in a word or sentence; appropriate rhythm or intonation; adopting the features of connected speech)

- awareness of how we communicate and strategies for doing this effectively (the ability to 'take turns': *knowing when to start and finish speaking in a conversation,* e.g. phrases for asking for clarification: *'what do you mean by …?'*)

- confidence to use the language in front of others and the ability to respond in real-time

- the chance in class (and outside) to just speak in order to express themselves (even if they make mistakes – as making mistakes is part of the learning process).

How can we help students develop their speaking skills?

Students need a lot of opportunities, in pairs or groups, and in a safe, supportive learning environment, to be able to try and express themselves in speaking in order to communicate effectively. As Philip Kerr says:

> *'Without opportunities to re-use and interconnect the language they have studied, learners' knowledge* about *language may never become the ability to* use it. *(…) Without the communicative task, the probability of language learning taking place is much diminished.'*[1]

To help students develop fluency:

- pick a topic they are familiar with and are interested in

- choose speaking activities that mainly require language they already know and can easily recall

- encourage them to focus on expressing a message (their opinion and ideas) and not to worry too much about being a hundred per cent accurate.

The aim of developing speaking as a skill, or oral fluency, is about helping students to communicate their message effectively. Giving feedback on their ideas (content) and communication strategies. is just as important as correcting their errors.

Speaking personally

- How much opportunity do you have to speak English outside the classroom?
- What do you find most challenging when speaking in English: using the right words and grammar, pronouncing the language correctly, finding something to say … or something else?

[1]Kerr, P. (2017). *How much time should we give to speaking practice?* Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series. (PDF) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p4.

Suggested communicative activities

Timed Think-Pair-Share[2]	
Aims: oral fluency; listening for detail Procedure: 1. Divide the class into pairs and label each student A or B. 2. Give students a task or clear question; avoid just saying 'Talk about ...' 3. Give students 30 seconds to a minute to think alone about their answer. 4. Decide which student will start: A or B (you can flip a coin).	Useful classroom language
	Instructions: In your pairs, decide who is A and who is B. Now swap roles! B, you've got one minute to share your ideas. A, listen. *Checking instructions:* A, you are talking for one minute. B, are you talking too or listening? (Listening, good.)
5. Tell As to share their answer (one minute) while Bs listen. 6. Now ask all Bs to share their answers with As for one minute. 7. Elicit some ideas from different pairs and give some feedback on ideas.	Support: Write the question on the board. Give students more thinking time. Give students less talking time. Ask students to write down key words (during the 'think' stage) which they can then use while talking. Extend: Once both students have spoken, give them an extra minute to respond to each other's talk. (e.g. 'I liked that you …'; 'One thing I'm not sure about is …', etc.)
Tips: ● This activity makes sure that all students get an equal opportunity to participate in a speaking activity in class. ● Make sure you give students enough thinking time (give more time if necessary) so that they can prepare their ideas and the language they will need when speaking.	

[2] First proposed by Frank Lyman (1981). *The Responsive Classroom Discussion*. University of Michigan.

Categorise it!

Aims: oral fluency; listening for detail; categorising, negotiating and giving reasons	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Give students a number of words, images or items (e.g. six to eight). 2. Tell students to work in pairs/small groups and categorise the words/images/items in any way they choose (e.g. into two or three categories). 3. Tell students they need to discuss the categories and agree on the grouping (about five minutes); suggest they take notes. 4. Elicit ideas from different groups; give some feedback on ideas/categories.	*Instructions:* Look at the words on the board (e.g. milk, language, information, love, knowledge, coffee). In your pair/group discuss how you can group them. *Feedback:* Tell the class why you have grouped them like this. Are there any other ways you can group them?
	Support: Use images or realia (real objects) instead of words. Tell students that they need to make two groups. Extend: Provide words, images or items that can be grouped in different ways. This means there is no wrong or right answer, but groups need to explain their thinking to the class.

Tip:
- This activity also works well to highlight particular aspects of pronunciation: sounds, syllables, or stress patterns. You can give students some words (e.g. *comfortable, chocolate, vegetable, factory, camera, dictionary*) and ask them to group them, e.g. according to the number of syllables (two syllables: *chocolate, factory, camera;* three syllables: *comfortable, vegetable, dictionary*)

Question triangle

Aims: oral fluency; listening for detail; writing questions	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Divide the class into groups of three. 2. Tell students to decide who is A, B and C. 3. Give the class a meaningful topic or let groups select a topic they want to talk about (e.g. sports, hobbies, food). 4. In their group, students write three questions for the chosen topic together (on paper/in a notebook). 5. Groups exchange their questions (passing the paper/notebook). 6. Using another group's questions, A now asks B one question; B answers and C listens carefully to give some feedback (e.g. '... was interesting! I liked how you …'). 7. B now asks one question to C; C answers and A listens carefully and gives some feedback. 8. C asks the last question; A answers and B gives feedback. 9. Elicit some ideas from different pairs and give some feedback on content.	*Instructions:* In your group of three, write three different questions on the topic of ... Now give your three questions to another group. A you ask one question, B you answer and C listen carefully so you can give feedback on what you liked. Then change roles. Support: Write six to eight questions on the board and ask students to choose three which they write on paper/in a notebook. Extend: Students can write six questions on the topic. You can give students a minimum talking time (e.g. answer the question and keep talking for one minute!) Challenge students to ask more complex questions, e.g. 'Do you think it is a good thing that …?'/'Why do you think … ?'

Tips:
Learner training before this activity is recommended.
- Make sure students understand they need to be encouraging and supportive to each other (e.g. no laughing at or interrupting somebody when speaking).
- Tell them mistakes are welcome in class (this is the best way to learn).
- Ask them, during peer feedback, to focus on ideas/the message and not just correct language mistakes.

Pyramid discussion

Aims: oral fluency; listening for detail; ranking, negotiating and giving reasons	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Divide the class into pairs. 2. On the board, list ten words related to the same topic (e.g. sports, food, movie genres, hobbies, etc.). 3. Ask students individually to select five words and rank them in order of most important, most fun, most difficult, most wanted, most delicious, etc; students should each write their 'Top 5' list. 4. Get students to turn to their partner and explain why they have selected these five words. 5. Tell pairs that they have four minutes to agree on a 'Top 3' list together (only using words from their 'Top 5' lists!); one student should write this 'Top 3' list. 6. Get two pairs to share their 'Top 3' lists and, give five minutes, to agree the top one together (only using words from their 'Top 3' lists!). 7. Elicit some ideas from different groups and give some feedback on content.	*Instructions*: Select your 'Top 5' and order them from one (most important) to five (least important). Share your 'Top 5'. Then together agree on the three most important. You can only use the five on your lists! Now in groups of four share your 'Top 3' lists and together agree on the number one. You've got five minutes! *Providing support:* What kind of language can you use to persuade your partners? --- Support: Give students extra time to write their 'Top 5' list. Ask them to write down a reason for each. They can refer back to these when speaking. Extend: Students write a paragraph giving reasons for their top choice. They can compare/contrast with the other options discussed.

Tips:
- Write useful language on the board for students to:
  - introduce their opinion
  - compare the concepts given
  - give reasons and persuade the other(s).
- Make sure students/pairs/groups write each list so that they have these to refer to when sharing and negotiating.

Five-word stories

Aims: oral fluency; listening for detail; predicting	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Write five words on the board. Inform students you are going to tell them about an event in your life; ask students to look at the words and, with the person next to them, predict the story. 2. Elicit some predictions but avoid commenting 'right'/'wrong'; tell students to listen to your story and check their predictions; ask if anyone had guessed correctly. 3. Ask students to think about a similar event/experience in their life; give them time to write five key words connected with this event/experience on paper. 4. Group students into groups of three: A, B and C. 5. Student A shows their five key words and the others predict the story. 6. Student A tells their story and B and C listen to check their predictions. 7. Repeat for B and C; once all students have had a turn, ask them to select the best story. 8. Elicit some ideas from different groups and give some feedback on content.	*Instructions*: Look at these five words. These connect to an experience in my life. Can you guess what happened to me? Now, think about an event in your life. Write down five key words. Show your five key words. Get your group to guess your story. Don't say if they are right or wrong yet! Now, which story was the most interesting in your group?
	Support: Write useful phrases and sentence starters on the board. Students can use these when speaking. Extend: Students write their own story or a summary of the best story.

Tips:
- Steps 1 and 2 allow you to demonstrate the task and provide a good model so that students get a clear idea of what they need to do.
- The story can be about a past event/experience, the present, or a future plan/dream.

End of unit reflection

- How much time do you spend developing students' oral fluency in a reading or listening lesson?

- Of the four skills (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking), which is the most important… in the eyes of your students? … in the eyes of their parents? … in your opinion?

- What are the challenges of assessing your students' speaking? How can you overcome these?

Further reading:

Kerr, P. (2017). *How much time should we give to speaking practice?* Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series. (pdf) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at:

www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/CambridgePapersinELT_TimeForSpeaking_2017_ONLINE1.pdf

9 Writing

Ask yourself

How do you feel when you write in English?

What is 'writing' in the English classroom?
There are three kinds of writing:
- learning to write by hand or type (learning the basic mechanics of the written form)
- writing to learn (e.g. copying information from the board; giving written answers to exercises - the focus here is not on writing but learning the content or the language structures)
- developing the skill of writing (e.g. structuring a paragraph or writing a letter – the focus here is on the written text or *product* and the *process* of writing it).
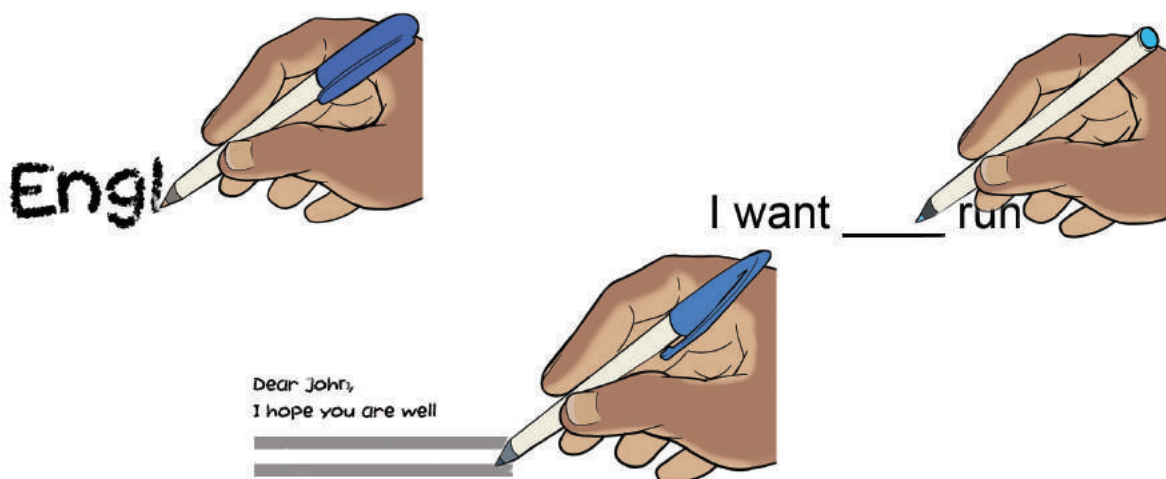
We can ask students to write different kinds of text, e.g. a message, an essay, a description of a person. These kinds of texts have a special purpose and we call each form a written *genre*. We expect to see vocabulary, grammar, content and layout specific to each genre.

What makes writing challenging for students?
Writing is not a natural skill like listening and speaking. We need to teach students how to write and writing requires a lot of effort. Even copying from the board can be a challenge for low-level students, especially if the script of their first language is different from English. Writing takes time and a lot of practice but it is, nevertheless, important. As Penny Ur says:

> *'Writing has become a much more important skill in recent years owing to the increase in the use of digital communication.'* [1]

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[1] Ur, P. (2016) *Penny Ur's 100 teaching tips*. Cambridge University Press. p111.

Students need:
- ideas and content
- vocabulary, grammar and functional language
- punctuation (e.g. full stops, commas)
- knowledge about the genre.

And, of course, they need something to write on: lined paper and a pen/pencil or a computer. It may be best, though, to avoid asking individual students to write on the board because this can take too long, be difficult to read and only keeps one student engaged.

How can we support students?

To help students, choose writing activities that students can manage. Pick a topic they know something about and they have language for. Writing does not have to be solitary. We can do a whole class activity with the teacher guiding students through the process, thinking aloud. We can also ask students to write in pairs/groups.

It is common to teach writing using:
- a product approach

  We give students an example of the finished written text (the product), not to copy word for word, but to discover for themselves (with teacher help) how the text is structured (e.g. opening of a letter, short paragraph, use of linking words).
- a process approach

  We guide students through the writing process and we do not start with a clear end product in mind. Students work together to brainstorm ideas before they start planning, organising, writing draft 1, editing and re-drafting their work.

Speaking personally

- Which genres do you write in your daily life? Would these be the same for your students?
- How much writing do you do with a pen/pencil? Is knowing how to type more important nowadays?

Suggested communicative activities

Controlled writing: Breaking the code	
Aims: accuracy at sentence level; activating knowledge of spelling; developing logical thinking Procedure: 1. Draw a mobile phone pad on the board (each number 1–9 should have two or three letters).	Useful classroom language
	Instructions: Here is a secret code. What is the message in English? Pay attention to spelling! Don't forget to use capital letters and full stops *Sample code:* 8317 37 9576 5152 Answer: What is your name?

<table>
<tr><td>1
ABC</td><td>2
DEF</td><td>3
GHI</td></tr>
<tr><td>4
JKL</td><td>5
MNO</td><td>6
PQR</td></tr>
<tr><td>7
STU</td><td>8
VW</td><td>9
XYZ</td></tr>
</table>

2. Give students questions or sentences using only numbers. 3. Ask students in pairs/groups to decode the message and write it with correct spelling and punctuation. 4. Get students to ask and answer the questions together.	Support: Instead of a sentence or question, only put words and phrases in code. Extend: Get students to write their own codes for the group to 'break'.

Tip:
● Use this activity to practise recently learned grammar structures (including question formation) and vocabulary (including spelling).

Controlled writing: Opinion dictation

Aims: listening for detail; accuracy at sentence level; giving personal opinion

Procedure:
1. Ask students to prepare a three-row grid on paper with the headings: Agree/It depends/Disagree.

Agree	
It depends	
Disagree	

2. Dictate a sentence and ask them to write it in the row that represents their opinion; repeat two or three times if needed.

3. Encourage students in pairs/groups to discuss their choice.

4. Write the sentence on the board and check spelling/sentence formation with students.

5. Continue with other dictated sentences.

Useful classroom language

Sample sentence to dictate:
We should not use mobile phones in school.

Instructions:
Please copy this grid in your notebook.

Explaining the three options:
Listen – do you agree or disagree? Or maybe you sometimes agree and sometimes disagree: it depends.
Write in the box that matches your opinion.

For feedback:
Did your partner write in the same box?

Support: Before the activity, write the sentences on the board. Cover them with paper or a cloth. As you dictate, reveal each written sentence for a few seconds, just long enough to give students some support with words or sentence structure.

Extend: Only repeat each dictated sentence once. Get students to check spelling/sentence formation before you write each sentence on the board.

Tip:
● Dictate sentences that students can use later for another piece of writing (e.g. as topic sentences for an essay) or that are part of a listening or reading text.

Semi-controlled writing: Truth dictation

Aims: listening for detail; accuracy at sentence level; personalising information	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Dictate a sentence to students and tell them to only write it (word for word) if it is *true* for them. 2. If it is not true for them, ask them to adapt the sentence so that it becomes true for them. 3. Do an example together, e.g. 'I like bananas.'	*Instructions:* Write this sentence if it is true for you. *Checking students' understanding of task:* If the sentence is *not* true for you, do you write it? (Answer: No) If the sentence is *not* true for you, what do you do? (Answer: change it so it is true for you)
4. Ask students to put their hands up if they like bananas; those who like bananas should write 'I like bananas'. 5. Eicit from those who don't like bananas what they should write, e.g. 'I don't like bananas' or 'I like mangoes', etc. 6. Ask students in pairs/groups to share and discuss what they wrote. 7. Elicit some sentences from the students; write these on the board to check for spelling/ sentence formation. 8. Continue with other dictated sentences.	Support: Write each sentence on the board. Students copy it if it is true for them and change it if it is not true for them. Extend: Choose more challenging vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Tip:
● Choose sentences that recycle language studied before *or* that model the language students are studying *or* are useful examples for the topic of the lesson.

Semi-controlled writing: Dictogloss[2]

Aims: listening for both gist and detail; note-taking; accuracy at sentence level; and working with others.	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Prepare a short paragraph (five or six sentences may be enough) and write two or three key words from the text on the board. 2. Ask students to predict the topic from these words. 3. Read the text at normal speed and ask students to just listen. 4. Ask students in pairs/groups to discuss what they heard. 5. Read the text again at normal speed and ask students to take notes, writing key words and phrases that they hear (tell them not to try and write everything).	*Instructions:* *Step 3:* Please just listen – no writing. *Step 5:* Please listen – and take notes of some words and phrases you hear. Don't try to write everything – you won't have time! *Steps 6 and 7:* In pairs/groups of four, put your texts together and make one text that has a similar meaning.
6. Put students in pairs to recreate the text from their notes (again, tell them you don't want an exact copy but a text with the main ideas) and write one version together. 7. Put pairs together (into a group of four) and ask them to share their texts and produce one final version. 8. Write the original text on the board and ask groups to compare with their version; discuss what is different. Option: Monitor, highlight some good language use and collect two or three common errors as feedback.	Support: Write more key words or phrases on the board. Dictate a shorter text. Read the text at slightly slower than normal speed. Halfway through the activity, tell students you will read the text one more time. Extend: Start at step 3 (without pre-teaching vocabulary or giving information about the topic) and dictate a longer text.

Tips:
- Discuss with students (in L1 if necessary, as part of learner training) why it is important to edit and re-draft when we are writing.
- Dictation can be a bridge between very controlled and freer writing and can lead to meaningful communication. For more information on dictation, see:
  www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/using-dictation.

[2] Activity first introduced by Ruth Wajnryb (1990) *Grammar Dictation.* Oxford University Press

Freer writing: EmPOWERing the writer

Aims: taking students through the writing process (suitable for longer writing tasks); encouraging peer correction	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Put students in groups and give them any writing task. 2. Ask each group to *plan* their writing (brainstorming ideas and language). 3. Ask each group to *organise* their notes (getting the ideas in order). 4. Get students to *write* draft one individually. 5. Ask students to share their writing in the group and *edit* (giving feedback and corrections to each other). 6. Get students to *re-draft* (revising their text before handing in the final draft).	*Step 2:* Together think about the ideas you want to write about. *Step 3:* Discuss together what should go in each paragraph. *Step 4:* Start writing on your own. *Step 5:* Look at each other's work. Can you give some advice to make it even better? *Step 6:* Rewrite your work using the feedback from your group.
	Support: On the board provide a skeleton for the writing task. Write a sentence starter for each paragraph that students can use. Alternatively get them to write in pairs, with each student writing but helping each other with the language. Extend: Ask students to look at their sentences and see if they see repetition of nouns or verbs. Can they replace these with different words (synonyms)? Alternatively ask them to write an extra paragraph.

End of unit reflection

- How much time do you spend in class developing students' writing skills?
- What are the challenges you face when teaching writing? What can you do to help students overcome some of these challenges?
- What kind of writing are your students assessed on?

Further reading:

Kaye, P. *Making writing communicative*
Available at: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/making-writing-communicative

English Connects: Supplementary activities for English language teaching   © British Council

Practising new language

Ask yourself

How much practice did you need when learning a new skill (e.g. to drive/play a new sport or musical instrument or swim?

Why do students need practice?

Students need to understand new language: grammar, vocabulary and functional language. If students do not understand it, they cannot put this information in their brain. Teacher explanations of language are not enough to do this. Students must *use* the language themselves.

To help students use new language, we need to give them many opportunities in the classroom for *practice*. This moves them from 'knowing about' or 'memorising' new language to actively 'using' it in their speaking or writing. This practice stage is perhaps where the real learning happens!

We cannot be sure that students will remember what we teach. But when we give students time to practise new language, they have to find this information in their brain (information retrieval) and think deeply about what they have learned (making memories). The more often students practise new language (repetition), the easier it will become for them to actively use it without thinking too much about it (use it with automaticity). Instead of 'practice makes perfect' (are we ever perfect?), it may be more accurate to say:

'Practice makes permanent!' [1]

[1] Origin unknown, but often attributed to football manager Bobby Robson (1933-2009)

What kind of practice do students need?

There are two different kinds of activities to practise the new *target language* (TL).

● Controlled practice activities:

  ○ focus on accuracy (of meaning, form and pronunciation)

  ○ provide repetition of the TL (speaking, e.g. oral drills; writing, e.g. matching tasks, written exercises)

  ○ are mostly controlled by the teacher

  ○ give students little choice in what language to use

  ○ are monitored carefully by the teacher who corrects and usually gives immediate feedback on accurate use of the TL.

● Freer practice activities:

  ○ focus on fluency (using the TL in a relevant context)

  ○ often allow students to personalise the task and contribute their own ideas (discussion, debates, writing games)

  ○ are less controlled by the teacher

  ○ give students some choice about what language to use (they can bring in other language they already know)

  ○ are usually monitored 'at a distance' by the teacher who may give corrections or feedback later.

When is a good time for practice?

● After teaching and clarifying the TL

● Controlled practice *before* freer practice (to maintain a smooth flow from very controlled to less controlled activities).

Practice can also be good for:

● revision

● homework.

Make sure students get to practise the TL several times. The best way is to give practice over a long period of time, with gaps between each practice opportunity: distributed practice[2].
For example:

Week 1 /Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Week 2 /Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Teach TL + practise	Do another activity with TL			Do another activity with TL					Do another activity with TL

Speaking personally

  ● In your lessons, how much time do you spend introducing new language compared with giving students practice?

  ● What percentage of your practice activities are controlled compared to freer?

[2] For more information see: https://pcl.sitehost.iu.edu/rgoldsto/courses/dunloskyimprovinglearning.pdf

Suggested communicative activities

Disappearing sentences	
Aims: controlled practice of TL; focus on accuracy of form and pronunciation	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Write a sentence with the TL on the board; make sure students understand the meaning. 2. Ask students to listen carefully when you read it out.	*Instructions:* Look at the board (rub out one word). Can you remember the sentence? Please say it out loud. Well done! Now, (rub out another word) can you say the sentence again?
3. Ask students to repeat the sentence (make sure they use correct pronunciation). 4. Rub out one of the words. 5. Ask students to say the sentence again, remembering the missing word. 6. Then rub out another word; students say the sentence again, etc. until there are no words left on the board! 7. Finally, students write down the whole text from memory.	Support: To make this activity easier choose a simple, short sentence. Rub out 'grammar' (not content) words first, e.g. 'the', 'in', 'and', etc. Extend: Choose a longer sentence or choose a sentence with useful collocations. Rub out content words and collocations first to challenge the learners.
Tip: ● You can turn this into a competition by dividing the class into two groups (left/right, front/back, girls/boy, etc.) who repeat at different times. See which group remembers the sentence correctly.	

Personalising the coursebook

Aims: controlled practice of TL; focus on accuracy of meaning and form	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Ask students to look at the gap-fill in the coursebook/on the board. 2. Get them to complete the gap with the TL. 3. Then tell students to make the sentence more about their context, e.g. replace names, places. Example: Coursebook gap-fill: *Sally often _____ (visit) the museum in London.* Student changes to: *Mamadou often visits the library in Dakar.*	*Instructions:* Look at the sentences. Complete the gap and change the sentence so it is more about us in...
	Support: Ask students to just change one word in each sentence. Extend: Students can swap notebooks after they have completed the tasks. Students then write questions for each of their partners' sentences (e.g. 'What does Mamadou often do in Dakar?'). They can ask each other the questions to get the sentences (with the TL) back.

Tip:
● Do an example first on the board with all students watching.

Activating the coursebook

Aims: controlled practice of TL; focus on accuracy of meaning and form	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Divide the class into pairs and label each student A or B. 2. Ask As to turn their backs towards the board; Bs can see the board.	*Checking understanding of instructions:* As, can you turn around and look at the board? No! Not yet. Bs, can you look at the board? Yes!
3. Show/reveal a few practice gap-fill sentences (with answers). 4. Get Bs to read aloud the first sentence. 5. As listen and fill in/say the missing TL. 6. Bs listen and say 'yes' (correct) or 'no' (incorrect). 7. Continue for the other sentences. 8. Then change roles and repeat with remaining practice sentences. 9. Finally, both students look at all the practice sentences and discuss the answers; check any difficulties with the whole class.	Support: Write short, simple sentences. Give two sentences only. Extend: Students write their own gap-fill sentences. In pairs they read out their sentences for their partner to complete with the TL.

Tip:
- Do a demonstration first with a stronger student.

Rolling dice

Aims: semi-controlled practice of TL	Useful classroom language

Preparation:
Before going to class, find a large box. Turn it into a dice: write the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 on the appropriate sides, large enough for students to see.
 	
Procedure:
1. On the board write the numbers 1 to 6.
 	
2. Next to each number, write a TL focus area, for example:
  ○ 'Wh-' questions on a topic/grammar area
  ○ different grammar points
  ○ specific vocabulary, etc.
 	
3. Put students into pairs/groups.
 	
4. Roll the dice or get a student to roll the dice.
 	
5. Ask students to do the task for that number., for example:
  ○ talk about the topic
  ○ make a sentence with the grammar structure
  ○ write a sentence with the vocabulary, etc.
	Instructions:
	Let's roll the dice. It's landed on number 2. Look at number 2 on the board, (e.g. present perfect).
	Turn to your partner. You are going to say a sentence using number 2, (the present perfect). OK, Abi, please roll the dice again for the next sentence.
	
	Support: Instead of writing key words after each number, you can write a jumbled sentence or question for students to order.
	
	Extend: To challenge learners, the first time they can roll the dice for the grammar they need to use and the second time for the vocabulary they need to use in that sentence.
	
	Option:
	If you want to extend students' speaking, write up another list of 1–6 showing 'talking time':
	1 – 1 min
	2 – 2 min
	3 – 1 min
	4 – 2 min
	5 – 1 min
	6 – 2 min
	After you have rolled the dice to select the focus area, roll again to select the time they need to talk for.

Tip:
● Put students in groups of three: A, B and C. Student C will take notes when A and B are talking. When they finish speaking, C gives feedback. Then swap roles so all learners get to speak twice and give peer feedback twice.

Say it!

Aims: freer practice of TL on a topic of students' choice	Useful classroom language
Procedure: 1. Write three or four topics students like to talk about on the board, for example: Tell me about … … someone you admire … a traditional dish … a festival you enjoy … hobbies people have. 2. Write on the board a list of five or six TL items you want them to practise (grammar structures, vocabulary, phrases, etc.), for example: ○ 'enjoy' + 'ing' ○ 'want to' + base form ○ 'interested in' + 'ing' ○ 'good at' + 'ing' ○ 'need to' + base form.	*Instructions:* In your group select which topic you want to talk about today. You have 30 seconds. Now copy these five items onto your paper. In your groups, talk about your topic. Take turns and try to use as many of these (items) as you can in a natural way! When you have used one, cross it out. You've got four minutes.
3. As a class or group select one topic. 4. Set a time limit, e.g. five minutes. 5. In pairs/small groups students talk for five minutes about the topic with each student using as many of the TL items as they can.	Support: Mix the TL with language students have studied before. Put students in pairs instead of groups. Give students more time to complete the task. Extend: Write up a list with six or more TL items for students to use. Give students less time to complete the task.

Tip:
- To make this more engaging, get students to copy the TL you want them to practise. Each student in the group ticks off the items they have used. The student in each group who uses all four or five within the set time limit is the winner.

End of unit reflection

- How much variety do you provide in your practice activities?
- Do you plan enough time in your lessons for students to get freer practice?
- Which of these activities do you want to try in your class?

Further reading:

McDonough, K. and Sato, M. (2019) *Promoting EFL students' accuracy and fluency through interactive practice activities.*

Available at: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1221530.pdf

Glossary

aims – Goals that teachers (and learners) want to achieve in the lesson or a course. Often given as WALTs (we are learning to). For example, 'We are learning to use *used to* when talking about our childhood'.

base form – The infinitive verb form, e.g. 'to read' without 'to' ('read').

benchmark – (for assessment) - A standard against which students are compared when grading them.

brainstorming – A technique where learners in groups discuss ideas, what they already know, or solutions, etc. in a less structured form.

collocation – Words that appear together with high frequency. They can be formed from various combinations: verb + noun, for example 'take a break'; adjective + noun, for example 'heavy rain'; adverb + adjective, for example, 'well-built', etc.

communicative activity – An activity that gets students to speak with a purpose and with the aim of delivering a message (usually with a focus on fluency).

concept checking questions (CCQs) – Simple questions used to find out if a learner has understood the meaning of a new concept (grammar, vocabulary or functions).

differentiation – Adapting your lesson plan and delivery according to students' different needs, interests and abilities: extending the activity for strong learners and supporting those who need more help.

eliciting – Using techniques to get learners to provide information instead of the teacher giving this information to them.

engaging – Getting learners fully involved and participating in the lesson.

formative assessment – Part of the learning and teaching journey in which we find out what learners can do and still need to work on. The goal is usually to match the teaching and learning to learners' needs. Often contrasted with summative assessment, which refers to finding out where students are at the end of a period of time.

functional language – Language that is used with a certain purpose and to perform certain functions, e.g. greeting, making suggestions, agreeing, etc.

genre (of writing) – A socially-accepted way of structuring a piece of writing, using expected, specific language features to communicate a particular purpose, e.g. a letter, an essay, a report, a story.

gist (listening/reading for …) – Listening or reading for the general ideas. Often contrasted with listening or reading for specific information where the focus is on understanding details.

graded language – Teacher language that is adapted to enable the learners to understand the message, for example short sentences using simple language.

group work – An interaction pattern: pair work or small group work. Students work together and actively collaborate to complete a task or activity.

information checking questions (ICQs) – Simple questions, often requiring a one-word answer, used to check if learners have understood the instructions, for example, 'In this activity, are you speaking or writing?'

interacting – Students working together to share information (communicate) and responding to each other's message.

knowledge gap – The gap between where students are currently at in their learning and where they need to be at the end of the unit/term/year.

L1 (first language) – The language students have learned from birth within their family context.

mechanics (of writing) - The micro skills of writing such as handwriting, letter formation, punctuation, capitalisation and spelling. Often contrasted with the macro skills of writing, e.g. lay-out, paragraphing, linking.

mindmap – A technique where ideas connected with a certain topic are presented visually, usually around a key word.

model – When a teacher gives students a clear idea of what they need to do. Also referred to as a demonstration. This can be showing students how to say something, before they repeat it, or what to write, before they complete an exercise.

monitor – A classroom management technique used by the teacher to observe the learners and the learning process.

nominate – Choosing a person by name in order to invite them to contribute to the lesson. Often used when eliciting.

pace – The speed of delivery of the lesson.

part of speech – The classification of a word in grammar, e.g. a noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc.

peer – The classmate of a learner. Peer checking, peer correction or peer feedback refers to one or more classmates working together to carry out these activities.

plenary position – The place in the classroom where the teacher stands so that every learner can see them. The teacher usually gives instructions and feedback from this position.

process writing – An approach to teaching writing where the focus is on the steps for creating a piece of writing (brainstorm, plan, write, edit and re-draft). Often contrasted with a product approach to teaching writing where the focus is on the final text that students need to produce.

productive skills – The productive skills are speaking and writing. Students actively produce language to communicate their message.

punctuation – Part of micro-writing: the features of writing such as spacing, comma, full-stop, question mark, exclamation mark, etc.

receptive skills – The receptive skills are reading and listening. Students receive information, which they must actively process, from a written or audio text.

scaffolding – Temporary support given to students (by teachers or peers) throughout the learning process in order to enable them to perform a task just above their level.

staging – The different steps in a lesson plan that enable students to achieve the main aims of the lesson.

success criteria – A list of measurable factors which students must meet in order to show they have completed a task to the standard required. Often given by the teacher as WILFs ('What I'm looking for'). For example, 'What I'm looking for are three sentences using past simple verbs'.

summative assessment – Finding out where students are at the end of a period of time. Often contrasted with formative assessment (see above).

target language – A particular language point that is the main focus of the lesson.

topic sentence (writing) – The sentence that gives the main idea of the paragraph. Often written as the first sentence of the paragraph.

wait time – Also called 'thinking time'. The period of time between when the teacher asks a question and students need to respond. It is recommended to allow at least five seconds for students to think.

whole class – An interaction pattern: all the students in one large group. When all students are being addressed by the teacher or are working together as one large group. Often contrasted with pair work and group work.

Acknowledgment: some definitions have been adapted from definitions and explanations given in articles on the British Council website www.teachingenglish.org.uk