What Should Every ESL Teacher Know?

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Compass Publishing

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Introduction

This very practical book covers the most important information that a teacher of English as a second language should know. It focuses on practical issues such as how to teach various kinds of classes including one-to-one teaching, teaching small groups, teaching in schools, and teaching on English for academic purposes course.

The idea that runs through the whole book is that well designed language courses need to look carefully at learners' language use needs and so several chapters focus on needs analysis and environment analysis.

The book is written in a clear direct style avoiding jargon and technical vocabulary. It speaks directly to teachers about how they can best go about the teaching of English as a second language.

The companion book to this one is called What Should Every EFL Teacher Know? and is available from Compass Publishing(www.compasspub.com/EFLTK).

The writer, Paul Nation, has been training teachers of English for over forty years, and he has taught in Indonesia, Thailand, the United States, Finland, and Japan. He has written numerous books and articles about the teaching and learning of vocabulary, language teaching methodology, and curriculum design. He is professor emeritus at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. His website contains many free resources for teachers.

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Chapter 1 How Does ESL Differ from EFL?

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that the major difference between English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language is that ESL learners usually have clear immediate language needs and a strong motivation to meet these needs. Teachers should take account of these language needs when planning their ESL program.

ESL stands for English as a Second Language. EFL stands for English as a Foreign Language. Learners are in an ESL situation when they learn English in a country where English is used around them, such as when learners go to the United States, Canada, England, Australia, or New Zealand to learn English. Learners are in an EFL situation when they learn English in a country where English is not commonly used, such as when learners learn English in China, Germany, or Venezuela. These two situations can differ from each other in very important ways which have a strong effect on what is learned and how it is learned. Here we will focus on English as a Second Language. If you are interested in English as a Foreign Language, see my book *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?*.

This book is intended for a wide range of teaching situations. It can be used by home tutors who typically teach just one or two learners at a time often in their homes. It can be used by teachers running classes for immigrants. It can be used by teachers who are preparing learners of English as a second language for study in an English-speaking university. It can be used by teachers who have ESL learners in their primary or secondary school classes. Each of these teaching situations has its own particular requirements, and we will try to look at these in this book. What is common to them all however is that they are all ESL teaching situations, and ESL teaching situations have some very important common features.

What Are the Important Features of ESL?

There are four important features that distinguish ESL from EFL. Firstly, in an ESL situation, most learners have readily defined, immediate needs. That is, there are usually very clear reasons for using English and it is typically not difficult to see what these reasons are. Secondly, motivation to learn is usually very strong. Thirdly, there are many opportunities to observe, learn, and use the language. Fourthly, language learning in an ESL situation has very strong cultural and integrational aspects, and these can have a marked effect on motivation and success in language learning. Let us now look at each of these four very important features in turn.

(1) Learners have clear and immediate needs

When learners are living in an ESL situation where the language is being used around them, they typically need to make use of the language in order to cope with aspects of their daily life. This is very obvious with young learners who are going to school and need to use English to cope with their study and in their relationships with their schoolmates. For these learners, the pressure to learn English is so strong and deeply felt that they typically very quickly pick up the language regardless of the type of language support that the school provides for them. However, many learners will benefit from support. Any young learner whose parents are not native speakers of English but who was born in an English-speaking country or came to it at a young age has a good chance of becoming a native speaker of English from a vocabulary perspective. Like native-speakers however, there may be large differences between such learners in their vocabulary size. Teachers of young children in an ESL situation need to give a lot of attention to making these learners feel happy and welcome as well as providing suitable second language support.

Adult learners have immediate survival needs which can include things like shopping, finding a place to live, finding a job, making friends, getting their children into education, and dealing with legal requirements. Teachers need to investigate and address these needs as quickly as possible so that such learners get immediate benefits from their study of the language. Working out what these needs are and deciding how to address them is a part of curriculum design called **needs analysis**, and we will look at this closely in this book.

(2) Motivation to learn the second language is very strong

These strong immediate needs mean that motivation to learn the language is not an issue. That is, most ESL learners are very highly motivated to learn the language. Young learners in particular feel a very strong desire to fit in, but most learners see how important the second language is to their daily life.

This motivation is not guaranteed or unchanging, but it is typically strong.

(3) There are out of class opportunities to observe, learn, and use the language

What better way could there be to learn a language than to live in a country where the language is spoken? This common belief is generally true, but it is not always true. However, when learners live in an English-speaking country, there are plenty of opportunities to observe, learn and use the language, and an important skill of the ESL teacher is to help learners make use of these opportunities. A very important goal of this book is to suggest ways in which teachers can do this. One of the major difficulties that face ESL learners is to get language input which is at the right level for them. There may be plenty of opportunities for listening and reading, but if this listening and reading is too difficult, it does not provide helpful opportunities for learning. Learners of English as a second language just like learners of English as a foreign language need to have input which is at the right level for them. A skilful teacher and a skilful learner can find plenty of such opportunities in an ESL situation.

In an EFL situation, the classroom is often the only source of English language learning. In an ESL situation, the classroom should only be one of many important sources.

❖ **Figure 1.1** Sources of language learning

(4) Cultural and integrational aspects of language learning take on a special importance

When learners learn English as a second language, there is a wide variety of reasons why they happen to be living in the country where English is spoken. They may be immigrants or refugees who are likely to spend the rest of their life in this country. They may have only come to the country for a defined period of time to study, to work, or to accompany a family member. The degree to which they create and take up the opportunities to participate in the normal daily life of the country will have a strong effect on their language learning. There are plenty of stories of people who have lived for many years in another country and who have successfully managed to learn very little of the language of that country. This may largely be because their immediate needs could be fulfilled without such learning. It may also be because they did not feel the need or have the opportunity to take part in the daily life of the country. The teacher of English as a second language not only has the job of teaching English, but also has the job of helping learners take part in the daily life of the country so that there are opportunities for learning beyond the classroom.

Part of learning to take part in daily life involves learning the customs and typical behaviour of the native speakers of the language. At its most basic, this involves an awareness of such customs and behaviour. For various reasons learners may not wish to follow these customs and behaviour, but it is important that they understand them. The teacher of English as a second language can be a very useful source of such information.

These four features of learning English as a second language affect all aspects of curriculum design. They affect what needs to be learnt, when it is learnt, and how it is learnt. The most important job of any teacher is to plan. This planning should involve making sure that learners get the best range of opportunities to learn what they really need to know. As a part of this planning, one of the most important things that an ESL teacher can do is to find out what their learners really need to know. Most of the early chapters in this book involve finding out what learners need to know.

In this book we focus on several common teaching situations where English is taught as a second language. They include one-to-one home tutoring of adult learners, teaching small classes of adults, teaching second language learners in the school system, teaching job-seekers, and teaching on an English for academic purposes program. These do not cover all ESL teaching situations, but the principles and activities for other situations are usually the same or very similar to the ones described in this book. The changes that need to be made simply need to address what makes the situation different from the ones described here. For example, teaching large ESL classes needs to take account of the large class size and the inevitably wide range of proficiency

levels in the class (see my book, *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?*, for suggestions). Doing one-to-one tutoring of young learners needs to take account of the age of the learners because this will affect their language needs and opportunities for learning outside of the one-to-one lessons.

This book draws on a rather small number of teaching activities, around twenty. These are ones that research and my teaching experience suggest are most useful. Some, like extensive reading, pair and group discussion, and speed reading are well researched. Others like 10 minute writing and role play need more research, but analysis of the conditions they can set up suggests that they are useful activities.

Each teacher has their favourite activities and because an activity is not mentioned here does not mean that it is not a worthwhile activity. However, teachers do need to be critical of the activities they use. An activity is only as good as the learning conditions it sets up. In this book we look at the learning conditions of repetition, deliberate attention, retrieval, and creative use which are very important for language learning, and teachers could examine how well the activities they use make use of these conditions.

The teacher's most important job is to plan a relevant well-balanced course. For this reason, there are two major themes in this book. The first is that teachers need to make sure that there is an equal balance of activities across the four strands of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development. This theme is largely dealt with from Chapter 7 on. The second theme is that ESL courses must take account of the needs of their learners. Chapters 2 to 6 look at needs and environment analysis in five different ESL teaching situations.

Further Reading

Chapter 1 of Nation, I.S.P. (2012). *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?* Seoul: Compass Publishing contains a description of the nature of EFL teaching.

See Chapter 1 of Nation, I.S.P. & Webb, S. (2011). *Researching and Analyzing Vocabulary*. Boston: Heinle Cengage Learning, for a system of technique analysis to evaluate teaching activities.

Chapter 2 Needs Analysis and Environment Analysis and One-to-One Tutoring with Adult ESL Learners

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that teachers should make use of a negotiated syllabus when doing one-to-one tutoring with adult learners. A negotiated syllabus involves talking with the learner to work out what they need to learn and how they can best learn it. An important focus of one-to-one teaching is helping the learner to continue learning outside the classroom.

Needs analysis is an important part of curriculum design. It involves finding out what the learners already know, what they need to know, and what they want to know. Environment analysis is sometimes included as a part of needs analysis. Environment analysis involves looking carefully at the situation in which learning will occur in order to find out what are the major advantages and disadvantages of the situation which need to be taken account of when designing a course. It includes important factors like the amount of time available for the course, the skill of the teacher, the size of the class, the resources which are available, and the motivation of the learner. To see how needs analysis and environment analysis fit into the larger picture of curriculum design, you can read the following short article which is available under the heading Publications on Paul Nation's website. Nation, P. (2000) Designing and improving a language course. *English Teaching Forum, 38*(4), 2-11.

Needs analysis and environment analysis are very important parts of curriculum design because they make sure that a course is relevant for the learners and takes account of factors that can help the course be successful or stand in the way of it being successful.

Needs Analysis

When doing needs analysis, we need to find out what the learner already knows. What is their vocabulary size? How good are they at reading? Do they have a good control of the grammar of the language? How good is their spoken language? We also need to find out what the learner needs to know. Do they want to learn English to travel? Are they planning to go on to academic study? If so, what subject do they want to study? What language knowledge and language skills do they need to carry out this kind of study successfully? This part of needs analysis typically involves looking at the amount and kind of language needed to perform certain tasks. The third aspect of needs analysis involves finding out what the learner wants to learn. Sometimes what the learner needs to learn and what they want to learn are in almost complete agreement. Often however they are not, and so the teacher needs to deal with this gap between what is necessary and what is wanted. Often the gap exists because learners do not have a very informed idea of what is involved in knowing and learning a language. Sometimes the gap exists because what the teachers see as an important learning need for the learner is not what the learner really wants to learn. For example, a learner wishing to do academic study may feel that a very important language learning goal is to be able to chat with other students and to make friends. This could be a very realistic goal because having helpful and supportive friends who are studying the same subject as you can make that study much easier. When we look at needs analysis across a variety of situations in this book, we will give attention to these three aspects of needs analysis;

- ✓ What the learner knows now
- ✓ What the learner needs to know
- ✓ What the learner wants to know

Before doing this, let us look briefly again at environment analysis.

Environment Analysis

The simplest way to do environment analysis is to ask what are the two or three factors that the teacher should take advantage of which will be most helpful for this course. These factors can involve the learner, the teacher, or the teaching situation. For example, learners may be highly motivated. This

means that the teacher can give them plenty of homework to do, and can set them to do independent tasks. Another advantage may be that the learner has plenty of time for study, or has plenty of resources such as access to the internet or a good library. A simple approach to environment analysis also involves looking at two or three factors that need to be overcome in order for the course to be successful.

In many cases lack of time is a very important limiting factor. This factor can be partly overcome by focusing on training the learner to be an independent learner, giving priority to the most important things that need to be learnt, and by finding extra time through the use of homework, independent study, or study groups. Another limiting factor may be a lack of learning resources. This is often not the case where English is taught as a second language, but it can still occur for example through a lack of material which is at the right level for the learner. In some places where English is taught as a second language, it is not easy to find graded readers which are specially written for language learners. It is also not easy to find people who can provide spoken input at the right level for elementary and intermediate learners of English. When doing environment analysis, it is not enough just to find the factors helping and limiting the course. We have to take the next step which involves making the best use of these factors or overcoming them.

In this chapter and the following chapters we will look at a wide range of teaching situations to see how we can carry out needs analysis and environment analysis. These situations include one-to-one tutoring, teaching small groups of immigrants or refugees, teaching second language learners in the school system, teaching second language learners who are looking for work, and teaching on English proficiency programs designed to prepare learners for academic study.

❖ **Figure 2.1** One-to-one teaching

One approach to needs analysis involves the use of a negotiated syllabus. A negotiated syllabus involves the teacher and learners working together to decide what will be taught and how it will be learnt. One-to-one tutoring provides ideal conditions for having a negotiated syllabus. A negotiated syllabus involves the following steps.

Step 1 The learners suggest what they would like to learn during the course.

Step 2 The teacher discusses this with the learners and together they reach a decision about whether it would be included in the course or not and how much time would be given to it. Note that this involves negotiation, not just acceptance of what the learners suggest. This negotiation can involve the teacher commenting on the usefulness and practicality of what the learners suggest, and together reaching a consensus about it.

Step 3 The suggestions are worked into the course.

Step 4 After a week or two, the negotiation is carried out again, evaluating what was worked into the course and making further suggestions for the syllabus.

When doing one-to-one teaching, it is a very good idea to negotiate at least part of the syllabus. This makes sure that the learner really feels that the course is focusing on useful material. Most learners have a very good awareness

of what they want to know and what they do not know well. Note that the learner's main contribution to a negotiated syllabus may be what they want to learn. The teacher's part in the negotiation is to provide information about what the teacher thinks they need to learn and how they could best learn it.

Here are some useful questions to ask when carrying out needs analysis in a one-to-one situation.

What do you most need to use English for? Do you want to talk with friends and neighbours? Do you need English to go shopping? Do you need English to help your children with schoolwork? Do you need it to do study? Table 2.1 contains a list of areas of daily language use that could be drawn on when doing needs analysis.

Do you want me to correct you when you make mistakes or would you rather concentrate on becoming fluent?

Can you think of anything that has happened in the last two days where you felt that you did not know enough English to be able to deal with it?

Table 2.1 ▶ **Topics for finding out learners' language needs**

Topics	
Giving information about yourself and your family, and asking others for similar information full name, spelling your name, signing your name where you are from age, address, phone number partner and family length of residence job using the telephone	**Describing your home, town, and country and asking others for similar information** house\flat furniture features of the town features of your country **Describing your job and asking others about their job** job place conditions travelling to work
Meeting people greetings talking about the weather inviting for a meal etc telling the time and day saying what you like asking for help saying you are sorry joining a club thanking	**Finding out how to get a job** kind of job where to look what to do **Finding food and drink** getting attention using a menu ordering a meal offering food praising the food finding a toilet
Going shopping finding goods asking for a quantity understanding prices going through the checkout	**Taking part in sport and entertainment** saying when you are free buying tickets saying what you like and do not like doing
Using important services post office bank public telephone police garage	**Using a computer** reading and writing email reading the computer menus and labels
Asking how to get to places and telling others directions directions distance and time using public transport	**Controlling language input** asking people to repeat, speak more slowly, spell a word, explain what a word means, clarify giving feedback while listening
Taking care of your health contacting a doctor reporting illness describing previous illness and medical conditions calling emergency services	**Special needs**

In one-to-one teaching, we can find out a lot about what the learner already knows informally by talking to them and by getting them to read to us. It is however useful to also do some more formal testing to see what they know. When doing such testing, it is a good idea to sit next to the learner and to provide them with encouragement and support while they sit the tests. This makes sure that we are seeing their best performance on the test. Such tests could include a measure of vocabulary size (see Paul Nation's website for the Vocabulary Size Test which is also available in bilingual versions, and look in the Vocabulary Resource Booklet on that website for bilingual tests of the first 1,000 and 2nd 1,000 words). It is also a good idea to get the learner to read aloud to you and to discuss the ideas of what they have read with you. The following text is written in a vocabulary of less than 1,000 words and so may be a good one to begin with to see if learners can read within this high frequency limited vocabulary.

A reading test

The Inuit live in Canada, Greenland and the north of America. They were the first people to live in these countries, arriving there about 5,000 years ago. They live in a land of ice and snow, a land without trees. For nine long months of the year it is cold, dark winter, while summer is only three short months. Today, many Inuit live modern lives in towns and cities, but not so long ago the people lived the way their parents and their parents' parents had lived for thousands of years. Like many people all over the world, the Inuit do not want to lose their languages. There are about 90,000 people who speak Eskimo-Aleut languages and because there is not much difference between the languages, people from different places can understand each other. They want to remember their culture and teach their children the old ways.

It is also worth doing a simple dictation test where you read a passage to the learner phrase by phrase and they write down what you have said. The dictation test will give some insight into their writing skill and into their listening. The following dictation test may be useful because each paragraph is written at a different vocabulary level (for more information about the test look at the following article on Paul Nation's website under the heading Publications (Nation, I.S.P. & Fountain, R.L. (2000). A vocabulary-based graded dictation test. *RELC Journal, 31*(2), 29-44). The slanting lines (/) show the divisions between phrases where the teacher pauses for the learners to write what they just heard.

A graded dictation test

My husband has a friend / who is the father /of a large family. / The poor man has ten sons. /

As a single man he imagined / it would be a pleasant experience / to bring up this number of children. / He now realizes / it is a difficult problem / to obtain enough money / to provide food, / clothes and shelter / for a household of this size. /

Costs have tended to mount recently / and parents frequently discover / that unless they take special economic measures / their expenses threaten to exceed their incomes. / If this occurs their debts compel them / to make a reduction in their living standards. /

Besides financial considerations, another factor / is that the effective running of a family of these proportions / makes management ability essential. / Our acquaintance is fortunate to have a capable wife. / Before her marriage, / she was employed in business administration. / She attributes her efficiency to this previous training. /

With his responsibility to maintain so many dependent relatives / the man I refer to /is continually striving to attain adequate security. / In his quest for promotion / his slender resources are an unfortunate disadvantage, / and furthermore his obligations hinder his prospects.

If the learner has problems with reading and writing, it is worth looking in detail to see the causes of these problems. Do they have trouble reading because they cannot recognise the written forms of words, they do not know enough vocabulary, they lack reading fluency, they do not bring enough background knowledge to what they read, or they have eyesight problems. Appendix 1 contains a diagnostic procedure that can be followed when analysing reading problems.

So far, we have looked at finding out what the learner wants to know, and what the learner already knows. We still need to look at what they need to know to perform various language tasks. The information provided in Table 2.2 relates to the performance of typical native speaker listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks. For the receptive tasks of listening and reading,

the figures assume a learner needs somewhere near 98% coverage of the running words in the input. ESL learners can perform many such tasks with less language proficiency if they adapt the task or the task is adapted to them through providing plenty of background knowledge or choosing tasks where the learner already has plenty of background knowledge, controlling the vocabulary and grammar to suit their language level, and controlling the speed and amount of support during the task. The information in Table 2.2 indicates what learners need to know to perform such tasks without any special support.

Table 2.2 The language and skills needed to perform certain common uncontrolled language tasks

Language use	Language needs
Listening and speaking Watching TV and movies Taking part in friendly conversation	Around 3,000 to 5,000 word families. A listening and speaking speed of around 150 words per minute.
Reading Reading the newspaper Reading a novel Reading a junior high school textbook	Around 6,000 to 9,000 word families. Newspapers require around 8,000 words, novels for teenagers around 6,000 words, other novels 9,000 words. A reading speed of 200 to 250 words per minute.
Writing Writing a letter Writing a high school assignment	A minimum of 2,000 to 3,000 words. For school tasks, some of this vocabulary would need to be academic vocabulary.

The Vocabulary Size Test is a useful way of measuring how much written receptive vocabulary a learner knows, but is not suitable for young learners. If using the 140 item test from Paul Nation's web site, make sure the learner sits the whole test and multiply their score by 100 to find their vocabulary size. If they are unsure about items on the test they should guess, but not make wild guesses.

The one-to-one tutoring situation is also ideal for doing environment analysis so that the learner can get the greatest benefit from the sessions. Here are some useful questions organised around the learner, the teacher or tutor, and the teaching situation. The answers to the questions will come from questioning, reflection, observation, experience and research. Most of these questions would not be directly addressed to the learner, but the teacher would look for the answers.

✓ **The learner**

Does the learner prefer to learn in a certain way?
Is the learner willing and capable of doing independent learning such as extensive reading, observing language use on television, doing writing tasks, recording their reading aloud or delivering a prepared talk?
Does the learner prefer others to be around during the lesson?
Is it possible to negotiate the lesson content with the learner?
Is it important to have visible signs of progress to show that the learner is increasing in language proficiency?

✓ **The teacher**

Should the lessons be formal or informal over a cup of tea?
Does the teacher need to set regular work to be done between lessons?
Does the teacher need to prepare for each lesson and design a rough syllabus?
Will a translator be needed sometimes?

✓ **The teaching situation**

Are the lessons regularly scheduled?
Are the lessons clearly related to each other?
Is there enough time for each lesson and are there likely to be enough lessons?
What is the best seating arrangement for the lesson?
Is the teaching situation quiet and uninterrupted?
Are there enough reading and writing resources?

These questions and the answers to these questions should help the teacher consider a wide range of relevant possibilities so that the lesson time is used effectively.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Needs analysis is an important part of language curriculum design. It involves looking at where the learners are now in their knowledge of the language, where they need to get to in order to use the language for the purposes they are aiming for, and what they feel they want to learn. A very useful way of taking account of learners' needs in a language course is to use a negotiated syllabus. This involves the teacher and the learners regularly negotiating with each other to decide what will be taught and how it will be taught.

Environment analysis is also a part of language curriculum design and involves looking at a range of factors related to the learners, the teacher, and the

teaching situation. These factors can include the learners' level of motivation, the amount of time available for the course, the skill and experience of the teacher, the availability of texts, and whether there is a range of proficiency levels of the classroom.

To take part in listening and speaking including watching TV and movies, learners need to have a vocabulary size of around 5,000 word families and a listening and speaking speed of around 150 words per minute. A much larger vocabulary size of around 9,000 words is needed for reading unadapted texts.

Further Reading

To find out more about curriculum design, read this article which is available from Paul Nation's website. Nation, P. (2000). Designing and improving a language course. *English Teaching Forum, 38*(4), 2-11. There is also a more detailed book available on the same topic using the same model of curriculum design: Nation, I.S.P. & Macalister, J. (2009). *Language Curriculum Design*. New York: Routledge. It contains a chapter on negotiated syllabuses.

Web Resources

Look at http://my.vocabularysize.com for an online version of the Vocabulary Size Test. See also The Compleat Lexical Tutor at www.lextutor.ca.

Chapter 3 Needs and Environment Analysis When Teaching Small Classes for Adults

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that it is important to keep the learners informed about the language learning goals for their program. This can be done by using a negotiated syllabus and by clearly signalling the important things to be learnt. Small classes provide ideal conditions for the use of pair and group work.

This chapter looks at needs analysis and environment analysis in classes as small as three or four learners and as large as 15 or 20 learners. Such classes include for example intensive courses run for immigrants or refugees who have just arrived in the country, regularly scheduled classes for those who have been in the country for at least a few months, and less regular classes for small groups who want to get together both to socialise and to learn English.

Needs Analysis for Small Classes

(1) A negotiated syllabus

As with one-to-one tutoring, providing an opportunity for a negotiated syllabus is a very worthwhile idea. Here is how it could be carried out in a class setting. After the class has been running for three or four meetings, the teacher says "Let's make a list of the things that we have been doing in class so far." With the learners' help, the various class activities and homework activities are listed on the board. If the teacher wants to do this in an organised way to help the later discussion, the activities could be listed under the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, or on a timetable.

❖ **Figure 3.1** Negotiating a syllabus

Then the teacher says, "Are there other things that you want to do in class or for homework that we have not done so far?" The teacher could make some suggestions at this point, but it may be useful just to let the learners talk together in pairs or groups of three or four to come up with their own suggestions. After a few minutes of discussion in groups, the teacher then asks the learners for their suggestions and notes them on the board with the list of activities done in previous classes. At this point, the teacher should make some other suggestions that the learners might like to consider.

Then the teacher draws the class timetable on the board. If the class meets only once a week, then this will simply be a single box. If the learners do homework, then there should be a box for the class meetings and a different one for homework. If the class is an intensive one or meets several times a week, then the teacher should draw a blank timetable representing the meeting times and homework. Here is an example for a class meeting three times a week.

Monday	Wednesday	Friday

Homework

The teacher then asks the learners to work in small groups to fit their suggestions into the timetable. This of course will mean that they must leave out some of their suggestions because there isn't enough time to cover them in the time available in class. The teacher can turn this activity into a pyramid procedure. In the pyramid procedure, each learner looks at the task and makes an individual decision. Then they form pairs and must reach agreement about the decision in their pairs. The next step is to form groups made of two pairs where once again an agreement must be reached. Finally, the groups must work together to reach agreement on the final timetable. If the class is quite large, then this can be done with one representative from each group representing the others in the group. The representatives discuss the timetable and reach a decision while the other group members quietly observe the negotiation.

After the new timetable has been running for a few classes, the negotiation can begin again evaluating the changes and making further changes and adjustments.

A negotiated syllabus requires a certain level of language proficiency from the learners, and also requires a willingness to negotiate. Many learners are quite happy to leave the decision-making to the teacher, but in such cases it is probably worthwhile doing at least a small amount of negotiation on either a part of the timetable or on a certain aspect of the classes. These aspects can include the amount of homework, or the kind of reading activity which is being done, or the kinds of groupings which the teacher uses in the class, or any special aspects of language use that the learners need but which have not been covered by the teacher.

The major value of a negotiated syllabus is that it provides an opportunity for on-going needs analysis. Needs analysis needs to occur throughout the course not just near the beginning. This is because learners' needs change as their proficiency develops, as their experience with the language increases, and as they gain more awareness of what could be done in a class.

(2) Other sources of needs data

Needs analysis can occur through getting feedback from the learners as in a negotiated syllabus, through looking at the results of tests and tasks, and through the teacher's own observation and evaluation of the course. In most cases, it is a good idea to keep the learners informed about such needs analysis and what the teacher is doing to satisfy their needs. This makes the learners more aware of why they are doing certain activities and the benefits that will come from doing such activities. Informed learners typically work with greater motivation and involvement than uninformed learners. For

example, the teacher might say,

"While listening to you speaking, I have noticed that several of you need to do a little bit more work on the *th* sound. This sound is quite important because it occurs in the most frequent word in the English language, *the*, and this word occurs in almost every sentence. So, if you don't say this sound well, this is something that others will notice in your speech. This is quite an easy sound to make and what we will do is practice making it and I'll give you some feedback. I will also suggest ways in which you can remind yourself to say this sound correctly when you speak."

In Chapter 2 we looked at some tests that could be used to work out learners' language needs. In order to personalise this for learners within a class, it would be useful for each learner to have a list of short-term individual goals that they are working on. These goals could be usefully organised under the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These goals are worked out based on each learner's test results, on feedback from their spoken and written tasks, and from the teachers' observation. Here is a form that could be used and adapted.

Name:

Skills	Goals
Listening and Speaking	Know at least three or four ways of starting a friendly conversation Make the *ch* sound correctly Be able to do all my supermarket shopping in English
Reading	Reach a reading speed of 200 words per minute Learn 25 new words each week from the first 2,000 words of English
Writing	Write without making subject-verb agreement errors Write at least two pages a week of free writing

The form should have plenty of space so that goals which have been achieved can be ticked off and new ones can be added. Note that the goals can focus on particular errors and can also focus on the amount of work and learning that needs to be done.

Table 2.1 in Chapter 2 listed a range of situations that newcomers to a country might have to deal with. As part of a negotiated syllabus, it may be useful to get the learners to work on this table, adding new situations that they have had to deal with, and adding detail to the situations already listed.

It is also very useful to build up a list of situations under the headings of *What do I say if …?* and *What do I do if …?*. Table 3.1 can be a starting point for these lists. Such a table can act as a checklist with the learners ticking off the situations that they now feel comfortable in dealing with.

Table 3.1 Situations requiring cultural knowledge and language knowledge

What do I say if …?
I get invited for morning tea
I want to attract the shopkeeper's attention
I want to ask someone for help finding a place
I want to know if it is okay to go inside a certain building
I want to ask how much something costs
I want to find a toilet
I want to find out how to pay for a bus trip
I want someone to tell me when I should get off the bus at the right stop
I want to find out where to pay for something
someone says hello to me
someone knocks on my door asking for a donation
I want to end a phone call
What do I do if …?
someone gives me a small gift
I want to give someone a gift for helping me
I have just said hello to someone in the supermarket and then I meet them again in the next aisle
quite often I pass the same person while out walking
I want to introduce myself to my neighbours
some people have just moved in next door to me and I want to be friendly toward them

Such a list can be a very useful source of role play activities, which we will look at in Chapter 14, and can also be a very useful source of observation tasks. Observation tasks involve the learners paying attention to what native speakers say in certain situations. This observation can occur in real life activities and when watching a movie or television show.

Here are some examples;

What do native speakers say to the driver when they get on the bus?
What do native speakers first say when they pick up the telephone?
What do native speakers say when they want end a phone call?
What does the shopkeeper say when beginning to serve a customer?
What do adults say when they begin talking to a young child?

(3) Observation tasks

Observation tasks are ways for learners to do their own needs analysis. It is an interesting classroom activity to set the learners a particular observation task and then get them to report on the findings of their observation. Often it may be difficult for them to actually hear what is being said, but if they can get part of it and describe the situation, the teacher may be able to fill the gaps for them. Research on ways of giving thanks for example has shown that although *Thanks* and *Thank you* are the most common forms, in some places *Cheers* is also very frequently used. Learners may not want to use this form, but they should know that it is an acceptable form of giving thanks. It is also reasonably common to give thanks more than once—"Thanks very much. Thanks." Deliberately observing these things can provide very useful input for learning.

(4) Long-term goals

Classroom needs analysis also needs to take account of the long-term goals of the learners. If, for example, learners plan to do some kind of academic study, then reading newspapers and starting to read some academic texts can be an excellent way of getting on top of the vocabulary needed for such study. Learners may also wish to go on holidays within the country, and the survival vocabulary for foreign travel (see Nation, P., & Crabbe, D. (1991). A survival language learning syllabus for foreign travel. *System, 19*(3), 191-201, available from Paul Nation's web site under Publications) may be a useful starting point for elementary learners. Learners may have the goal of getting a job, and so they may then want to start working on the language that they need in the workplace (see Chapter 5). Learners may have the goal of taking part in activities which involve their children such as kindergarten, play centre, school support groups, and playgroups. Finding out these long-term goals can provide useful information for planning a relevant classroom program.

Environment Analysis for Small Classes

Learning in classrooms brings its own challenges and some environment analysis can help in making sure that the classes are likely to be successful. This can involve looking at the nature of classroom attendance, the willingness of the learners to do homework, the amount of class time and what can be achieved within that time, learners' willingness to work together in group work activities, and the resources available to support classroom and homework activities.

Typically, the most pressing environment constraint is usually time. In such cases either the course is quite short or the meetings do not occur very often. This can have several useful effects on the course, namely that the learners are given training in managing their own learning, and that a few very achievable goals are set for the course. There are two ways of dealing with an environment constraint—accept it and work within it, or try to overcome it. One way to overcome the constraint of time is to find extra time by setting homework activities and by helping learners organise pair or small group meetings outside of class time.

Another important environment constraint in ESL classes is a wide range of proficiency amongst the learners. This is often also accompanied by a wide range of different needs. The most important first step in dealing with this constraint is to work out what activities in the class can be done by learners working at different levels perhaps on different materials, and what activities can be done by everybody working together on the same material. For example, most reading and writing activities involve individual work and learners can be reading and writing at their own level. This just requires a bit of organisation and giving some of the responsibility for arranging the work to the learners. Some speaking and listening activities can be done in small groups or pairs where the groups or pairs are organised on the basis of proficiency. Some activities like strip stories and recall exercises can be done in groups of mixed proficiency.

When teaching small classes it is important that the individual needs of learners are not overlooked, and one of the goals of this chapter has been to show how a teacher can make sure that individual needs are attended to so that learners follow a course that is the most relevant to them.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

A negotiated syllabus is particularly suited to learners in small classes. In addition, learners should also set individual goals for themselves in

consultation with the teacher. Teachers should also draw on other sources of needs analysis including observation and interviews with the learners. It is very useful to keep learners well-informed about the goals of the language class and how the various activities in the class are working toward these goals.

Probably the most severe environmental constraint on ESL classes is the constraint of time. There is so much that needs to be learned and usually limited class time.

Further Reading

See Boon, A. on negotiated syllabuses in Macalister, J. & Nation, I.S.P. (eds) (2011). *Case Studies in Language Curriculum Design.* New York: Routledge.

See Nation, I.S.P. (2012). *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?* Seoul: Compass Publishing, for a range of teaching activities for small classes.

Chapter 4 Needs and Environment Analysis for Learners Going to School

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that the language support given to learners at school should largely have a close relationship to what they are studying. Special support may be needed to make sure that second language learners keep up with their native-speaking classmates.

So far we have looked at needs analysis for learners in one-to-one tutoring and in small language classes for adults. Learners in these situations may sometimes have limited opportunities and motivation to truly become a part of the society in which they are living, and this can have very strong effects on their language learning. Learners within the school system, however, are in a quite different situation, because they have little choice but to participate actively in the school environment which may then extend beyond the school. In the vast majority of cases, second language learners in the school system have very strong motivation to learn the second language and have a wide range of opportunities to do such learning.

Opportunities for Learning for Young ESL Learners

A young child living in a country where English is the main language has the following opportunities for learning English as a second language.

❖ **Figure 4.1** Learning from friends

1 The child speaks to brothers and sisters in English.
2 The child speaks to their parents in English.
3 The child plays with others in English.
4 The child watches TV and movies in English.
5 The child goes to a school where English is the medium of instruction.
6 The child is involved in day-to-day communication in English in the community.

If at least three of the above six conditions apply, and the child came to the English speaking country before the age of 7, we would expect that

- ✓ The child will soon speak English without any obvious effect of their L1 on their pronunciation
- ✓ For many children, their rate of vocabulary growth and their vocabulary size will soon be within the range of that of native speakers of the same age. Some children may have vocabulary gaps that may need to be directly dealt with through teaching or reading and listening in certain topic areas
- ✓ English is highly likely to effectively become their first language or like a first language, even if they are bilingual.

If at least three of the above six conditions apply, and the child came to the English speaking country between the ages of 7 and 11, the probability becomes less of speaking English without an accent but it is still highly likely, of having a similar vocabulary size as native speakers, and of achieving native-like mastery of English, but these achievements are still a real possibility. Special efforts would be needed to maintain their proficiency in their L1. It is highly desirable to maintain the L1, and it is important that parents in particular are aware of the values of L1 maintenance. Such maintenance provides useful support for their learning of English and brings the advantages of being able to speak more than one language, a goal that many do not achieve through deliberate study in their lifetime. These special efforts could include making frequent extended visits to family in the country where their L1 is spoken, speaking to their parents and members of their family in their L1, attending L1 literacy and language maintenance classes, and regularly engaging in L1-medium groups such as church groups in the English speaking country.

If they came to the English speaking country after the age of 11, they are likely to continue to speak English with an L1 accent, and may lag behind native speakers of English of the same age in their vocabulary size. The language of their parents is likely to remain their L1, although they can become very proficient in English. This issue is more complex than described here because the likelihood of the L1 remaining a strong influence is affected by a wide range of factors including the learner's attitudes toward the L1 and L2, others' attitudes to the L1, L1 maintenance opportunities, and L2 learning opportunities.

Young ESL learners, certainly those below the age of seven or eight, can benefit from special language support beyond that normally given to native speakers of the language. Their main requirement, however, is that like other learners they should have caring and capable teachers, and the opportunity to make good friends with their classmates. The support they get should focus on both the language and subject-matter content of what they are studying. This support has the major goal of making sure they keep up with their native-speaking classmates in reading and study. Some education systems have schemes like reading recovery (for 6 year olds in New Zealand) which make sure that learners do not slip behind.

There is no special need for the parents of young children within the school system to use the second language at home. The amount of exposure that they will get to the second language at school and with their English-speaking friends is easily enough for speedy L2 language growth. There is no harm and there is certainly benefit in using the L1 at home. However, maintenance of the L1 will become difficult as learners' L2 proficiency develops. It is very common for brothers and sisters to quickly begin communicating with each other at home in the L2 as their language of choice. Where there are several

children in the family, it seems that the eldest child is the one most likely to maintain the L1 to some degree, and younger brothers and sisters may eventually be unlikely to understand or speak the L1. We will not look at L1 maintenance in this book, but for young learners special measures are usually needed to maintain the L1. Parents often mistakenly think that it is not a good idea to use the L1 at home and that they should use the L2 to help their children learn the L2. This is a mistaken idea and they should keep using the L1 with their children.

It seems that young children's motivation is to be like the other children around them and this particularly involves speaking the same language that they speak. The speed at which young children learn the L2 is remarkable, and seems to be carried out in much the same way in which they learnt their L1.

The Vocabulary Knowledge of Young Native Speakers

Native speakers of English learn vocabulary at the rate of around 1,000 word families a year, and this continues until their early 20s. The rough rule of thumb when estimating a native speaker's vocabulary size is to take about two or three years away from their age and multiply the result by 1,000. This means that a five or six-year-old has a vocabulary size of around 4,000-5,000 words. An average 13-year-old beginning junior high school has a vocabulary size between 10 and 11,000 words. A senior high school student at the age of around 17 has a vocabulary size of around 14,000 words. At any age level and grade level there is considerable variation in vocabulary size, by as much as several thousand words, but even native speakers at the lower end of the range know enough vocabulary for vocabulary knowledge not to be a major problem affecting their reading or study. Books written for young children beginning reading require a vocabulary knowledge of around 2,000 to 3,000 words and young native speakers can easily cope with this. Such books of course are very supportive of language learning as they involve lots of helpful accompanying pictures and often have built-in repetition. They are also typically very interesting and engaging books, and learners are very willing to hear such stories over and over again, and to read them more than once.

What Kind of Vocabulary Do Learners Need to Cope with in Their Secondary School Texts?

Books written for secondary school students require a knowledge of around 7,000 to 8,000 words, and most secondary school students have vocabulary sizes well beyond that. Table 4.1 shows the amount and kinds of vocabulary that occur in a first year secondary school science text.

Table 4.1 **The vocabulary levels in a secondary school science text using the BNC/COCA lists**

Frequency level	Coverage	Cumulative	Families	Cumulative
High-frequency	75.89%	75.89%	2,000	2,000
Proper nouns, letters, etc.	5.63%	81.52%		
Mid-frequency	16.58%	98.10%	7,000	9,000
Low-frequency	1.55%	99.65%	15,000	24,000
Not in the lists	0.35%	100.00%		
Total	100.00%		24,000	

In total, the Science book analysed in Table 4.1 is 62,445 tokens long, and uses 2,400 word families with words from every level from the 1st 1000 to the 25th 1000.

Figure 4.2 contains an example section of the science text with different levels of vocabulary marked up.

❖ **Figure 4.2** **A secondary school text marked to show word frequency levels**

{3}Defining a Species

{4}Biologists have {3}estimated that there are many {7}trillions of living {4}organisms on the surface of this planet. We need to {4}classify (sort) this {3}vast number of {4} organisms into groups in order to make the scientific study of living creatures possible. The most basic group is the species. A species is a group of {4}organisms which share many features in common. These features include {3}structure (e.g. tooth {3}structure), {7}physiology (e.g. blood {3}proteins), {3}behaviour (e.g. activities which attract mates) and {3}genes ({3}inherited information). But, as well as having many features in common, members of a species must be capable of breeding with other members to produce {3} fertile {5}offspring. Dogs of different breeds may look quite different, but they are able to mate and produce {3}fertile puppies. All dogs belong to the same species. Horses and {6} donkeys can mate to produce {5}offspring called {6}mules, but {6}mules are {3}infertile. So horses and {6}donkeys belong to separate species.

The Five Kingdoms

Related species are put into a {8}genus. similar {10}**genera** are put into a family. Similar families are put into an order. Similar orders are put into a class. Similar classes are put into a {12}**phylum**, and finally {4}biologists have discovered over two million species so far. Each species must have a {3}unique species name to avoid confusion. A species is given a two - word {31}Latin name. ({31}Latin was the language of {3}Ancient {31} Rome.) The scientific name for the dog species is {19}**Canis** {!}**Familiaris**, and {19}**Canis** {13}**lupus** is the name of the wolf species. The first name always starts with a capital and the second name with a small letter. The first name of a species tells you which {8}genus the species belongs to. A {8}genus is a group of closely related species. The {8}genus {19} **Canis** includes closely related species such as dogs, wolves and {12}**jackals**.

Hook, G. (1997) *Year 9 Science. New Zealand Pathfinder Series compact course books.* Auckland: New House Publishers Ltd.

Words in the first 2,000 are not marked. {3} = 3rd 1,000, {4} = 4th 1,000 and so on. {!} = not in the lists. Low frequency words and words outside the lists are in bold. {3}-{9} = mid-frequency, {10-24 }= low frequency, {31} = proper nouns.

Much of this vocabulary will already be familiar to the learners. There is however vocabulary in school texts that will be new to native speakers as much as non-native speakers, and most of this is the technical vocabulary of particular subjects such as science, mathematics, history, and geography. The most frequent words in the science text analysed in Table 4.1 which are unlikely to be known by native speakers are *protista (8 times), monera (5), thigmotropism (5), Brownian (4), C6H1206 (4), limewater (3), monerans (3), NH3 (3)*. This vocabulary does require attention from teachers and can be a barrier for reading. Most subject matter texts deliberately explain the meaning of technical words through definitions in the texts and one of the skills that native speaking readers need to develop is recognising these definitions and learning from them. Teachers can usefully give attention to technical vocabulary. Note that several of the high and mid-frequency words are also technical vocabulary—*species, genes, genus, protein, fertile, class, organisms,*

physiology. These may not require a lot of extra learning, but there will be some. *Species*, for example, has a precise meaning in science and a very general meaning in general use.

Testing Vocabulary Size

It is important that teachers of second language learners within primary and secondary schools know about the vocabulary growth and needs of native speakers, because some L2 learners can very quickly become like native speakers of the language, while others may struggle to keep up. Native speakers of the language in the primary and secondary school system have language needs and teachers need to have a clear idea of what these needs are. These needs include being able to deal with vocabulary while reading as the vocabulary demands of texts increase as learners deal with more difficult content-matter subjects. This difficulty is likely to come from a lack of familiarity with content matter with its accompanying vocabulary demands. This lack of familiarity needs deliberate attention and is probably best treated as a content matter issue rather than simply a vocabulary issue. Topic-related vocabulary is usually best learned as the subject matter is being grappled with.

The information presented in this chapter about the vocabulary sizes of native speakers was obtained by testing using vocabulary size tests within the school system. It is important however to point out that these vocabulary size tests were not given to groups of learners, but were given individually to each learner with the test administrator sitting next to the learner and encouraging them to pay attention to the test, and helping them with any difficulties such as the pronunciation of words that they faced in the test. This individual testing was very time consuming, but it was essential because experience had shown us that learners who were switched off school did not take such tests seriously and did not give their best effort when sitting such tests. As a result the scores on group-administered tests were often much lower than they should have been, and by sitting next to each learner as they sat the test and keeping them motivated and on task we could sometimes double their score on the test. This means that if teachers want to measure the vocabulary size of learners, they would be well advised to give such tests individually and sit next to the learners and encourage them while they do the test. If this is not done the scores could be very misleading. This is a very impractical suggestion, but it is basically a choice between accurate measurement and inaccurate measurement. Table 4.3 lists the features of the test administration.

Table 4.3 **Features involved in administering the *Vocabulary Size Test* and their effects**

Features of testing	Effects
Individual testing (one-to-one)	Maintain attention
Explain the purpose of the test	Maintain motivation
Give immediate feedback on each item	Maintain motivation
Get learners to read the items aloud	Control for reading skill Make learners consider all choices (test taking strategy)
Occasionally discuss items	Evaluate the test Consider test taking strategy
Break up testing with interviewing	Reduce fatigue Gather supporting data

The Vocabulary Size Test on Paul Nation's website is suitable for such testing (see http://my.vocabularysize.com for an online version). This kind of testing takes considerable time and for this reason should largely involve learners who are in difficulties. Poorly administered and poorly sat tests are worse than no tests at all for learners who are switched off school.

The Language Needs of L2 Learners at School

Learners of English as a second language who are studying in the school system need to have a long term goal of bringing their language knowledge close to that of native speakers of the same age. This is an ambitious goal for those entering the school system when they are teenagers, if they have very little previous proficiency in English. Younger learners have an easier but still challenging task for several reasons. Firstly, their motivation to be like their native speaking classmates is very strong, and they are more likely to form friendships and alliances with native-speaking classmates than older learners are, and this will greatly increase their opportunities for language learning. These opportunities will be especially helpful if their friends are proficient users of the language. Secondly, the amount of learning that they need to do initially to get close to their classmates' language proficiency is not so great. Thirdly, the assessment requirements in the junior school are much more forgiving than those in secondary school. Teachers need to be aware that learners may have gaps in their language experience and look for

these particularly in relation to classroom tasks and reading.

(1) Vocabulary goals

There are short-term language needs which if met can speed up language learning. In the secondary school system, academic vocabulary plays an important role. The Academic Word List contains 570 word families which are very useful when reading academic texts and reading newspapers. These word families are spread across the first 7,000 words of English. There are tests available to measure how much of this academic vocabulary is known. The Academic Word List section of the Vocabulary Levels Test is probably the most useful. This consists of 30 items in a matching format. It takes only a few minutes to sit this test, but as mentioned above with the Vocabulary Size Test, it is best to administer this test individually if possible while sitting next to the learner who is taking the test and keeping the learner on task. The test is available in the Vocabulary Resource Booklet on Paul Nation's website along with the list of words in the Academic Word List. Learners' proportional score on the test represents the proportion of the 570 word families that are known. So, a score of 15 out of 30 on the test (50%) means that about half of the 570 word families are known, meaning that there are around 285 left to learn. The words in the Academic Word List are divided into 10 sub-lists that are ranked in importance, with sub-list 1 being the most useful. Second language learners should set out to deliberately learn the words in the Academic Word List, and teachers should do whatever they can to support this learning. There are various websites and books that help the learning of the words in the Academic Word List. Native speakers do not need help with this list because their vocabulary size already includes these words.

Second language learners may need particular help with reading. It is important to find out how many words they already know and this can be done using the Vocabulary Size Test. If their vocabulary size is less than 3,000 words, they should do some reading of graded readers at an appropriate level to support their learning of the high frequency words. Where possible, the titles of the graded readers chosen should have some relevance to their schoolwork. If the learners have a vocabulary size greater than 3,000 words, they should read mid-frequency readers (available free from Paul Nation's website), and could also read school texts with the help of a bilingual dictionary. They should also read material appropriate to their age level. Bilingual dictionary use should be encouraged including the use of electronic bilingual dictionaries, because such dictionaries provide the easiest access to the meanings of the words. There are some very high quality electronic bilingual dictionaries available in a wide range of languages. To use a monolingual learners' dictionary well, learners need a vocabulary size of at least 2,000 to 3,000 words, because that is the number of words needed to understand the definitions in some dictionaries. It is useful to encourage

learners to look up words working in pairs. Before they look up, they work together to guess what the word might mean. This helps when choosing the appropriate sense in the dictionary.

(2) Minimum requirements

Second language learners may need special attention to their written work. It is worth setting minimum requirements for such work. Minimum requirements consist of a short list of grammatical features that are expected to be correct in any piece of submitted work. Learners need training in how to check their work for these features, and the teacher needs to insist that such checking occurs before any written work is submitted. The following list of items make up a suitable set of minimum requirements for writing.

- ✓ There must be agreement between subjects and verbs.
- ✓ There must be agreement between pronouns and nouns.
- ✓ Spelling must be correct.
- ✓ Every sentence must contain a verb.

Work that is submitted which contains more than one minimum requirement error can be returned to the learner for checking before it is marked. Having minimum requirements makes sure that the teacher's feedback on written work can focus on more content-related features than these very common grammatical features.

(3) Test preparation

If second language learners in the secondary school have to sit high stakes tests and examinations, it is worth considering whether there should be focused examination preparation sessions for such learners. By focusing strongly on the examination requirements, on the format of the examination, and on practice and preparation in writing answers to specific questions, second language learners can perform much better than they would as a result of more general preparation. Such a focus has its negative aspect, namely that the examination is seen as the goal rather than the learning which it is supposed to encourage. However, such a strong focus can have striking effects and can also have very positive effects on learners' confidence. Such a focus firstly involves the teacher in carefully analysing the format of the examination (how many questions there are to answer, how much time

needs to be spent on each question, the order in which the questions should be answered, and what questions are likely to be asked). Secondly, it involves the learners preparing answers to predicted or past questions, and getting feedback on these answers. Thirdly, once the answers are satisfactory, the learners should practice writing the answers within the time limit allowed by the examination. If the answer cannot be written within that time, it needs to then be revised so that it can be fitted within the time. Such timed writing practice should occur at least three times for each answer to an examination question. Fourthly, learners should get plenty of practice in reading the examination instructions and making a simple time allocation plan for answering the whole examination. Fifthly, if time permits, learners should practice writing answers to variations of the questions that they have already practised before. Such examination practice can be highly motivating for many learners, and it is very likely to help learners achieve respectable results in the actual examination. This focused examination work needs to be explicitly discussed with the learners so that it becomes more than practice and develops examination taking strategies, such as time allocation to each of the questions, double-checking of examination instructions, deciding on the order of answering the questions, preparing brief outlines of answers during the exam to make sure no points are over-looked in the heat of writing, and making written notes of all these features that are ticked off as they are done.

Environment Analysis

A key factor to success at school is being happy in the school surroundings. Most second language learners will come to school wanting to make friends and be accepted. Teachers should do whatever they can to support this. This can include setting up a buddy system between second language learners and native speakers, arranging for cross-age peer tutoring between second language learners who speak the same first language, having some activities which involve learners working together in groups where each group member is valued, and where it is not embarrassing for the second language learner, drawing on their knowledge and experience from their home culture and first language in class work.

Second language learners at secondary school often feel it is much easier to get on with other second language learners who speak the same language or who come from a somewhat similar culture to theirs. This feeling of comfort is worth supporting and may be a consideration when forming groups for group work.

The parents of second language learners may have very high educational expectations for their children, and it is worth seeing if there are useful ways

of enlisting the parents' help in getting homework done, and in providing resources.

Some second language learners have less than ideal conditions at home for getting homework done, and the school may wish to consider whether it is useful to help parents with setting up a homework centre after school to help with the support and supervision of homework. Such a centre could draw on volunteers and parents, and it may be possible to find teacher trainees and retired teachers who are willing to give support. Setting up homework groups among the learners is likely to be useful. This involves a lot of work and planning, and needs to be well supported by parents and the school.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Many young ESL learners quickly become like native speakers in terms of their vocabulary size regardless of the language used in their home setting. Others may need support and encouragement. For learners in primary school, the teacher needs to make sure the learners are included and feel valued in the school activities, and are happy and well supported in their learning. ESL learners at secondary school who were not born in an English-speaking country and who came to live there late in their primary school study will benefit from classes focused on their language proficiency development. Secondary school texts require a vocabulary knowledge of at least 9,000 word families. Learners' vocabulary size can be measured using the Vocabulary Size Test, and this is best administered on a one-to-one basis. ESL learners will benefit from exam focused instruction if they have to sit national exams while in secondary school.

Further Reading

See Biemiller, A., & Slonim, N. (2001). Estimating root word vocabulary growth in normative and advantaged populations: Evidence for a common sequence of vocabulary acquisition. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 93*(3), 498-520 on the vocabulary size of young native-speaking children. Five year olds know around 3,000 words, 6-7 year olds around 4,000-5,000 words, and 12 year olds around 8,000-9,000 words.

Web Resources

See Sue Ruffell's picture vocabulary test for young children under the heading Resources on Paul Nation's website. The test was designed for six year olds and was based on a corpus of books used in reading recovery in New Zealand. Almost all of the vocabulary in the test is in the first 2,000 words of English, with most in the first 1,000.

Chapter 5 Needs and Environment Analysis for Job Seekers in an ESL Setting

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that recent immigrants to a country may need training in communication skills that are relevant to the workplace. It is also valuable to carefully analyse their language proficiency so that they can work on areas of weakness.

Immigrants to a country may experience difficulty in finding a job. One reason for this could be low proficiency in English and this may need to be dealt with through one-to-one classes, regular part-time classes, or an intensive course. In this chapter, however, we will focus on another reason, namely the lack of communication styles and interaction skills that are typical of the English-speaking country where they now live. There are, of course, other reasons making it difficult for non-English speakers to find a job. These include a lack of local work experience, a lack of access to professional networks, a lack of contact with local people, and fear by employers that a foreigner might not be understood by customers or workmates or might not be able to do the job.

Among the language skills needed in the workplace are the ability to engage in small talk and to interact with others. This interaction can involve making requests, refusing requests and responding to refusals, making suggestions, disagreeing with suggestions, making compliments, and making apologies.

Job Seeking Needs Analysis

In order to find a job, a job seeker typically needs to have a well presented curriculum vitae. While it is possible to simply follow a model to prepare such a document, it is much better if the learner understands the principles which

lie behind it. This is because the curriculum vitae may be used as a basis for a job interview, and most of the principles that apply to the preparation of the curriculum vitae will also apply to the kinds of information covered in an interview. If the job seeker already has a prepared curriculum vitae, a critical assessment of this can be used as the basis of the needs analysis.

The second major step is dealing with a job interview and a role play activity can be used as a means of data gathering about the learners' job interview skills. If it is not possible to carry out such role play activities, a valuable second choice would be to get learners to observe two or three recorded job interviews and then to list the positive and negative features that they saw in the job seeker's performance in each interview. It is also useful to get the learners to list and analyse the interview questions so that their understanding of the questions can be checked.

Communication Skills Needs Analysis

Learners' communication skills can be assessed in a variety of ways. A simple and straightforward way is to provide a checklist that learners can respond to. This is more likely to reflect their worries than their actual needs, but it may be a useful starting point. A much more informative way is to use role plays to see how the learners actually handle situations that are relevant to them. The starting point for such role plays can be what is called a Discourse Completion Task, which is usually done in a written form. Here is an example.

> A family member of one of your close friends has died and you want to attend the funeral. You have only been working in your job for about two months and you know that it is a very busy time at work. However your friend would be rather upset if you didn't attend the funeral. Ask your supervisor for half a day's leave to go to the funeral.

When using such a task as a part of needs analysis, it is good to give the learners some time to think about the task before doing the role play based on it. When observing the role play, it is important to see (1) how well the learner used the right level of politeness to take account of the relative status of the supervisor, and how well they knew the supervisor, (2) how directly the learner made the request to take account of the inconvenience that the request would cause, and (3) how the learner led up to the request through

explaining the background or through the use of small talk if this was suitable.

Having a good range of discourse completion tasks is a very important preparation for such needs assessment. Several are listed in Chapter 14, and both Riddiford (2007) and Riddiford and Newton (2010) provide a large number of examples of such tasks.

Discourse completion tasks can also be responded to in writing and although this may be a time-saving way of gathering data, it does not provide as rich data as an interactive role play.

When doing needs analysis of communication skills, it is also useful to see how aware learners are of the features of good communication. A useful way of doing this is to get learners to observe a role play or a video recorded interaction and to get them to comment on the features of the interaction. This comment can include noting the effectiveness of the interaction, the reasons for its effectiveness or lack of effectiveness, noting how directly or indirectly the interaction was carried out, whether this degree of directness was appropriate or not, noting the degree of politeness in the interaction and whether this was appropriate or not, noting if any humour was used in the interaction, and whether the degree of familiarity used in the language was suitable for the people involved.

Language Proficiency Related Needs Analysis

The amount of language knowledge required to do various jobs can differ greatly according to the kind of job. Some jobs require only a small amount of rather predictable interaction, while others require high proficiency across the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Some courses to help skilled migrants find a job require a high level of language proficiency prior to admission to the course. Such courses are typically for learners who are already well skilled in a profession and need to solve the often very difficult problem of finding their first job in an English-speaking country. For such learners, international proficiency measures such as TOEFL and IELTS can be suitable measures. The course for skilled migrants in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Victoria University of Wellington requires an IELTS level of 6 or higher, which is that required for first year university study. Such learners are likely to have a vocabulary size of at least 5,000 or 6,000 words and to have reasonable reading and writing skills. They also need to be trained experienced professionals with at least two years experience overseas who have not been able to find suitable employment related to their qualifications, although this time requirement is not always strictly followed. These demanding entry standards ensure that the course

members have what is traditionally seen as high language proficiency and have enough overseas professional knowledge and experience to do the jobs they seek. The assumption is that what is holding them back is more closely related to the local environment, and this is what the course sets out to deal with.

Learners seeking jobs which are less language demanding can be assessed using bilingual vocabulary tests (see the Vocabulary Resource Booklet on Paul Nation's website), graded dictation tests (see the article by Fountain and Nation (2000) available under Publications on Paul Nation's website), and a cloze test or some other reading comprehension measure. Where possible, an interview or a role play task would be a useful means of assessing spoken language, and a short composition could be used to assess writing skills.

Environment Analysis for a Course for Job Seekers

(1) How much time should be given to appropriate communication skills?

Just under 50% of the class time in the program reported on by Riddiford (2007) was spent on training and practice in appropriate communication skills and interaction. It is worth noting that six of the twelve weeks were spent in a job placement with only one afternoon a week during those six weeks spent back in class. This time commitment and the success of the program indicates firstly that it is worth taking such skill development seriously, and secondly that it is important to give it a reasonable amount of time in the program.

(2) How important is motivation?

Studies of communications skills development show that motivation is a very important factor. This motivation needs to include a willingness to adapt to the requirements of the workplace. Where this willingness exists, learners can make good progress in communication skills even with limited amounts of language knowledge.

(3) Should a workplace experience component be included in the course?

The inclusion of such a component is obviously important, and is a major contributor to the success of graduates of the course in eventually gaining employment. Such placement provides not only experience for the learner, but also provides local work experience that can be included in a curriculum vitae. Placement for such work experience is not easy to organise, and seems to be most successfully done through a coordinated approach with the support of contracting job placement agencies and making use of voluntary

organisations such as the Rotary Club or Lions. In these placements, the learners are not paid but are taken on as a kind of temporary apprentice.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Immigrants to a country who wish to enter the work force and who already have reasonable proficiency in the language may need to work on their communication skills, focusing on the use of English in the workplace. It is also useful if their proficiency across the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing is carefully assessed so that they can work on areas of weakness.

Further Reading

Nicky Riddiford and Jonathan Newton's excellent book is available from Victoria Books at Victoria University of Wellington. Riddiford, N. and Newton, J. (2010). *Workplace Talk in Action*. Wellington: LALS, Victoria University of Wellington. It is strongly research-based drawing on research from the internationally renowned Language in the Workplace project started by Janet Holmes. It contains a wealth of examples of conversations across a wide range of speech acts and provides useful frameworks for analysing them. It also has numerous discourse completion tasks that can be used as a basis for role plays. See also Nicky Riddiford's chapter, "Helping skilled migrants into employment: The workplace communication program", in Macalister, J. & Nation, I. S. P. (2011). *Case Studies in Language Curriculum Design*. New York, Routledge, 72-81. See also Riddiford, N. (2007). Making requests appropriately in a second language: Does instruction help to develop pragmatic proficiency? *TESOLANZ Journal, 18*, 88-102, and Riddiford, N. & Joe, A. (2010). Tracking the development of sociopragmatic skills. *TESOL Quarterly, 44*(1), 195-205.

Chapter 6

Needs and Environment Analysis for ESL Learners in Pre-University Courses

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that courses in English for academic purposes need to focus both on the language that learners will need to use in their future study, and on the language skills that they need to pass the entry test to university. Study skills are an important component of university preparation.

Learners who come to do tertiary study in an English-speaking country often enrol in pre-university English courses to study English for academic purposes. Their needs are often likely to be more immediate than this, that is, they need to pass some kind of proficiency measure of their English in order to gain entry to university. This proficiency measure may be an internationally recognised test like TOEFL or IELTS, or it may be an in-house measure administered by the staff on the pre-university course. Whatever measure it is, passing it is a major goal of the learners on the course, because if they do not achieve a high enough grade in this measure, they will not be eligible to begin to study for their university degree. As a result, the curriculum on a pre-university course must indicate to the learners that they are working toward passing the English entry requirement, as well as learning the English and study skills required for successful academic study.

Skilled and experienced teachers on pre-university courses can often work out after a week or two of classes which learners will have to struggle the most to meet the entry requirement, or who may need to re-think their goals because they do not have enough time to reach the required entry standard. Research on a widely used language proficiency measure, the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) which uses a nine band grading scheme, has shown that in a twelve week intensive course, learners can increase their score on the test by an average of half a band. Some learners can make a much larger increase (see Further reading).

The relationship between performance on an English proficiency test like IELTS and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and grade point average in subsequent university study is not a strong relationship. Typically correlations between TOEFL score and grade point average are of the order of .3. Roughly speaking, this means that the TOEFL test measures around 9% of the factors that contribute to successful university study. The other 91% of the factors are not measured by the TOEFL test. This is not necessarily a weakness of the test. If a score on the TOEFL test correlated highly with grade point average, we would expect that native speakers, who should score highly on a test of English proficiency, would all be very successful university students. This is clearly not so, because success at university not only depends on how well you know the language but also on a wide variety of other factors including motivation, willingness to work hard, previous knowledge of the subject, study skills, social relationships, and good study and accommodation conditions. However having at least an adequate proficiency in English is an important requirement, and the higher a learner's English proficiency, the more they can give attention to the content of their study.

Academic and Technical Vocabulary

Tests of the vocabulary size of learners of English as a second language at an English-speaking university show that there is a wide range of vocabulary sizes with an average around 6,000-7,000 word families. Without giving special consideration to technical vocabulary, analyses of academic texts indicate that around 8,000 word families are needed for learners to gain 98% coverage of the running words in the texts. This means that to do university study without vocabulary becoming a major burden, learners need to know the high frequency and mid-frequency words of the language. It is likely that knowledge of the technical vocabulary of the subject area that they are studying may to some degree reduce the number of word families that need to be known, but the reduction is likely to be only a small one. In some subject areas, the technical vocabulary can be substantial with many of the words unfamiliar to most native speakers.

(1) Academic vocabulary

There are useful shortcuts to reaching a satisfactory vocabulary size to deal with academic study. The most well-known one is the Academic Word List. This is a list of 570 word families that are frequent in a wide range of academic subject areas. This list assumes knowledge of the 2,000 words of the General Service List and builds on that. Some researchers see this assumption as a weakness in the Academic Word List, but there is little doubt that the words in

the Academic Word List are a very useful learning goal for learners intending to do academic study. Even in subject areas like medicine where there is a very large technical vocabulary which is largely unique to the subject area of medicine and related health disciplines, the words in the Academic Word List provide a good degree of text coverage and are well worth learning. There are many books which are full of activities to teach the words from the Academic Word List, but it is important to remember that the learning of such words needs to occur across the four strands of meaning-focused input (listening and reading), meaning-focused output (speaking and writing), language-focused learning, and fluency development. Working through vocabulary exercise books and being directly taught academic vocabulary should make up only part of the language-focused learning strand, and thus while vocabulary activities are useful, they should not make up a major part of the course activity. The Vocabulary Levels Test contains a section on academic vocabulary. This 30 item section is large enough to give a reliable measure of a learner's knowledge of the Academic Word List. If a learner gets 15 out of 30 on the Academic Word List section of the test, it means they know roughly half of the words in the 570 word family list. The proportion known on the test indicates the proportion of the list that is known.

The four strands

✓ Meaning-focused Input

The strand of meaning-focused input involves learning through listening and reading. Learners' attention should be focused on the message of the material that they are listening to or reading. The materials should be at the right level for them in that it contains a few new language items but these are easily understandable through background knowledge and context clues. A good example of an activity in the meaning-focused input strand is reading a graded reader which is at the right vocabulary level so that only around two out of every one hundred words in the text were previously unfamiliar to the reader. One quarter of the course time should be spent on meaning-focused input.

✓ Meaning-focused Output

The strand of meaning-focused output involves learning through speaking and writing. Learners' attention should be focused on communicating messages to others. They should be speaking and writing about things that they know a lot about but which stretches their language knowledge. A good example of an activity in the meaning-focused output strand involves telling another learner about yourself or about something that

you are very interested in. One quarter of the course time should be spent on meaning-focused output.

✓ Language-focused Learning

The strand of language-focused learning involves deliberate attention to language features. That is, it involves the deliberate learning of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structure. It also involves the deliberate learning of language learning strategies. A good example of an activity in the language-focused learning strand is learning new vocabulary and phrases using bilingual word cards. One quarter of the course time should be spent on language-focused learning. Many courses tend to spend far too much time on this strand and one of the major purposes of this book is to show a range of activities that can be used in the other three strands of the course. An important message in this book is that teachers tend to teach too much. Three of the four strands involve message-focused learning through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This learning does not occur as the direct result of teaching, but occurs through having to use the language. The language-focused learning strand is typically where most teaching occurs. But teaching is only one of the means of language-focused learning. Learners are also responsible for language-focused learning, and the deliberate learning of vocabulary example is much more efficiently carried out through the use of word cards by learners working by themselves than through teachers teaching vocabulary. Experimental studies of vocabulary teaching typically show that out of every ten words that are taught, only about three or four are actually learnt. Most teaching is neither effective nor efficient.

✓ Fluency Development

The strand of fluency development involves learning to make the best use of what is already known. This strand includes developing listening fluency, speaking fluency, reading fluency, and writing fluency. A good example of an activity in this strand is speed reading. Speed reading involves training in reading faster using very easy material which is followed by comprehension questions to make sure that faster reading is also accompanied by good comprehension. One quarter of the time in the well-balanced course is spent on fluency development. This should be true at all levels of proficiency.

(2) Technical vocabulary

Each subject area has its own technical vocabulary. The technical vocabularies of different subject areas differ in three major ways. Firstly, there is the size of the technical vocabulary. Although quantitative research on technical vocabulary is still in its beginning stages, it seems that the technical vocabulary of many subject areas tends to be around 1,000 to 2,000 word families. There are, however, some subjects like medicine, zoology, and botany which each have a very large technical vocabulary. The technical vocabulary of medicine is probably approaching 10,000 word families. If we consider that the subject areas of botany and zoology include the common names and scientific names of all plants and creatures, then these would be very large technical vocabularies indeed.

The second way in which technical vocabularies differ is in the kinds of words that they contain. Here are some technical words from the field of medicine—*pulmonary, systemic, tumors, antibody, receptor, syndrome, lymphoma, chemotherapy, urinary, venous, fibrosis, infarction*. Here are some technical words from the field of applied linguistics—*negotiation, language, implicit, interaction, word, acquisition, learning*.

❖ **Figure 6.1** Negotiating meaning

Even someone who has not studied applied linguistics already has substantial knowledge of the meaning of many of the words in its technical vocabulary. *Negotiation*, for example, refers to the interaction between language users to work out the meaning of a piece of communication. While this is a little bit different from negotiation between parties in a dispute, it still shares many important common features. Around 80% of the technical vocabulary of applied linguistics is common outside of that specialist area. Medicine, however, contains a very large number of words which would not be known

by native speakers who have not studied medicine.

The third way in which technical vocabularies differ from each other is in their history. Medicine largely came to us from the Greeks and a lot of its technical vocabulary comes from Greek. Like Latin, Greek is a language which makes use of prefixes and suffixes, so a very useful strategy in the learning of medicine is to learn the meanings of important word parts. Here are some examples: *psycho-, -ectomy, -otomy, -oscopy, cardio-, cranio-*.

Gaining knowledge of the relevant technical vocabulary is a very important part of academic study. Viewed simplistically, learning the technical vocabulary is not much different from learning the subject matter. In academic texts there is a great deal of explanation of vocabulary, and learners need to be able to recognise when this explanation is happening and to take advantage of it.

The principle of the four strands applies to technical vocabulary in the same way that it applies to academic vocabulary and other aspects of language learning. It is important to maintain a balance between the four different opportunities for learning. The learners need to meet technical vocabulary through meaning-focused listening and reading within the subject area. They need to have the opportunity to make productive use of this technical vocabulary in the speaking and writing related to the subject area. They need to do some deliberate study of the technical vocabulary to speed up and strengthen its learning. They need to meet this technical vocabulary many times in easily manageable tasks to increase their fluency with this vocabulary.

Technical vocabulary needs to be learned in the context of study in the content area. It is not a good idea for teachers to develop substantial lists of technical vocabulary that they then try to teach. It is a much better use of the teacher's time to find out ways in which learners can deal with this technical vocabulary most effectively. This may involve some study of word parts. It may also involve doing intensive reading with some technical texts to note the places where the technical vocabulary is being defined in the text. Because most of these in-text definitions make use of the classic definition pattern and reduced forms of it, it is useful to introduce learners to this pattern.

A *x* is a *y* which … [a description of its defining feature(s)]

Here are some examples.

A species is a group of organisms which share many features in common. These features include structure (e.g. tooth structure), physiology (e.g. blood proteins), behaviour (e.g. activities which attract mates) and genes (inherited information). But, as well as having many features in common, members of a species must be capable of breeding with other members to produce fertile offspring.

A genus is a group of closely related species.

Organisms may be unicellular (made up of just one single cell)

Learning technical vocabulary may also include new concept learning. When learning new concepts it is useful to see several examples of the concept, to work out the common features shared by all the examples, and to distinguish examples which represent the concept from examples that do not. Where an item of technical vocabulary is especially important in the field, it may be useful for the learners to write a clear, comprehensible definition of the concept listing its defining features and some examples and non examples with an explanation of what criteria the non examples do not meet. The following table could be used.

Technical word	General category	Defining features	Examples	Non-examples (and reason)

Each subject area has its own technical vocabulary and an essential part of the needs analysis in any English for academic purposes course is to find out the subject areas that the learners intend to study in, and to be aware of some relevant academic texts in those subject areas, so that while learners are still in the English for academic purposes course, they have an opportunity to meet the kind of language that they need in their academic study.

Needs Analysis and Study Skills

Learning the language features needed for study in a second language is an important learning goal. Learning how to do academic study is another

equally important goal. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the focuses that can be part of a study skills component of an English for academic purposes course. Typically, these study skills are seen as being useful across a wide range of subject areas. However, because subject areas differ in the kinds of language use that they require and in their assessment requirements, there needs to be an investigative focus that helps the learners to work out what they need to do in a particular subject area.

Table 6.1 **Focuses for study skills in an EAP course**

Skill focus	Study skill
Listening	· Note taking
Speaking	· Presenting a prepared talk · Taking part in discussions · Following discussions · Discussing academic reading
Reading	· Note taking · Reading academic texts · Using library resources · Using internet resources
Writing	· Coping with written assignments · Understanding and applying the classic research article format · Understanding referencing conventions · Dealing with written exams · Avoiding plagiarism · Developing skill in computer use (word processing, spreadsheets, library and journal searches, referencing programs) · Writing emails
Language learning	· Coping with technical vocabulary · Increasing vocabulary size
University requirements	· Understanding attendance, work, and assessment requirements

The study skills listed in Table 6.1 need to be a part of needs analysis early in an English for academic purposes course. One way to deal with this is to use a checklist as part of on-going needs analysis (see Table 6.2). The class teacher and the learners work together to keep updating the checklist. Note how the checklist sets specific goals. These of course can be changed to suit the proficiency level of the learners.

Table 6.2 ▶ **A needs analysis checklist for English for academic purposes**

Skill focus	Study skill	Yes/No
Listening	· Can you take satisfactory lecture notes from a lecture?	
Speaking	· Can you present a prepared talk using brief notes? · Can you take part in a tutorial discussion?	
Reading	· Can you read at a speed of at least 200 words per minute? · Can you take notes from reading so that you do not need to read the same text again? · Can you use the university library computing system to find the books and articles that you need? · Can you use search engines on the internet to find information or references that you need?	
Writing	· Do you know the major parts of a well organised and well prepared university assignment? · Do you know how to write a good review of the literature? · Do you know how to find out the characteristics of a good assignment in your subject area? · Can you write a well organised and well prepared university assignment? · Can you recognise examples of plagiarism? · Do you know how to avoid plagiarism? · Can you write at a speed of around 15 words per minute? · Can you touch type at a speed of at least 35 words per minute? · Can you use a spreadsheet program like Excel? · Can you use a referencing program like Endnote?	
Language learning	· Do you know how to learn vocabulary using word cards? · Can you use a dictionary to find the meanings of words? · Can you use a dictionary to find the word parts that words contain?	
University requirements	· Are you familiar with the typical work, attendance, and assessment requirements of the university that you are going to study in? · Do you know where to go to get help with study during your study? · Do you know where to find information about help with study? · Do you know where to find old exams for your subject area?	

Most of the items in the checklist in Table 6.2 can be directly tested by setting learners tasks to do. This is why the checklist is best regarded as a piece of on-going needs analysis rather than a list that learners or teachers simply check in one brief session. For example, the questions on dictionary use in the *Language learning* section can be checked by giving learners several small dictionary consultation tasks to do. The questions on fluency (reading speed, writing speed, touch-typing speed) can all be tested by timed tasks. The questions on assignment writing need to be checked through the assessment of assignment writing tasks.

English for academic purposes courses typically last around 10 to 12 weeks and although a reasonable amount of language proficiency increase can occur in such a time, it is still a rather short time. For this reason, the development of study skills which focus not only on developing knowledge of the university and its requirements, but also on the language use needed at university, should be a major focus of any English for academic purposes program. The major goal of the study skills component of an English for academic purposes program is to help learners become independent in developing their own proficiency and their own academic skills, so that their learning continues after the course ends.

Needs Analysis and Language Proficiency

Many learners entering English for academic purposes programs may have their results from sitting tests such as the IELTS or TOEFL tests. Nevertheless, each English for academic purposes program usually has its own placement test for at least assigning learners to different classes within the program. These placement tests typically cover several of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They involve a listening test of some kind (perhaps a dictation or a listening passage with comprehension questions), a reading test of some kind (perhaps a cloze test or passages with questions or information transfer tasks), a vocabulary measure (perhaps measuring knowledge of academic vocabulary or a vocabulary size measure), and a short writing test (perhaps a one or two page response to a given topic or choice of topics). Not many placement tests involve some kind of speaking measure because of the short time involved and the number of students needing to be tested, but if there is such a test it is often some kind of oral interview.

Such tests are a form of needs analysis. Assigning learners to classes is largely a response to their language needs. The most useful placement tests are those that also provide information that can be used with each learner to help them focus on the learning which is most useful for them. Measures like

dictation tests, cloze tests, and vocabulary size tests usually contain enough points of assessment to be reliable measures and to provide information that can be compared with the results of students from previous years, and that can give some indication of how far the particular learner needs to go to reach a standard suitable for meeting the university entrance requirement and coping with university study.

Language needs for academic study

We have looked at the vocabulary size needed for academic study along with the special kinds of vocabulary, academic vocabulary and technical vocabulary, that learners need to know. There is also some research on the kinds of tasks that university students need to do. There are analyses of the kinds of assignment and test questions that they need to answer, as well as the different kinds of writing that they need to do (see Further reading).

Most subject area university teachers do not get too concerned about the grammatical quality of learners' written language. What most concerns them, however, is how well the writing that learners do matches the kind of writing which is expected within their discipline of study. This is partly an issue of grammar, as academic writing tends to be impersonal, requiring the use of passive constructions, and phrases involving the use of heavily modified noun groups. Mostly, however, it is an issue of discourse and an awareness of the nature of the audience of the piece of writing. A geographer needs to write like a geographer, and a physicist needs to write like a physicist. While there are common features across a range of different disciplines, learners need to look carefully at reports and articles published in their field to find out what the expectations are. In Table 6.1, this is called analysing research reports. The activity, *Reading like a writer*, is one way of doing this analysis, and we will look at this activity in more detail in Chapter 12.

Language Wants in an English for Academic Purposes Program

One of the most common complaints that learners make in an English for academic purposes program is that the texts that they have to read will have nothing to do with the subject area in which they intend to study. The major reason for this is that each class usually consists of a mixture of learners from a wide range of disciplines and so when all of the learners work on the same text, this needs to be a text that all can relate to. The teachers justify the use of such general-purpose texts by pointing out that the kind of vocabulary used and the grammar of the texts will be of value to the learners whatever subject they study. It is important, however, that learners have the opportunity in

such a course to work on the texts that they will need to read in their subject disciplines. For many learners these unsimplified texts may be too difficult for them, given that a vocabulary size of around 8,000-9,000 words is needed to read them without any external support. However the essence of any course which deals with English for special purposes is that it tries to address as closely as possible the language needs of the learners. The learners on such courses thus should be reading their subject matter texts. There are several complementary ways of dealing with this problem.

1 The learners do independent intensive reading of such texts, seeking clarification from the teacher when necessary. If the text is available in an electronic form, then the web based *Read with resources* program on Tom Cobb's website, the Compleat Lexical Tutor, can be used to support the reading. The learners keep a record of such reading and provide some kind of evidence for the teacher that the reading is being done. This evidence can be in the form of notes taken from the reading, brief summaries, or annotated texts.

2 The activity *issue logs* involves each learner choosing a topic which is very relevant to them and over a period of several weeks each learner gathers data on the topic from a variety of sources, regularly discussing the data that they have found with others in a small group, and eventually reporting on the data to their group and then to the whole class. The teacher may also require them to prepare a written assignment answering a specific research question, following normal university academic assignment requirements.

3 If there are learners within the class who share the same academic subject, such reading can be done as paired reading where learners work together to read a text, discussing it as they read it. If the timetable is a flexible one, the same kind of activity could be done with learners from different classes making up the pairs.

Learners also tend to see informal spoken language as a major learning goal in an English for academic purposes program. This is a realistic want, as academic study involves working with others, and to work with others you need to be able to establish good relationships with them.

Proficiency Test Preparation

If a proficiency test is waiting for the learners at the end of their course, it is worth giving attention to the particular test. It is likely that specific training in following the instructions of the test, in allocating time when sitting

various parts of the test, and in practising answering the specific question formats will have a positive effect on learners' results in the test. If learners are very familiar with the format of the test, then they can devote all of their attention to its content. Where English for academic purposes courses do not have a clearly scheduled focus on the particular English proficiency test as part of the course program, it is not unusual for learners to skip several days of classes so that they can prepare for the English proficiency test. "I can't come to the English course because I'm preparing for TOEFL". The challenge to the teacher of English for academic purposes is to provide obvious test preparation practice while making sure that useful learning is taking place.

One way of doing this is to have a weekly class focusing on test preparation. As the time to sit the test gets nearer, this preparation time can become more substantial. Typical activities could include sitting mock tests or previous tests, developing test wiseness with particular test formats such as multiple choice, and discussing and practising deliberate test-taking strategies such as allocating and managing time carefully including time to check, attempting to provide an answer to every question, and dealing with the easiest questions first. Test preparation is effective and probably can affect up to 10% of the final mark. This may be enough to gain the mark required for entry.

English for academic purposes courses can have a wide range of forms and focuses. They can include training for government officials, youth leaders, and university students. It is worth including the opportunity for the learners to at least negotiate part of the syllabus in an English for academic purposes course. As described in Chapter 3, this negotiation can occur after the course has been running for at least a couple of weeks so that such negotiation can be informed by the learners' experience of that part of the course.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Learners in English for academic purposes courses often have the two goals of improving their academic language proficiency, and passing the language entry requirement for university. Such courses need to focus on both of these goals. Preparation for tertiary level study also involves the development of study skills. It is important in such courses that learners see the connection between the English for academic purposes course and their future study. This can be helped by getting the learners working on texts and tasks that are directly related to the university subjects that they intend to study. These texts can be worked on in independent intensive reading, in the issue logs activity, and in group work where the groupings are made up of learners with the same major subjects.

Further Reading

For the most common types of writing tasks at university level see Friederichs, J. and Pierson, H.D. (1981). What are Science students expected to write? *ELT Journal, 35*(4), 407-410, and Horowitz, D.M. (1986). What professors actually require: academic tasks for the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 20*(3), 445-462.

For the classic article on test wiseness, see Millman, J., Bishop, C.H., Ebel, R. (1965). An analysis of test-wiseness. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 25*(3), 707-726.

For a report on IELTS gains, see Elder, C. & K. O'Loughlin (2003). Score gains on IELTS after 10-12 weeks of intensive English study. *IELTS Research Report. Volume 4*: 62-87.

See Chung, T. M., & Nation, P. (2003). Technical vocabulary in specialised texts. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 15*(2), 103-116, for information about technical vocabulary.

Web Resources

Both IELTS (http://www.ielts.org/) and TOEFL (http://www.ets.org/toefl/) have websites with very useful information.

There is a lot of information on test wiseness on the web.

Chapter 7 Beginning to Read in a First and Second Language

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that there is a range of different kinds of knowledge that children need to develop in order to read. These include developing phonemic awareness, understanding the alphabetic principle, experiencing the nature of books and reading, and developing the skills of turning print into sound.

This chapter describes how children can be helped to get ready for reading. Many of the things mentioned here are largely what parents of native speakers of English could do, so that their child is ready to learn to read when they go to school. However, most of the activities described here would work very well with any language, with young learners of English as a second language or, with some adjustments particularly to the actual material being read, with older learners.

Learning to read for the first time requires a child to make some major conceptual leaps. These include realising that the spoken form of language consists of sounds which are combined in various ways and that words can be broken up into their component sounds, and component sounds can go together to make words. This is called phonemic awareness. Words are made of separable sounds. Another important piece of learning is what is called the alphabetic principle, and that is gaining an awareness that individual sounds can be represented by letters of the alphabet, and that letters of the alphabet can signal certain sounds. As well as these two very important ideas, there are many ideas to be gained about the nature of reading and the nature of books. Let us now look at each of these ideas one by one.

Phonemic Awareness

Gaining phonemic awareness is actually fun and when young children are ready, around the age of about four or five, parents can play these kinds of games with them. The parent says "What word is this? /k/, /a/, /t/. That is, the parent sounds out the word and the child tries to recognise it. Note that the parent is not spelling the word, but is splitting up the sounds that make up the word. This game can be played when travelling in the car, walking along the street, or just sitting around. It should not be treated like a lesson, but should be played like a challenging game. When the child gets really good at doing this, then the child can become the one splitting up the sounds of the words for the parent to recognise. This is often highly amusing, because sometimes the way the child splits the words is very creative. This very simple but enjoyable game has a very important goal, namely gaining phonemic awareness. For reading in an alphabetic language like English or Arabic, phonemic awareness is very important.

❖ **Figure 7.1** Practising phonemic awareness

It is quite easy to test if the learners have phonemic awareness. You simply ask them questions like these "Which word is this – /p/ /e/ /n/?", "/k/ /a/ /t/?". Note that this involves saying the sounds, not the names of the letters. If learners are able to identify the word by hearing the separate sounds, then they already have phonemic awareness. A further test is to see if they can break words up into their separate sounds, but this is a slightly more difficult skill.

The Alphabetic Principle

Once learners have gained phonemic awareness, then understanding the alphabetic principle is the next big step to take. Understanding the alphabetic principle means realising that letters can represent sounds and that sounds can be represented by letters. A useful way to practice this is by looking for the same letter in a piece of text, such as the newspaper. "Can you find any words which begin with t?" Note here, that the parent does not say "tee" for the letter t, but actually says the sound that the letter represents.

Many parents think that teaching their children the alphabet, that is to say A, B, C, D E, etc, is a good way of helping them begin to read. Learning the alphabet in this way has very little to do with reading. Learning to recognise the letter shapes is useful, but learning their names is not as useful as learning the sounds that they represent.

Learning Letter Shapes

If a second language learner is already able to read in their first language, and their first language uses the same alphabet as English, then little if any letter shape learning will be needed. A native speaker of Spanish who can read Spanish already knows the letter shapes needed for reading English. The spelling-sound rules are not exactly the same but the written forms are not a problem. Learners who cannot read in their first language, or whose language uses a different writing system like Arabic or Japanese, may need to learn to recognise the letter shapes. Because of the detailed recognition skills that are needed, it may be most effective to teach learners how to write the letters rather than just rely on looking at them. Activities can include tracing over letters; repeated copying of letters of the alphabet; delayed copying where the learners look, look away, and write from memory; letter matching of flash cards (find the pairs); and letter dictation. Productive use can help receptive recognition. Letters of similar shapes *p*, *d*, *b*, *g*, should not be learned at the same time as they are likely to interfere with each other.

Learning about Books and Print

The most important way that parents can prepare their children for reading is helping them to realise that reading is fun, and that if you can read, then you can access that fun yourself. Reading stories to children at bedtime and at other times is an excellent way of showing this. When parents read to

children, the children should see this not as a lesson but as a very pleasant and enjoyable activity shared with the parent. While they listen to stories, children can learn many things about books. They don't have to be taught these things, but can observe them happen while they listen to the story. For example, they learn that books have pages, and that with English books you turn the pages from right to left. They learn that there are words on these pages and that you read the words from left to right when reading English. They also learn that the first line is at the top of the page and the next line follows under that. They also learn that books contain pictures as well as words, and that the pictures and the words relate to each other.

When they have been listening to stories and looking at the books for a reasonable amount of time, they may also recognise that there are big letters and small letters, that words are separated by spaces, and that there are question marks, full stops, commas, and exclamation marks. They also learn to take care of books, partly because they will want to read them again and other people will want to read them.

It is also good if children see that their parents read and enjoy reading and gain obvious pleasure from it.

An Experience Approach to Reading

There is a very useful activity that is very common in New Zealand schools. It is called an experience approach to reading and was first written about by a very inspiring teacher called Sylvia Ashton-Warner. It works in this way. The children each draw a picture of something that recently happened to them. After they have drawn the picture they bring it up to the teacher one by one who asks them what the picture is about. The teacher writes exactly what the child says underneath the picture. So if the child says "Yesterday my daddy drove the truck out of the drive, ran over the dog and squashed it flat", that is what the teacher writes underneath the picture. The teacher should not correct the child's language but writes what the child says. This then becomes the child's reading text for the day, and the child can read it to others in the class showing them the picture and reading them the story. Each day a new picture is drawn and a new story is written underneath, and these stories are gathered together to become the child's reading book.

This is called an experience approach to reading because the child brings a lot of previous knowledge to the reading task. First, the ideas in the story are completely familiar to the child because the child has experienced them and drawn them. Second, the language in the story is completely familiar to the child because it is the child's words. Third, the discourse and organisation

of the story is completely familiar because it is the child's story, spoken by the child. The only learning needed which is outside the child's experience is connecting the child's spoken forms to the written form provided by the teacher. This is the learning goal of the activity.

Parents can also help their children to learn through the experience approach to reading. Children can draw their pictures at home and get their parents to write what they say underneath them. Once again, this should be treated not as a lesson but as a fun thing to do.

We have looked at several useful things that parents can do to get their child ready for reading. Although these activities all have serious purposes, they need to be treated as things that the child enjoys and wants to do. If parents get too formal and serious about these things, they may turn the child away from reading. In such cases it would be better that nothing was done rather than that this negative effect occurs. Research shows that the easiest time for young learners to learn to read is when they are around the age of six years old, because by then they are easily able to develop phonemic awareness and to gain an understanding of the alphabetic principle.

You don't have to be a trained reading teacher in order to help children get ready for reading and to take the first very important conceptual steps toward reading. Reading is one of the most important learned skills that a child will learn and any useful help along the way toward this skill is time well spent.

Learning to Read through Phonics

Learning to read using the sound-spelling correspondences in an alphabetic language is called using phonics. Reading using phonics involves applying the alphabetic principle. In order to understand the alphabetic principle and apply it to reading, learners need to know what letters can represent what sounds. Unfortunately in English the names of letters (a = ay, b = bee, c = see etc) do not represent the sounds of the letters. This is why learning to say the alphabet is not very good preparation for reading. To recognise words using phonics, learners need to learn the most common sounds of each of the letters. Although the sound-spelling relationships of English are not as highly regular as they are in some languages, there is still a great deal of regularity in the English spelling system, and there are many regular sound-spelling correspondences. You can find a list of these in the appendix to *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing* (Nation, 2009) which is mentioned at the end of this chapter.

Some reading teachers are not very happy about using phonics because they

feel that it takes the learners' attention away from the enjoyment of reading. As long as a phonics-based approach is only a part of the language-focused learning strand of a balanced reading course, and if the learners have developed phonemic awareness, then it is well worth doing. Such teaching however should only be a small part of a well-balanced reading course.

A Whole-Language Approach to Reading

A whole language approach to reading wisely sees attention to phonics as being only a part of an integrated approach with most attention being given to gaining enjoyment from reading and drawing on a range of cues to decode words in context. Sometimes an opposition is set up between phonics and whole language, but this opposition is to a large degree unreal, except where practitioners of phonics see phonics as the major or only approach to reading with most time being spent on language-focused learning (phonics), rather than meaning-focused input and fluency development. A whole language use of phonics involves developing word analysis skills in context and using phonics as one of a range of word attack skills.

How Difficult is it to Learn to Read English as a Second Language?

Beginning to learn to read English as a second language is easier if:

1 The learner can already read in their first language.
2 Their first language uses an alphabetic system of writing, for example Samoan, Korean, Thai, Arabic, Russian.
3 Their first language uses the same letters as English.
4 The first language pronunciation of these letters is close to the English pronunciation.
5 The learner is highly motivated to read.
6 The learner can already speak quite a lot of English.

Beginning to read English as a second language is difficult if:

1 The learner knows almost no English.
2 The learner cannot read in their first language.
3 The writing system of their first language has few similarities with English.
4 The learner is not interested in learning to read in English.

Learning to read English as a second language can be made easier if:

1 The reading books are chosen so that they contain known language. For older learners this will require the use of graded readers. For five and six year olds, the usual books for beginning reading will be suitable because they will quickly learn the vocabulary needed to read them.
2 The reading material is interesting and very relevant to the learner's needs.
3 The reading activities are designed not to be too difficult so that the learner can complete them successfully.
4 The learner is encouraged to read a lot and to do repeated reading.
5 The teacher checks that there are no problems, such as poor eyesight, poor hearing, letter confusions, that stand in the way of learning to read. Appendix 1 has a diagnostic procedure for checking out learners with reading problems.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Young readers need to develop phonemic awareness, knowledge of the alphabetic principle, and a familiarity with letter shapes. They also need to experience the nature of reading through being read to. An experience approach to reading involves the learners reading material that is closely associated with their daily experience. Phonics can be a very useful part of a reading course, but it needs to be a component within a much wider approach to reading. The learner's first language can play an important role in beginning to read, particularly if the learners can already read in their first language.

Further Reading

For an excellent introduction to how reading is taught to young native speakers see Smith, J. & Elley, W. (1997). *How Children Learn to Read.* Auckland: Addison Wesley Longman.
The end of Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of Nation, I.S.P. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing.* New York: Routledge is about beginning to read in another language and learning to spell.

Chapter 8 One-to-One Tutoring with Adult ESL Learners

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that good one-to-one tutoring involves planning a well-balanced course and taking account of the learner's goals and needs. A major advantage of one-to-one tutoring is that the teacher can easily adapt the learning focus to suit the needs of the learner.

In Chapter 2 we looked at needs analysis and environment analysis in one-to-one tutoring. In this chapter we look at how such lessons can be planned and carried out where the target language, English, is the language used in the community. From this chapter on, we move from looking at needs and environment analysis to looking at teaching and learning.

Planning a Well-Balanced Course

The most important job of the language teacher is to plan. This means planning a course where there is a good balance of opportunities for different kinds of learning. The general principle followed in this book and also in the book *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?* is the principle of the four strands. This principle simply says that in a well-balanced course, equal time should be given to each of four different strands–the strand of meaning-focused input, the strand of meaning-focused output, the strand of language-focused learning, and the fluency development strand. So, the principle of the four strands suggests how the time in a course and the work done outside of the course should be divided up. The major value of this principle is that it makes sure that each of the four kinds of learning gets attention, and that no one kind of learning is given too much attention at the expense of the others. This principle does not apply as strongly for ESL teaching as it does for EFL teaching, but it is still a useful principle.

Let us now look at the most important activities that can occur in each strand. Table 8.1 lists these activities.

Table 8.1 The four strands and their related activities for one-to-one tutoring

Strand	Activities
Meaning-focused input	· Extensive reading · Listening to stories · Extensive listening · Linked skills activities
Meaning-focused output	· Role play activities · Writing tasks · Linked skills activities
Language-focused learning	· Intensive reading · Pronunciation practice · Spelling practice · Paired reading
Fluency development	· Listening to recordings · Repeated speaking · Repeated reading · Speed reading · Speed writing · Linked skills activities

All of the activities listed in Table 8.1 are suitable for one-to-one tutoring. In some of the activities, this will involve the tutor taking an active part in the activity. For example, in role play activities, the tutor will need to take on one of the roles in the activity.

Let us now look at each of these activities seeing how they can be used in one-to-one tutoring. When looking at the activities, we will not divide them up according to the categories in Table 8.1, but will divide them up according to the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. We will look at some activities only briefly, but they will be looked at in much more detail in later chapters of this book.

Listening and Speaking Activities

We group listening and speaking together because several activities like role play activities and linked skills activities involve the learner in both having to listen and to speak.

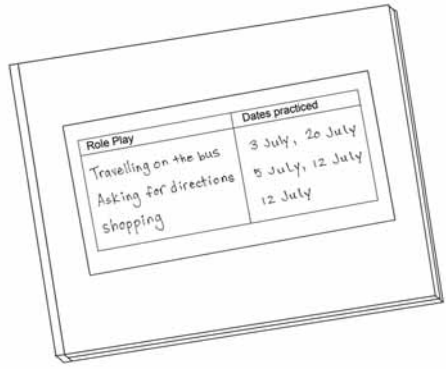
(1) Role play activities

Role play and simulation activities are looked at in much more detail in Chapter 14. Simulation activities involve the learner in not taking on a new role but simply performing as they would normally have to perform. For example, a useful simulation activity may be *Going to the corner shop*. In this activity, the tutor takes on the role of the shopkeeper, and the learner simply takes on their usual role of the buyer. In Chapter 2 in Table 2.1, there is a list of possible topics for such activities. In one-to-one tutoring, the tutor needs to encourage the learner to suggest situations and topics that they normally have to deal with and find some difficulty dealing with.

It is worthwhile designing a set procedure for such activities to make sure that learning really does occur from them. The two major learning features that need to be included in the procedure are repetition and retrieval. Repetition simply means performing the same task or a similar task several times, with some of the repetitions several days or weeks apart. Retrieval means performing the repetitions without a full written script, but with the learner having to retrieve what was practiced before from their memory. In the early repetitions, it is important that the teacher is patient and gives the learner time to retrieve. Retrieval is a very powerful learning condition and if the tutor rushes in too quickly to provide what the learner has trouble recalling, then the opportunity to use this powerful condition is lost.

So, in order to do role play activities, the tutor with the help of the learner needs to choose a useful situation to role play. The role play is done slowly and carefully with the tutor providing the necessary words and phrases or sentences if the learner has difficulty doing this. Once this first role play has been successfully completed, it is immediately done again (preferably two additional times) with the learner being supported by notes, quickly drawn diagrams, or cues from the tutor. The tutor makes a brief note about the role play with the date that it was practised, and then

❖ **Figure 8.1** The record of role plays



within a few days time makes sure that the role play is practised again. The tutor writes the date of the practices with the goal of having at least five practices in total for that particular role play over a period of several weeks. In the later repetitions, this particular role play activity becomes a fluency development activity because it is now so familiar and easy to perform.

In the later repetitions, the teacher can introduce a third powerful learning condition—creative use. Creative use involves meeting or using in slightly new ways what is already partly known. This means that in the later repetitions the teacher changes the role play slightly, for example, in their role as the shopkeeper by changing the responses that the shopkeeper has made in the previous role plays, or by requiring the learner to pretend to buy something different. The basic idea is to make small changes to the role play so that the learner meets the useful words and phrases under slightly different conditions.

Such role play activities are most effective if in their daily life the learner deliberately observes others in such situations and notes what they say. There is also value in understanding why certain things are said in certain ways. We will look at this in more detail in Chapter 14.

(2) Listening to stories

The listening to stories activity involves the learner listening while being read to. Typically, it involves listening to a part of the story for a few minutes and then going on to some other activity, with the story being continued in the next lesson. If the learner can read English, then this activity may include listening while reading. However, it is not essential that it does. The tutor and the learner should work out a simple set of signals to indicate when the tutor should repeat a phrase or sentence, or where the tutor should explain a word or phrase. This activity can also be done as an independent study activity either using recordings of graded readers (most recently published graded readers also include a CD of the spoken form of the text), or a recording made by the tutor. Modern digital recorders include a speed control function and this can be perfect for slowing down the listening or speeding it up. If the tutor has also included extensive listening in the program, then the listening to stories activity can be made more interactive, with the tutor reading the story and discussing it with the learner as the story continues.

(3) Extensive listening

Extensive listening involves listening to large amounts of spoken language which is at the right level for the learner. This can be done as an independent activity but will require the use of a CD player or a digital tape recorder. There are very many graded readers which are accompanied by a recording of the

text, and the learner's goal should be to listen to as many of these as possible, and listening again to those that were the most enjoyable or challenging. Reading while listening is generally more effective for vocabulary learning than listening by itself, but listening by itself, especially when the listening is repeated, is a valuable activity.

❖ **Figure 8.2** Extensive listening

(4) Linked skills activities

Linked skills activities are dealt with in detail in Chapter 15. The basic idea behind such activities is that learners focus on exactly the same material across three of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, or writing. So, the learner may read about an event in the newspaper, then talk about that event with the tutor, and then write about it. Thus the same event is focused on in reading, speaking, and writing. Linked skills activities are very easy to make and they provide ideal opportunities for learning through repetition, retrieval, and creative use.

Reading Activities

For a variety of reasons, learners of English as a second language may be unable to read English and may also not be literate in their first language. Usually, it is better to learn to read in the first language before taking on reading in a second language. If this proves to be impossible through a lack of teachers, resources or even motivation, and the learner wishes to learn to read the second language, a tutor can provide very useful help in these first

steps. See Chapter 7 in this book on teaching beginning reading.

(1) Extensive reading

If the learner has basic reading skills in the second language, then it is very useful to get the learner to do large amounts of extensive reading. Where English is learned as a foreign language, almost one quarter of the course time could be usefully spent doing extensive reading for meaning-focused input and fluency development. Where English is learned as a second language, it is reasonable to expect that a learner should be reading at least two graded readers a week which are at the right level for them. This means with only a small number of words which are outside their present vocabulary knowledge. It is very important that tutors know about extensive reading and graded readers. If the tutor was trained as a primary or secondary school teacher, they may not be familiar with the specially prepared graded readers which are used when English is taught as a foreign or second language. These graded readers have very strict vocabulary control, much stricter than that used in levelled reading schemes. Reading texts which are written for native speakers of the language assume a vocabulary knowledge of several thousand words. They tend to be difficult for non-native speakers to read. On the other hand, the lowest levels of graded readers assume only a vocabulary knowledge of just over 100 words. Every major ELT publisher has its own series, and usually several series, of graded readers. At the end of this chapter, under the heading of **Further reading**, there are suggestions about how the tutor can find out more about graded readers and extensive reading. It is very important that teachers of English as a second language are aware of the graded readers that are available and of the importance of simplification and vocabulary control for learners of English as a second language. With very young learners of English, up to the age of about seven or eight, it may not be necessary to use graded readers, and the usual books for beginning reading for native speakers can be used.

In an extensive reading program, learners read material which is at the right level for them and read large amounts of it. They are not tested on the reading and they read material which is interesting for them and hopefully which they enjoy reading. The tutor can help the learner choose books at the right level, and should help the learner begin extensive reading by doing paired reading with the learner during the early tutoring sessions. Once the learner is familiar with what to do, then extensive reading can become an independent study activity. Extensive reading is a very effective way of improving reading skills, of increasing reading fluency, of expanding vocabulary knowledge, of strengthening vocabulary knowledge, of increasing knowledge of collocations and grammatical patterns, and of developing a love of reading. An extensive reading program is the cornerstone of any well thought out language course.

(2) Paired reading

Paired reading involves the tutor and learner reading a text aloud together. The tutor and the learner sit next to each other looking at the same copy of the book. Most of the reading will be done by the learner, but when the learner needs help with the reading, the tutor can provide it. It is probably best not to turn paired reading into intensive reading where the teacher provides quite a bit of information about the language features in the text. Paired reading should simply be seen as a way of helping a learner move steadily through the text. The learners may welcome pronunciation correction during paired reading and this could be an appropriate thing to do.

One of the most important skills that the tutor needs to develop in one-to-one tutoring is to give the learner time to produce a piece of language or to find an answer without the tutor rushing in to provide it. This skill is so important in helping learning that it is sometimes put into a slogan, such as Pause, Prompt, Praise. In learning terms, it is providing the learner with the opportunity to retrieve. Some tutors do this naturally, but others may need to carefully observe themselves to make sure that they are doing it. In paired reading, this means giving the learner a chance to struggle to sound out or pronounce the word before providing help.

Silent paired reading is also possible where the learner reads quietly and asks the tutor for help when it is required.

(3) Repeated reading

Repeated reading involves reading the same text three times, each time immediately after the other. This can be treated as a form of paired reading where the goal is for the learner to finally be able to read the text with a reasonable degree of fluency. The texts used in repeated reading are usually not longer than a page and may be shorter than that. Repeated reading not only improves reading skill but also develops vocabulary knowledge. Passages from graded readers or from the speed reading courses mentioned below can be used as texts for repeated reading.

(4) Intensive reading

Intensive reading involves the tutor and learner working together to understand a difficult text. The texts which are used in intensive reading are more difficult than those used in extensive reading and repeated reading. Ideally, the learner should provide these texts for the tutor and they could include items which have appeared through the mail, notes sent home from school, school texts that the learner's children have to deal with, and forms that need to be filled out. Items which have appeared through the mail can include community notices and community newspapers, bills, and

advertising material. This activity is done in a similar way to paired reading except that the teacher can spend a reasonable amount of time on each unfamiliar item, explaining it, showing how it relates to what is already known (through word parts or word stems), and showing other uses of it. Intensive reading can also be an opportunity for pronunciation practice, spelling practice, explaining vocabulary, developing grammar knowledge, and looking at the organisation of texts. It may also be an opportunity for cross-cultural understanding. Intensive reading can eat up a lot of time and it is important to make sure that the balance between the four strands is maintained. Intensive reading should only be one part of one quarter of the course.

(5) Speed reading

The name speed reading suggests that the learner should be reading very fast. In fact, the aim of speed reading is to get the learner to read at a speed which is normal for native speakers of the language. Native speakers typically read at speeds of around 250 words per minute, but this of course depends on the material they are reading and why they are reading it. Once learners have a vocabulary of over 1,000 words, they can begin doing speed reading practice. This involves keeping a record of the time that it takes to read a text, noting that time, and then answering comprehension questions about the text. The learner marks the questions themselves using an answer key and records their reading speed and comprehension score on graphs. Each speed reading session usually takes less than 10 minutes. A free speed reading course is available from Paul Nation's website. The introduction to the course contains more detail about how to carry out speed reading. There are also several free speed reading courses available from Sonia Millett's website. Each of these courses is at a different vocabulary level. Speed reading not only improves reading fluency, but also has beneficial effects on other aspects of language knowledge.

Writing Activities

(1) Writing tasks

In one-to-one tutoring, writing tasks should be based on the kind of writing that the learner needs to do. The great advantage of one-to-one tutoring is that the classes can focus on material which is immediately relevant to the learner and tutors should make sure that they do this wherever possible. Writing may be as simple as making lists, signing your name in English if your language uses a different script, filling in forms, writing short notes to others (such as notes explaining absence from school), and writing e-mails. It may

also be as difficult as writing assignments or job applications.

Writing should be done with a clear understanding of who the reader will be, and the goal of the piece of writing. It should also be done when the learner has most of the information that is needed for the writing.

Initially, writing should be done like paired reading, with the tutor and learner working together. Once again, the tutor needs to exercise patience allowing the learner to have a go before providing help. The following questions may help when beginning a paired writing session.

- ✓ Who are you writing to?
- ✓ Why are you writing to them?
- ✓ Do you have all the ideas you need to do your piece of writing?
- ✓ Do you have to organise your writing in a particular way?
- ✓ What is your first sentence?

In speaking activities, it is not always a good idea to interrupt the learner to correct them while they are speaking. This may have the effect of discouraging them from speaking. In writing, however, giving feedback while the learner is writing may be useful.

A One-to-One Tutoring Session

A good one-to-one tutoring session will contain elements of a friendly conversation, serious work, and counselling. Good tutors take a personal interest in their learners and thus can see their learning and their learning problems in a much wider context than a class teacher can. This can have very good motivation effects for the learner who feels their particular problems are being listened to and attended to.

Like most lessons, once the course is going, the problem is not what to do in each lesson but how to fit it all in. Several of the activities in Table 7.1 are suitable for the learner to do individually in their own time. These can include extensive reading, listening to stories from a CD or digital recorder, writing tasks, intensive reading, and speed reading. These activities need to be first introduced in class and a plan of work can be negotiated with the learner. This negotiated plan can be something that is treated as a kind of contract and is checked on to keep the learner motivated and doing the work, or it can

simply be advice to the learner.

A session can typically begin with a chat which can be a mixture of social chat, a discussion of any problems that occurred since the previous meeting that could be dealt with in this session, and confirming the plan for the current lesson. When planning a lesson it is a good idea to have several shifts in focus during the lesson. This means that some of the lesson focuses are on interactive work shared between the tutor and the learner, some of the lesson focuses are on the learner quietly tackling a task while the tutor observes, and some of the lesson focuses are on the tutor or the learner taking the lead. Moving between one focus and another provides an opportunity for a change and a rest, so that the tutor and the learner do not arrive at the end of the lesson feeling exhausted.

In any lesson it is a good idea to deal with the most important or difficult piece of work as early as possible, so that the lesson is seen as something involving genuine learning that is taking the learner a step forward. Depending on what the learner has suggested, this could be a role play activity or the beginning of linked skills activity. If the learner's interest is in reading, then some intensive reading may be a good starting point.

The learner should be able to see that each lesson is taking them forward in their knowledge of the language. There are several ways of signalling this. One way is to have a small book in which what happened in each lesson is briefly noted. This can also contain reminders of work that needs to be done in future lessons. Another way involves the use of graphs or progress sheets. For example, learners record their speed reading scores for speed and comprehension on graphs and this is a very useful record of improvement. It is possible to do something similar with a list of role play topics or conversation skills, crossing them off as they are practised and marking them again as they are revised. The same can be done with extensive reading. It may also be possible to build some kind of assessment into the tutoring, particularly in the areas where the learner feels the need for improvement. For pronunciation improvement, this could involve some semi-formal assessment of the decontextualised and contextualised pronunciation of certain sounds.

The lesson can end with some planning of the next lesson and of things that the learner needs to do before that lesson. It is a good idea to have a rough predictable plan for a lesson. This makes sure that things get done and that the tutor is seen as being well organised.

One-to-one tutoring can make substantial changes to people's lives. Because someone is prepared to take an interest in them, learners can make a degree of improvement that they would not make in an ordinary class. Tutoring can also be a very important starting point for more ambitious study.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

When a learner and a teacher are in a one-to-one situation, it is useful to see that the learner is getting a balance of learning opportunities across the four strands of a language course—meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language focused learning, and fluency development. Each of these strands has its own typical activities, and the teacher needs to use these activities in ways that meet the immediate and long-term learning needs of the learner. Both the learner and the teacher need to have a clear idea of the learning goals of the classes and they should often talk about these, particularly considering how the learner can do independent study without the teacher.

Further Reading

To find out more about graded readers and extensive reading, go to the Extensive Reading Foundation website and to Rob Waring's website. On the extensive reading website, there is a free booklet about extensive reading which can be downloaded. It is also worth looking at the websites of major ELT publishers such as Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Heinle Cengage Learning, Macmillan, and Pearson Longman. There are two free graded readers available on Paul Nation's website, and on the same website, there are mid-frequency readers freely available for learners who have vocabulary sizes of 4,000 words or larger.

Chapter 9 Teaching Small Classes of Adult ESL Learners

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that learners need to have opportunities to learn across the four strands of a course, and this involves using activities like extensive reading, pair and group activities, linked skills activities, prepared talks, writing tasks, observation tasks intensive reading, and fluency training across the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In Chapter 3, we looked at needs and environment analysis with small classes, stressing the value of taking advantage of the ESL situation by finding out what the learners need through a negotiated syllabus. We also pointed out the value of having observation tasks, where the learners are given specific things to observe about the way that native speakers carry out particular conversations. We also looked at the value of having clear long-term goals that the learners clearly understand and value.

In this chapter, we look at a range of activities that can be used in teaching small classes, and what learners need to learn.

In Chapter 8, we looked at the four strands of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development. These four strands also apply to teaching small classes, but in an English for second language learning situation, we need to be a bit more flexible about how we apply the strands, largely because there are many opportunities for learning outside the classroom. However teachers need to take a very realistic view of these opportunities. Older learners may have trouble finding meaning-focused input at a level which is suitable for them, and the opportunity for fluency development could be limited, if the learners do not have a lot of contact with native speakers. When considering these opportunities, it is useful to reflect on the amount of vocabulary knowledge that learners need to cope with unsimplified tasks. Watching television requires a vocabulary of

at least 3,000 words and preferably 5,000-6,000 words if the learner wants to gain a good understanding of what is being said. Fortunately, learners can cope with more defined and limited situations with a smaller vocabulary, especially if these situations have been practised and prepared for. Tasks like reading newspapers and novels require a vocabulary of around 8,000 to 9,000 words, if they are to be done without the help of dictionaries or other support. Once again, with some support and with a more limited task, such reading can be done.

Activities for Small ESL Classes for Adults

In Chapter 8, we looked at a range of activities for one-to-one tutoring across the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Most of the same activities are suitable for small classes, and because the learners have the opportunity to work with each other, there are further group work activities, like 4/3/2, which can be used. Table 9.1 provides a list of useful activities across the four strands.

Table 9.1 **Activities across the four strands for small ESL classes**

Strand	Activities
Meaning-focused input	· Extensive reading · Classroom management · Pair and group activities · Linked skills activities
Meaning-focused output	· Pair and group activities · Prepared talks · Writing tasks · Linked skills activities
Language-focused learning	· Pronunciation practice · Observation tasks · Intensive reading · Feedback on writing · Strategy training
Fluency development	· Listening to recordings · 4/3/2 · Easy extensive reading · Speed reading · Repeated reading · 10 minute writing · Linked skills activities

Listening Activities for Small Classes

In Chapter 8, we looked at extensive listening as a way of providing meaning-focused input. This is not included in Table 9.1, although it could be used as a home work activity. In small classes, the listening focus can come from the teacher's use of English to run the class, from work in small groups with learners who speak a different first language, and through linked skills activities. The learners who want to work intensively on their listening can do this as homework using the various websites that provide listening practice (type in *ESL listening* to search for sites), doing repeated listening of recordings made from the news for television, watching DVDs with English subtitles, and watching DVDs with a written script. The scripts of many movies are available on the web (http://www.imsdb.com/, http://www.simplyscripts.com/movie.html, http://www.script-o-rama.com/), and learners can read these, looking up words and underlining particular phrases that they want to pay attention to before watching the DVD.

Observation tasks are a language-focused learning approach to listening, usually as a preparation for speaking. Such tasks involve the learner in being an eavesdropper, giving deliberate attention to what people say in certain situations. Reporting back on observation tasks can provide a useful opportunity for deliberate learning and for cross-cultural discussion. Observation tasks are discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 11.

Fluency development in listening can come through the 4/3/2 activity where one learner in a pair is the listener. It can also be developed through linked skills activities if the last activity is a listening activity. Quicklistens, a technique where learners answer quick questions while listening to a graded reader, are available on Sonia Millett's website.

Speaking Activities for Small Classes

(1) Pair and group activities

Learners often come to evening classes not only to learn the language but also to meet others who are in a similar learning situation to them. Because of this, pair and group work activities are often quite popular. In Chapter 14, we look at role play and simulation activities. The content of these activities should as much as possible be related to the needs of the learners. For a wider collection of speaking activities, see Nation, I.S.P. (2012). *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?* Seoul: Compass Publishing.

Learners who attend small classes often have the opportunity to speak with native speakers, but they do not get the correction that they desire from

them. They feel that they may be making mistakes while they speak, but the people they speak to are tolerant of these errors or are unwilling or incapable of correcting them. One of the reasons for coming to a regular English class may be to get feedback about their spoken language. Ideally, this feedback would come from the teacher, because a teacher is most likely to provide relevant and informed correction. Thus, it is important that during group work activities in a small class, the teacher moves around from group to group giving feedback where necessary. It may also be useful before a small group activity to get each learner to note some aspect of spoken language that they want to focus on during the activity. This could be the pronunciation of a particular sound or word, the use of a particular phrase, or the use of some discourse strategy such as giving short answers and then providing extra information, or providing feedback that they are attending to what the other person is saying.

(2) Prepared talks

If learners also need to make presentations at work or to do some kind of extended talk, then prepared talks could be a useful class activity. These can be done as a group activity or as an individual activity. As a group activity, they can become the third part of a linked skills sequence, with the previous parts involving listening or reading and writing. As a small-scale individual activity, prepared talks can involve a learner finding a topic of interest in the newspaper or from some other source, reading about it and preparing it in their own time, and then delivering a short presentation based on it to their group or the whole class. A larger scale activity can involve the learner choosing a topic for extended data gathering, and eventually making a spoken presentation on this topic along with a written assignment. This activity is called *issue logs* (they could also be called *projects*) and will be looked at in more detail in Chapter 12 in the context of English for academic purposes.

(3) Pronunciation

Pronunciation is often a major concern for adult learners of English as a second language. Many find it difficult to get constructive feedback on their pronunciation, and the English class is probably the ideal place for this feedback to occur. A useful distinction can be made between (1) the pronunciation of individual sounds, and (2) the features of spoken language of word stress, sentence stress, and intonation. Individual sounds can be taught and practised, and because the first language has a major influence on the learning of these sounds by older learners, each learner can benefit from an individual session with the teacher where the teacher points out particular sounds and words that they need to work on. If there are several

learners who speak the same L1 in the classroom, this analysis and advising can be effectively done with a group of these learners if it is done sensitively. More than any other aspect of language learning, pronunciation is the one that can be most threatening to the learner's image of themselves. In their desire to be like others around them, young ESL learners have very little difficulty in picking up a nativelike pronunciation. The older the learner is, the greater the chances that their L1 will continue to have a major influence on the pronunciation of the second language.

To truly help second language learners with their pronunciation, second language teachers need to learn elementary articulatory phonetics. This involves learning how sounds are made, what parts of the mouth are involved in making each sound, whether sounds are vowels or consonants, voiced or voiceless, and stops or continuous sounds. (try searching the web using *articulatory phonetics for teachers*). If the teacher does not have the time to spend doing this kind of study, a useful first step is to identify the difficult sounds for most learners, for example the beginning sounds in *the*, *she*, *wet*, and then gather a small amount of information on how these sounds are made, and how they can be taught. It is worth working on individual sounds, because good progress can be made with a relatively small amount of work.

Helping learners with sentence stress and intonation is more difficult, because stress and intonation are strongly related to the information being conveyed. Most copying of intonation patterns seems contrived and inauthentic. Learners are best encouraged to observe how native speakers do it.

(4) 4/3/2

Speaking fluency comes from doing easy and repeated tasks, especially where there is some encouragement to go faster. The 4/3/2 activity involves the learners working in pairs. When the teacher tells the learners to begin, the person who is learner A speaks for 4 minutes on a very familiar topic. Learner B just listens and makes no comments. At the end of 4 minutes, the teacher says stop, and everyone who is learner B moves to a new partner. The teacher tells the learners to begin, and learner A then gives exactly the same talk again to the new partner but this time has only 3 minutes to do it. When the teacher says stop, all the learners who are B move to a new partner, and then all the learners who are A give their talk for the third time for 2 minutes. This activity results not only in changes in speaking fluency but also in changes in grammatical accuracy and the use of more complicated grammatical constructions. The only preparation required for the activity is a list of easy topics for the learners to talk about.

Linked skills activities typically involve some kind of spoken interaction. Chapter 15 provides a detailed description of linked skills activities.

Reading Activities for Small Classes

(1) Extensive reading for language growth and fluency

An extensive reading program is a very important part of any language development program. When extensive reading for meaning-focused input, and extensive reading for fluency development are added together, they make up just under one quarter of the time that the learners should be spending on learning English. The difference between extensive reading for meaning-focused input and extensive reading for fluency development is that when reading for meaning-focused input a small number of the words met should be unfamiliar to the learners. This should not be more than 2% of the running words and preferably only three or four words per page at the most. When reading for fluency development the learners should be reading very easy material which contains no unknown vocabulary or grammatical features. They can read graded readers that they have already read before, or they can read graded readers from a level which is way below their present level of proficiency. The idea is that they should read as much as possible and with a reasonable speed. It is important that teachers find ways of getting a good supply of graded readers for their classes, particularly if their learners have vocabulary sizes of 2,000 or 3,000 words or less. For learners with vocabulary sizes of around 4,000 words or above, there are free mid-frequency readers available on Paul Nation's website. Extensive reading need not be limited to graded readers, but it needs to be done on material that learners find interesting and relatively easy to read. Struggling through a difficult text which contains a lot of unknown words is not extensive reading. Extensive reading is important because it provides large quantities of meaningful input at the right level for the learners, and this input makes a significant contribution to language growth.

(2) Intensive reading

Intensive reading involves the teacher and the learners working together through a text which contains some unfamiliar language features. It is best if the text is an example of the kind of material that learners have expressed the need to read. For example, it may be a text from a newspaper, a recipe book, a popular magazine, or a government department. The teacher's job when working through the text is not just to aim at a good understanding of the text, but more importantly to focus on language and textual features that are relevant to other texts that the learners may read. The goal of today's reading is not to make today's text easier but to make tomorrow's text easier.

The kinds of things to focus on include spelling, the pronunciation of some of the words, vocabulary, word phrases, aspects of grammar, the way the information in the text is organised, and the content of the text. Intensive

reading is included under language-focused learning because although one of its aims is understanding of the text, the focus is on giving deliberate attention to language features.

Teachers might ask learners to bring texts for intensive reading to class, and may ask them to give a brief introduction to the text explaining why they brought it to class, and why it is important for them to be able to read it. Such texts should be reasonably short, probably only 200 or 300 words long, because most of the time will not be spent on reading but on learning about the language in the text. Intensive reading also provides a good opportunity to help the learners develop strategies that can help them in language learning and in coping with unfamiliar texts. These strategies can include dictionary use, guessing from context, word part analysis, choosing words to go onto word cards, and sentence parsing.

(3) Reading faster

Reading faster is almost the opposite of intensive reading. The most efficient way of increasing reading speed is by using a speed reading course. We looked at speed reading courses and where to find them in Chapter 8. Research on speed reading courses show that they are a very efficient means of helping learners read at a speed which is close to that of native speakers. Speed reading courses require material which does not contain any unknown language features. You don't become fluent by reading difficult material.

(4) Repeated reading

Repeated reading involves reading the same short text aloud three times while a partner listens. The time taken for each reading is noted, with the aim of each reading being faster than the previous one. Texts for repeated reading should only be around 200 words long so that they can be read within two or three minutes. Because repeated reading is a fluency development activity, the text should contain no unfamiliar language features and should be on largely familiar topics. The teacher could use repeated reading as a way of giving learners feedback on their pronunciation, and so the repeated reading activity could be one that is done with the teacher while the rest of the learners are doing some are other kind of class work.

Writing Activities for Small Classes

(1) Writing tasks and feedback on writing

Writing tasks need to be suited to the kind of writing that learners want to do. It may be that writing e-mails or text messages is an important writing goal for the learners. Table 12.3 in Chapter 12 looks at the parts of the writing process. These include having a model of the reader, having a writing goal, gathering information, organising information, turning information into written text, reviewing what has been written, and revising and editing. Giving learners a conscious awareness of these parts can help bring about improvement in their writing, and if writing is an important learning goal for them it is well worth focusing on these parts of the process.

If learners have specific writing goals it is also worth focusing on them. For example, they may wish to be able to write letters to the school, explaining their children's absence, or they may wish to write job applications, or to e-mail friends in English.

When describing a writing task for the learners to do, it is worth making clear who the reader of that piece of writing will be. If the writer can visualise who they are writing for, the writing should then contain the right amount of detail and have the proper degree of formality. It is also useful to include the goal of the piece of writing in the writing task, because this helps with the organisation of the information in the writing. Here is an example.

> A teacher at your son's school was particularly helpful in explaining to you the reading program that your son has to follow and how you can help him follow the program through helping him at home. You were very impressed by this help and kindness of the teacher who spent time with you. You want to write a letter to the head of the school praising the teacher. This will be a rather formal letter but it should be clearly and simply expressed.

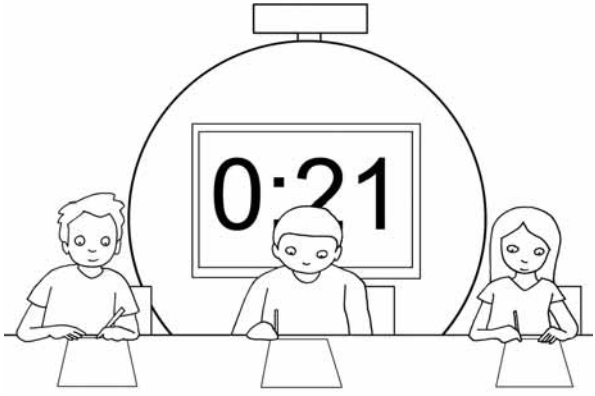
Note in the example, that the reader of the piece of writing is clear, and the goal of the piece of writing is also clear.

Writing provides excellent opportunities for feedback on grammar, vocabulary, organisation, and cross-cultural expectations. Teachers can provide this feedback individually for the learners in a small class, and if some learners are willing, their particularly good pieces of writing can be shown on an overhead projector and commented on for the whole class to learn from.

(2) 10 minute writing

Writing fluency can be developed by getting learners to do large quantities of writing. The best fluency development, however, occurs when learners are writing on topics which are very familiar to them and where there is some pressure for them to write faster than they would normally write. The 10 minute writing activity has all the features of a good fluency activity – a message focus, an easy task, pressure to go faster than normal, and quantity of practice. When doing 10 minute writing each learner chooses a topic that is easy for them or that they are well prepared for. When the teacher says "Go!", The learners start writing. If they make errors, they simply cross them out and continue writing. Their goal is to write as many words as possible within the 10 minute period. At the end of 10 minutes, the teacher says "Stop!", And the learners stop writing and count the number of words that they have written. They write this number on their writing graph. Their aim is to write more words each time.

❖ **Figure 9.1** Doing ten minute writing



The teacher does not correct the pieces of writing but occasionally looks at them and comments on the content of the writing, saying things like "Tell me more about that", and "That was interesting. Can you tell me what happened next?". The reason the teacher does not correct the grammar errors is because the teacher does not want the learners to slow down in order to write more correctly. There is opportunity for correction and feedback in other parts of the course. In the fluency section of the course, the aim should be on quantity and speed.

The teacher should regularly look at learners' graphs and see if they are making progress in the number of words that they produce in the same time period. 10 minute writing can be 7 minute writing or 12 minute writing, depending on the time available and the proficiency level of the learners. If the same time period is kept for each session, it becomes much easier for the

learners to see their progress.

Planning a Course for a Small ESL Class

The activities listed in Table 9.1 need to be fitted into a class schedule. Small ESL classes sometimes meet only once or twice a week in the evening, or there may be one or two morning sessions per week. There may also be intensive ESL classes which run for a few weeks meeting several hours each day. Each course will have its own particular timetable, but there are principles which should lie behind the design of the timetable. Firstly, the timetable needs to take account of work that will be done in class and the opportunities for learning outside of class as well as the opportunities for doing homework. Secondly, the timetable needs to take account of the needs of the learners. If their main reason for coming to class is to get language-focused guidance and feedback, the teacher should satisfy this need. If the learners have many needs and are aware of these, then a flexible timetable which could incorporate a negotiated syllabus would be desirable. Thirdly, there needs to be a balance of activities across the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as a balance across the strands of meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development.

Because time is usually a critical environment factor with small classes—there is not much class time—it is useful to make a division of activities which will be largely independent study by the learners, and those which will take place in class under the guidance of the teacher. Table 9.2 takes the activities from Table 9.1 and classifies them in this way.

Table 9.2 **The division of responsibility for the activities in a small ESL class**

Class activities	Independent study and homework
Classroom management	Extensive reading
Pair and group activities	Prepared talks
Linked skills activities	Writing tasks
Pronunciation practice	Observation tasks
Intensive reading	Listening to recordings
Feedback on writing	Easy extensive reading
Strategy training	
4/3/2	
Speed reading	
Repeated reading	
10 minute writing	

The activities which are done as independent study or homework need to be prepared for in class, but once these activities are underway they need only occasional monitoring.

Needs analysis plays a very important role in running small ESL classes. Activities which were very suitable for learners of English as a foreign language may turn out to be not what learners of English as a second language really want. If the teacher decides not to have a negotiated syllabus, it is essential that the teacher regularly consults the learners about their reactions to what is going on in class and how well it meets their expectations. As was pointed out in Chapter 1, learners in an ESL situation typically have obvious immediate needs, and it is important that the classroom program meets these needs and is seen to be meeting these needs.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Small classes have the advantage that learners have the opportunity to learn from each other. The range of activities involved do not differ greatly from those of other types of classes and need to provide coverage of the four strands of a course. Because of the time constraint, it is useful to divide the activities between those which are done in class and those which are particularly suited for independent learning. Learners in small classes value direct language feedback from the teacher on the correctness of their speaking and writing, as they may find this difficult to get outside of class.

Further Reading

To learn more about fluency activities, read the following article which is available on Paul Nation's website. Nation, I.S.P. (1997) Developing fluency in language use. *KIFL Academic Journal, 6*, 30 35.

To learn more about reading fluency activities, read the following article which is available on Paul Nation's website. Nation, I.S.P. (2005). Reading faster. *Pasaa, 36*, 21-37.

To learn more about setting up a regular fluency program, read the following article. Millett, S. (2008). A daily fluency programme. *Modern English Teacher, 17*(2), 21-128.

Chapter 10 English as a Second Language at School

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that non-native speakers of English at school should be helped to fit into the normal school classes and routines as early as possible. Although there are lots of opportunities for language development outside school, at school the main focus should be on developing the language, skills and subject knowledge needed for study.

In Chapter 4 we looked at needs analysis and environment analysis with ESL learners in the school system. We looked at how many young learners, below the age of seven, are likely to quickly become like native speakers when they become a part of the school system, although teachers may need to provide some extra support for them beyond the normal caring support that they would provide to any learner. Some learners may need particular attention that focuses on their particular needs, provides supportive opportunities for learning from classmates, and helps speed up their learning to close the gap that exists between them and their native-speaking classmates. Older learners in the primary school system may also quickly become like native speakers but they may need more support and tolerance as they try to bridge the large language gap which exists between them and their native speaking classmates. As much as possible, this support for primary school children should be provided within the usual classes, and it is not a good idea to have substantial amounts of withdrawal to a special program for these learners. Every effort should be made to make them feel that they are just like the other learners in the school and are not specially differentiated in any way. This means that withdrawal programs should not be a preferred choice.

Second language learners who enter the secondary school system with very little English, however, will need some special attention. Their native speaking classmates at the beginning of secondary school have vocabulary sizes of over 10,000 words and second language learners will require several years to

learn this many words. To cope with secondary school study a vocabulary size of 8,000 words is needed, and teachers need to help learners learn these high frequency and mid-frequency words in the context of their school subjects. Gaining such a vocabulary size is a basic long-term goal for second language learners at secondary school.

An important principle guiding language support for secondary school learners is that as much as possible the support should be provided with direct relevance to the subjects that they are studying at school and to the tests and examinations that they need to sit. Even if the learners are in preparatory English-language programs within the school, or are being withdrawn from regular classes for several hours a week for language support, the subject-matter content of the material that they are working on to improve their English should have direct relevance to their studies. The major reasons for this are that it is much more efficient to focus precisely on what needs to be learnt, and that the English support does not become an extra burden for an already struggling student, but helps them reduce the burden of their regular study. Focusing on subject matter content is also good for learners' motivation.

This approach to choosing the content of the English teaching material is in effect content-based learning, which is also called learning through the curriculum. Content-based learning involves learning the language while also learning the ideas content of what is being studied. Content-based learning provides ideal conditions for language learning, because staying within one content area reduces the vocabulary load of the material that learners have to work with, and allows learners to make use of previous learning and background knowledge to deal with the material they are working with. Content-based learning should also include deliberate attention to language features, and using the guideline of the four strands, this deliberate attention to language should not make up more than 25% of the content-based learning time. Let us look at how such a focus can be carried out at secondary schools.

Content-Based Learning in Secondary Schools

Table 10.1 is organised around the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and many of the activities will involve more than one language skill as in listening while reading. The content focus of all the activities in Table 10.1 should relate to the subjects that learners are studying in school.

Table 10.1 **Content-based language learning activities for ESL learners in secondary school**

Language skill	Activities
Listening	· Listening while reading · Instructional and explanatory language · Linked skills activities
Speaking	· Reading aloud · Task-based discussion · Linked skills activities
Reading	· Intensive reading · Paired reading · Deliberate vocabulary learning · Reading adapted content texts · Speed reading · Linked skills activities
Writing	· Content-based writing tasks · Feedback on writing · Linked skills activities

One of the major problems in carrying out such activities is finding texts at a suitable level for the learners. The AntWordProfiler program (available free from Laurence Anthony's website) is a very efficient way of adapting texts by highlighting words at certain frequency levels and allowing editing directly into the highlighted text. It is well worth spending the small amount of time required to learn how to use the program. The texts adapted using the program can be the basis for linked skills tasks (see Chapter 15 on linked skills activities). If the learners are low proficiency learners, the first step in a linked skills activity can be intensive reading or paired reading where the learners get help understanding the content and language of the text they will work with.

Anthony, L. (2012). *AntWordProfiler* (Version 1.3.1) [Computer Software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available from http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/.

Listening Activities for ESL School Students

(1) Listening while reading

Listening while reading has been included as a useful activity for ESL school students because it can be done as a class activity and also as individual work. When it is done as a class activity, the teacher reads the text aloud while the learners follow the written text. They can interrupt the teacher for explanation when they need it, thus turning the listening into a type of intensive reading. This activity is most suitable for lower proficiency learners, and it should be discontinued when the teacher feels that the learners are no longer benefiting from it.

As individual work, the activity can be done on the computer using text-to-speech software. The speed of speaking (around 150-200 words per minute) is typically slower than the speed of reading (around 250 words per minute), and thus the listening while reading activity can be a comfortable way of coming to grips with a text.

(2) Instructional and explanatory language

In an ESL teaching situation, the language of classroom management and instruction is usually English. The teacher should consciously use classroom management as a way of introducing and repeating useful language items. Where possible, standard ways of explaining tasks and of controlling the learners should be used, so that the learners have many opportunities to hear the same words and phrases in a meaningful context. The learning conditions of repetition, retrieval, creative use, and deliberate attention which we have looked at in earlier chapters should occur in teacher talk in the daily running of the class. The input from the teacher may be very different from the input the learners get outside the classroom and if this input truly engages the learners and challenges them, it can provide valuable opportunities for language learning.

(3) Linked skills activities

Linked skills activities should be the most commonly used activity in the ESL classes for school students, largely because they are ideally suited to content-based learning. Chapter 15 looks at linked skills activities in detail. At least one of the three steps in each linked skills activity should involve some kind of group work, such as paired reading, task-based discussion, shared writing, or brainstorming. Linked skills activities can provide good opportunities for learners to get rich comprehensible listening input which is very important for their language development.

Speaking Activities for ESL School Students

To a large degree, the speaking needs of ESL school students will be developed through group work in the classroom, and through interaction with others outside the classroom. The teacher just needs to make sure that there is some opportunity for ESL learners to talk about the content material that they are studying. The teacher could provide some individual help with pronunciation, and a good opportunity for this could occur in the activity of reading aloud. It is very important that teachers provide opportunities for real discussion of subject matter material, both between the teacher and the learners, and between the learners in pairs and small groups. The teacher needs to develop the skill of entering into genuine dialogue with the learners so that useful clarification and feedback is provided in both directions. Where there are several speakers of the same first language in the classroom, some discussion of the content matter in the learners' L1 is also helpful.

(1) Reading aloud

Like listening while reading, reading aloud provides an opportunity for learners to link spoken and written forms. A lot of the language learning which will occur outside of the classroom will be through listening and speaking, and activities like listening while reading and reading aloud can help the learners to link their spoken language development to their growing knowledge of the written language. Only a small amount of time should be spent on reading aloud, and when it is done as a class activity, the teacher can use it as a way of providing feedback on word form recognition and pronunciation. It is also possible to do reading aloud as a paired activity, with one learner listening and following the text while the other reads aloud. The listener can give feedback but is not obliged to do so. It is useful if reading aloud relates to making sense of the content of the text, and this can be done by following a simple text-based procedure for pair work, involving reading aloud, talking about the meaning of the text, and the learners preparing one or two questions to clarify or extend the text. Repeated reading, where the same text is read aloud three times, is a fluency development activity and this can also be usefully done with learners working in pairs. Adding a retell activity at the end can increase the focus on comprehension.

(2) Task-based discussion

Task-based discussion activities involve the learners working in pairs or small groups on a content-based task. These tasks can be as simple as answering the comprehension questions which follow a text, coming up with a list of suggestions in response to a problem, or ranking a list of suggestions according to a given criterion. They can also be as complicated as deciding on the main ideas of a text and organising them into a coherent summary, or

providing a critical analysis of a solution to a problem.

Task-based discussion activities should focus on subject matter that the learners are studying. The subject matter itself will suggest a suitable discussion topic. However there are some frameworks that a teacher can use to design task-based discussions. One of these frameworks looks at the outcome of the discussion. That is, what kind of goal are the learners trying to reach in the discussion? Useful outcomes include:

- ✓ Suggest a list of solutions to a given problem
- ✓ Choose from a list of given options, being ready to justify your choice
- ✓ Decide if a given action should be taken, giving the pluses and minuses of your decision
- ✓ Rank a given list of solutions or choices, being ready to justify your ranking
- ✓ Arrange of set of steps or objects into the most suitable order
- ✓ Justify your arrangement

See Chapter 14 for examples of these outcomes used in role plays.

Another useful framework relates to the kinds of ideas involved in Bloom's taxonomy. That is, the task-based discussion can involve:

- ✓ The literal understanding of ideas
- ✓ Seeing the implications of ideas
- ✓ Applying the ideas to a situation or problem
- ✓ Critiquing or evaluating the ideas

Usually task-based discussion activities work best where the learners in the group are of roughly equal proficiency. This kind of grouping is more likely to result in a roughly equal spread of speaking time. In secondary schools,

gender groupings may also be appropriate, as there is a strong tendency for boys not to give girls' opinions much weight. However second language learners may get better input and support if they are in groups of unequal proficiency as with native speakers. The opportunities to learn can be increased by involving a procedure that makes sure that the non-native speaker is truly involved in the group and plays an active part.

Here are some examples of task-based discussion topics from a science text for first year secondary school students in New Zealand.

- ✓ Copy and complete the labelling of the diagrams of simplified plant and animal cells.
- ✓ Decide whether the following statements are true or false.
  a) Cells are big enough to be visible to the unaided eye.
  b) All cells are box shaped.
  c) All organisms are made of at least one cell.
  d) Organelles are found inside cells.
  e) A cell's form is designed to carry out a particular function.
  f) The main difference between plant and animal cells is the presence or absence of the cell wall.
- ✓ Explain how a complex multi-cellular organism can come from a single fertilised egg cell.

(from Hook, G. (1997). *Year 9 Science.* New Zealand Pathfinder Series compact course books Auckland: New House Publishers Ltd.)

With a few changes, these tasks are very suitable for group discussion. The tasks should be challenging enough to require discussion, but easy enough to eventually result in a correct answer. Appendix 2 has suggestions for improving such tasks for language learning.

Reading Activities for ESL School Students

Reading is such an important activity for school students that careful monitoring is needed to make sure that learners are coping with the reading demands of their courses, and that their reading skills are at a suitable level for

their overall language proficiency. For learners who should be reading well but who are not reading well, Appendix 1 of this book provides a procedure for trying to diagnose the source of reading problems.

The major factor leading to improvement in reading will be the quantity of reading that learners do. To do large quantities of reading, learners need to have material which is at the right level for them, so that no more than 2% of the running words on any page are beyond their present level of knowledge. For ESL learners with vocabulary sizes of less than 5,000 or 6,000 words, this means that specially adapted material will need to be provided. If reading texts are available electronically, this adaptation is relatively straightforward, using the AntWordProfiler program. Fortunately, in most English speaking school systems subject-based easy read texts are not too difficult to find.

(1) Intensive reading

Intensive reading provides useful opportunities for teachers to diagnose learners' language problems and for learners to gain feedback and information on the difficulties that they face with reading. For ESL learners at school, intensive reading should focus on texts from their content areas of study. The intensive reading will thus have two valuable goals—helping learners understand a text which is important for them in their study, and helping them understand new vocabulary and grammatical constructions which will occur in other texts. The great advantage of content-based instruction with intensive reading is that the topic-related technical vocabulary which occurs in the texts is highly likely to be met again by the learners as they continue their study.

There are several ways of doing intensive reading. Where English is taught as a foreign language, intensive reading is often done using the learners' first language, and is sometimes called the grammar-translation method. This can be an effective way of doing intensive reading. Where English is taught as a second language, intensive reading will typically be done through English. One way of doing such intensive reading is simply going through the text with the teacher and learners picking out features which are worth giving attention to and spending some time discussing these features. Table 10.2 is adapted from Chapter 3 of *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing* by Paul Nation (2009, New York: Routledge).

Table 10.2 Useful focuses in intensive reading

Focus	Items	Strategies
Comprehension	Question types Question forms	Predicting Standardised reading procedures
Sound-spelling	Regular sound-spelling correspondences	Spelling rules Free/checked vowels
Vocabulary	High frequency vocabulary Underlying meanings of words Technical vocabulary	Guessing Noting and learning on cards Word parts Dictionary use
Grammar and cohesion	High frequency grammatical features Complex grammatical constructions	Dealing with sources of difficulty (clause insertion, what does what?, coordination, cohesion)
Information content	Topic type constituents	Topic type
Genre	Features that typify this type of text	Generalise to writing

Column 1 of Table 10.2 shows what aspect of language is being focused on. Column 2 looks at the particular language and language use features that could be given attention. Column 3 suggests generalisable strategies which could be practised as a part of intensive reading. For example, in the vocabulary focus, attention could be given to the word parts strategy which involves the learners memorising around 15 very useful prefixes like *ab-*, *ad-*, *com-*, *dis-*, *un-*, *fore-*, *bi-*, *en-*, *ex-*, *mis-*, *pro-*, *mid-*, *post-*, *anti-*, *sub-*, and using these to help remember the meanings of words that contain them. In the grammar and cohesion focus, the strategy of dealing with sources of difficulty involves developing a strategy to break up complex sentences into their simpler parts so that they can be more easily understood.

The questions used in intensive reading need to gradually stretch the learners' comprehension of the text, and it is a very useful teacher skill to be able to move through a variety of question types and forms to develop comprehension.

Another way of doing intensive reading is to follow a standardised procedure. Some procedures, like reciprocal reading, have a well described set of steps and may have been the focus of research. The ESL teacher can adopt one of these procedures, or perhaps more usefully develop their own. Such a

procedure simply involves following a set of predictable steps that both the teacher and the learners know and understand. The first step, for example, could be focusing on the pictures, tables and diagrams that accompany the text. The second step could involve focusing on the vocabulary of the text. The third step could be looking at each paragraph to see if there are any particularly complex sentences that need to be analysed. The fourth step could be looking at the overall message and main idea of the text. The fifth step could be dealing with each paragraph in detail, working out what it means and how it relates to the main idea. The sixth and final step could involve restating the message of the text and perhaps providing some kind of critical comment on it, or relating it to other pieces of reading or knowledge. A good procedure is easy to remember and deals with the most important problems faced when reading a text.

When doing intensive reading, the teacher always needs to keep an eye on the longer term value of the activity. For ESL learners at school, intensive reading has the short-term goal of helping learners understand today's text. It should also have the long-term goal of helping them understand tomorrow's text and become independent in their reading.

(2) Paired reading

Paired reading, which we looked at in Chapter 5, can be seen as a simple form of intensive reading. Instead of the teacher working with the class, two learners work with each other to understand the text. They can have access to dictionaries and to the teacher when necessary. Like intensive reading, paired reading can make use of the learners' L1, can focus on problems, or can follow a standardised procedure. Teachers need to work out which of these options works best for their learners. Having a simple paired reading guide may be useful. This could involve three steps of looking at the topic and the pictures and diagrams accompanying the text and making one or two predictions about what it is about. The second step could involve the learners talking turns quietly reading aloud. The third step could involve focusing on comprehension by the learners summarising the main ideas in their own words.

(3) Deliberate vocabulary learning

Deliberately learning vocabulary from word cards is more typical of learning English as a foreign language than learning English as a second language. However some learners in an ESL situation may be perfectly willing to do this kind of learning. Because it is such an efficient and effective learning procedure for making very big steps in vocabulary growth, it is worth the teacher giving learners some training in this procedure, so that the learners can do it most effectively. The guidelines for doing word card learning which

are most strongly supported by research are as follows.

1 Write the word to be learned on one side of the card and its translation on the other side. This forces retrieval of the item after the first meeting.

2 Initially start with small packs of cards—about 15 or 20 words. Difficult items should be learned in small groups to allow more repetition and more thoughtful processing. As the learning gets easier increase the size of the pack—more than 50 seems to be unmanageable simply for keeping the cards together and getting through them all in one go.

❖ **Figure 10.1** A word card

3 Space the repetitions. The best spacing is to go through the cards a few minutes after first looking at them, and then an hour or so later, and then the next day, and then a week later, and then a couple of weeks later. This spacing is much more effective than massing the repetitions together into an hour of study. The total time taken may be the same but the result is different. Spaced repetition results in longer lasting learning.

4 For words which are difficult to learn, use depth of processing techniques like the keyword technique. Think of the word in language contexts and situational contexts. Break the word into word parts if possible. The more associations you can make with an item, the better it will be remembered.

5 Make sure that words of similar spelling or of related meaning are not together in the same pack of cards. This means days of the week should not be all learned at the same time. The same applies to months of the year, numbers, opposites, words with similar meanings, and words with the same class name such as items of clothing, names of fruit, parts of the body, and things in the kitchen. These items interfere with each other and make learning much more difficult.

6 Keep changing the order of the words in the pack. This will avoid serial learning where the meaning of one word reminds you of the meaning of the next word in the pack.

7 Say the word aloud to yourself. This helps the form to enter long term memory.

8 Write collocates of the words on the card too where this is helpful. This particularly applies to verbs. Some words are most usefully learned in a phrase. In the classroom, it works well to have a "word wall" where vocabulary met in various activities is noted up and returned to several times.

Learning vocabulary using word cards is much more efficient than the teacher teaching vocabulary. If word card learning is well organised, every word which is on the cards will be learned. Teaching vocabulary is usually less than 50% effective. It is possible to do such learning on cell phones, computer tablets, or on the web using flash card programs. Many of these programs are available free.

(4) Reading adapted content texts

Learners should do large amounts of independent reading of their content texts. If it is possible to adapt these texts, then this should be done as long as it does not break copyright. Even if the learners have to struggle to a small degree to read difficult texts, they must be encouraged to persist in doing this provided they have the support to read with success. Reading improvement will not come unless learners do sufficient reading. However texts which are simply far too difficult are not suitable for such reading.

(5) Speed reading

We looked at speed reading in Chapter 8. Learners who have a vocabulary size of 1,000 words or more should do a speed reading course. The aim of such a course is to get their reading speed to around 200 to 250 words per minute when they read material which contains no unknown language features. The total time investment in a speed reading course is small, less than two hours, but the results are usually impressive. Free speed reading courses are available from Paul Nation's website and from Sonia Millett's website. Instructions on how to run the courses come with the material.

Writing Activities for ESL School Students

(1) Content-based writing tasks

The ESL teacher needs to look carefully at the writing that students need to do as a part of their regular study, and make sure that the learners get practice in doing these kinds of writing. If the learners have to sit timed exams, then they should be given plenty of practice in preparing for such exams and for sitting them under time pressure.

In Chapter 12 on English for academic purposes courses, we will look at the parts of the writing process. At the very least, ESL teachers should be aware of these parts, and ideally learners should also know about them so that they can apply them independently to their own writing.

(2) Feedback on writing

ESL teachers need to make sure that learners write a lot and that they make good use of feedback on writing to help learners improve their spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and organisational skills. They should also use feedback on writing to help learners improve their control of the parts of the writing process. The teacher needs to make sure that there is a balance of writing which is done to get substantial language-focused feedback which will encourage accuracy in writing, and writing which is done to improve writing fluency which gets little if any language-focused feedback but gets feedback which responds to the content of the writing. Learners typically welcome such feedback and it can set up useful conditions for language learning.

The time-on-task principle says that the more you do something, the better you will become at doing it. This is a rather crude principle because it ignores the quality of work that is being done and focuses on quantity. However it is a very effective principle. Table 10.3 suggests minimum reading and writing goals for L1 learners, so that they get enough practice with these skills. Learners of English as a second language may have difficulty achieving these goals, but they are well worth aiming for.

Table 10.3 Reading and writing goals for L1 learners

	Minimum yearly goal	Words per subject per week
Reading	500,000 words	2,500 (around 7-8 pages)
Writing	40,000 words	200 (around 1 page)

It is important that teachers give learners plenty of reading and writing tasks to do, even if the learners have difficulty with them. If teachers use oral means to deal with what should be dealt with through reading and writing, they are avoiding the very practice that learners need to do. Oral support can help reading but it should not be a substitute for it.

How Do You Teach Subject-Related Vocabulary?

In Chapter 4 we looked at the vocabulary needs of ESL students at secondary school. If ESL learners do not know all of first 2,000 words and most of the 570 word families of the Academic Word List, there needs to be an intensive focus on these words because they are the essential basis for academic study. Lists of these words can be found in the free Vocabulary Resource Booklet on Paul Nation's website. There are numerous websites for the Academic Word List.

Graded readers can help with learning the first 2,000 words and a bit beyond, but once these words are known, graded readers will not be of much help.

Learners need to learn vocabulary across the four strands of learning from the input (listening and reading), learning from output (speaking and writing), deliberately learning vocabulary, and developing fluency. Here we will focus on deliberate learning with the idea that subject-matter teachers rather than the ESL teachers will take responsibility for teaching this vocabulary in the context of subject-matter study.

The following guidelines can be followed by subject-matter teachers when teaching both ESL learners and native speakers.

1 Check that learners are coping with the definitions in their subject-matter texts. It is useful spending a small amount of time on the format of classic definitions (an X is a Y which …), and reduced forms of this format.

2 Where possible focus on word parts. This may require preparation through dictionary look-up by the teacher. *epi/derm/al, bio/sphere, long/itude*.

3 If the spelling is not predictable, draw attention to the spelling. This can be done by writing the word on the board and drawing attention to the irregular part of the word. If there are other known irregularly spelt words which use the same spelling, draw attention to them (*troughs–coughs*), but only as a way of briefly connecting the unknown to the known.

4 Give a brief definition and then check the understanding of your explanation. Check using true/false statements, a classification task, a search for examples, or a cause-effect completion.

5 Make a note or have a student make a note of each word that you have given attention to and want to come back to again. Once every week or two weeks do a quick revision of these words. You can use the following activities.

- ✓ Give the learners some hints and ask them to recall the vocabulary that was given some attention over the past week or two.
- ✓ Dictate the words to the students. One student can write them on the whiteboard as you dictate.
- ✓ Go around the class getting each learner to pronounce any one of the words on the whiteboard.
- ✓ Get learners to work in pairs or small groups to recall contexts or collocations for each word.
- ✓ If some of the words can be broken into parts, then do this explaining the meaning of the parts, getting assistance from the learners wherever possible.
- ✓ Get the learners to look at the words written on the whiteboard and tell them that they have one minute to remember all of the words in exactly the same arrangement as they have on the whiteboard. Lightly rub out all of the words (so that you can see where they were but the learners can't) and ask the learners to write all of the words in exactly the same arrangement on a piece of paper.

6 Where possible arrange linked skills activities to recycle the target vocabulary. That is, get the learners to recall what they have read through speaking, or get them to recall what they have heard through writing, and so on.

Giving attention to new words is only part of the learning process, and it is important that these words are met again several times over several weeks. In any lesson, it is the old material which is most important rather than any newly presented material. This is because the old material may be reaching the point at which extra attention will help it be remembered for a very long time. Newly presented material will be quickly forgotten, and so devoting too much attention to it when first meeting it may be a waste of time. It deserves the most attention in later meetings.

The goal of teaching ESL learners at school should be to get them fitting into regular classes as soon as possible. Young learners have a great capacity for language learning, and if provided with the right opportunities, they can make enormous progress in their learning of the language as well as their academic study. This is greatly helped if learners develop an awareness of words and how to learn them. Even young learners can become fascinated

by words and the ways they behave, and this encourages learning.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Second language learners who enter the school system with very little English will need special attention. They have a very large vocabulary gap to bridge. The language support that they get should as much as possible be closely related to the subjects that they need to study in school. One approach to this is to use content-based instruction (which is also known as CLIL—content and language integrated learning), where the learners study both the content matter and the language at the same time.

Intensive reading is a particularly useful activity in schools. Learners may also be encouraged to do deliberate vocabulary using word cards. In content matter classes, teachers can usefully focus on subject-related vocabulary, being careful to revise this vocabulary periodically.

Further Reading

See Nation, I. S. P. (2000). Learning vocabulary in lexical sets: dangers and guidelines. *TESOL Journal, 9*(2), 6-10, about avoiding interference between related words.

Nation, I.S.P. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing*. New York: Routledge, contains chapters on intensive reading, extensive reading, reading faster, the writing process, responding to writing, and topic types. It also contains an appendix on sound-spelling correspondences.

Web Resources

To find the names of texts that teach the words in the Academic Word List, go to http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/links. The site also contains links to programs using the AWL.

Chapter 11 Helping ESL Learners Develop Communication Skills

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that there should be a deliberate and well planned focus on developing communication skills for non-native speakers wishing to enter the work force. This focus should include observation of interactions, learning about factors affecting interactions, deliberate learning and memorization of useful sentences and phrases, practice in communication skills, and reflection on this practice.

In Chapter 5, we looked at needs analysis and environment analysis for a course aimed at ESL speakers who were well qualified in their profession but who could not find a job. In this chapter, we focus on developing spoken communication skills. Although our focus will partly be on English in the workplace, the material in this chapter is much more widely applicable. This communication skill focus would only be a part of a course for ESL job seekers, probably about one fifth of a taught course. Ideally, such a course would include a very large workplace experience component. In the Victoria University skilled migrants course, this experience component makes up almost half of the course time, and provides ample opportunities for meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output and fluency development, along with language-focused learning through deliberate observation.

The other parts of the taught section of such a workplace-focused course would include the kinds of learning which goes on in an intensive language course with focuses on pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, reading and listening skills, speaking and writing skills, and deliberate language learning. In this chapter however, we are going to focus only on developing spoken communication skills with a strong emphasis on discourse. We will look at speaking which has both task goals (conveying important information) and people goals (building and strengthening relationships between people). This area of linguistics is called pragmatics, and its name

indicates that it is the study of how language is used to get things done. The major theme of this chapter is that second language learners need to become like applied linguists. That is, they need to be aware of why certain things are done in certain ways, and they need to develop the skills of observation and reflection on this observation, so that they can understand others' behaviour and shape their own. In other words, a communication skills course needs to have a strong strategy component.

What Kinds of Learning Need to Be Included in a Communication Skills Course?

The principle of the four strands needs to apply to appropriate communication skills just as it applies to other aspects of language curriculum design. That is, in a well-balanced course there should be roughly equal time given to learning from input, learning from output, deliberate learning, and developing fluency. The learning from input, learning from output, and fluency development strands of the course need to involve observing others communicating, taking part in role plays, and where possible learning on the job. In a course on communication skills, it is important that there is the opportunity to learn through seeing good models and real examples of interaction. It is also very important to apply what is observed and to experience a variety of communication situations. It is also valuable if learners develop a conscious understanding of the factors and the features of effective communication. Most native speakers do not have this conscious understanding, and because of this, native speakers may interpret a second language learner's poor communication skills as impoliteness or inappropriateness rather than an issue of correctness. For example, I recall witnessing a proficient user of English as a second language using the phrase "In future" when asking an older native speaker not to do something. The native speaker was clearly offended. The phrase "In future" is used as a very direct and demanding way of asking someone not to do something, and it was clearly inappropriate in that conversation. The native speaker was a person who was used to speaking to non-native speakers, but the communication error was not interpreted as an error but as impoliteness, although no impoliteness was intended.

The language-focused learning strand (deliberate learning) of a communication skills course should include the following.

1 Observation and analysis of examples of interaction.

2 The development of awareness of the factors of status difference, level of familiarity between the people in an interaction, and the level of imposition, seriousness, or difficulty of the goal of the interaction (for example, is

someone making a request which requires considerable work from the person being asked?).

3 Deliberate noting and memorisation of useful sentences and phrases to use.

4 Training in how to make small talk, how to encourage a conversation, how to end a conversation, how to involve others in the conversation, how to acknowledge what the speaker is saying, how to take a turn and allow others to take a turn, how to make use of humour and acknowledge humour, how to soften the impact of what is being said, and how to make use of pauses, intonation, and non-lexical features of speech such as fillers and sighs.

5 Deliberate reflection, and where possible observation, on the differences between the way communication is carried out in the L2 and the way that it is done in the L1.

Let us now look at each of these five kinds of focuses in turn.

Observation and Analysis of Interaction

It is important that learners observe real interactions, not just ones created by a course book designer or a teacher. Studies of the kinds of language modeled in coursebooks typically reveal that there is not strong agreement between the results of corpus analysis and the examples that appear in coursebooks. This does not mean that the teacher has to gather lots of examples, although this would be a useful thing to do. Course books which are based on corpus data already have plenty of examples that can be used. Each section of the Riddiford and Newton course book, for example, is rich in examples. In addition, learners need to be encouraged and required to collect their own examples from observation.

There are several ways of initially focusing on how communication is carried out. One way is to present a complete example and analyse it. Another way is to use what some have called "the garden path technique". This name comes from the saying "to lead someone up the garden path", which means to deliberately take them in the wrong direction. In this approach the learners are given the beginning of a conversation and then have to predict how it will continue. After they make their prediction, they are then shown the complete example. A third way would be to get learners to suggest how they would do something in their first language, and then present the complete English example as a comparison and as a model to analyse. Whatever approach is taken, it is very useful early on if learners see typical examples of what they

are aiming for.

The analysis of examples should work on two levels. At the first level, it is an analysis of what is being said. What does the first person say, what is the response to this, how does the speaker continue? This analysis involves some generalisation because it involves considering what is being talked about, how much talking goes on, and how predictable and formulaic the various questions and statements are. For example, some people commonly use the greeting "Hey! How are things going?". What does "Hey!" signal? What does "How are things going?" mean? How predictable is the response?

At the second level, there needs to be analysis of the features of the status difference and level of familiarity between the speakers. Is the status difference of the two speakers equal, moderately different, or far apart? Do the speakers know each other well, moderately well, or not that well? This second level of analysis involves some understanding of the factors that affect the nature of interaction, and in a course for adults on communication skills, there needs to be some attention given to these factors.

Understanding the Factors that Affect the Nature of Interaction

A rather small number of factors can affect a relatively large number of features of interaction. Table 11.1 lists the most important factors and several features of interaction that they can affect.

Table 11.1 Social factors and their effect in interaction

Factor	Effect in interaction
Status difference	· The degree of directness · The topics talked about · Who controls the interaction · The use of humour · The level of formality
Level of familiarity	· The amount of softening and hedging · The degree of politeness · The kinds of greetings used · The amount of small talk · The way others are acknowledged
Degree of intrusion, seriousness, or difficulty of the goal of the interaction	· The use of pauses and intonation · Who speaks the most · How conversations are begun and ended · How turns are taken · The amount of teasing · Who begins the interaction

Table 11.1 is designed to help learners build up their knowledge of the factors affecting communication and how they affect it. It is useful to have a set of factors and features to work from. It is also useful to consider each factor as representing a scale, such as a three-point scale, so that the variable nature of the factor can be appreciated.

There are other important things to consider. What is the goal of the interaction? When and where does the interaction occur?

Understanding the factors and the features also needs to be accompanied by noting the particular words and expressions that occur.

Learning Useful Phrases and Sentences

Although it is important that learners observe what others do and draw on that as models for their own use, it is also useful to deliberately memorise commonly used phrases and sentences. Quite a large part of informal spoken language is formulaic. That is, it makes use of phrases and sentences that may be stored as single choices. The most obvious examples of this are greetings and responses, and ways of expressing gratitude. Table 11.2 contains a list of commonly used phrases that are used in spoken language. These should just be regarded as a starting point and a collection to choose from.

Table 11.2 **Words, phrases and sentences commonly used largely for discourse purposes**

Discourse function	Phrases
Greetings	Hello, Good day, Hi, How are you?
Giving thanks	Thanks, Thank you, Cheers, Thanks a lot, Ta, Thank you very much, Thank you so much
Acknowledging	all right
Requesting	come on, straight away, do you want me to
Refusing	at present, for the moment, in practice, in theory, never mind, I don't know if, I don't know whether, I don't think so
Making suggestions	at the same time (conversely), in a way, had better, by the way, most likely, first of all, might as well, to me (in my opinion), in the meantime, how about, what do you think
Disagreeing	as a whole, as yet, even so, at one time, at the same time,
Making compliments	on the whole, something of a, by far
Making apologies	I'm afraid
Softeners	of course, you know, I mean, you see, that is (rephrasing), at the moment
Expressing vagueness	sort of, something like that, the other day, and stuff like that
Exclamations	Oh no, Oh dear

The items in each row in column 2 are in frequency order, with the most frequent first. The major weakness of Table 11.2 is that most of the frequency counts drawn on were not discourse focused, and it is important to see in what contexts the phrases occur and what their particular functions are.

The list in Table 11.2 should be used at first for consciousness raising. The learners can pick one or two items that they have heard before or that are new to them and listen for them in the language they hear around them. The value of the list is that these items are high-frequency items, and many of them have a meaning and function that is not always clear from the meaning of their parts.

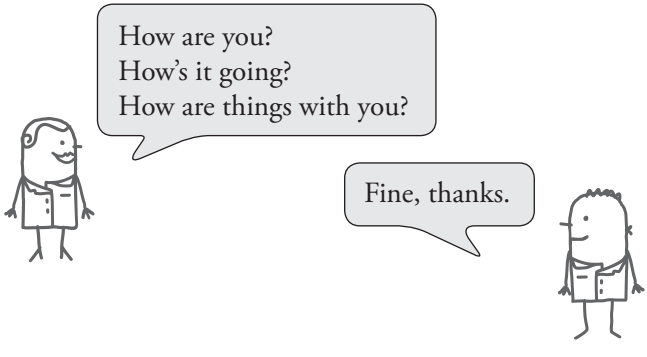
Learning useful words, phrases and sentences is a helpful step toward understanding and coping with discourse. The most important step, however, is putting this knowledge into practice.

Training and Practice in Communication Skills

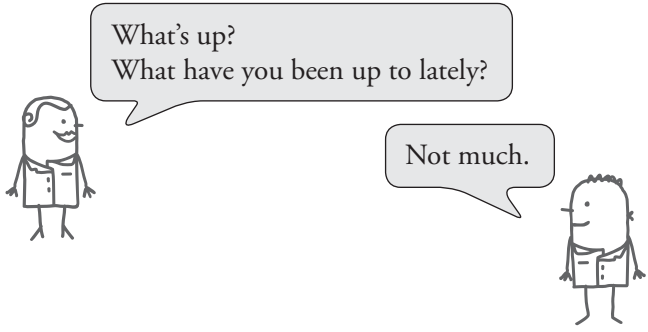
It is important in any communication skills course that there are substantial opportunities for training and practice in the use of communication strategies. In this section we will look at making small talk, and at a range of activities which can be used to practice communication skills.

The term "small talk" is used to refer to the friendly conversation that people engage in when they are not focused on more serious matters or on getting things done. In fact, at times small talk can be used as a way of getting things done. Small talk is not usually aimed at conveying important information and is usually not related to a specific piece of work which is being done. It is more people oriented than task oriented. Small talk is important because it confirms and builds relationships, and these relationships can be really important when things need to be done. Small talk usually occurs during free time. In a workplace setting, it can occur during tea and lunch breaks, at the beginning and end of meetings, and when people meet casually on their way to do some other task. In social settings, it often occurs when people meet.

Because one of the important functions of small talk is to strengthen relationships, the topics which are covered are usually ones where there is common experience, such as the weather or perhaps sport, and where the answers are usually predictable as in enquiring about someone's health. Sometimes the answers to the initial greeting are so predictable that they can be formulaic. An appropriate response to most greeting questions beginning with "How … ?" is typically "Fine, thanks."



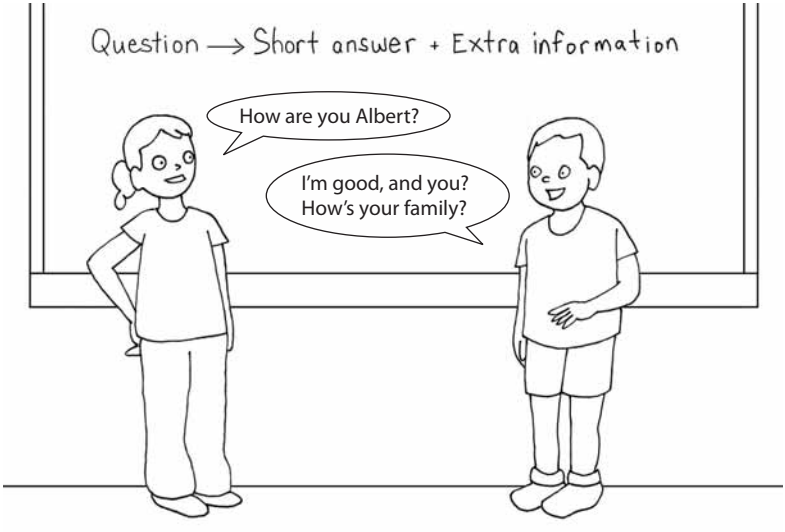
An appropriate response to most greeting questions beginning with "What … ?" is typically "Not much."



The topics chosen may also be an encouragement to talk more, as in the case of sport or what someone has been doing lately.

A greeting may simply be a greeting with no other small talk expected or perhaps wanted. A greeting can also be treated as an opportunity for further small talk. The way a person responds to a greeting can be an encouragement for further talk. A useful discourse strategy can be summarised by the following formula:

❖ **Figure 11.1** The Q → SA + EI strategy



Q → SA+EI. The formula means a Question can be responded to with the Short Answer plus Extra Information. The extra information provides a topic and an opportunity for further talk. Here are some examples.

- ✓ How are you Albert.
  I'm good, and you? How's your family?
- ✓ Are you OK?
  I'm fine. I was just feeling a bit dizzy but I'm OK now.
- ✓ Aren't you doing Linguistics 201?
  Yes. I'm really enjoying it.

Note that the extra information can be a fact, a feeling, or a question. If someone responds to a greeting with a short answer but no extra information, this is a clear discouragement to further talk. If someone responds to a greeting with a short answer and extra information, then the nature of that extra information (whether it is vague or precise, whether it is general or specifically addressed to the person) can indicate how willing the speaker is to carry on the conversation. The Q → SA+EI strategy is a very useful one for ESL learners to observe, analyse, and develop skill in using. It is well worth practising in class as a deliberate strategy. The learning required to use the strategy well involves being able to provide an appropriate kind of extra information and interpret the clues in someone else's extra information. Each learner should consciously know of at least three or four different kinds of extra information that they can add to their short answer to a greeting. The same strategy is also useful in interviews. If the person being interviewed includes extra information in their responses to questions, this extra information can play a large part in guiding the direction of the interview.

Discourse completion tasks and small role plays are very useful ways of practising communication skills. Such activities are usefully followed by reflection on how well they were done. One way of encouraging this reflection is to form groups of three with one of the three being an observer who later comments on the performance of the two speakers. This commentary can be helped by having small observation checklists.

Here are some examples.

Focus: Extra information	· What kind of extra information was provided? · Was it interesting and appropriate? · Did the second speaker respond well to the extra information?

Focus: Turn-taking	· How did the second speaker manage to take a turn? · Did the first speaker provide an opportunity for the second speaker to take a turn? How?

Focus: Giving feedback to the speaker	· What kinds of feedback did the listener provide? · Were they appropriate? · Was feedback provided often enough, too often, or not often enough?

Focus: Ending a conversation	· Who signalled the end of the conversation? · What signals were used? · How did the other speaker respond to the signal

Similar observation checklists could be made for softening requests or refusals, making compliments, using pauses, encouraging others to speak, beginning and ending a telephone call, saying no, making suggestions, apologizing, and making a request.

Observing, Reflecting, and Comparing

As pointed out in Chapter 1, one of the defining features of the ESL situation is that learners can have access to the language being used around them. A very important way to make use of this advantage is to set learners observation tasks that draw attention to how proficient users perform certain speech acts and the context in which they occur. Ideally, this observation would be of normal unscripted interaction. However, in addition to this, observing interactions in movies and on TV can also be a useful source of learning.

Observation is best carried out if it is well informed. In this chapter, we have looked at the role of analysis and understanding as important parts of communication skills lessons. It is important to observe not only what happens but to reflect on why it happens. This observation is not intended so that learners can copy the performance of native speakers, but has the goal of helping them work out their own style of communication with an awareness of the factors that influence communication in English.

Versions of the observation checklists described above can guide observation outside the classroom, but this observation also needs to look more widely at questions like the following, which focus on small talk.

- ✓ Who talks to who?
- ✓ Who starts the small talk?
- ✓ What do they talk about? What kind of extra information is used?
- ✓ What kind of feedback is provided?
- ✓ When is it most appropriate to provide minimal feedback?
- ✓ When do they talk?
- ✓ How much do they talk?
- ✓ Is the amount of time in small talk evenly balanced between the participants?
- ✓ Is small talk used to achieve task goals?

Observation tasks can arise from an analysis of recorded interactions and from difficulties experienced in everyday language use or in classroom activities. The teacher can usefully focus the learners' attention on particular interaction issues and suggest ways that they can gather data to explain and clarify the issue. Initially this is probably best done as a whole class activity, with the learners providing small bits of information from observation that the teacher then draws together and explains. As the learners' understanding of the factors involved in interaction develops, small groups of two or three learners can take on particular issues that they research and report back on after a week or so.

We have looked at the major kinds of activity which need to occur in the development of communication skills. Let us now look at how these can fit together into a lesson.

A Communication Skills Lesson

A communication skills lesson can involve observation and analysis of examples of interaction, some deliberate attention to useful sentences and phrases, some practice, and some reflection on the practice. During the observation and analysis of an interaction (ideally presented in both spoken and written form), the learners can talk about the factors and features

involved in the interaction and compare the model interaction with L1 use. Here is an example. The interaction is taken from the British National Corpus.

J: Morning.
2: Morning John.
J: How are you?
2: Not so bad.
J: Are you, love? How's the hand?
2: It's still a bit stiff, but it's back to work Monday.
J: Urgh.
2: Yuk.
J: So that's all right.
2: Yeah.
J: Haven't spotted a little steam cleaner like, have you?
2: No.

- ✓ What are the signs that the speakers know each other reasonably well?
- ✓ What are the topics of the small talk?
- ✓ How predictable are the questions and responses?
- ✓ What is the first piece of business talked about?
- ✓ What is the effect of *like*?
- ✓ In your L1, do you use short forms of greetings?

The same interaction topic needs to be practiced two or three times within the same lesson and needs to be returned to at least twice in later lessons. Repetition is essential if communication skills are to become fluent.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Learners who already have a reasonable level of proficiency in the language can benefit by improving their skills in using that language, particularly in spoken interaction within the workplace. This can be done by observing and analysing examples of interaction, by developing an awareness of the important factors affecting the language used, by deliberate memorisation of useful sentences and phrases, by training in communication skills like making small talk, encouraging conversation, and involving others, and by deliberate reflection on the differences between the L2 and the L1 in the way communication is carried out.

Further Reading

Essential reading - Riddiford, N. and Newton, J. (2010). *Workplace Talk in Action.* Wellington: LALS, Victoria University of Wellington, and Riddiford, N. (2007). Making requests appropriately in a second language: Does instruction help to develop pragmatic proficiency? *The TESOLANZ Journal, 15*, 88-102.

For more on Q->SA+EI see Nation, I.S.P. (1980). Graded interviews for communicative practice. *English Teaching Forum, 18*(4), 26-29, and Holmes, J. & Brown, D.F. (1976). Developing sociolinguistic competence in a second language. *TESOL Quarterly, 10*(4), 423-431.

Web Resources

The website of the Languages in the Workplace project has many free occasional papers on English in the workplace
http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/lwp/resources/occasional-papers.aspx.

The data in Table 11.2 comes from the following sources.

Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Cortes, V. (2004). "If you look at ...": Lexical bundles in university teaching and textbooks. *Applied Linguistics, 25*(3), 371-405.

Schauer, G.A. & Adolphs, S. (2006). Expressions of gratitude in corpus and DCT data: Vocabulary, formulaic sequences, and pedagogy. *System, 34*, 119-134.

Martinez, R., & Schmitt, N. (2012). A phrasal expressions list. *Applied Linguistics, 33*(3), 299-320.

Chapter 12 English for Academic Purposes Courses in an ESL Situation

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that preparation for academic study needs to involve activities that are similar to those involved in academic study. These include reading academic text, listening to lectures, library use, note-taking, group discussions, prepared talks, analysing research reports, test-taking, writing under time pressure, and writing assignments.

In Chapter 6, we looked at needs analysis and environment analysis for English for academic purposes courses. We looked at the vocabulary demands which indicate a vocabulary of at least 5,000 word families and preferably closer to 8,000 families is needed for academic study. We also saw the importance of academic and technical vocabulary when reading texts (see also Chapter 10). We looked at the importance of study skills as a part of the curriculum, and the need for proficiency test preparation if learners still have to pass such a test.

An Overview of the Focuses and Activities in an EAP Course for ESL Learners

Table 12.1 is an expansion of Table 6.1 with a row of Test preparation added, and Oral communication skills and Reading for pleasure added in the second column.

Table 12.1 **Focuses and activities in an EAP course**

Skill focus	Language use and study skill	Activities
Listening	· Note taking from lectures · Following discussions	· Evaluating note taking styles · Training in note taking styles · Listening to mini-lectures · Linked skills activities
Speaking	· Presenting a prepared talk · Taking part in discussions · Oral communication skills	· Issue logs · Problem-solving discussions · Role plays · Prepared talks · Discussing academic reading · Linked skills activities · Training in oral communication skills
Reading	· Note taking from reading · Using library resources · Using internet resources · Reading academic texts · Reading for pleasure	· Issue logs · Library tasks · Speed reading · Linked skills activities · Intensive reading · Extensive reading
Writing	· Coping with written assignments · Writing from sources · Understanding and applying the classic research article format · Referencing conventions · Dealing with written exams · Avoiding plagiarism · Computer use (Word processing, spreadsheets, library and journal searches, referencing programs) · Writing emails	· Issue logs · Reading like a writer · Analysing research reports · Making a list of references · Writing under time pressure · Touch-typing practice · Writing assignments using sources · Linked skills activities
Language learning	· Coping with technical vocabulary · Increasing vocabulary size	· Dictionary use including etymology · Word cards
University requirements	· Understanding attendance, work, and assessment requirements.	· Reading course outlines
Test preparation	· Understanding the test format · Understanding item formats · Managing time · Coping with the content	· Test instruction · Test practice

Table 12.2 takes the activities listed in the third column of Table 12.1 and suggests who should take responsibility for carrying them out. It is not possible to fit such a large number of activities into class time, and the teacher should have the aim of making the learners take control of their own learning. This should be a policy that the learners are informed about.

Table 12.2 Allocation of responsibility for activities and learning

	Teacher-led	Group responsibility	Independent work
Listening	Training in note taking styles Listening to mini-lectures	Evaluating notetaking styles	
Speaking	Problem-solving discussions Role plays Training in oral communication skills	Discussing academic reading	Prepared talks
Reading	Linked skills activities	Issue logs Speed reading	Library tasks Intensive reading Extensive reading
Writing	Analysing research reports	Writing under time pressure	Reading like a writer Making a list of references Touch-typing practice Writing assignments using sources
Language learning			Dictionary use including etymology Word cards
University requirements	Reading course outlines		
Test preparation	Test instruction Test practice		

Table 12.2 is a rough allocation because there are shared responsibilities. Generally, the bulk of the work for the activities in the Independent work column can be done without immediate teacher supervision as homework or in independent study time. Activities in the Group responsibility column usually need to be done in class, but need not be teacher-led. Activities in the

Teacher-led column typically require substantial preparation, organization and input from the teacher. All the activities in the table require some setting up by the teacher at least initially. For example, touch-typing practice is best done individually on a personal computer, but learners may need guidance to find useful typing tutor programs and may need initial supervision in setting up a practice schedule.

Let us now look at the activities listed in Tables 12.1 and 12.2.

Listening Activities in an EAP Course

(1) Evaluating notetaking styles

Research on notetaking shows that it fills two main functions. One is the storage of information. That is, notes are taken so that the information can be looked at later. The second function is called the encoding function where the actual process of notetaking deepens the processing of the information helping it to enter long-term memory. If the notes were thrown away at the end of the lecture, then it would not matter too much in relationship to the encoding function. Learners need to work out why they are taking notes. That is, are they taking notes for storage or are they taking notes for encoding. Then they need to practice and choose among the various note taking options for one which suits their purpose.

(2) Training in notetaking styles

There is a range of notetaking styles. Some learners prefer to take detailed notes and this can be done efficiently through the use of headings and subheadings. In this kind of notetaking the layout of the notes is important. Another kind of notetaking does not make use of a sequential or linear arrangement, but involves a kind of concept diagram with the main point written in the middle of the page and the information related to that topic projecting out like the legs of an octopus. Learners should practice a variety of styles so that they can choose amongst them when they need to. A useful way to do this is to have learners sit in pairs during a lecture or mini-lecture while taking notes, and at several points during the lecture, the lecturer stops so that they can compare their notes. On the basis of this comparison, they can make adjustments to their notetaking. These discussion times during the lecture are sometimes called *buzz groups* because the learners talking together should be like the quiet buzzing of bees.

(3) Listening to mini lectures

Usually lectures last around 50 minutes or longer, but this may be too long

when learners practice listening to lectures and notetaking. This length of time also does not provide much opportunity for the use of buzz groups. Mini lectures are usually around 10 to 20 minutes long, and when these are interrupted with buzz groups the total time can stretch to over half an hour. The idea behind a mini lecture is that it should contain most of the features of a normal academic lecture with the main difference being that there is more built-in support for the learners. This support can take the form of preparation before the lecture, providing outlines during the lecture, buzz groups, and substantial pauses during the lecture to allow learners to look over their notes.

Speaking Activities in an EAP Course

(1) Problem-solving discussions

Problem-solving discussions are looked at in Chapter 14. In an EAP course, the topic should relate to those typically involved in academic study and could usefully be part of a linked skills series involving reading of academic text and the spoken discussion of some ideas arising from the text. Appendix 2 contains detailed guidelines on the design of tasks to encourage vocabulary learning.

(2) Role plays

Role plays are dealt with in Chapter 14. Where possible, in an EAP course, the role plays should involve roles in situations that are relevant to the learners in tertiary study.

(3) Prepared talks

Prepared talks are looked at in Chapter 9. The most important prepared talks will arise from the issue logs activity described below, but they can also be a part of a linked skills activity (see Chapter 15), and wherever possible should involve the learners drawing on the subjects that they are going to study at tertiary level.

(4) Discussing academic reading

Discussing academic reading is a typical tutorial activity in many tertiary level subjects. Usually learners have been set an article or a section of text to read and are expected to discuss it during the tutorial. It is worth each learner developing a procedure for doing this which can act as a strategy that they carry over into their later study. This procedure could involve (1)

carefully reading the text and noting the main points, (2) listing two or three places in the text that are confusing and preparing a question about each of these places, and (3) making a few brief notes about how the ideas in the text relate to other reading and what has been presented in lectures. These first three steps are preparation for the discussion. During the discussion, each learner should practice presenting the main ideas and asking the clarification questions. The discussion of the application of the ideas in the reading could be a planned part of the discussion, or a learner could phrase them as a question to the person running the tutorial. If learners have a procedure like the one just described to draw on, participation in tutorials may be less threatening.

(5) Training in oral communication skills

In Chapter 11, we looked at oral communication skills. There are academic applications of these skills, but some of them are undesirable, such as requesting a time extension for an assignment or task, apologising for handing in a task late, explaining an absence from class, and requesting the re-marking of a paper. Nonetheless, there is clearly value in practising some of the skills described in Chapter 11 in an academic context.

Reading Activities in an EAP Course

Reading is such an important activity in tertiary study that it needs to be a major focus of any EAP course. Ideally most of the reading should occur within the learners' fields of study, but this is very difficult in EAP courses where there are learners from a wide variety of subject areas. Nevertheless, a reasonable amount of independent study time should be spent on reading relevant academic texts.

(1) Issue logs

The issue log activity is a kind of linked skills activity (see Chapter 15) that is extended over several weeks. The four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing can all be involved. The first and critical step in the activity is for each learner to choose a topic that they will research and report on over the next several weeks. The choice of topic should relate to their subject areas of study wherever possible, and it must be a topic about which substantial amounts of information can be found. Having chosen their topic and checked it out with the teacher, each learner then begins to gather information on the topic from a wide range of sources, including textbooks, journals, newspapers, television, magazines, the internet, and interviews. Every two weeks each

learner reports to the two or three others in their small group on what they have found. Each learner in the group reports on their own separate topic to the others in the group. Each learner may also be expected to make a regular one page written report to the teacher, briefly describing the sources looked at and the main points of information found. Toward the end of the course, each learner is expected to make both an oral presentation and a written assignment on their topic. This could become part of the grading of a course.

The great value of the issue log activity is that it includes many of the processes involved in academic study. For a few minutes each week, the EAP teacher should provide some general guidance for the learners on doing the issue log activity, such as pointing out the importance of acknowledging sources, learning how to do referencing both in the text and in a list of references, using a suitable format for the assignment, and planning the organisation of the data and its presentation.

(2) Library tasks

In Table 12.2, library tasks are listed as an independent activity. The teacher's contribution to the activity can be setting initial tasks which involve finding certain sources of information or pieces of information. As the EAP course progresses, each learner can suggest their own library task for the week. Such library tasks should cover actually going to the library to find hard copy material, searching in the electronic library catalogue, accessing journals, books, and theses, and making use of the facilities that libraries offer such as interloan. Each library task should not be very large, and should ideally be able to be completed in much less than an hour. The goal of such tasks is to make learners aware of what kinds of information and resources are available and how to use them.

(3) Speed reading

We looked at speed reading in Chapter 8. The kinds of speed reading courses that should be part of an EAP program do not train the learners to read at exceptional speeds, but simply to increase their usual reading speed to one that is closer to that of native speakers. The learners completing an EAP course should be able to read material which is at the right level for them at speeds of around 250 words per minute. The gains from speed reading courses are so striking, compared to the small amount of time that is needed to do them, that they should be a compulsory part of every course. Several sets of speed reading texts are available from Sonia Millett's website. The ones most suitable for learners preparing for academic study include those at the 2,000 plus Academic Word List level, and those at the BNC/COCA 4,000 level.

(4) Linked skills activities

Linked skills activities are described in detail in Chapter 15. They are ideal ways of learning academic vocabulary and of developing some of the academic skills such as critical reading and discussion.

(5) Intensive reading

In Table 12.2, intensive reading is classified as an independent activity. In other courses, it is typically done as a class activity with the teacher using the text as a means of drawing learners' attention to language features in the text. This kind of intensive reading has been looked at in detail in Chapter 8, and also briefly in Chapter 9. Because of the pressure of time in EAP courses, intensive reading may be best done as an individual activity, providing the learners with the opportunity to struggle their way through subject matter texts. It is important in an EAP course that learners do reading within their own field of study, but this is difficult to do as a classroom activity because typically learners will be studying in a wide variety of different subject areas. A possible compromise is organising learners into groups based on their study areas. These groups could stretch across the different class levels in an EAP course, and could meet in a scheduled independent study time.

In general, it is not good advice to learners to encourage them to read a difficult text from the beginning to the end. This is because in any text almost half of the different words will occur only once or twice in the text. Thus a lot of time could be spent looking up unknown words that are not repeated and that are subsequently forgotten. In relevant academic texts however, between 20% and 30% of the words in the text will be technical vocabulary regardless of how often they occur. This vocabulary is essential to anyone studying within that subject area. This language learning benefit, coupled with the content learning that goes on during such reading is enough to justify such intensive reading.

(6) Extensive reading

In most language courses extensive reading is a very important source of language input as well as being an excellent opportunity for reading fluency development. We have looked at extensive reading in Chapter 9 and also in the Further reading section in Chapter 8. Ideally, learners studying in an EAP programme should have a vocabulary size larger than 4,000 words, which is the limit of published graded readers. This means that any extensive reading which is done would largely involve mid-frequency readers (see Paul Nation's website), or reading in areas where the learners have a great deal of background knowledge. It seems a good idea to balance the serious academic focus of an EAP course with some reading for pleasure. Such

extensive reading should not have a heavy vocabulary load.

Writing Activities in an EAP Course

Writing is one of the major modes of assessment in tertiary study, and so it is important that learners have plenty of opportunities to write in an EAP course. It is also important that they gain experience of academic writing and more particularly of the kind of writing that needs to be done within their fields of study. Learners need to take an investigative attitude toward their writing, and in particular toward the writing in their subject areas. The first activity described below, reading like a writer, has this investigative goal.

(1) Reading like a writer

The reading like a writer activity involves the learners reading texts which are typical of the kind of writing that they will need to do. While reading, the learners ask questions about the text. The idea behind this is that the answers to the questions can then guide their own writing of a similar text. Here are some typical questions.

- ✓ What are the main sections of the text?
- ✓ Are subheadings used?
- ✓ Are the subheadings general headings which can be applied to any text or are they particularly related to the content of this text?
- ✓ What kind of information is included in each of the sections of the text?
- ✓ What general question is this information answering in each section?
- ✓ Are there any useful phrases which are worth copying?
- ✓ How personal is the text? Are the pronouns I and you used?
- ✓ Who is the likely audience for the text? Does the writer take account of this audience in any way?

To do the reading like a writer activity, the teacher needs model texts and

a set of questions. If the activity is done several times, the questions can be added to each time. The reading like a writer activity involves reading but focuses on the production of texts.

(2) Analysing research reports

Analysing research reports is very much like reading like a writer, except that the classic research report follows a very standard format. This format includes the parts of the review of previous research, research questions, methodology, results, discussion and conclusion, and list of references. Learners should get very familiar with this format as it applies to the discipline that they going to study in. Becoming familiar with this format makes reading easier but also helps when writing, because each section of the classic research report requires certain kinds of information. This information is most standardised in the methodology section, where we expect to read who the subjects were, when the research was done, where the research was done, the materials that were used, the measurements that were used, and any special controls that were exercised during the experiment. Analysing research reports is a very good step toward doing research.

(3) Making a list of references

There are standardised ways of making a list of references and although the format of these different ways changes from one discipline to another and from one journal to another, they all include the same bits of information. Very early in an EAP programme learners should be encouraged to choose one style of referencing, for example APA, and should have to memorise the exact formats for references for articles in a journal, references for a book, and references for chapters in a book. They should be tested on this knowledge in a recall test, and then be periodically checked to see that they can consistently apply the reference style to a variety of references. Note, it is not only important to choose a particular reference style and follow it, it is important to be consistent in applying that same style. Learning to make use of a program like Endnote which stores and formats references is also very useful.

(4) Writing under time pressure

We looked at 10 minute writing in Chapter 9. Writing under time pressure is necessary in written exams. Typically second language learners write well under half of what native speakers write in the same time. Although it is very important to have answers which are of a good quality, if there is not time to write all that needs to be said within the limited time, then this can have a strong effect on learners' exam performance. The effect of writing under

time pressure as a fluency development activity is virtually unresearched. However speed reading practice and spoken language practice using the 4/3/2 activity show very clearly that fluency practice can result in good fluency gains as well as affecting other aspects of language knowledge in positive ways. Having two or three brief fluency writing sessions each week may have good effects. The topics for writing under time pressure can come from the learners' issue log research, or from linked skills activities.

(5) Touch-typing practice

With about 20 minutes practice a day over four weeks, it is possible to become a proficient touch-typist. Touch-typing means typing without looking at the keys. There is excellent freeware and shareware as well as commercial programs which are not very expensive for doing such practice. Because computer use plays such a big role in tertiary study, being able to touch-type is a great advantage.

(6) Writing assignments from sources

Learners should become familiar with the main steps in the writing process as shown in Table 12.3.

Table 12.3 Seven steps in the assignment writing process

Steps in the writing process	Description
Deciding on the writing goals	This involves working out why you are writing and what the main purpose is, and the main ideas you have to communicate.
Thinking of who the reader will be	Before you write you should think of who will read your writing so that you can adapt your writing to their needs.
Gathering ideas	Often it is useful to gather the ideas that you want to include in your writing by making some rough kind of plan. Usually, the more ideas you gather, the easier it will be to do your writing.
Organising ideas	Ideas need to be organised so that the piece of writing will also be organised and easy for the reader to follow. Organising ideas may simply involve working out their logical order, or putting them into categories.
Turning the ideas into written text	This is the central part of the writing process, actually doing the writing. Sometimes people need to start writing before they gather ideas and organise them. Often however it is better to gather and organise the ideas first and to work out your goals and readers before doing the actual writing.
Looking back over what has just been written	As you write, it is useful to look back over what you have already written to make sure that your ideas are flowing well. Looking back can also result in gathering more ideas.
Editing and correcting the writing	Usually after the writing has been completed, it is important to check that you have included all the ideas you wanted to include, that you have organised the ideas well, that you have expressed them well, and that you have not made errors in turning your ideas into written text. Sometimes checklists are used to help with editing and correcting the writing.

The steps described in Table 12.3 can become a focus for teaching and practice. It is quite useful to see the steps in the writing process as making up a strategy that learners can bring to the writing. The steps can be expressed as a series of questions that learners ask themselves as they prepare for and do a piece of writing. Here are some examples.

- ✓ What am I trying to say in this piece of writing?
- ✓ Who am I writing to?
- ✓ What are the main ideas that should be in my writing?
- ✓ Have I organised these ideas in the most effective way?
- ✓ Is my writing correct and easy to read?

Learners who are studying English for academic purposes need to apply the steps when writing assignments in their subject area. Giving learners practice in writing assignments can have a very marked effect on their performance in their academic courses. Ideally, the practice assignments that they write, should be based on their areas of study, although initially there could be value in the whole class working on the same assignment topic, breaking the work down into the steps described in Table 12.3.

An important part of the gathering ideas step is the use of multiple sources. Learners need to learn how to find sources, how to evaluate them, how to combine information from them, and how to acknowledge them in their writing. Teacher guidance and the analysis of examples are useful learning procedures.

Language Learning Activities in an EAP Course

(1) Dictionary use including etymology

In many subject areas, particularly those that have a long history, the technical vocabulary may contain word parts that are shared amongst many words. Learners should be aware of this and look for formal similarities between words they are learning and words they already know. They can confirm if these form similarities are also signals of meaning relationships by consulting the etymology section of a good dictionary. The etymology sections of most dictionaries can make very difficult reading, but with a little help and assistance they can be very useful sources of information which will help technical vocabulary stick in learners' memories.

(2) Word cards

In Chapter 10, we looked in detail at deliberate learning from word cards. Not all learners are comfortable with word card learning, but it is such an effective technique that they should know about it and know how to apply it well. A class vocabulary box (Coxhead, A. (2004). Using a class vocabulary box: How, why, when, where, and who. *Guidelines, 26*(2), 19-23) is a good way of introducing learners to the word card strategy. As useful words occur in class, they are noted on cards by the learners, and the cards are put into the word card box. On a regular basis, a small amount of class time is spent working on the words so that they continue to get attention, either doing teacher-centred work, pair work or individual study. The activities can include word dictation, testing recall of the meaning or form, word part analysis, word family building, and collocation searches using a concordancer.

University Requirements

Reading course outlines

Many universities require that each course has a detailed written course outline which is made available to students in the first week or two of classes. This course outline typically shows what will be covered in the course, the reading that needs to be done, how the course will be assessed, and attendance requirements. There may also be more general regulations, such as a statement on plagiarism, in the outline. If learners are unfamiliar with such documents, or with such regulations, it is useful spending two or three sessions on examining course outlines and how learners can plan their work and fulfil the obligations that they need to fulfil in order to pass the course.

Test Preparation Activities in an EAP Course

If learners have to meet an English proficiency requirement by the end of the EAP course in order to gain entry to the university, then their motivation will be high to focus on this test. Unfortunately, sometimes the strength of this focus overwhelms the need to focus on the regular content of the course. If this is the case, then it is worth including clearly signalled specific test practice as a part of the program. This could begin with one small test practice session a week, and increase as the test looms nearer.

(1) Test instruction

Test instruction involves becoming familiar with the parts of the test, how to answer them, the amount of time allowed to sit the test, how much time should be given to each part, the particular test item formats used in the test and how best to answer them. There need only be a few test instruction sessions, and if there are learners in the class who have already had experience in sitting the test, such as the IELTS test or the TOEFL test, then making these sessions interactive would be a good idea. The goal of such instruction is called *test wiseness*, and there is a reasonable amount of research on this topic largely focusing on multiple-choice questions. Test instruction needs to be accompanied by test practice.

(2) Test practice

Test practice simply involves sitting old versions or created versions of the test, getting feedback on the results, and reflecting on the feedback. It is useful if some of these practice sessions involve sitting the test under timed conditions.

There is much to be done in an EAP course, and Table 12.1 contains a rather long list of focuses and activities. It is therefore important that good needs analysis is carried out so that learners are not practising things that they are already good at. The division of responsibility in Table 12.2 is an attempt to make it easier to fit the activities into a course by assigning some of them to homework and independent study, others to group work either in class or outside of class, and to teacher-led activities. A good EAP course can make an ESL learner's first year in an English-speaking university a much less frightening and more pleasurable and successful experience.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Courses in English for academic purposes need to involve a focus on both language use and study skills. There is so much that needs to be covered in such courses that it is useful to divide the activities into those which are teacher-led, those which can be the responsibility of a small group, and those which can be done as independent work. This division allows learners to be less dependent on the teacher and to improve their proficiency outside of class time. Giving attention to the writing process is particularly important in such courses.

Further Reading

To read about assessment in a university TESOL course, see the chapter by Read, J. & Roe, L. in Macalister, J. & Nation, I.S.P. (2011). *Case Studies in Language Curriculum Design.* New York: Routledge.

Chapter 13 Understanding Cultural Differences

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that learning a new language also involves developing an understanding of the culture of the users of that language and reaching a compromise between the L1 culture and the L2 culture. This understanding can develop through guided and thoughtful observation, direct discussion of cultural issues, reflecting on L1 and L2 cultural differences, and experience.

Learning another language is necessarily learning another culture. This is sometimes called developing intercultural competence. Because learners do not typically have an explicit understanding of their own culture, developing intercultural competence should result in an awareness that there is no one right way of doing things, but that behaviour is influenced by custom and beliefs. The positive outcome of understanding cultural differences is feeling at ease and coping in intercultural contexts. Learners of a second language do not need to behave like native speakers of the language, but they should understand why native speakers behave in certain ways and should work out their own ways of behaving with this knowledge in mind.

Communication in a second language is necessarily communication between cultures, so living in a new culture involves not only learning the language but also learning what is seen as being appropriate behaviour and what is not. Learners might not be aware of some cultural differences until a misunderstanding occurs. The misunderstanding can result in bad feeling even when there was no bad intention. Sometimes misunderstandings may be language based, and Chapter 11 looks at one aspect of this. Sometimes misunderstandings may be as simple as the misunderstanding of a single word, but whatever the source of misunderstanding, it is important to learn from it.

An Approach to Developing Intercultural Competence

Understanding another culture can come from (1) observation, (2) experience, (3) direct learning about and discussion of cultural issues, (4) practice in coping in different situations, and (5) reflection, particularly with regard to differences between the L1 and L2 cultures. In this chapter we will look at each of these five opportunities for learning. Teachers can work out useful sequences of these opportunities. This approach to developing intercultural competence follows the general approach of the four strands, namely, provide a roughly balanced range of different kinds of opportunities for learning without neglecting or over-emphasising any one kind of opportunity. These opportunities should include both deliberate and incidental opportunities for learning.

Culturally Focused Observation

In Chapter 11 on developing communication skills, it was suggested that second language learners need to become like sociolinguists observing and interpreting the ways in which people use language. Similarly, second language learners need to become like anthropologists, observing and interpreting how users of English behave. First language users rarely reflect on this behaviour, but an observer with the perspective of another culture and with some guidance can learn a large amount from observation. For example, the ways in which people eat a meal is strongly culturally influenced. Consider these questions.

- ✓ Does everyone sit down to eat at the same time? If not, is there a rough order deciding who eats when? What beliefs could be affecting this order?
- ✓ Are there any special expressions used to start and end the meal? Are there any special expressions used during the meal?
- ✓ How does each person get their food and the amount of food that they want?
- ✓ How is the food eaten? What eating tools are used? Are young children given specific training in how to eat? If eating tools are used, do they have to be used in certain ways? Do they have to be placed in certain ways when the meal is finished?
- ✓ Is meal time a time for conversation? What kinds of topics are talked about?

There are many other questions that could be asked (the kinds of food and drink, the times for meals, the length of time spent eating, and so on), but the questions given above are enough to show that normal daily acts which we take for granted are generally quite complex and are based on custom and belief.

An important way of developing intercultural competence is to observe what users of the second language say and do. Such observation is an important intercultural learning strategy, and skill in using this strategy can be developed by guidance in what to look for. The simplest way to do this is to set learners two or three questions that they can try to answer through observation. These questions can be similar to those given above for the example of meal times. The findings of the observation can then be a basis for teaching, discussion, and reflection. Table 13.1 contains a list of topic areas that are very fruitful areas for observation.

Table 13.1 Topic areas and example questions for intercultural observation

Topic areas	Example questions
Ways of addressing people	· What pronouns and terms of address are used when talking to people of different ages and different genders? · How is politeness and respect shown?
Greeting people	· What greetings are used when people meet each other? · Do the greetings differ according to who is meeting whom? · What do people actually do when they greet each other, for example, shake hands? What affects the kinds of things they do?
Saying goodbye	· What do people say when they leave each other? · Is there an order to who says goodbye first?
Speaking to young children	· Do older people speak to young children in certain ways? · Is there any vocabulary which seems specially used for speaking to young children? · What sorts of things are spoken about when talking to young children?
Buying goods in a shop	· How can people ask to look at certain goods? · Are politeness words like *please* and *thank you* used? · Who uses them?

Having a cup of tea	· What do people reply when they are asked if they want a cup of tea? · What do they say to accept? What do they say to refuse? · What do they say when they are given a cup of tea? · Is a cup of tea always accompanied by some kind of food?
Swearing	· What words are regarded as swear words? · On a scale of swearing, which are the strongest swear words and which are the weakest swear words? · Who uses swear words and with whom? · What is the effect of swear words?
Entering someone's house	· How is someone invited into someone's house? · What do you do when you enter someone's house? Do you take off your shoes? Do you take off your coat? · Who goes first after you've entered the house?
Walking on the footpath	· What side of the footpath do people walk on? Do they keep to the left or keep to the right, or doesn't it matter? · If a man and a woman walk together, do they always walk on the same side of each other?
Visiting someone's house	· How do you invite someone to come and see you? · How do you accept such an invitation? How do you refuse it?
Showing respect to teachers	· Are there special terms of address for teachers? · What do you do to attract the teacher's attention if you want to ask a question or ask for help? · Are there rules governing the ways learners speak to teachers? · Are there rules governing the ways teachers speak to learners?
Classroom discussion	· Are there rules for classroom discussion? · Who decides who speaks when? · How are others encouraged to speak?

The topics given in Table 13.1 are just a sample of focuses for developing intercultural competence, and they show how the more general topics in Table 13.2 can be elaborated. Table 13.2 is largely based on Michael West's classification of the minimum adequate vocabulary (West, M. (1960) *Teaching*

English in Difficult Circumstances. London: Longmans, pp. 113-114).

Table 13.2 General topics for an intercultural focus

General area	Particular focus
The earth	· Climate and the seasons · Farming · Animals, pets, farm animals · Trees and flowers
The self	· Bathing, sleeping · Medical treatment · Clothing · The emotions · Religion
The home	· Houses and furniture · Housework, meals and food, cooking, gardening · The family · Formal ceremonies; birthdays, Christmas, funerals, engagements, wedding ceremonies, church ceremonies, graduation ceremonies
The intellect	· Preschool, school and education · Reading · Computers
Business	· Shops and businesses · Money, banking, buying and selling · Jobs, trades and professions
Relaxation	· Travel · TV, movies, computers, music · Art and photography · Literature · Visiting others, socialising, drinking · Games and sports
Public life	· Government, law and taxation · The military · History · Rank and social class · Immigrants and foreigners

The topics in Table 13.2 can be the basis for observation tasks, discussion, and teaching.

Observation tasks and the results of the observation can be the beginning of other opportunities for intercultural learning.

Learning From Experience

Learning from experience is most obvious when a misunderstanding occurs and when those involved realise that there is a misunderstanding. However most learning from experience is a kind of informed active observation where the learner is not a detached observer, but is actively involved. The general strategy here is "Do as others do", but that has its dangers. Nonetheless, when English is learned as a second language, learners are typically participating in the culture and trying to make sense of it. It is very helpful if the problems they have faced and the understandings they have gained are offered for discussion in class.

Direct Learning and Discussion with a Cultural Focus

Directly learning about aspects of culture involves teaching and discussion of important cultural factors and cultural situations. Such teaching and discussion can focus on problems that the learners bring to the class, observations that learners have made of native speaker behaviour, typical situations (see Table 13.1 and 13.2), and underlying factors like age, gender, class, family relationship, legal requirements, tradition, religious beliefs, political beliefs, cultural beliefs, and history that affect a wide range of cultural behaviours.

Discussion can draw on L1 and L2 comparisons and provide a good opportunity for learners to show and develop their knowledge of their own culture. The danger to beware of in such discussion is cultural stereotyping and this can be avoided to some degree by observing that just as cultures differ, so do groups and individuals within each culture. Pictures can be used as a starting point for discussion, showing an activity or situation in the L2 culture. These are discussed and comparisons can be made with the L1 culture.

An important goal of discussion and teaching should be to show that behaviour is strongly influenced by belief and custom, and that belief and custom differ between cultures, between groups within a culture, and between individuals.

Practice and Culturally Focused Role Play

Simulation and role-play activities are useful ways of practising and understanding intercultural situations. Such activities are most useful if they

are informed by observation and research. People's beliefs about how they behave are not always matched by how they actually behave in the same situation. Chapter 14 looks at role play and simulation activities and how they can be designed and used.

Reflection and Cultural Comparison

Reflection and cultural comparison involves looking for similarities and differences between L1 and L2 culture, and considering the nature and reasons for these differences. Reflection has the goal of understanding the differences and similarities, and relating this understanding to the learner's own experience and values. Similarities in behaviour may not necessarily be matched by a similarity in purpose. The wearing of school uniforms for example may have different motivations in different cultures.

Reflection is essentially a personal activity but it is helped by observation, experience, teaching and discussion. Some find it easy to accept cultural difference while others find it difficult, expecting that there is one right way of doing things. An important goal of reflection is to see that differences are not arbitrary but come from beliefs, values and tradition and they make sense to those who follow them.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Developing intercultural competence involves being able to cope and feel comfortable in intercultural situations. Such competence can be developed through observation, experience, direct learning and discussion, practice and culturally focused role-play, and reflection and cultural comparison.

Further Reading

The following book was written for teachers of English as a foreign language, but its appendix has a substantial list of culture-focused discussion topics which could be useful starting point for culture-focused discussions in ESL classes. Snow, D. (1996). *More than a Native Speaker: An Introduction for Volunteers Teaching Abroad.* Alexandria, Va: TESOL.

See Liddicoat, A.J. (2008) Pedagogical practice for integrating the intercultural in language teaching and learning. *Japanese Studies, 28*(3), 277-290 for a very practical approach to dealing with cultural learning. Liddicoat has a nice example of a series of activities beginning with the learners discussing and answering questions about the nature of their school. Then each group sees a different picture of a school in another country and they interpret their picture and compare what they see with their own school (expert groups). They then re-form groups so that each group has a learner with a different picture (family groups), and they discuss the same questions. Finally the learners reflect on how they would feel about attending the school in the L2 culture and how native speakers of that culture would feel attending a different school.

Block, D. (2012). Class and SLA: Making connections. *Language Teaching Research, 16*(2), 188-205, has an interesting discussion of social class distinctions noting the following features affecting class distinctions–property, wealth, occupation, place of residence, education, social networking, consumption patterns, behaviour (clothes, pastimes, eating), and spatial relations (travel, size of house and rooms, nearness to others). These features could provide a useful basis for classroom discussion.

Chapter 14 Simulation and Role Play Activities

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that simulation and role play activities are very effective means of practising coping in situations that commonly occur outside the classroom, and they are good for motivation if learners play a part in deciding the topics of these activities. Such activities can set up excellent conditions for vocabulary learning.

In Chapter 1 we looked at four important characteristics of learning English as a second language—(1) most learners have readily defined, immediate needs, (2) motivation is high, (3) there are many opportunities to observe, learn, and use the language, and (4) language learning in an ESL situation has very strong cultural and integrational aspects which can have a strong effect on motivation and success in language learning.

These four characteristics make role play a very important learning activity. This is because role play activities can be directed toward learners' needs, the activities can be informed by observation, they have the strong motivational effect of practising something relevant that can be immediately used, and they provide a useful opportunity for learning and gaining feedback about cultural issues.

Strictly speaking, activities that have direct relevance for ESL learners are not role play activities. In a role play activity learners take on roles that are different from the usual daily activity. An activity where the learner does not have to pretend to be someone else but acts as themselves is more properly called a simulation activity. The best-known simulation activities are involved in the training of airline pilots, where pilots are in specially designed simulators and practice dealing with situations that they normally meet or might meet in their job as a pilot flying an aeroplane. Simulation activities are also used in sports such as scuba diving when learners practice dealing with potentially dangerous situations such as running out of air, or having to share your air

with someone else, and managing equipment failure. When we practice a fire drill or an earthquake drill, we are taking part in a simulation. In this chapter we will look at both simulation and role play, because even though role play activities might involve situations that learners would not typically meet, they provide good opportunities for meaning-focused language practice.

Designing Simulation Activities

From a learner's perspective, the best simulation activities are those that deal with situations of immediate relevance to them in their daily lives. These can include activities like going shopping, talking on the telephone, going to the doctor, using public transport, chatting with friends, and filling out forms. From a language teacher's perspective, the best simulation activities are those that set up conditions that encourage language learning.

In Table 2.1 in Chapter 2, there is a list of very common situations that learners have to deal with in their daily lives. These cover talking about yourself, meeting people, going shopping, using important services, giving and following directions, taking care of your health, taking part in sport and entertainment, and controlling language input. It was also noted in Chapter 2 that as part of a negotiated syllabus, learners should be repeatedly given the opportunity to suggest situations that they need practice in dealing with. The teacher's job is to turn these situations into activities. This is not very difficult to do as it simply involves providing a short detailed description of the situation, being careful to mention any particular features that will affect the kind of language use that is needed. We looked at these features in Chapter 5. They include the status differences between the people involved, how well the people know each other, and the amount of difficulty or trouble that one person is imposing upon the other. Let us look at a few descriptions of situations to see what they need to include.

Let us start with a very simple but common situation, travelling on a bus.

> You are going to take a short trip on a bus. You will need to pay the driver for a ticket, make your way past some people and sit down. When you reach your bus stop, you will get off the bus.

There will be three people in the simulation, you(), the bus driver(), and a passenger() . Here is a procedure that the teacher can follow in

preparing for and carrying out the activity.

Step 1 The teacher shows the learners the written description of the situation. They can ask any questions they wish.

Step 2 The learners work in pairs or groups of three or four to plan what they will say and to predict what might be said to them.

Step 3 The teacher then shows the learners a model dialogue or a recorded example, or uses their suggestions to write a model dialogue on the board.

Step 4 The teacher and the learners talk about various features of the dialogue, such as, do you need to say please and thank you and why, do you say anything to people when you squeeze past them or sit next to them, when you get off the bus do you say anything and why?

Step 5 The learners now practice the dialogue in their small groups while the teacher moves around observing and commenting on their performance.

Step 6 One or two of the groups can now perform while the rest of the class watches.

Step 7 The learners comment on any differences between what they would say and do in their home country compared to what they have just practised.

Step 8 After a few days, the learners in their small groups spend a few minutes practicing the same situation again. After couple of weeks, they practice it again.

In the description of the situation given above, there is no description of the status relationship between the bus driver and passenger, on how well the passenger knows the bus driver, and on the level of difficulty of the request (to buy a ticket). This is because these three important factors can be assumed from the situation. As a part of Step 4 above, there is value in getting learners to fill in the following table.

Feature	Description	Effect
Status relationship		
Level of familiarity		
Degree of difficulty or trouble		

Here is how it could be filled in for the situation of travelling on a bus, with regard to the relationship between the passenger and the bus driver.

Feature	Description	Effect
Status relationship	Equal	Say please and thanks.
Level of familiarity	Unknown to each other	Be polite.
Degree of difficulty or trouble	Small	Be direct, no small talk.

Imagine how the situation and the language used might change if you travelled on the same bus which was driven by the same bus driver every day, and thus you became more familiar with the driver. The effect would be a much greater likelihood of there being some small talk, such as commenting on the weather, or about how busy the driver is. Here is another situation.

> At least two or three times a week you go into a small shop to buy a newspaper and a drink. You are always served by the same person, and although you don't know their name, you have become friendly with each other. Go into the shop and buy your newspaper and drink.

Here is how the table could be filled out.

Feature	Description	Effect
Status relationship	Equal	You say please and thanks.
Level of familiarity	Known to each other to a small degree	You would make some small talk, but you would not ask their name. You would also say goodbye.
Degree of difficulty or trouble	Low level of trouble	You would be direct and not try to soften your request.

Here are several other common situations.

✓ **Making small talk**

You see someone who is in the same class as you, but who you have not spoken to before. You want to be friendly. What will you say? What topic will you focus on in your small talk?

You are sitting on a bus and the person sitting next to you asks where you come from. The person seems very kind and friendly and you would like to continue the conversation. What topic of extra information will you provide in your answer? It needs to be a topic that you can talk more about and that your fellow-passenger would be interested in.

Often on your way to catch the bus, an older person who lives just down the street says hello to you. Usually you just smile and reply and hurry on to catch the bus. This morning you have plenty of time. What will your reply to "Hello" be? What topic of conversation will you focus on?

✓ **Refusing**

You got an email message from a classmate who is not a close friend but who you occasionally speak to. He has asked you several questions about the course which shows he has misunderstood that part of the course. You don't have time to answer all his questions and many are off the point anyway. What will you write in the email?

A group of people who are not your close friends have asked you to come with them to a nearby cafe. Unfortunately, you can't go because you have to finish a piece of homework, but you would like to go. What will you say to show that you would like to go with them at some future time, but can't go now?

You have just had a meal at someone's house. You have just finished eating and have had plenty to eat. The host offers you some more food. What will you say?

✓ **Making suggestions**

A group of your friends are going to a restaurant and they have asked you to come along. You do not like the food at that restaurant and would rather go to a different one that you know well. What will you say to suggest going to that restaurant?

Someone who you have met before just borrowed a pen from you to make a brief note. They have written the note but seem to have forgotten to give your pen back. You need it back. What will you say?

✓ **Disagreeing**

Your teacher has suggested a change that you should make to your piece of writing. You think the change suggested is not a good idea. What will you say?

One of your classmates has been criticising a friend of yours. You think that these criticisms are wrong and want to defend your friend. What will you say?

The teacher has given back one of your pieces of writing with a low grade. You think from the comments on the writing that the teacher misunderstood what you meant to say. How will you point this out to the teacher?

✓ **Making complaints**

A classmate has been bullying you by continually saying bad things about you and you want to do something about it by talking to the teacher. What will you say?

You bought a USB drive from a shop and when you got home you found that they had given you the wrong one. It is not the one stated on your receipt. You want to take it back and get the right one. What will you say?

✓ **Making apologies**

You have arrived 15 minutes late for an appointment with your teacher because of heavy traffic. What will you say?

You have not done a piece of homework that you were supposed to have done. The teacher is collecting the work but notices that you have not handed yours in and asks you where it is. What will you say?

You accidentally spill your drink and it wets the written notes of the person sitting next to you. What will you say?

✓ **Controlling language**

You have gone into a government department for information and an official says something to you that you don't understand. They say the same thing to you again but you still don't understand. What will you say in each case?

You have just given a talk in class, and it is time for your class members to ask you questions about your talk. One of them asks you a question but you can't understand what they say because they are speaking too quickly. What will you do?

It is easy to make similar tasks based on situations that your learners find difficult to deal with. After initially practising them, the teacher should return to the same tasks for revision and fluency development.

Learning From Role Play and Simulations

So far we have looked at how learners can practice dealing with a variety of situations that occur in their daily life. However it is not enough just to become familiar with these situations. Learners need to be able to learn language features and routines from them and be able to recall them when necessary. Let us now look at the conditions affecting learning from role play and simulations listed in Table 14.1.

Table 14.1 Conditions affecting learning through role play and simulations

Focus	Conditions	Setting up the conditions in a course
Deliberate attention	Memorisation	· Deliberate learning of phrases, sentences, and sequences · Memorisation of topics
	Observation	· Observation of examples, models, and normal use
	Analysis	· Noting features relating to the effects of status difference, level of familiarity, and level of difficulty or seriousness
	Understanding	· Learning the principles that affect the nature of interaction · Comparison with the learner's first language
Use	Retrieval	· Opportunities for performance and use · Responding to discourse completion tasks
	Creative use	· Opportunities for varied use
	Fluency development	· Opportunities for repeating familiar tasks
	Repetition	· A plan for returning to the same material

Table 14.1 lists two major sets of conditions which affect learning through the use of role play and simulation. The first major conditions are based on deliberate attention and they fit into the strand of language-focused learning. The second major conditions fit into the strands of the meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, and fluency development, and all involve meaning-focused use of the language. Because language-focused learning should only make up around one quarter of the course time, the greatest amount of time should be given to the conditions involving use of the language. However giving deliberate attention to language features is a

very powerful way of helping them stay in memory so both kinds of learning need to be included in a course.

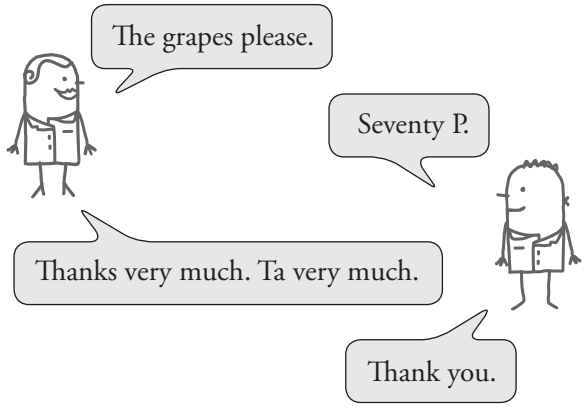
The conditions of deliberate attention include memorisation of useful language items. This can be done using bilingual word cards with the phrase or sentence on one side and the translation and the learners' first language on the other. The teacher can also help such memorisation by using the blackboard reproduction exercise. When a dialogue has been written on the whiteboard or blackboard, the teacher can gradually rub out parts of it (preferably single words or very short phrases) getting a learner or pair of learners to repeat the complete dialogue after each rubbing out. By the end of the activity, the learners are repeating the whole dialogue even though there is nothing left on the whiteboard.

An amusing and very handy rule of thumb is that if someone greets you with a question beginning with "How", a fairly safe answer is "Fine". If they greet you with a question beginning with "What", a fairly safe answer is "Not much"! If learners have trouble making small talk, it is useful to memorise a short list of handy topics that can be used.

Native speakers' management of small talk and conversation is done without conscious awareness of the principles which lie behind it and of what they are actually saying. Research typically shows that what native speakers think they do is not always what they actually do. For this reason, it is very useful for both the teacher and the learners to carry out simple observation tasks of native speakers performing common speech acts. This observation can be based around the following general questions.

- ✓ How do native speakers …?
- ✓ What different words, phrases and sentences do they use to do this?
- ✓ What else comes before or after this act?

For example, the question could be "How do native speakers give thanks?". There is research on this and the answers to the questions are not always what a native speaker would necessarily predict. Schauer and Adolphs (2006) found that the most common words and phrases used were *Thanks*, *Thank you*, and *Cheers*. It was not uncommon for several expressions of thanks to occur one after the other.



Other questions for observation tasks include the following.

- ✓ How do native speakers offer someone a cup of tea?
- ✓ How do native speakers respond to such an offer?
- ✓ How do native speakers show that they are ready to go home after a meal or social meeting?
- ✓ How do native speakers invite someone to come for a meal at their place?
- ✓ How do native speakers respond to such an offer?

The third deliberate attention condition in Table 14.1 is analysis. Such analysis requires examples and data either gathered from observation or provided by the teacher. Riddiford and Newton's (2010) excellent book is full of many useful examples, and we have looked at how such analysis could be done in the description of Step 4 of the procedure described earlier in this chapter.

The fourth deliberate attention condition in Table 14.1 is understanding, and this can come from observation and analysis, from the teacher deliberately pointing out principles of interaction, and through comparison with the learners' first language.

While deliberate attention is a very useful means of coming to grips with the way people use the language, it should only be a relatively small part of the communication skills course. The major part must be opportunities for use. The use section of Table 14.1 includes retrieval, creative use, fluency

development, and a plan for returning to the same material so that there is plenty of repetition.

Retrieval involves going over previously met material without having that material in front of you, so that you are forced to retrieve it from your memory. Retrieval is a very powerful learning condition, and each successful retrieval strengthens the link between the form and the meaning of the speech act. Creative use involves retrievals which are slightly different or rather different from previous retrievals. It is sometimes called generative use. Retrievals involving creative use have a particularly strong effect on strengthening memory because they enrich the associations attached to the item to be learnt.

Fluency development involves working with easy, familiar material, but with an encouragement to process and produce it faster. The 4/3/2 activity, where learners repeat the same material three times but with a decreasing amount of time available for each successive repetition (4 minutes, then 3 minutes, then 2 minutes), is a very useful fluency development activity. Linked skills activities also set up good conditions for fluency development, particularly for the last activity in the sequence of three.

Although repetition is the last condition mentioned in Table 14.1, it is probably the most important condition. A plan for ensuring repetition need not be very complicated. At its simplest, it can just be a list like the one given below. This is set up for five repetitions.

Role play activity	1	2	3	4	5
Using the bus Having a cup of tea …	8 July				

As shown in Table 14.1, the repetitions should not always be exact repetitions of the same activity, but should involve retrieval, creative use, and fluency development. The repetitions can also include a deliberate learning element, such as commenting on others' performance, or learners commenting on their own performance.

The *Say it*! activity is a very useful way of repeating previously met speech acts. It also provides a good opportunity for receptive and productive repetition within the activity itself. Here is an example based around the act of giving thanks on a social occasion.

	1	2	3
A	Someone hands you a cup of tea. What will you say?	Someone thanks you for handing them a cup of tea. What will you say?	You want someone to pass you the sugar. What will you say?
B	Someone gives you a small gift. What do you do? What will you say?	Someone thanks you for giving them a small gift. What will you say?	You want someone to pass you a pair of scissors. What will you say?
C	Someone brings a plate of food to your place for afternoon tea. What will you say?	Someone thanks you for bringing a plate of food. What will you say?	As you are leaving, someone gives you your empty plate to take home. What will you say?

In the *Say it*! activity, a group of three or four learners take turns at doing the tasks shown. The activity begins by one person choosing a task to do and when the task is done that person gives the grid number of the task that the next person in the group has to do, for example B2. The next speaker has to do to the task in the square B2. Any grid number can be called, and the same grid number can be called more than once during the activity. This activity is a very useful way of revising old material.

It is important that learners have an opportunity to suggest simulations that they would like to practice. They should also have the opportunity to ask about interactions that they have seen and have not completely understood, either because of the language used or because they did not understand the nature of the interaction.

In this chapter we have focused on spoken interaction. However increasingly interaction can occur through writing, particularly through e-mails, text messaging, and blogs.

Designing Role Plays

So far, we have looked at simulations and these should be used much more than role plays because they can be directly related to the communication needs of the learners. However role plays can be very enjoyable activities and can also set up the useful learning conditions that we have just looked at. It is a fairly straightforward matter to make role play activities. Chapter 3 of *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?* and the article, Nation, P. (1991) Managing

group discussion: problem-solving tasks. *Guidelines, 13*(1), 1-10 (available free from Paul Nation's website. Look under the heading Publications), describe in detail how to make problem-solving role plays. We will provide a brief description of the steps here.

❖ **Figure 14.1** Role play

When designing a good problem solving role play, we have to make sure that it has a clear outcome, it involves some requirements and restrictions which make the task a little bit more difficult to complete, and it involves a procedure which provides the learners with a set of steps to follow in order to reach the outcome. Let us look at each of these three features with plenty of examples.

An outcome is included in the statement of the problem that the learners have to solve. When the learners have reached the outcome, then they know that they have completed the task. There are six useful outcomes that are commonly used in problem-solving role plays. They fit into two main groups (i) decide, locate, arrange, and (ii) suggest, choose, and rank. Here are several examples of each outcome. They are all related to the topic of business and are part of a much larger list which can be found in the references given above.

- ✓ Suggest ways of spending an amount of money
- ✓ Choose which product you should buy
- ✓ Rank cars to buy
- ✓ Decide whether a shopping centre should be built
- ✓ Decide whether the school should be insured
- ✓ Locate an advertisement in the newspaper
- ✓ Locate a fast food business in the town
- ✓ Arrange the floor plan of an office
- ✓ Arrange the buildings around a town square

An outcome gives learners a clear goal to work toward. Imagine a task without an outcome, for example, discuss the kinds of buildings that you could have around a town square. Compare this with: Decide which of these buildings should be built around a town square, or Locate these three buildings within a town square, or Arrange these buildings around a town square. A task with an outcome makes the discussion much more purposeful.

Requirements and restrictions increase the opportunity for learners to discuss and argue with each other. For example, when the learners are given the task of arranging the buildings around a town square, some of the restrictions could relate to what kinds of shops should go next to each other and what kinds of shops should not be next to each other. For example,

- ✓ Fast food shops which involve fried food and strongly smelling food should not be placed next to shops selling clothing or other goods that might absorb the smell of cooking.
- ✓ Two shops selling the same kind of product should not be placed next to each other or close to each other.

The requirements and restrictions should not make it impossible to reach the outcome, but they should make it more difficult. Assigning roles to the

learners can be a part of the restrictions and requirements, because each role may suggest different restrictions. For example, if one of the roles in the task about arranging the buildings around the town square is that of a fast food seller, then that fast food seller may have certain wishes, such as to be on the corner of one of the streets entering the square, or to be near a very popular store.

Procedures are simply a series of steps that learners have to go through to do a task. The most common procedures are (i) the pyramid procedure (where learners individually think of an answer, then work in pairs to reach agreement, then work in groups of four to reach agreement, and then perhaps try to get the whole class to reach agreement), (ii) the expert group-family group procedure where learners form different expert groups working on one part of the task (for example with each group working on our different one of the requirements or restrictions), and then make new groups so that there is an expert from each of the previous groups in each new group, (iii) a procedure involving a series of outcomes, such as first of all deciding from a list of choices what businesses should be placed around the town square, and then arranging the choices in the best possible arrangement.

Here are some activities involving all the features. As you read the activities you may wish to note what the outcome is, what the restrictions are, and what procedure is used and how many steps it has. The activities do not have set roles but they could easily be added.

- ✓ **Decide whether a forest should be cleared for a factory.**

  The area where you all live has a very high level of unemployment. Many people in the area cannot find jobs and have to move away in order to find work. There is an area of forest near the town which would be the ideal location for a factory. The clearing of the forest, the building of the factory, and the factory itself would provide a lot of employment for local people, and would provide a very strong economic benefit for local shopkeepers. The forest however is a beautiful area where the local people like to go for walks and where during holiday time a small number of people from out of town come to enjoy the outdoor life. In your group, make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of clearing the forest? Then check your list with the other groups, adding to your list if necessary. Decide whether the forest will be cleared and the factory built or not.

- ✓ **Keeping a country school.**

  You live in a farming area and the nearest town which has a school is 25 km away. There is a small local country school in your area where the children of the local farming families go to school. The school has one teacher

who teaches children from the age of 5 to the age of 12. The school is a very important part of the community, but the number of children in the school is getting lower and lower. In a few years however, it is likely that the number of children in the area will increase, as the younger generation take over the running of the farms. It is a very good school where the children get a good education and the parents, many of whom went to the same school when they were children, strongly support the school. In recent years, the roads in the area have been greatly improved making travel faster and easier, and so there has been a suggestion that the school should close and the children should be taken in a small bus each day to the school in the nearby town. Decide if the school should be closed or if extra money should be found to keep it open over the next few years. Be ready to justify your decision.

✓ **Suggest ways of losing weight.**

Several of you have gained a few kilograms in weight over the past few years. You all feel that it would be worthwhile getting more exercise and losing some weight, and you think that your efforts would be much more successful if you set up a plan as a group and helped each other keep to the plan. Make three suggestions for a weight loss program. One or two of you are on a low income and cannot afford to spend much money on a program. None of you play any regular sport and your level of fitness is rather low. When you have made your list, try to organise it under headings if possible. You will have to report back to the class about your list.

✓ **Decide whether the school should be insured.**

The cost of insurance for a public building like a school is very high. This is because there are many cases of schools and other buildings like churches being deliberately burned down. The school has to pay the insurance costs out of its own budget and although it can afford to do this, it could also use the money for more equipment and technology that would help in the children's education. You all are on the school committee, and the committee has to decide whether to insure the school or not. The last serious fire in a public building in your area was over 20 years ago. If the fire just destroyed one classroom, the school could probably afford to replace it, but there would not be enough money to replace the whole school.

✓ **Locate a story on the front page of a newspaper.**

You are a group of editors and reporters on the local newspaper. You have five stories in front of you. One of these stories has to be the lead story, attracting people to buy the newspaper. It will have a big headline and will be right at the top of the front page. The teacher will give you

the five stories. You have to read them and then reach a decision about which story will be the lead story, and then together you have to write a headline for the story. The headline must not contain more than 20 letters with spaces between words also being counted. (The teacher needs to cut five stories from a newspaper, preferably the lead stories from five different issues). First, make expert groups with one group working on one story to understand it thoroughly and decide how good a story it is. Then form family groups with one person from each expert group, and rate the stories. Write your headline for the top rated story. Report your rating to the teacher who will record it on the board for all to see.

Role plays have an added benefit if the role being played is one that learners will play in their everyday life. However one of the strong advantages of problem-solving role play activities is that they get the learners to use language in ways which will be different from how they have used the language before. That is, role plays are likely to encourage creative use of the language, and creative use helps learners remember and recall the vocabulary that they have used.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Simulation and role play activities can play an important role in English as a second language courses, because they allow the learners to practice dealing with the situations that they typically face outside of the classroom. It is very important to draw on the learners' needs when deciding on the topic and focus of such activities. Such activities need to be designed so that they are setting up conditions that encourage learning. These conditions include deliberate attention, retrieval, creative use, and repetition.

Further Reading

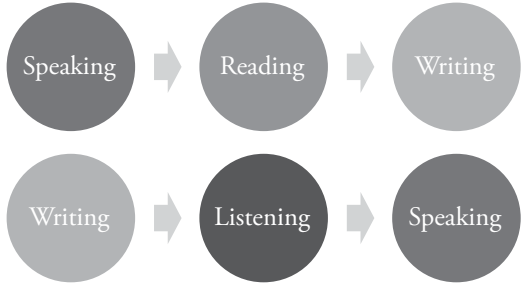
Look at Riddiford, N. and Newton, J. (2010). *Workplace Talk in Action. Wellington*: LALS, Victoria University of Wellington, and Riddiford, N. (2007). Making requests appropriately in a second language: Does instruction help to develop pragmatic proficiency? *TESOLANZ Journal, 18*, 88-102, for simulation activities.

Chapter
15 Linked Skills Activities

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that linked skills activities are probably the most useful of all language learning activities because they are easy to make, set up ideal conditions for language learning, and provide strong support for the learners while they move through the parts of the activity.

In a linked skills activity, the learners work on the same material through three successive skills, for example (1) they read the material, (2) then they listen to it, and (3) then they write about it. There are many such combinations. The last activity in each series becomes a fluency development activity because of the previous practice in the other two skills. Linked skills activities are sometimes called integrated skills instruction.



Linked skills activities have many benefits, and these benefits are typical of those where a single topic or subject is focused on for a considerable period of time, as in content-based learning. One of the major benefits for a teacher is that they generally require very little work to prepare and organize, but they get a lot of work from the students. They can also provide very useful conditions for language and content learning. Let us look first at how linked skills activities can be made, and how to judge whether a linked skills activity has been well made or not.

Designing Linked Skills Activities

Let us take a typical piece of material which may be used when making linked skills activities—a reading passage with accompanying questions. The example I have used in class when training teachers is a text on food handling safety in order to avoid food poisoning.

The activities are described in Table 15.1 which should be read horizontally. It contains five sets of linked skills activities. Each row is one linked skills series of three activities. The item on the left is the first activity in the series, which is then followed by the one in the middle, and then by the one on the right. Theoretically, there are twenty four possible linked skills sequences (four choices from listening, speaking, reading and writing for the first activity, a choice from three for the second activity, and a choice from two for the third activity) if no skills are repeated in the series. Note however that there can also be a lot of variety in the nature of the actual activity. That is, there are many kinds of speaking activities for example, so twenty-four is clearly an underestimate.

Table 15.1 **Five sets of linked skills activities**

	First activity	Second activity	Third activity
1	Read the questions without seeing the text and try to guess the answers (Read)	Listen to the text and check and correct your answers (Listen)	Talk about the differences between your guesses and the right answers (Speak)
2	Read the text (Read)	Listen to the questions and write answers to them (Listen/Write)	Write guidelines for storing food safely (Write)
3	Write guidelines for storing food safely using your own experience and background knowledge (Write)	Talk about your guidelines with another student (Speak)	Read the text and answer the questions (Read)
4	Listen to the text being read to you by the teacher taking notes if you wish (Listen)	Write what you can remember about the text (Write)	Do a 4/3/2 activity on the content of the passage (Speak)
5	Talk to a partner about what you know about good food storage procedures (Speak)	Read the text and answer the questions (Read)	Either prepare and deliver a talk to your partner about (1) good food storage procedures OR (2) the danger of not handling food carefully (Speak)

So, in the first linked skills series, learners read the questions by themselves and try to choose the correct multiple-choice answers. Then they hear the text being read to them by the teacher while they look at the questions and their answers, correcting them when necessary. In the third step, they talk to a partner about their guesses and the correct answers and report orally to the whole class on the most difficult questions. The last activity in the series is a fluency activity, because the previous work has made this final activity easy.

Note in the fifth linked skills series that the sequence is Speak-Read-Speak. In the last step the learners work in pairs, one learner delivering talk 1 about food storage and the other student giving talk 2 about dangers. Linked skills activities need not use three different skills but can repeat a skill aiming for a higher performance in the second use of the same skill.

Note that it is possible to mix and match some of the individual activities in Table 15.1 to make a new series.

Evaluating Linked Skills Activities

How can we judge which series of activities is likely to be the most effective? We will look at this from the perspective of vocabulary learning, and also from the perspective of the relative difficulty of the activities in the series.

1 Ideally, all three activities in the series should draw very strongly on the same piece of content material. This will ensure that the activities become easier as learners proceed through the series, and that the same vocabulary and grammatical structures are repeated during the series.

2 Essentially, the three activities should make use of the same language items, particularly vocabulary and multiword units. The recurrence of the vocabulary will help learning through the opportunity for repeated retrieval and hopefully creative use of the vocabulary.

3 The first activity in the series should be reasonably easy for the learners to do. The following activity will be helped by the one(s) before it.

4 Typically, the last activity in a series of three is highly likely to be a fluency development activity, because at this point the material that learners are working with is very easy because they have now worked with it at least two times. That is, they should be well in control of the content of the material and of the language used to express this content. The challenge to them is to use this now familiar content and language through a skill (listening, speaking, reading, or writing) which has previously been unpractised with this material. If the teacher has a fluency goal for

this final activity in the series of three, or wants the activity to be done particularly well, the teacher should look at the final activity to see if it is a receptive skill (listening or reading) or a productive skill (speaking or writing). If it is a productive skill, then it is probably important that one of the two preceding activities in the series also involves productive use of the language. So if the final activity is a writing activity, it may be useful to make sure that one of the two preceding activities is a speaking activity, or vice versa. This is because productive skills (speaking and writing) are usually much more challenging than receptive skills, particularly from a vocabulary perspective. Having practised the material with a productive skill once makes it much easier to use it again productively in the next or later activity in the series. Thus, in Table 1 above, the fifth linked skills series beginning with speaking is likely to be very effective in preparing for the final activity in the series. Similarly series 4, where the productive skill of writing is followed by the productive skill of speaking, is likely to enable better performance of the speaking activity than if both of the preceding activities had been receptive activities.

Linked Skills Activities and Conditions for Vocabulary Learning

There are several conditions which support learning. Firstly, we have the condition of repetition. It is clearly easier to learn something that is met several times than something that is just met once. Although there is no clear cut-off point for the minimum amount of repetitions needed for learning, there is plenty of evidence that the greater the number of repetitions, the more likely learning is to occur.

Secondly, we have the condition of retrieval. Having an opportunity to recall something that has been met before strengthens learning. When meeting a word again, receptive retrieval at least involves recognising the form of the word as being at least partly familiar and being able to recall the meaning or part of the meaning that was gained on previous meetings. Productive retrieval involves being able to produce the spoken or written word form to express a meaning.

Thirdly, we have the condition of creative use. Creative use can be receptive or productive. Receptive creative use involves meeting a word through listening or reading in new contexts. Productive creative use occurs when a learner produces the word in speaking or writing using it in ways in which the learner has not met it or used it before.

Fourthly, we have the condition of deliberate attention. Deliberate attention

means consciously focusing on the language item in order to understand or learn it. Deliberate attention occurs when we look up the word in a dictionary or in a glossary, or when we ask someone about the meaning of the word such as when negotiating its meaning in a spoken task. As long as this does not interrupt the message-focused activity too much, deliberate attention is a very useful contributor to vocabulary learning.

Fifthly, learners have the chance to work out the meanings of unknown words through guessing from context while listening or reading, and through negotiating with other learners in the group.

Monitoring Linked Skills Activities

The following things are worth looking for when linked skills activities are being used. They relate closely to the design features described above.

1 Is exactly the same topic being focused on in each of the three steps of the linked skills activity?

2 Are the learners coping well with the activities, especially in the last two steps of the series?

3 Do the same language items keep recurring in each of the three activities?

4 Are the learners retrieving the target vocabulary in activities 2 and 3 in the series rather than repeating them from the input sheet?

5 Do activities 2 and 3 involve creative use of the vocabulary from activity 1?

6 Are the learners handling the content of the activity more confidently in the later steps?

7 Are the learners interacting well with each other in some steps of the activity? Are they explaining the meanings of words to each other? Are they clarifying ideas clearly to each other?

8 Do the learners seem to enjoy doing the activity?

The activities which are the last two steps in linked skill series are highly likely to be experience tasks. That is, they are activities where learners bring a lot of background knowledge to the activity. The early steps of the series of linked skills activities can create and strengthen this knowledge. Because of this, typically the last activities in a linked skill series are likely to have many of the features of a fluency development task. That is, the task is very easy to do and

learners can do it at a faster than usual speed. For this reason, it is important that it is not just used as a throwaway activity (for example, for homework write …), but is given the time and attention that it deserves.

There are other activities which share some of the features of linked skills and that set up similar learning conditions. These include

- ✓ Quantity of input activities like extensive reading and content-based instruction
- ✓ Repetition activities like repeated reading and the pyramid procedure
- ✓ Procedures
- ✓ Focused activities like narrow reading

Further Examples of Linked Skills Activities

Here is a more detailed example of a linked skills activity.

1 The teacher writes a topic on the blackboard, for example, *Washing your hands*. The learners then form small groups of three or four people to share what they know about this topic and to predict three ideas that the following reading text might contain.

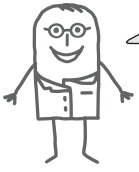
2 After a few minutes of this, the teacher then hands out the reading text which discusses research on the way in which people can best wash their hands. The learners read the text quietly or do paired reading where two learners sit together to read a single copy of the text, and after each paragraph they check that they have understood what they have read and clarify any problems.

3 Then the learners have to write a set of instructions that will go above wash basins in the school, advising people on the most effective way of washing their hands. This is a linked skills activity because the same topic *Washing your hands* is focused on across the three different skills of speaking, reading, and writing.

It is usually easy to design such linked skills activities around a reading text.

Note that the reading text could be involved in the first activity, the second activity, or the third activity in the series. Here is another linked skills activity based around the same topic.

1 The teacher gives the learners a list of actions that can be involved in washing your hands.



( ) Wet your hands thoroughly.

( ) Use plenty of soap.

( ) Dry your hands carefully.

( ) Rub your hands together.

( ) Let a lot of water run over your hands.

( ) Shake your hands thoroughly before drying them.

( ) Put soap on your hands, wash them, put soap on them again and wash them again.

The learners work individually and read the list carefully, ranking the actions in order from the most important for cleanliness to the least important.

2 The learners then form small groups and compare their ranking with the others in the group. The group decides on a common ranking.

3 The learners then get the reading text and see if their ranking agrees with the ideas presented in the text.

Table 15.2 contains several more examples of linked skills activities. As you can see, such activities are very easy to design especially if there is a reading passage to use as a part of the activity. Such activities require very little work from the teacher but provide a good range of meaning-focused input and meaning-focused output for the learners. When reading Table 15.2, look across each row for the three steps in the activity.

Table 15.2 Examples of four linked skills activities

	Step one	Step two	Step three
1	Read the text and list the three most important ideas.	Form groups of four learners and compare your ideas and reach an agreement on the three most important ideas.	Write a summary of the text including the three most important ideas.
2	The teacher writes a topic on the board and each learner thinks of one idea they know about that topic and writes it down.	Each learner then tells their idea to the teacher who writes the ideas on the board, organising them under headings where possible.	The learners then read a text on the same topic noting any ideas that were not on the board.
3	The learners listen to a talk. They can then ask questions about it to get a good understanding.	The learners then read a text on the same topic.	They write what they think are the three most important ideas in the text.
4	The teacher prepares ten comprehension questions on a text. On the board the teacher writes the numbers from 1 to 10 and next to each number writes one or two keywords from the question or answer. Working by themselves, the learners read the text and using the keywords try to predict what the questions and their answers will be.	The learners then form pairs to compare what their predictions of the questions and answers are and to improve their predictions.	The teacher then asks learners for their predictions, tells them the question and asks the learners for the answer. This is an amusing activity especially if one or two of the keywords are actually the answers to the teacher's questions.

A good linked skills activity keeps attention focused on the same ideas and language through the three steps, begins with a manageable activity, and has a productive step at steps 1 or 2 if step 3 is a productive activity.

Applying Linked Skills to Gapminder Data

Gapminder at http://www.gapminder.org is an excellent source of data for linked skills activities. A major strength of using visual data like that provided

in Gapminder is that the data remains the same across two or all three of the activities, thus enhancing the repetition effect of the linked skills activities.

Table 15.3 Linked skills and Gapminder

	First activity	Second activity	Third activity
1	The learners work in pairs to predict the answer to a given question (Speak)	They look at the Gapminder data and write a written report (Write)*	They change reports with other groups and read and critique their reports (Read)*
2	The learners listen to the teacher's description of a Gapminder graph while looking at the graph (Listen)*	Then working in small groups, they recreate the teacher's description (Speak)*	They then write a summary of the description (Write)*
3	Looking at a Gapminder graph, the learners write a description of certain year (Write)*	They then work in small groups to predict a given year beyond that (Speak)	They then listen to other group's predictions (Listen)
4	The learners read a description of a Gapminder graph without seeing the graph (Read)	They then listen to the description while looking at the graph (Listen)*	They then write a description of what they read and heard (Write)*
5	The learners read a description of a graph while looking for the same information in the graph (Read)*	The learners then give their own explanation of the graph (Speak)*	They write what they spoke about, without seeing the graph (Write)*

An asterisk* indicates that the learners can see the graph at this step.

Note that learners' output can be used as input (Example 1, activity 3; Example 3, activity 3). Note also that in Example 4, activities 1 and 2 involve getting the same input through different modes, and in Example 5, activities 2 and 3 involve giving the same output through different modes.

Linked skills activities are largely meaning-focused input and meaning-focused output activities, although the last activity in a well-planned series is likely to be a fluency development activity. There is also good reason for language-focused learning to be one of the steps in a linked skills activity.

What Should You Learn from This Chapter?

Linked skills activities are among the most useful language learning activities, largely because they set up very effective learning conditions. Each linked skills activity involves the successive use of three of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while learners are focusing on exactly the same material. Such activities are relatively easy to design, and teachers need to develop skill in designing them and in monitoring them.

Further Reading

To find out more about experience tasks read Nation, I.S.P. (1990). A system of tasks for language learning. In *Language Teaching Methodology for the Nineties*, Sarinee Anivan (ed.), RELC Anthology Series No 24, 51-63, available from Paul Nation's website under Publications.

Chapter 16 Reflections on Teaching English as a Second Language

Main Idea

The main idea in this chapter is that teaching English as a Second Language requires teaching skills that are not exactly the same as those needed for teaching English as a Foreign Language, even though many of the same techniques can be used. This is because language needs, motivation, opportunities for learning, and the relevance of cultural content are likely to differ in the two teaching situations.

ESL and EFL

In this book we have looked at teaching English as a second language, that is, teaching English in countries where English is widely used outside the classroom. In its companion book, *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?*, we looked at teaching English as a foreign language, that is teaching English in countries where English is not in common use outside the classroom. Table 16.1 summarises and compares the four major types of features.

Because of these striking differences, materials designed for ESL teaching may not be suitable for EFL classes, largely because ESL materials may be too uncontrolled with regard to language features because ESL learners may have much larger vocabulary sizes than EFL learners. Similarly, most EFL materials are likely to be unsuitable for ESL learners because they may be too controlled, but more importantly, they do not take account of the immediate language needs of the learners. However some EFL materials with careful vocabulary control like graded readers, speed reading courses and activity books, can play a very useful role in ESL courses for elementary and low intermediate learners and for fluency development, where easy material is required.

Table 16.1 Comparing the features of ESL and EFL teaching

Features	ESL	EFL
Language needs	There are strong and immediate language use needs outside the classroom.	Often the learning has no obvious purpose.
Motivation	Because of immediate and long term needs, motivation is typically very high.	Motivation depends heavily on the quality of the teaching, and courses may be compulsory, which is not usually good for motivation.
Opportunities for learning	A wide range of opportunities for learning exist outside the classroom.	Classroom activities may be the most significant source of input and language use.
Cultural content	There are immediate cultural needs.	Much of the language learning may not be affected by cultural needs.

Table 16.1 provides a rather negative picture of the circumstances for learning English as a foreign language, with all of the features in the ESL column contributing positively to language learning, and with those in the EFL column resembling a list of obstacles to be overcome. This of course is reflected in the general effectiveness of learning English as a second language compared with the uncertain results of learning English as a foreign language. Most ESL learners who spend a substantial amount of time in an English speaking country learn a lot of English, and those that do not are an interesting study in themselves, particularly with regard to the features listed in table 16.1.

The two books, *What Should Every ESL Teacher Know?* and *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?*, turned out to be much more different from each other than I expected them to be. There is no doubt that many of the techniques used in teaching English as a foreign language can be effective when teaching English as a second language, and that learning conditions like retrieval, creative use and repetition apply to both learning situations. The major differences between the two teaching situations involve the importance of taking account of learners' needs in the ESL situation, and providing a rich and balanced set of opportunities for language learning in the EFL situation. This underlines the importance of needs analysis in ESL teaching and the use of the four strands in EFL teaching.

EFL teaching of course is not all bad news. It is just that the challenges are greater. EFL teachers need to find ways of making the learning purposeful

and of maintaining the learners' motivation to learn the language. They also need to find ways of increasing the amount of meaningful input that the learners get, and extensive reading programs are very important way of doing this.

What is Missing from the ESL Book?

This book does not contain any chapters on language testing or on the teaching of grammar. This was not an oversight. The book is intended to contain the basic information that an ESL teacher needs. While it is useful for a teacher to know about language testing, language testing should not play a major role in most ESL courses. The exception to this is probably when English is taught for academic purposes, because often at the end of such a course there are tests which may determine learners' chances of entry into university. In many cases however these tests are international proficiency measures such as IELTS and TOEFL.

The teaching of vocabulary is clearly given priority over the teaching of grammar in this book. One reason for this is of course my own strong interest in vocabulary. Another important reason is that the research on the effectiveness of the teaching of grammar is generally not encouraging. It may be that the most useful grammar teaching for ESL learners occurs as feedback to writing or as a part of intensive reading.

It may be however that grammar teaching is important when the English of ESL learners is in a state of fossilisation. That is, when learners have reached a certain level of proficiency which is enough to fulfil their immediate needs, they may feel no motivation to improve their control of the grammatical features of the language even though many grammatical features are used incorrectly but are comprehensible. Input alone may not be enough to bring about change, and a direct focus on grammar may be necessary if change is desired. Such errors will differ according to the first language of the learners but may include subject verb agreement, pronoun forms, the use of formal *there*, tense usage, and the singular-plural and countable-uncountable distinctions. It would be interesting to know whether changing such fossilised errors requires grammatical knowledge or simply consciousness-raising.

Roles of the Teacher

Several times in the book I have referred to the roles of the teacher. The teacher's main jobs are (1) to plan a good course (the most important job) and organise learners' learning opportunities both in and outside the classroom, (2) to train learners in language learning strategies so that they are encouraged to be independent in their learning, (3) to test learners to make sure that they are making progress and that they know how well they are doing, and finally, the least important but still important job, (4) to teach.

❖ **Figure 16.1** The teacher's jobs

1. Planning 2. Training the learners 3. Testing 4. Teaching

In this ranked list of four jobs, I have put teaching as the least important job. This is largely because I have defined teaching narrowly as an activity where the teacher is the sole source of information, where attention is focused on the teacher, and where the teacher decides on the pace of the lesson. I do not include the other jobs of planning, organising, training, and testing as part of teaching, although they are very clearly important parts of the teacher's work.

I have played down the importance of teaching because I consider it is much better for learning if teachers plan and organise well and let the learners get on with the job. Research on the effectiveness of teaching generally shows that only a relatively small proportion of what is directly taught is actually learnt (for vocabulary it is much less than 50%). In addition, teaching can only cover a rather small proportion of what needs to be learnt. For example, learners need to know thousands of word families, but only a few hundred of these could ever be taught during class time.

There are other ways of learning besides teaching which are often more effective than teaching. These include learning through comprehensible input, learning through deliberate rote learning, learning through pushed output, and learning through fluency development. That is, learning needs to occur through the four strands, and teaching only makes up a small proportion of the language focused learning strand.

Teachers should teach, but they need to see teaching in perspective, as only

one part of a larger range of opportunities for learning.

Teachers should also be fully aware of the range of jobs that they need to perform as planner, as organiser, as trainer, as tester, and as teacher, and they need to be aware of the relative importance of each of these jobs.

Moving Forward

This book and its companion book, *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know??*, try to set out the basic information that a language teacher should know. There is much more to know about language teaching, and the last chapter of the EFL book suggests ways in which language teachers can develop their professional knowledge. In brief, this development can involve specialist study through doing a diploma or a Masters degree in language teaching or applied linguistics, through reading journals and books, through attending conferences and presenting at conferences, through participating in teacher organisations and teacher groups, and through carrying out reflection and investigation into language teaching and its effects.

Teaching English as a second language can have life-changing effects on the learners, and so it is important that ESL teachers should be well-informed and thoughtful practitioners. I hope that this book can make at least a small contribution to that professionalism.

Appendix 1 | Why Do Some Learners Have Problems with Reading?

Some learners may find reading difficult. There are many reasons for this and so it is important for teachers to be able to work out the causes of this difficulty. Reading problems may be caused by hearing or vision problems, and if these are suspected it is worth checking them out informally and then professionally. When looking at reading problems, it is best to find a quiet time when you can work with the learner individually to answer the following questions.

A procedure for finding reading problems

1 Can the learner read an easy text like this one aloud and talk about the ideas in the text?

> In the houses the older women and the mothers with young babies sit and talk about the day. The old men sit by themselves rolling leaves to make rope. Some families are already hard at work cooking the food which has been brought from the village gardens. Children are running backwards and forwards, carrying water. They get leaves to put the food in before it is cooked.

If they can do this easily, try a more difficult text. If they can read the more difficult text, they probably do not have reading problems.

2 What does the learner think the problem is?

i Ask the learner why they have difficulty with reading
ii Ask the learner if they can see well (Do they need glasses?), know enough vocabulary, have trouble with spelling, and do a lot of reading in their first language

3 Does the learner know enough vocabulary and grammar?

i Measure vocabulary size (Use the Vocabulary Size Test). If the learner knows over 2,000 words, they have enough vocabulary to read most graded readers.
ii Measure grammatical knowledge using a function word cloze test

> Some of _____ men get ready _____ take the boats out fishing. Through the village a noise calling the young men together _____ heard. They come _____ all parts of the village. Some go with their digging sticks _____ work in the village garden. Others work in _____ own gardens. Little children are too hungry to wait for the first meal of the day _____ they eat food left over from _____ day before. Women carry washing to the river at the far end _____ the village while the older girls go fishing or make cloth.

4 Can the learner read English words?

i A test of reading isolated words

For this test, a frequency ranked list is used to see at what frequency level the learner can recognise words with regular and irregular spellings. Isolated words are used so that only word recognition is being measured.

1st 1,000 Function words	1st 1,000 Content words	2nd 1,000	3rd 1,000	4th 1,000
the	tell	brilliant	fortnight	bonus
of	way	active	achieve	ache
one	fun	decision	effective	sued
is	needs	comment	link	tick
each	part	tiny	secretary	verse
they	home	attack	analyse	accountant
he	bring	private	review	clash
are	story	hobbies	construct	fleet
because	give	chew	motion	merchant
has	wait	rude	proceed	riot

Learners who can read most of the words in this test have a good sight vocabulary. That is, they can recognise these words and recall the spoken forms. If they cannot do this for the first two lists, they either have poor word recognition skills, have a very small vocabulary if they are not native speakers of English, or have eyesight problems.

ii Nonsense word test

Nonsense words are used to check that the learner has the word attack skills to read phonically rather than relying on memory of the form of the whole word. Tell the learners these are not real words.

Checked	Free	Initial clusters	Final clusters	Two syllables
jat	toop	frit	rans	arrane
lef	leep	plek	feld	leeing
ris	rine	spad	plats	tumple
fot	kane	clat	ront	campine
mun	fone	spran	lect	cussic

If the learners cannot read most of these, they have not developed decoding skills (phonics), and may need some special individual help with reading phonically.

iii Phonemic awareness test

Sound these words out for the learner without the learner seeing the word, and ask the learner to tell you what word it is. Use the sounds of the letters not their names. So say "pe eh te" for pet, not "pea ee tea".

pen, *dog*, *rub*, *sit*, *let*, *catch*, *shot*, *three*, *mine*, *so*

5 Can the learner read fluently? Use a speed reading text and time the reading. If the learner is reading under 100 words per minute, they need a speed reading course.

6 Can the learner read and criticise the text by talking about the accuracy of the ideas in the text and the clarity of the writing?

When doing such diagnosis, every measure should be given one-to-one, that is, not as a test given to the whole class, but with the teacher sitting next to the individual learner while the learner sits the test. This is to make sure that the learner is encouraged and kept on task during the testing, so that they truly show what they are capable of doing.

Appendix 2 | Maximising Vocabulary Learning from Message-Focused Input and Output

Ranked guidelines	Application	Teacher skills needed	Activities
Make sure there is plenty of input and output across the four skills including a strong fluency development strand.	50% of the course should be meaning-focused input (listening and reading) and output (speaking and writing), and 25% should be fluency development activities.	Understand the principle of the four strands Know about graded readers. Be able to motivate learners to do message-focused work. Know a range of fluency development activities across the four skills.	Extensive reading Listening to stories Speaking activities Speed reading 4/3/2 10 minute writing
Make sure that the input and output is at the right level for the learners.	For input, learners should have 98% coverage of the running words. For fluency development, there should be 100% coverage.	Understand the nature and importance of simplified material compared to unsimplified. Know how to measure learners' vocabulary size.	Using graded readers
Make use of both repetitive and recycling activities to ensure repetition, retrieval, and creative use.	Make use of linked skills activities, input becoming output, procedures, and narrowly focused activities.	Be able to design linked skills activities. Know how to use procedures like the pyramid procedure, expert groups/family groups, reporting back.	Linked skills activities Pyramid procedure Narrow reading Ranking, role play, and problem-solving activities
Link message-focused activities to language-focused learning, but make sure that the language-focused learning is only 25% of a course and is not counted in the message-focused time.	Train learners in the use of word cards. Encourage learners to reflect on the new language met during an activity. Use some direct teaching and exercises.	Know how to train learners to use word cards. Understand how to find the learning burden of a word. Use some vocabulary-focused communication activities.	Word cards Word box Quickly providing the meaning of a word
Use some tasks that are supported by the teacher, peers or reference resources.	Use *Read with the resources* on Tom Cobb's website. Include discussion to provide opportunities for negotiation. Use peer work. Use dictionaries, glossaries, and concordances.	Be familiar with the activities on Tom Cobb's website (www.lextutor.ca). Know how to add a discussion activity to a listening, reading, or writing task.	Read with resources Buzz groups

Appendix 3 | A Culture Test

This test can be used as a starting point for discussion. The questions are divided into categories, including a category on academic culture. All the questions in one category could be used in one discussion session. The answers are given at the end of the test along with some reasons for the answer.

Being a guest

1 If someone invites you to their home for tea, you should

(a) be ready to eat a meal
(b) expect to drink tea and eat cakes
(c) put your money in your shoe
(d) expect to be able to choose tea or coffee

2 If you are invited to be at someone's place for a meal at 8 o'clock, you should arrive there

(a) at 8 o'clock
(b) at 5 minutes to 8
(c) at 10 past 8
(d) at half past 8

3 When you finish the meal, you should

(a) leave a little food on the plate
(b) say to the woman in the house "You are an excellent cook"
(c) say "That was delicious"
(d) take some more to show you enjoyed it

4 You are at someone's place and they say "Would you like a cup of tea?" You should say

(a) "Yes, please"
(b) "Are you going to have one?"
(c) "What kind of tea?"
(d) "I don't like tea. I'd prefer coffee."

5 To show that you have finished eating a meal, put your knife and fork like this.

(a)  with the prongs of the fork facing up

(b) 

(c) 

(d)  with the prongs of the fork facing down

Moving around

6 You are on a bus and there are no empty seats. A seven year old child gets on. You should
   (a) give your seat to the child
   (b) squeeze over to let the child sit next to you
   (c) put the child on your knee
   (d) do nothing

7 You accidentally stood on someone's foot. You should
   (a) pretend it did not happen
   (b) say "Sorry"
   (c) say "Did that hurt?"
   (d) smile and move quickly away

8 You are at someone's house and you want to go to the toilet. You should
   (a) go looking for it
   (b) say "I want to wash my hands."
   (c) say "Where is the little room?"
   (d) say "Can I use your toilet?"

9 You pay the bus driver for a ticket. The driver gives you the ticket. You
   (a) say nothing
   (b) say "Thank you."
   (c) nod to the driver
   (d) count the change carefully

Meeting people

10 You want to visit some friends at their house. You know them well. You should
   (a) just visit them without warning them
   (b) telephone them to tell them you are on your way
   (c) telephone them to ask if it is O.K. for you to come now
   (d) arrange a visit several days before the time

11 You have just been introduced to a person of the opposite sex. You should
   (a) shake their hand
   (b) kiss them on the lips
   (c) kiss them on the cheek
   (d) smile at them

12 You have a written invitation to a party which has the words *Bring a plate* on it. You should
   (a) bring a plate and a knife and fork
   (b) only bring a plate
   (c) bring some food to share
   (d) bring a friend

13 You are at a party and you want to begin a conversation with someone sitting next to you. You should say

(a) "What job do you do?"
(b) "Are you married?"
(c) "Where do you live?"
(d) "It's a nice party"

14 A friend at work says to you "Let's go for a drink after work". Who will pay?

(a) your friend will because he\she suggested it
(b) you will each pay for your own drink
(c) you will take turns for paying for each round of drinks
(d) the oldest person will pay

15 You are in the supermarket and while walking around with your trolley you meet a New Zealand friend. You say hello and talk a little bit. Then you move on. Then a few minutes later you pass each other again. You should

(a) pretend you do not see your friend
(b) just smile and say nothing
(c) say hello and talk a bit more
(d) nod or smile to your friend and go in the same direction as your friend to avoid meeting again

Language

16 *B.Y.O.* on an advertisement or sign for a restaurant means

(a) you can buy wine or other alcoholic drinks at the restaurant
(b) you can buy wine but no other alcoholic drinks at the restaurant
(c) you can bring alcoholic drink that you have bought somewhere else to the restaurant
(d) you cannot buy alcohol at the restaurant or bring it to the restaurant

17 When a New Zealander says "Hang on a minute!", you should

(a) hold him or her tightly
(b) wait patiently
(c) hold on to the nearest object
(d) say "No thank you"

18 *Spuds* are

(a) baby flowers
(b) holes in your socks
(c) potatoes
(d) rude noises

19 If someone says "Cut it out!", you should

(a) stop what you are doing
(b) reach for a knife
(c) consider seeing a doctor
(d) take something from your friend

20 *A chook* is

(a) an international student
(b) a black singlet
(c) a rude noise
(d) a chicken

21 *A dairy* is

(a) a place to buy milk
(b) a small shop that sells many things
(c) a place where cows are milked each day
(d) a large shed for cows to stay in

22 *Hokey-pokey* is

(a) a popular children's song
(b) the most popular flavour of ice cream in New Zealand
(c) a popular TV programme
(d) a drunken dance

Getting away from people

23 You have just had an evening meal in someone's house. When should you leave?

(a) just after the meal has been eaten
(b) after coffee or tea has been served
(c) when the host says "Thank you for coming"
(d) when you feel tired

24 A classmate asks you to go out with them. If you don't want to, you should

(a) agree just to be polite
(b) say "I'd like to, but I'm not free at that time"
(c) say "I'm sorry, but I don't think so"
(d) say "I'll have to think about it"

Getting things done

25 In the place where you work, there is a person whose job is to fix problems you have with the computer. You had a problem and asked for help, but nothing was done. What should you do next?

(a) try to find someone else to fix the problem for you
(b) apologise to the person for bothering them and say that you have tried to solve the problem but you cannot find what is wrong
(c) go to the person and say very firmly that you need the problem solved as soon as possible
(d) write a note to that person's boss complaining of the lack of help

26 You have just had a meal in a restaurant and the waiter was very efficient and friendly. You should

(a) thank the waiter before leaving
(b) speak highly of the waiter to the owner
(c) do nothing because it is part of the normal service
(d) leave the waiter a tip

Academic culture

27 You think that one of your teachers has been an especially good teacher and you want to show your respect and appreciation. It is the end of the last class and although you have to sit the formal exam for the course, you will probably not have a chance to see her again. What will you do?

(a) wait until after the assessment is completed and post her a gift
(b) give her a gift after the class of a souvenir from your home country
(c) invite the lecturer to have a meal with your family
(d) go up to her after the lesson and say how much you enjoyed the course

28 During a lecture, the lecturer raised some points that you did not understand. You think that these are important bits of information. What will you do?

(a) ask the lecturer about them during the class
(b) ask a classmate about them after the class
(c) make an appointment with the lecturer to ask about the points
(d) immediately the class ends, ask the lecturer

29 A friend has not been able to complete their assignment for a course on time and it is due tomorrow. You are doing well in the course and have completed your assignment. Your friend asks to borrow a copy of your assignment to have a look at it. What will you do?

(a) say sorry but you cannot because that would get you into trouble
(b) say okay and give them a copy
(c) say they can look at a hard copy of yours briefly while you are there and then take it back
(d) say you can give your friend spoken advice that you cannot give them a copy of the assignment

30 Your teacher has written the text for your course. When preparing your assignment for the course, you found some errors of fact in the text. These errors relate to the assignment. What will you do regarding these errors.

(a) don't mention them in your assignment
(b) point out the errors in your assignment providing strong supporting evidence
(c) discuss the errors with the teacher before completing your assignment
(d) briefly mention the errors but don't make a big issue of them

31 Some of your classmates meet regularly to discuss the content covered in the course and get the ideas in the course clear. They have asked you to join the group. What will you do?

(a) say no because you don't have much to offer the group
(b) say no because this could result in plagiarism
(c) join the group and play an active part in it
(d) join the group but don't make written notes of the discussion

Answers to the Culture Test

Being a guest

1 (a)

tea = a cup of tea. This is not always so however, as some people also use tea to refer to the evening meal. The best clue is whether the time you arranged to meet is near a meal time.

2 (c)

I don't know the reason for this but it is common.

3 (c)

The answer 3b is sexist, because all or part of the meal may have been cooked by the husband.

4 (b)

4a and 4d are expected in some Asian countries. Leaving food on your plate may be seen as wasteful. If the meal was one where you put your food on your own plate, going back for more if there is plenty left is OK.

5 (b)

5a and 5d signal that you have not finished eating yet.

6 (d)

(6b is probably OK) Children traveling on a student bus pass are expected to give their seats to adults.

7 (b)

Smiling apologetically is OK too but not as good as apologising.

8 (d)

Saying 8b or 8c might be misunderstood. Going looking for it may lead you to places you should not go.

9 (b)

Saying "Thank you" is the politest, but 9a and 9c are OK.

Meeting people

10 (c)

The closer the relationship, the less you need to warn them, 11a (11d is OK too), 12c Here "a plate means "a plate of food". Drink may also be acceptable instead of food.

13 (d)

14 (c)

or perhaps b

15 (b)

(15d commonly happens)

Language

16 (c)

17 (b)

18 (c)

Holes in your socks is also a correct answer. When your feet are in your socks, the holes look like potatoes.

19 (a)

20 (d)

21 (b)

22 (b)

Hokey-pokey is basically a heated mixture of golden syrup and soda which makes it puff up and become crisp. Delicious!

Getting away from people

23 (b)

Hot drinks usually signal that it is getting near the end of the evening. If the host says thanks for coming and you are not on your way home, you should be.

24 (c)

It is good to be polite, but if you do not give a clear signal, you might be asked again.

Getting things done

25 (b)

Personal relationships are important in gaining cooperation. 25c & 25d would probably result in less cooperation in the future, because the person would feel you had not treated them well.

26 (a), (b), (d)

Tipping is still not common in some Western countries, and when it is done, needs to be done tactfully. Praising someone to the boss or manager is usually a good idea.

Academic culture

27 (d)

In some Western countries gifts can be an embarrassment and can complicate the teacher-student relationship. They should definitely not be given before exams as they may be seen as a form of bribery.

28 (a)

It is likely that the difficult points were also not understood by others, so asking about them during class would have been helpful to others as well as yourself. Asking after the class or making a special appointment can be seen as wasting the lecturer's time. Asking a classmate is a good idea but you run the risk of getting no information or the wrong information.

29 (d)

If you give your assignment to your friend, they could submit it as their own assignment or use big parts of it. If this was found out by the marker, you would have to prove that it was really your work. The chances that some of your work will appear in your friend's assignment is high, so it is not worth the risk.

30 (b)

A good teacher would be grateful for errors being pointed out. It also shows that you are working carefully and thoroughly.

31 (c)

In higher education you should learn from your teachers, from what others have written, from your classmates, and from your own thought and reflection. Working together on clarifying ideas is not plagiarism.

The questions are intended as a basis for discussion and comparison with L1 behaviour. Often it is easy enough to see a general principle behind the behaviour, such as it generally being good to express your thanks. For some aspects of behaviour, like shaking hands, it is largely custom that decides what you should do.

Appendix 4 | EFL Table of Contents

The book *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?* is published by Compass publishing in Seoul, Korea. It can be bought as an electronic or hard copy.

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