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B E L I A N U M

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TEACHING ENGLISH

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"A teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge, and wisdom in pupils."

Ever Garrison

ABOUT THE BOOK

This book offers a range of answers to the question how to teach English as a foreign language. The answers are directed to trainees with some knowledge of general pedagogy, psychology, general methodology and developmental psychology. In other words it is a guide to methodology – to what might work in the English classroom.

The book will provide trainees with elementary guidelines how to approach presenting and practising basic areas of English as a foreign language in primary and secondary schools. However, it is not the source about the right and only way to teach. There does not exist anything such as an ideal teaching methodology and every teacher should be aware of as many options, approaches and techniques as possible.

The book comprises eight units each focusing on a different area of ELT methodology. Each unit enables trainees to get familiar with basic approaches and techniques of presenting and practising the target area such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, receptive and productive skills and culture. Apart from general theoretical guidelines each unit offers example tasks and activities from current English course books, review questions which are linked to essential points in the text. Recommended literature provides trainees with an opportunity for self-study and deeper understanding of the theoretical base.

We hope trainees will integrate the knowledge into their teaching and the book will become "a spring board" on the path to becoming excellent teachers of English.

Eva Homolová

UNIT 1 TEACHING VOCABULARY

In this unit you will:

- differentiate between receptive and productive vocabulary
- learn aspects of words
- get familiar with techniques for presenting the meaning, form, grammar and use of a word
- get familiar with types of exercises for vocabulary practice

Keywords: receptive and productive vocabulary, aspects of the word, presentation techniques, translation, use and grammar of words

1.1 Importance of vocabulary

The language system is complex and learners need to be guided through vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

Vocabulary is of great importance for mastering English. It is obvious that one cannot communicate effectively without knowing a certain amount of words (lexical items)[1].

In each language there is **receptive vocabulary** – words that we understand in reading and listening but we may never produce in speaking or writing. **Productive vocabulary** can be defined as words that we frequently and correctly use in communication. Obviously, most people's receptive vocabulary is much bigger than their productive vocabulary. Thus the language teacher has to consider the fact that not every English word a learner encounters in the lesson will necessarily become a part of their productive vocabulary. In the process of learning English, words move from one group to another.

Knowing a word is far more than just being able to translate it into one's mother tongue.

When the teacher presents a new lexical item, s/he has to present the following aspects:

- Form – how a word is spelt and how it is pronounced
- Meaning – what the word means (in different contexts)

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[1] Lexical item can be a single word, a phrasal verb (*put up*), a word phrase e.g. never mind, two or more words that go together to make one meaning (*a litter bin, a paper clip*).

- Use – how the word is used; in what situations and contexts, collocations (which words it collocates with, e.g. make decisions /take decisions
- Grammar – it is important for the learner to know whether it is a regular/irregular verb, countable/uncountable noun, regular/irregular plural etc.

The selection of vocabulary for teaching is based on the following criteria:

Frequency: in everyday communication some words are used more often than others, e.g. *drink, go* compared to *diminish, leash*

Coverage: some words have just one meaning (e.g. a *wig*) while others cover more meanings (e.g. *head*)

According to Gower (1995), we should teach:

- The "*easy*" words before the "*difficult*";
- The concrete before the abstract;
- The more frequent before the unknown;
- The most generative (all-purpose) before those that have a more restricted use.

1.2 Teaching the form of a word

All aspects mentioned above should be presented together. As far as the form of English words is concerned, spelling and pronunciation are not easy for learners as there is no consistent one-to-one relationship between the sound and the grapheme. In English there are more phonemes than graphemes.

In the first step the teacher should pronounce the word clearly several times, later learners repeat after him/her in chorus and individually. The teacher should pay more attention to words with sounds that do not exist in Slovak.

In the second step the teacher writes the word on the blackboard, learners copy it and later use controlled and free writing exercises or games.

Some words are similar in spelling but differ in pronunciation e.g. *thought, tough, through etc.*

1.3 Techniques for presenting the meaning of a word

Here are several techniques for presenting the meaning of a word. The choice depends on the age/level of learners, the importance of a word, whether the word is concrete (*a pen*) or abstract (*poverty*), the time available in the lesson and the context in which it occurs. Several authors (Hadfield 2012, Harmer 2009, Ur 2005) stress the importance

of presenting words in context e.g. full sentence examples, dialogues, or texts for developing reading/listening comprehension.

Many words have different meanings when they are used in different situations e.g.

- *Giving examples*: furniture = bed, table, armchair, sofa
- *Synonyms*: difficult – hard/demanding; angry/irritated
- *Antonyms*: deep/shallow, nice/ugly, clean/dirty
- *Translation*: should be used with more difficult, abstract and ambiguous words
- *Visual representation*: pictures, drawings or real objects:
- *Mime, gesture*: verbs such as walk, drink, tiptoe
- Definition/explanation: *custom (n.) = a common practice; the way people do things year after year*
- Giving examples: *vehicle= car, van, ambulance, bus, taxi*
- Scale: boiling- hot-warm-cool-cold-freezing

Task 1

Analyse one unit of any course book and find out which techniques are used to present the meaning of new words. Make a list of tem and give examples of new words.

-
-
-
-
-
-
-

After presenting the meaning of a word the teacher asks **concept questions**. The presented word should be used in questions.

Example (Gower, 1995, p. 150)

The teacher has presented the word "*building*"

Examples of concept questions:

- *Is our school a building?*
- *What are buildings made of?*

- *Can you give me examples of other buildings?*
- *Do animals build buildings?*

Task 2

Make a list of three nouns, three adjectives and three verbs the meaning of which can be presented through mime/gesture. Try it out on your colleague.

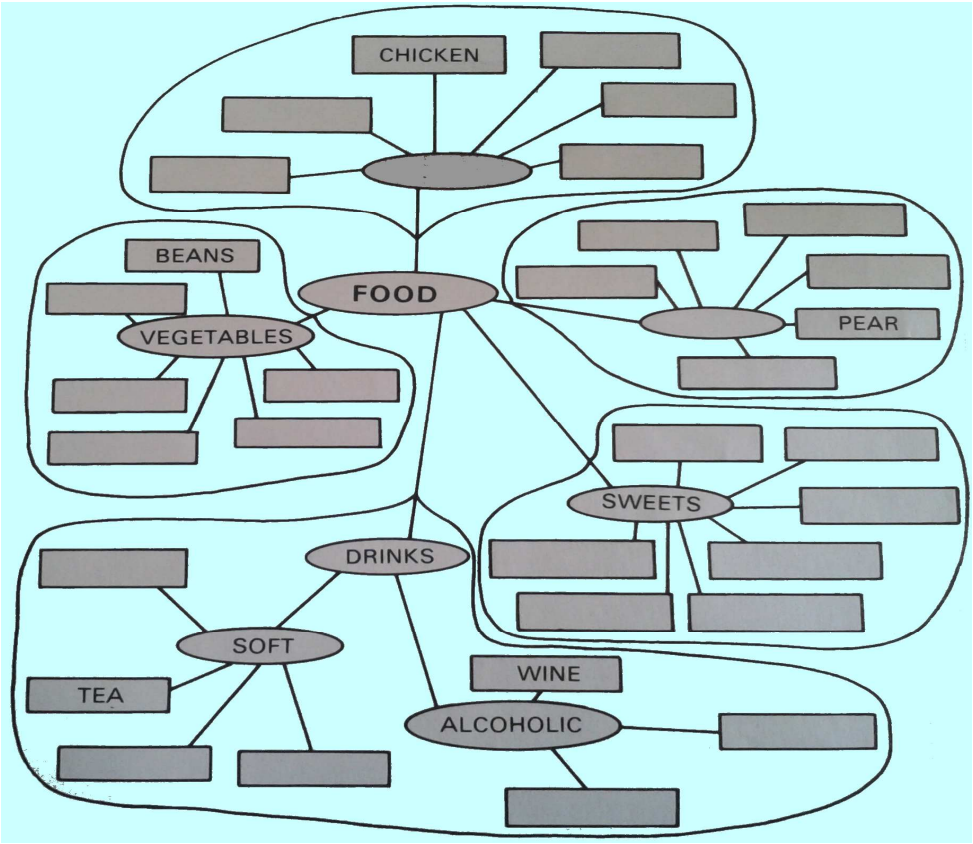
NOUNS			
ADJECTIVES			
VERBS			

To become a communicatively competent user of English, learners need to develop study skills that help them to record, remember and recall new vocabulary items.

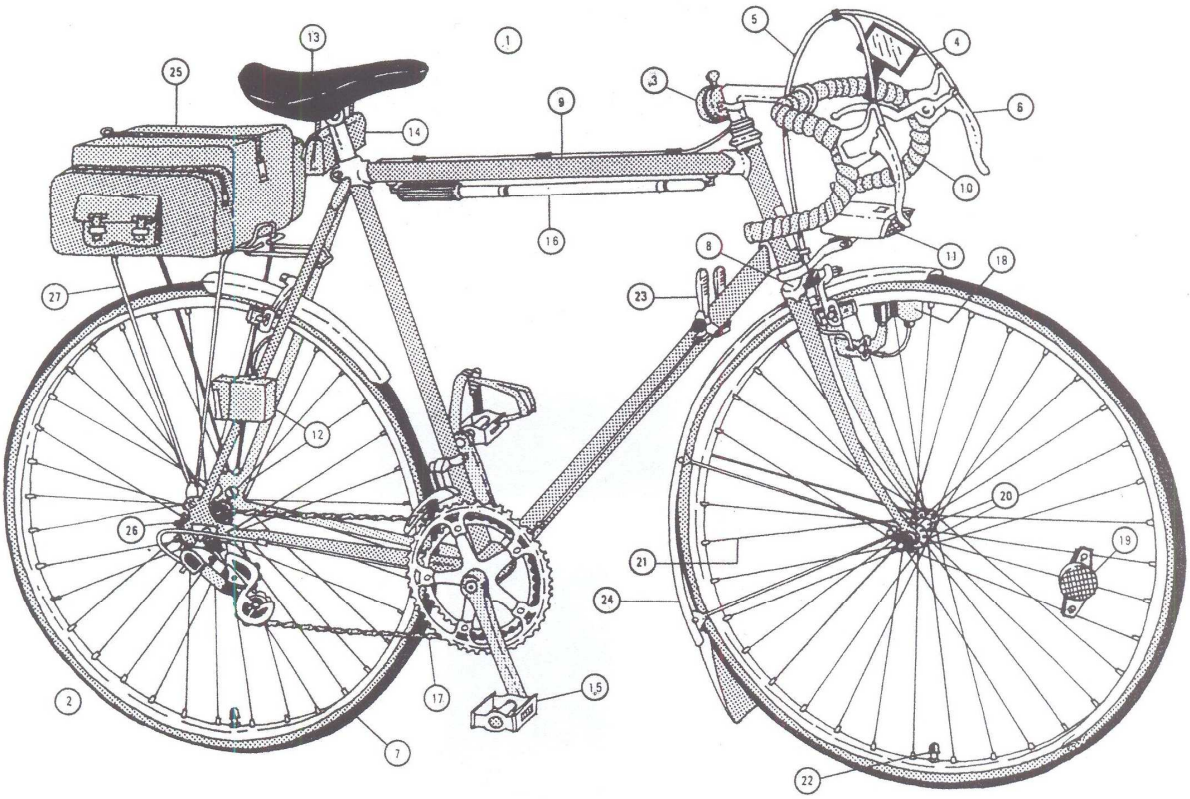
It is useful if learners create a system of recording new items in their vocabulary notebooks. They can also use small cards with a word on one side and its meaning on the other side. Learners can record either a translation or a definition and an example sentence with the new word. The method they choose depends strongly on their preferred learning style (visual style, auditory style etc.…) and the learning strategies they employ.

The most common way of three/column method (word/pronunciation/translation) can be replaced by other possibilities: organizing words according to their meaning e.g. w*ords for description / movement, feelings) or by topic (food, health) or, word class (work, worker, working)* (Straková, 2005).

It is advisable for the teacher to present new words in **lexical sets/word fields** and for learners to keep records of them. Lexical sets are words recorded in groups related by topic with relationship represented visually:



Other useful means include mind maps and labelled pictures.



To make the process of memorization easier the teacher can use the following ideas (Bowen, 1994):

- Association with another word in L1: sister/sestra, three/tri; banana/banán
- Association with subjective positive/negative feelings, e.g. meals we like/dislike, sports etc.
- Some words are memorable in and of themselves, e.g. traffic jam, jeopardize, black and white.
- Association with a mental image or picture
- Any visual support (pictures, drawings, use of coloured pencils).
- Association with a situation, topic or story. The context in which a word is used makes remembering it easier, e.g. a funny story, a joke, a song, etc.

1.4 Practicing and recycling vocabulary

Remembering and recalling new vocabulary is a long process. Even if learners can remember and use new items by the end of a lesson, they may have forgotten them by the end of the week. There are several types of exercises that can be used to practice and consolidate vocabulary. They can be both oral and written.

Examples:

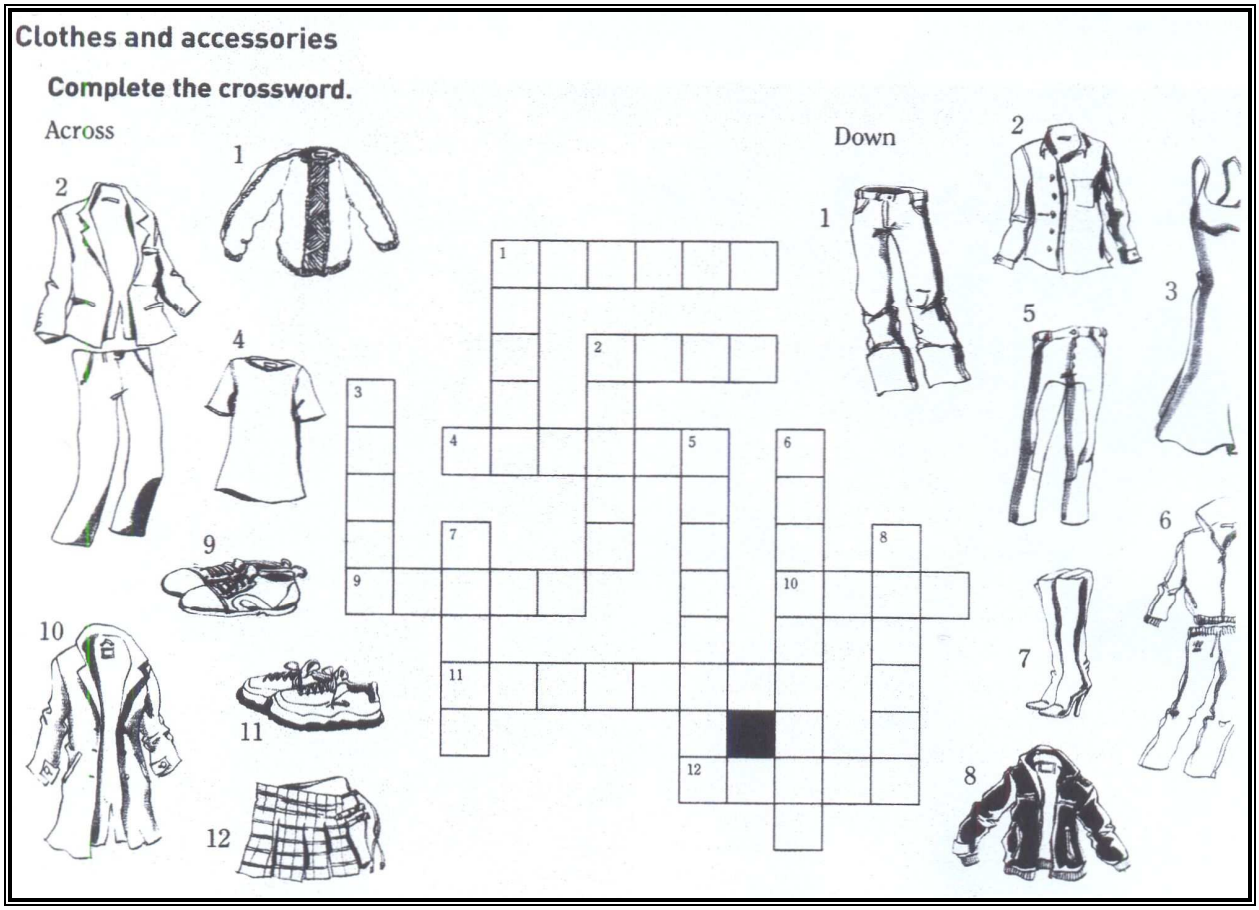
Write following words into columns: *armchair, basin, bath, bedside table, bookshelves, carpet, coffee machine, computer, cooker, cutlery, mirror, desk, dishwasher, oven, pot, sink, soap, sofa, tap, towel, toothpaste, wardrobe, washing machine.*

KITCHEN	BATHROOM	LIVING ROOM	STUDY	BEDROOM

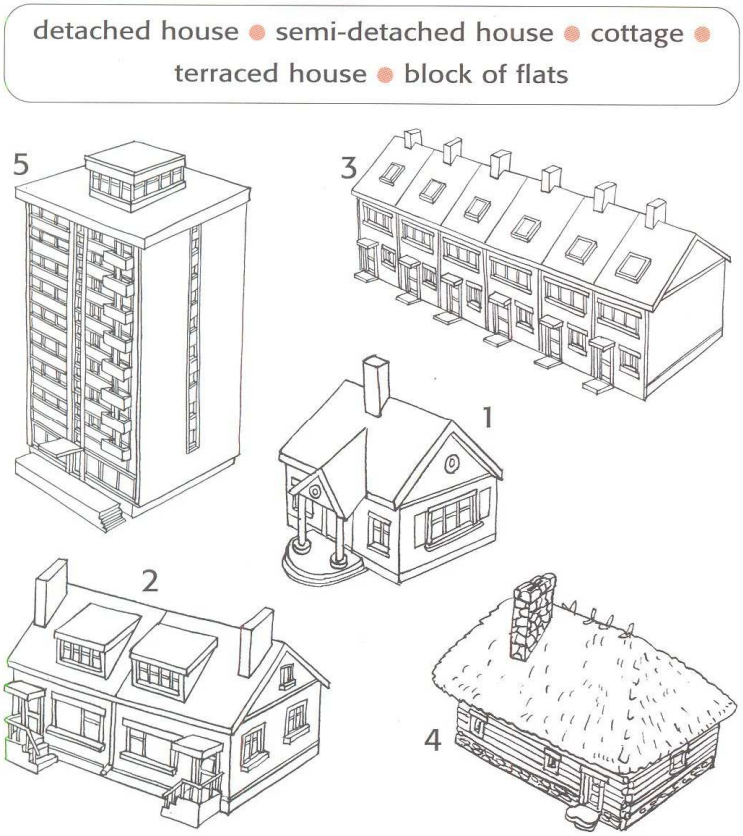
Look at the picture. Circle the correct words to complete the description.

Look at her! Where's she going, do you think? She's got a nice grey[1] *shirt / coat* with a[2] *belt / necklace*. It looks good with her[3] *jumper / jacket* and[4] *skirt / trousers*. I like her[5] *handbag / ring*, too. And look at that[6] *scarf / stud* - it's very long and it looks warm. Do you like her[7] *boots / trainers*? I like them but I don't think I like the colour.

(from *For Real elementary*, p. 162)



(from *For Real*, p. 162)



(from *Nová maturita z angličtiny*, p.16)

accommodation • ads • appliances • block • ground floor • holiday • home • homeless • housework • rent • spacious • tenants • upstairs

1. There was nobody at _____ when I came from work.
2. We usually spend summer in our _____ home on the lake. I'm getting bored with it.
3. Many _____ people end up sleeping in parks or at abandoned buildings.
4. There's a shortage of cheap _____ for students in Prague.
5. What's the _____ on that flat? Is it very expensive?
6. My flat is in a modern _____ in a residential area with good transport facilities.
7. I checked the classified _____ in the local newspapers before I found a suitable room to rent.
8. My grandparents live on the _____, while I and my parents live on the first floor.
9. We have a guest room _____ in the attic. It has a beautiful view on the village.
10. I hate doing _____. I think washing the dishes is the worst.
11. The Smith family consists of seven people; that's why they are looking for a _____ house.
12. What household _____ have you got in your new flat?
13. All the _____ are unhappy about the increase in monthly rents.

! Careful ! You can ***rent*** or ***hire a car*** and you can ***rent a flat*** but you cannot ***hire a flat***. You can also ***have a flat for rent*** or ***to let*** (= k pronajmutí).

(from *Nová maturita z angličtiny*, p.16)

Example 6

Write the name of each food under the word that best describes it.

bread, chilli, cranberry, grapefruit, lime, potato, salsa, sausage, rice, pasta, tomato, meat

BITTER	BLAND	SPICY

1 move	a at home
2 pay	b the dishes
3 share	c the table
4 make	d your bedroom
5 feel	e a deposit
6 lay	f kitchen facilities
7 wash	g the bed
8 tidy	h house

1 .... 2 .... 3 .... 4 .... 5 ....

6 .... 7 .... 8 ....

(from *Nová maturita z angličtiny*, p. 16)

1.5 Dictionary work

One of the skills language learners benefit from is effective work with various dictionaries. The teacher should provide learners with instructions on how to use dictionaries, e.g. what kind of information is included in the word entry. There are different kinds of dictionaries for different age groups and levels: picture dictionaries, monolingual, bilingual, pronunciation, etymological etc. Our learners most often use visual, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. Apart from print dictionaries, there are many on-line and off-line electronic dictionaries of varying size and quality. Learners are eager to use electronic media which offer features such as sound for practicing pronunciation.

1.5.1 What is a learner's dictionary?

What is a learner's dictionary?

The monolingual learner's dictionary is increasingly being recognized as a valuable resource in the language classroom because of the advantages it offers over other types of dictionary.

(from the Oxford Elementary Learner's Dictionary)

poultry /ˈpəʊltri/ *noun* (plural) birds that people keep on farms for their eggs or their meat. Hens, ducks and geese are poultry.

(from the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary)

☆**information** /ˌɪnfəˈmeɪʃn/ *noun* [U] **information (on/about sb/sth)** knowledge or facts: *For further information please send for our fact sheet.* ○ *Can you give me some information about evening classes in Italian, please?* ○ *The information is fed into the computer and the results are printed out in the form of a graph.* ☛ The word **information** is uncountable so you CANNOT say: *I need an information.* You can, however, talk about **a bit** or **piece** of information

It differs from dictionaries for native speakers

- in the simplicity of its definitions, which avoid difficult words which would cause problems for foreign learners
- in the amount of information it gives on, for example, grammar, constructions and possible problem areas for learners

(from the Advanced Learner's Dictionary)

casual /ˈkæʒuəl/ *adj* **1** [esp attrib] happening by chance: *a casual encounter/meeting/visit.* **2(a)** [usu attrib] made or done without much care or thought: *a casual remark* ○ *a casual invitation.* **(b)** (*derog*) showing too little concern or interest; IRRESPONSIBLE: *the company's casual attitude to office security.* **(c)** [usu attrib] not careful or thorough; not serious: *a casual inspection* ○ *a casual glance at a book* ○ *This may not be obvious to the casual observer.* **3** (of clothes) not formal: *a casual short-sleeved shirt.* **4** [attrib] not permanent or regular: *students looking for casual work during the holidays* ○ *a casual labourer* ○ *casual sex* (ie not involving a lasting relationship). **5** [attrib] slight; SUPERFICIAL(3a): *a casual acquaintance.*

It differs from bilingual dictionaries because it avoids a one-to-one equivalent which may not always be appropriate. It concentrates on bringing the reader to an understanding of the meaning of the word and its typical context and collocational pattern through definition and examples.

Introducing a monolingual dictionary to learners:

1. Choose the right level in terms of the language of definitions and examples.
2. Consider what dictionary skills learners already have. Some preparatory work is necessary to help them get the most out of the dictionary.
3. Devise some tasks and games through which learners can explore the way in which they can make use of it.
4. Get them familiarize with abbreviations.

The teacher needs to explain the dangers of using a bilingual dictionary without a deeper study of the word entry.

Examples of some mistakes resulting from improper use of a bilingual dictionary:

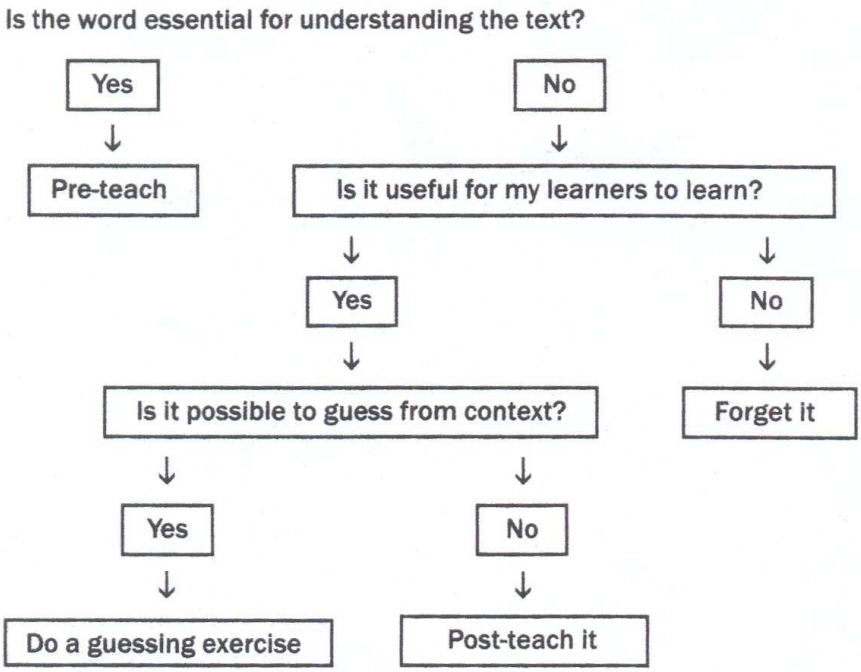
Guiney pig breast – morčacie prsia (jedálny lístok)

Expensive Mary – Drahá Mária (oslovenie v liste)

Director of photography – riaditeľ fotografie (titulky k filmu)

Vocabulary is the basis of English and of communication as well. But knowing a language is more than knowing a long list of words. The teacher should help learners to discover ways of storing, retrieving, using and enlarging their vocabulary bank.

Here is a diagram summarizing what to do with new vocabulary in texts.



(from *Hadfield*, p. 94)

Task 3

Suggest ways in which learners can keep their own vocabulary records.

Task 4

Here is a list of memory strategies. Tick those which are suitable for young learners. Do you use any of them?

Table 1 Memory strategies

Grouping	
Semantic mapping	
Using mechanical techniques	
Structures reviewing	
Placing new words into a context	
Using keywords	
Representing sounds in memory	
Associating	
Using imagery	
Using TPR	

(*Oxford*, 1990)

Task 5

How can you check that a learner has really understood the meaning of a new vocabulary item? How useful is the question “Do you understand?”

Review questions

Which techniques can be employed in the process of remembering and recalling new vocabulary?

What is the form of a word?

Which techniques of presenting meaning of a word are suitable for young learners? What about for teenagers, and adults?

Summary

The teaching and learning of vocabulary has always been a central aspect of English language teaching. New vocabulary items should be presented in a meaningful context (dialogues, reading passages), not in isolation. The teacher should present them in lexical sets or word fields. Obviously, the more techniques that are used in presentation and practice, the easier it will be for learners remember them and recall. It is advisable for the teacher to help learners to devise their own system or strategies for reviewing and learning vocabulary.

Further reading:

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UNIT 2 TEACHING GRAMMAR

In this unit you will:

- revise the differences between structures and functions
- learn what aspects of grammar the teacher has to present
- understand the difference between performance and competence
- learn the advantages and disadvantages of the deductive and inductive approach
- see examples of different tasks and activities for grammar practice

Keywords: grammar structures, grammar functions, sentences, grammar rules, inductive/deductive approach

2.1 Importance of grammar in communication

At a very basic level, words on their own are often enough to communicate with someone else e.g. *Juice, please*. However, if we want to express a more complex meaning, words are not enough.

Grammar is a description of the language system – it shows users of the language how we order words in sentences, how we combine them and how we change the form of words to change their meaning. We use grammar to communicate our thoughts more effectively and precisely with others.

Our the history of ELT the approach to teaching grammar has changed significantly. While the Grammar-Translation Method took grammar as the starting point of teaching and learning, the Direct Method prioritised oral skills and reflected explicit grammar teaching. The Audio-lingual Method was even stricter in its rejection of grammar teaching. Habit formation was a process in which the application of rules had no place (Thornbury, 2003).

Krashen's Natural Approach exposed learners to comprehensible input without grammar rule-giving, using a similar process to how we acquire the grammar of our mother tongue.

In communicative language teaching grammar is one of the main components, but the primary focus is on grammar functions.[2]

To communicate effectively in English the learner needs a degree of proficiency in two separate but complementary skills, which we can refer to as competence and performance.

Competence is the speaker's knowledge of the forms and meanings that exist in grammar, and a theoretical knowledge of how to use them. In other words, these are the rules of grammar. Competence will help learners to monitor their production and to do tasks that are widely used in the English language classroom (e.g. controlled grammar exercises).

Performance, on the other hand, refers to the ability to use grammar correctly and appropriately in real-life situations when the learner is exposed to pressures that accompany communication outside the classroom. There is often a gap between competence and performance and the latter does not follow automatically from the former, but needs to be developed.

In general, it is possible to state that learners in the lesson need to:

- Notice a grammar item when it is being used e.g. in texts for reading or listening (roughly tuned input). The more time learners are exposed to examples with particular grammar the more likely the grammar makes sense to them. A meaningful context is the most suitable starting point for teaching grammar.
- Understand the form of the item (the endings, auxiliary verbs, word order etc.)

Countable nouns

Most nouns in English are countable. They have a singular and a plural form.

Regular forms		
Singular	**Plural**	**Spelling**
a place	two places	Add *s*.
a church	three churches	Add es after *ch, sh, s, x*.
a city	ten cities	Add ies after a consonant + *y*.
a leaf	ten thousand leaves	Add ves after vowel + *f*

Irregular forms	
Singular	**Plural**
A person	Two people
A child	Two children
A man	Two men
A woman	Two women
A foot	Two feet
A tooth	Two teeth

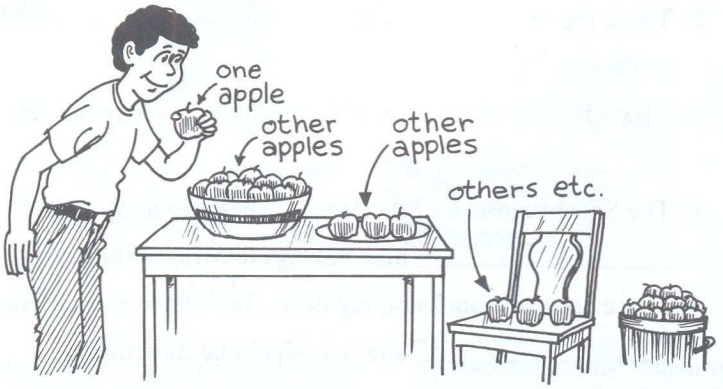
(from *New Inside Out*, p. 128)

[2] See Homolová, E. Methodology of Teaching English 1, p.14-15

- Understand the meaning – what the structure means, what its function is, how it is used, what the user can do with it (e.g. ask for permission; warn sb; express what will happen in the future, etc.). The meaning can also be illustrated visually.

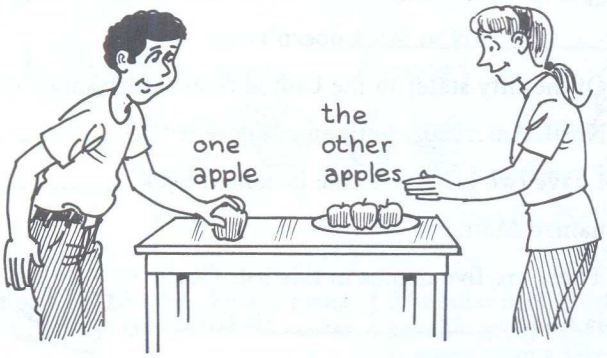
PLURAL FORMS OF *OTHER: OTHER(S)* vs. *THE OTHER(S)*

OTHER(S)



There are many apples in Paul's kitchen. Paul is holding one apple. (a) There are ***other*** *apples* in a bowl. (adjective + noun) (b) There are ***other*** *ones* on a plate. (adjective + ones) (c) There are ***others*** on a chair. (pronoun)	***Other(s)*** (without ***the***) means "several more out of a group of similar items, several in addition to the one(s) I've already talked about." The adjective ***other*** (without an ***-s***) can be used with a plural noun (e.g., *apples*) or with the word *ones*. ***Others*** (with an ***-s***) is a plural **pronoun**; it is not used with a noun. In (c): ***others*** = ***other apples***.

THE OTHER(S)



There are four apples on the table. Paul is going to take one of them. (d) Sara is going to take ***the other*** *apples*. (adjective + noun) (e) She is going to take ***the other*** *ones*. (adjective + *ones*) (f) She is going to take ***the others***. (pronoun)	***The other(s)*** means "the last ones in a specific group, the remains from a given number of similar items." ***The other*** (without an ***-s***) can be used as an adjective in front of a noun or the word *ones*, as in (d) and (e). ***The others*** (with an ***-s***) is a plural **pronoun**; it is not used with a noun. In (f): ***the others*** = ***the other apples***.

(from *Fundamentals of English Grammar*, p. 86)

can, **could**, **may**: permission etc

We use ***can*** to **ask for** and **give permission**, and ***cannot/can't*** to **refuse** it.

*'**Can** I ask you a question?' 'Yes, of course you **can**.'*
*I'm sorry, you **can't** come in here.*

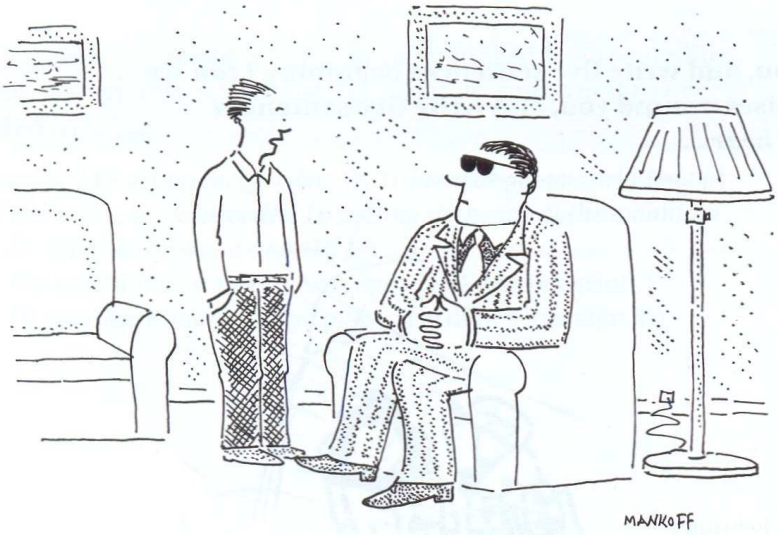
We also use *could* to ask for permission; it is more polite.
***Could** I have a look at your newspaper?*

May is used in the same way. It is more formal and less common.
***May** I help you, sir?*

We use *can* and *could* (but not usually *may*) to talk about what is normally allowed.
Can** you park in this street on Sundays?* (NOT ~~May** you park* ...?~~)

1 Rewrite these sentences using *can*, *could* or *may*.

1 I'd like to talk to you for a minute, Bill. *(friendly)*
Can I talk to you for a minute, Bill?
2 I would like to use your phone. *(more polite)*
3 I would like to stop work early today. *(formal)*
4 Take my bike if you want to.
5 Are children allowed to go into pubs?
6 I don't want you to come into my room.
7 I would like to speak to Jane, if she's there. *(polite)*
8 I would like to have a beer. *(friendly)*
9 Are students allowed to use this library?
10 I would like to pay you tomorrow. *(polite)*



'Dad, can I borrow the gun tonight?'

Drawing by Mankoff; © 1993
The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

(from *How English Works*, p. 116)

- Practice the item first in a safe environment to get it right (developing **accuracy**).
- Later, the learner needs many opportunities to use language in different situations and contexts until it becomes a solid part of their own knowledge and skills (developing **fluency**). Obviously, learners will make mistakes when using the new grammar on their path to get it right.

When such mistakes are made it is useful if the teacher reformulates the learner's utterance without a mistake, so that the learner is exposed to a correct version of the new language.

2.2 Methods and techniques of teaching grammar

There are two main approaches to teaching grammar:

A deductive approach – teaching grammar from rules

The teacher presents a rule, gives example sentences and learners form their own sentences.

ADVANTAGES	**DISADVANTAGES**
Time-saving	Problems with grammar terminology
Goes straight to the point	Teacher centred
Respects the role of cognition Suitable for analytical learning style Preferred by adult learners	Can cause problems to younger learners Knowing and understanding the rule does not guarantee the correct use Explanation of a rule is not very memorable

(Adapted: Thornbury, 2003)

Grammar
Comparative forms

a) Study the theory.

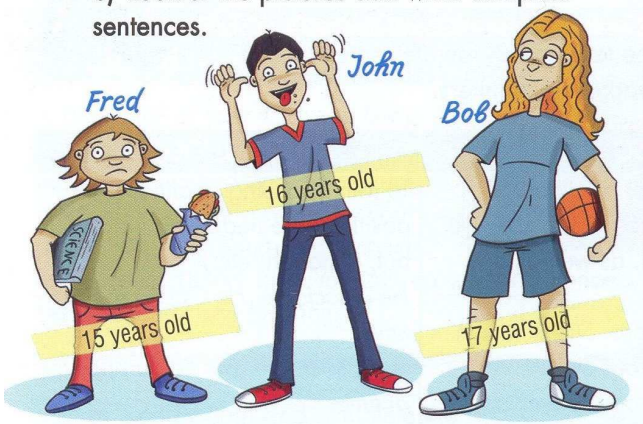
short adjectives: adjective + **-er** + **than**
*Johnny is **younger than** Susan.*
long adjectives: more + adjective + **than**
*Ben is **more powerful than** Reed.*

Spelling rules

- adjective + **-er** *tall – taller*
- adjective ending in **-e** + **-r** *large – larger*
- adjective ending in vowel + consonant → double the last consonant + **-er** *big – bigger*
- adjective ending in **-y** → ~~**-y**~~ + **-ier** *heavy – heavier*

Irregular forms
good – better, bad – worse, much/many – more, little – less

b) Look at the pictures and write complete sentences.



1 John/tall/Fred *John is taller than Fred.*
2 Bob/thin/Fred _____
3 John's hair/short/Fred's hair _____
_____
4 Fred/young/John _____
5 John/funny/Fred _____
6 Fred/heavy/Bob _____
7 Bob/good at basketball/John _____
_____
8 Fred/serious/John _____
_____
9 Fred/short/Bob _____
10 Bob/old/John _____

(from *Upload*, p. 95)

An inductive approach – teaching grammar from examples

The teacher provides several example sentences, learners study them. From the examples they derive an understanding of the rule. This approach is the way how one's first language is acquired.

A teacher presents several examples, the learner studies and formulates the rule

ADVANTAGES	**DISADVANTAGES**
More memorable	More time consuming
Learners are more actively involved	More demanding on teacher's planning a lesson
Learners become autonomous	Not suitable for all learning styles
Suitable for young learners	Not suitable for teaching any grammar (some rules are difficult to formulate)
More challenging	

(Adapted: Thornbury, 2003)

Find the rule

Look at these sentences:

You **know** Norma and Joe, don't you?
They **work** every day.
Joe **talks** to tourists, and Norma **writes** letters.
We always **go** to their travel agency.
The agency **offers** tours to many different countries.
I **like** the service there too.

▶ There is a final **s** on the verb only with certain subjects. What are they?

☐ I ☐ you ☐ he ☐ she ☐ it ☐ we ☐ they

Now apply the rule!

Circle the right verb.

I **see/sees** Norma almost every day, or she **call/calls** me. She and Joe sometimes **come/comes** to my house on weekends. Joe usually **tell/tells** us some funny stories.

(from *New Wave*, p.42)

When the teacher understands the advantages and disadvantages of both the deductive and the inductive approaches, it is important to recognize what best suits a specific situation. The teacher should always consider "*the amount*" of grammar in one lesson (e.g. the affirmative, question forms, and the negative should not be presented in one lesson).

The Common European Framework of Reference summarizes the methods and approaches of presenting grammar (p. 151) as follows:

Learners may (be expected/required to) develop their grammatical competence:

a) inductively, by exposure to new grammatical material in authentic texts as encountered;

b) inductively, by incorporating new grammatical elements, categories, classes, structures, rules, etc. in texts specially composed to demonstrate their form, function and meaning;

c) as b), but followed by explanations and formal exercises;

d) by the presentation of formal paradigms, tables of forms, etc. followed by explanations using an appropriate metalanguage in L2 or L1 and formal exercises;

e) by elicitation and, where necessary, reformulation of learners' hypotheses, etc.

Task 1

Analyse one unit of any coursebook and find out which approach is being used.

Structure:

Function:

Inductive approach?

Deductive approach?

2.3 Aspects of grammar

Gower (1995, p. 127) stresses the following aspects of teaching grammar structures:

The form:

- how a structure is formed; e.g. have + past participle; verb + ed;
- the spelling
- word order: whether an item is followed by a particular word or not, e.g. *I can ~~to~~ drive.*.
- the pronunciation, e.g. contracted forms: *should've, didn't, isn't*
- whether it is regular/irregular, e.g. *speak-spoke-spoken*; *mouse-mice*

The teacher says the structure several times and learners repeat it after him/her, first in chorus and followed by individual attempts. Spelling is usually presented by writing the structure on the board (showing it on cards, identifying in model sentences). It is useful if the teacher uses coloured pencils to attract learner's attention to the structure and its parts.

Task 2

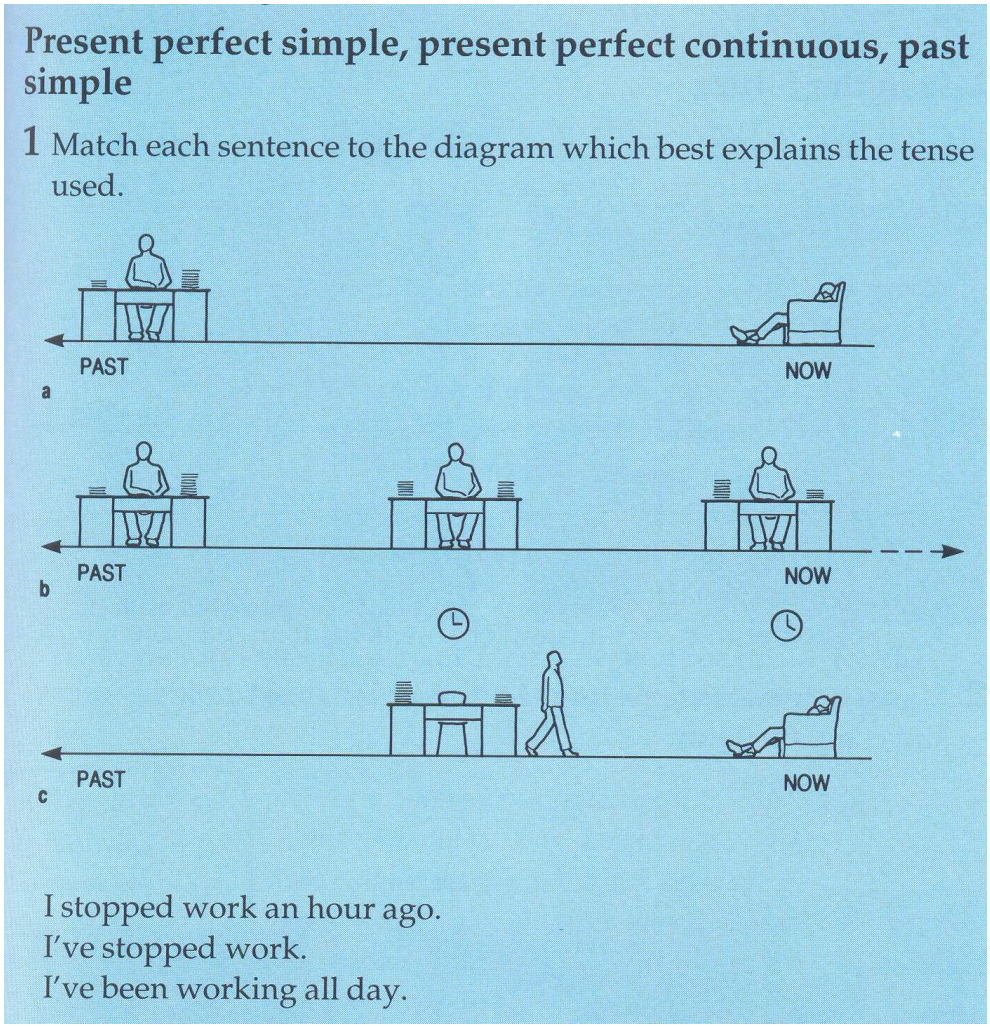
Design a substitution table (chart) for practising since/for.

	have **has**		**since** **for**	

The meaning of the structure: it should be clear from the very beginning what the function (meaning) of the structure is. The meaning can be presented:

- visually (pictures, drawings, mime), e.g. comparatives and superlatives, plural nouns, present continuous, word order etc..

It can be useful to use a timeline and visuals while teaching verb tenses.



(from *Highlight Intermediate*, p. 45)

Task 3

Draw timelines to illustrate the meaning of the structure.

– I've been studying English since 2012.

–We went out walking when it started to rain.

Visual presentation is useful mainly for lower levels and younger learners if a single item is being introduced. In general, a visual context is more interesting and memorable for learners than a verbal one.

- In short dialogues

A telephone conversation:

Hi, what <u>are you doing</u>, Mike?

Hi, <u>I'm waiting</u> for my brother.

Where is he?

Oh, <u>he's putting</u> on his shoes, <u>we're going</u> for a walk. Join us, Mike.

Ok, see you soon.

Dialogues can be used in addition to introducing language visually. Learners repeat the lines of the dialogues after the teacher taking turns, later the teacher elicits the structure and learners substitute verbs, different creating their own dialogues (controlled practice). The teacher can use picture prompts with various actions. Later this can be followed by freer communication practice in pairs.

- Through a situation

It is possible to show the meaning through a situation, in which a structure could be naturally used, e.g.

*You and your fried have no plans for the weekend, but you would like to see the film "Transformers". So you say: "**Let's go** to the cinema".*

*Your friend's brother is in hospital. You want to visit him. You say: "**Let's visit** your brother".*

- Through contrasting structures

Another option is presenting the meaning through contrasting structures in isolation:

I've got **some** bread. I haven't got **any** bread.

I've seen that film. **I saw** that film last week.

If they build a reservoir, there **will be** plenty of water. **If they built** a reservoir, there **would be** plenty of water. (Doff, 1993, p. 41)

- Through texts

Presentation through texts is useful for learners of the intermediate level and above. Texts provide exposure to language as a whole and not in isolation. Texts can provide a memorable context and a springboard for other tasks where a structure can be used more freely. The new structure can be used in contrast with the language which is already familiar.

Using a text to teach the passive.

DOG ATTACK

Jessica Johnson was out walking with her husband when she **was attacked** by an unsupervised Alsatian dog. Jessica's leg **was bitten**, and she had to have stitches in two wounds. Two days later, because the wounds had become infected, Jessica **was admitted** to hospital. Even after **she was discharged**, she needed further treatment and **she was** told to rest for two weeks.

Jessica **is self-employed** and her business **was affected** while she was sick. Also, trousers and shoes she'd been wearing **were ruined** by bloodstains, and **had to be thrown** away.

(from Thornbury, p.77)

In some situations it is useful to translate a structure or elicit the translation to make sure that all the learners understand the meaning.

Potential problems

The teacher should be aware of the level of difficulty of particular grammar for their learners. It may be the form that causes problems (e.g. should not have had) or its pronunciation (e.g. shouldn't have). The structure can be confused with another item in English (*to have sth. done/to have done sth.).* Moreover, interference of Slovak can cause problems (word order, double negative, expressing the future after IF/WHEN, the sequence of tenses etc.).

Suggested steps for presenting grammar:

1. Expose learners to the language so that they can see the structure you are going to teach
2. Help them to understand the meaning and the context of the use of a structure
3. Show them how the structure is formed and when it is used
4. Provide many opportunities for controlled practice
5. Provide opportunities to use the structure in meaningful activities in a broader context.

2.4 From presentation to practice

After the form and meaning have been presented and understood, learners need plenty of opportunities to use the structures themselves in a limited learning context (drills), and later proceeding to meaningful communicative activities.

Examples of grammar practice activities suggested by Ur (1996)

Find the rule

Look at these sentences:

You **know** Norma and Joe, don't you?
They **work** every day.
Joe **talks** to tourists, and Norma **writes** letters.
We always **go** to their travel agency.
The agency **offers** tours to many different countries.
I **like** the service there too.

▶ There is a final **s** on the verb only with certain subjects. What are they?

☐ I ☐ you ☐ he ☐ she ☐ it ☐ we ☐ they

Now apply the rule!

Circle the right verb.

I **see/sees** Norma almost every day, or she **call/calls** me. She and Joe sometimes **come/comes** to my house on weekends. Joe usually **tell/tells** us some funny stories.

(from Ur, p. 84)

The Common European Framework of Reference (p. 152) lists the following types of exercises for grammar practice.

If formal exercises are used, some or all of the following types may be employed:

a) gap-filling
b) sentence construction on a given model
c) multiple choice
d) category substitution exercises (e.g. singular/plural, present/past, active/passive)
e) sentence merging (e.g. relativisation, adverbial and noun clauses, etc.)
f) translation of example sentences from L1 to L2
g) question and answer involving use of particular structures
h) grammar-focused fluency exercises

Summary

To summarize this unit's main points, learners have to be exposed to plenty of examples of the target language (grammar) and have to notice them. The teacher needs to focus their attention on what the target language means, how it is formed and when or where it can be used. Considering the level and age of learners, the teacher can present and summarize the main aspects of the grammar structure in mother tongue. If the target language is used, it should be finaly tuned input for learners to understand. The teacher has to provide learners with many opportunities to practise things in an encouraging environment (in speaking and writing).

Review questions:

Explain the difference between competence and performance.

Where can you see advantages of presenting grammar in context?

Explain the differences between the inductive and the deductive method. Which do you prefer?

Further reading

DOFF, A. *Teach English. Trainer's Handbook.* Cambridge: CUP, 1991, ISBN 0521 34864 1

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Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf

UNIT 3 TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

In this unit you will:

- Look at the place of pronunciation in ELT
- Understand its importance in communication
- Get an overview of various techniques for teaching pronunciation

Keywords: pronunciation, intonation, stress, rhythm, speech organs

3.1 Importance of correct pronunciation in communication

Apart from teaching grammar, vocabulary and developing language skills, the teacher also has to focus on learners' correct pronunciation. This means that learners should be able to make the various sounds that exist in English and do not exist in Slovak. It is essential for learners to differentiate between unknown sounds, especially these sounds change the meaning of words, e.g. ship/sheep; vine/wine.

3.2 Aspects of pronunciation

When we think of pronunciation we usually have in mind **individual sounds**. Every language has its own set of sounds that more or less differ from sound of other languages. There are 44 phonemes[3] in English. Different sounds are formed in different parts of the speech organs. A pair of words with a single different phoneme is called a minimal pair, e.g. pin-bin; pit-bit, vet-wet; bad-bed etc.

Learners have to learn **word stress** and **rhythm** correctly if they are to function in communication. When presenting and practicing new words or grammar structures, the teacher should insist on appropriate stress.

Stress is an important feature of sentences. There is usually at least one main stress and a number of secondary ones. Changes in sentence stress can change the sentence's meaning.

The way we say a sentence will also determine what it exactly means. Learners need to be able to recognize **intonation,** – i.e. the music of the language,– which adds

[3]Phoneme is the smallest unit of speech that can be used to make one word different another word (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995 p. 1058)

meaning to what is being said and conveys information about the speaker's attitude. Flat intonation can sound boring, and inappropriate intonation can be, in some cases, offensive (Scrivener, 1994).

3.3 Techniques for teaching pronunciation

The basic principle is to give learners the opportunity to hear the sounds and sentences pronounced correctly. Certain aspects can be pointed out to them.

In general learners should be exposed as much to listening as possible. Listening to individual words, sentences or texts can serve as a model for imitation practice.

First the teacher should check, if the learner can hear and identify the sounds s/he wants to teach. In the raising-awareness stage, it is useful to use minimal pairs to contrast certain features. Can learners distinguish sounds in similar words?

Example:

Listen to the sounds in these words:
1 /u:/ **you** 2 /ɔ:/ **sort** 3 /əʊ/ **go**
4 /ɒ/ **off** 5 /ʌ/ **stuff**

Now match the sounds with the words below.

Example *fought* = 2

fought though, through, cough, thought, ought, enough, although, rough, tough, bought

Listen and check your answers. Then listen again and repeat the words.

Listen and repeat these sentences. How many different sounds for 'ou' can you identify?

1 The young couple bought a new house.
2 Although he was wounded, the tough boxer fought another round.
3 You were unconscious for about four hours.

(from *Opportunities Upper intermediate*, p. 75)

In teaching production of sounds that do not exist in Slovak, Gower (1995) suggests:

- Mouthing – exaggerating movements of lips, teeth and tongue so that learners can see clearly what is happening (the shape of the lips, position of the tongue etc.);
- Using gestures in teaching voiced/voiceless consonants the learner can put their hands on their throat or over their ears and notice the difference between them;
- Emphasizing the syllable containing the sound – the teacher first the stresses sound unnaturally and then immediately repeats it normally;

- Finger indication – a word is broken down into sounds that are associated with one finger. Pointing to the finger the teacher says the individual sound. Later puts the sounds back in the word;
- Using visuals or computer demonstrations (Gower, 1994, pp. 156-157).

The teacher should present and practise word stress when new vocabulary item is being presented (see Unit 1). The most common techniques are:

- Using gesture – moving hands, snapping the fingers, tapping or clapping hands
- Overstressing – exaggerating the stress when modelling the word
- Making marks in the written form of a word – underlining, stress mark, capital letter for a stressed syllable, dots, or boxes.

Example:

1 Practise saying the following sentences with the appropriate emphasis.

- Underline the stressed words.
- Mark with // where there is a slight pause.

a) What I love about Peter is his wicked sense of humour.
What I love about Peter // is his wicked sense of humour.
b) The thing I can't stand about this country is the weather.
c) What I really hate about my job is having to work at weekends.
d) What I find annoying about politicians is that they never give a straight answer.
e) The thing I find most difficult about English is the spelling.
f) What I would really like to do is to take a year off.

3.12 **Listen, check and repeat.**

2 Work with your partner. Use the sentence beginnings in Exercise 1 to express your feelings about your family, your friends, your job, etc.

(from *Inside out*, p. 105)

Task 1

Prepare a set of cards or a table for practising word stress.

o**O**	**O**o	**O**oo
ho**TEL**	**O**pen	**Pi**neapple

Intonation should be presented and practised when the teacher presents a grammar structure/function and provides learners with model sentences (see Unit 2). The most common techniques are:

- Exaggeration – the teacher exaggerates the main features and to make them memorable for learners;
- Using gestures – the teacher draws the intonation pattern in the air with a hand, moving it up or down to indicate the direction of the voice;
- Making marks on the board, e.g. using arrows over the sentence or a part of it.

Some sound and intonation patterns are problematic for some learners. It is not necessary to spend a long time on them with the whole class. There are many web pages that offer individual pronunciation practice.

Example:

PRONUNCIATION

Sentence stress

1 Listen to a reading of *Rising standards*, and mark the stressed syllables.

Example

Development is essential. Unless there is growth and development, . . .

2 Practise reading *Rising standards* in pairs.

(*from Streetwise Intermediate*, p. 53)

Example:

Grammar & Pronunciation

1 Work with your partner. Look at the examples from the conversation on page 6 and match the information in columns *A* and *B* to explain the form and use of question tags.

1 Sorry, but you're English, aren't you? *2 It isn't very busy here today, is it?*

A	B
positive statement	asking a real question
negative statement	negative question tag
rising intonation	asking for agreement
falling intonation	positive question tag

2 Choose the correct question tag for each statement. Is each question tag more likely to be said with a rising or falling intonation?

a) It's a bit chilly today, **isn't it? / is it?**
b) I'm late again, **isn't it? / aren't I?**
c) The traffic was dreadful, **isn't it? / wasn't it?**
d) You haven't been waiting long, **isn't it? / have you?**
e) Nobody's away today, **isn't it? / are they?**
f) You don't have Mike Smith's phone number, **isn't it / do you?**

1.06 **Listen, check and repeat.**

(from *Inside out*, p. 7)

Task 2

Make a list of sentences for practising falling and raising intonation. Indicate intonation by arrows.

- raising

1.

2.

3.

- falling

1.

2.

3.

Task 3

Find suitable web pages for pronunciation practice. Make notes.

It is also useful if the teacher uses tongue twisters to work on particular sounds, e.g.

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked. If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

Knife and a fork, bottle and a cork, that is the way you spell New York.

Chicken in the car and the car can go, that is the way you spell Chicago.

(learnerenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/tongue-twisters)

Another motivating technique for teaching all aspects of pronunciation is using jazz chants. Jazz chants are short rhymes, poems in which a particular tempo and beat can convey

powerful emotions, the rhythm, stresses and intonation patterns of spoken English (Graham, 1978).

Example:

Do you know Mary?

Mary who?

Mary MacDonald

Of course I do.

Do you know her little brother?

Yes, of course I do.

I know her brother, and her mother

and her father too.

Do you know her older sister?

Yes, of course I do.

I know her older sister, Betty

And her younger sister, Sue.

(Graham, 1978)

Summary

Wherever possible, developing pronunciation should be integrated into lessons that focus on presentation and practice of vocabulary items, and grammar structures/functions. Accordingly, listening texts provide opportunities for learners to acquire pronunciation naturally. In teaching short model dialogues, the teacher should insists on using correct intonation patterns (e.g. reading aloud or drama techniques).

Review questions

Where can you see the advantages of using minimal pairs for developing pronunciation?

How can you focus learner's attention on the stress of a word?

Further reading

GOWER, R. et al. *Teaching Practice Handbook.* Oxford: Heinemann, 1995, ISBN 0435 24059 5

HARMER, J. *How to Teach English.* London: Longman, 2009. ISBN 978 1 405 85309 5

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UNIT 4 TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

In this unit you will learn:

- how to approach a listening text in the lesson
- types of listening strategies and tasks
- differences between listening and reading comprehension

Keywords: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, listening strategies, lead in, listening tasks

4.1 Importance of developing listening comprehension

Listening comprehension is one of the language skills our learners have to master on their path to language proficiency. It is a receptive skill, as the learner receives language rather than producing it. It is the first skill learners are exposed to in foreign language classes, usually through listening to the teacher, a CD, tape, PC, the Internet or watching video extracts and listening to peers.

Obviously, learners are limited by their short term memory and cannot remember many facts from the text, even if they understand it thoroughly.

On one hand, listening comprehension is one of the aims of teaching and learning English – one cannot function effectively in communicative situations without understanding what other people say.

On the other hand, listening is a means for acquiring and practising language (pronunciation, intonation, stress, pitch, seeing how grammar works, revising vocabulary, predicting the meaning of unknown words etc.).The more learners listen to different texts, the better they become not only at understanding English but also at speaking and communicating.

Table 1 Differences between reading and listening

Reading comprehension	**Listening comprehension**
A reading text is more organized	A listening text can seem “unstructured”
Written and spoken language does not correspond	Regional/national accents and speed can cause problems

Learners work on their own pace	Speed of the recording is given
Learners can return back in the text and check again	Learners have to listen in real time, go at the speaker's speed Learners have to react immediately
Problems in reading in Slovak have negative impact on reading in English	All learners have listening skills in Slovak
Readers are deprived of non-verbal communication	Gestures, facial expressions can aid comprehension

Adapted from Gower, p. 94

Even though listening comprehension is a receptive skill learners are not passive in the process of listening. In conversation the learner has to concentrate and respond immediately and appropriately, ask for clarification/repetition etc.

In real life we listen to a wide variety of things:

- Announcements
- Conversations (face to face, over the phone)
- Radio /TV programmes
- Lectures
- Music
- Various kinds of instructions, advice

Listening in English should be as similar to listening in one's mother tongue as possible. Learners need to be exposed to various listening materials (non-authentic and authentic), genres, registers, monologues, dialogues etc.

4.2 Listening strategies

In real life we listen to different texts in different way. In some situations we need to focus on one fact, while in others why we want to understand the general topic of the speech and we ignore certain errelevant parts of it. Depending on the aim and type of the text, a listener/learner employs different listening strategies. Learners have to be trained for different situations and develop different listening strategies. In the lesson the teacher should include a variety of types of listening:

- monologues – dialogues

- different contexts and situations (social events, meetings)
- different styles: formal or informal (with friends, strangers, children/adults etc. (Gower, 1995)

Listening strategies:

- Listening for specific information

In everyday situations we often listen for specific details such as numbers, the weather forecast, traffic accidents, sports results etc. We focus solely on a particular piece of information and ignore the rest. Training listening for specific information means that learners develop the ability to ignore the parts of the text which they do not need to know. The teacher has to prepare suitable texts for developing this strategy (various announcements, weather forecasts, football results, opening hours, prices of goods etc.)

Example:

Listen to the dialogue and complete the information.

TRIP TO NEWTOWN SPORTS CENTRE: information

Day of visit: .....Friday.....

Total number of participants: [1] .....

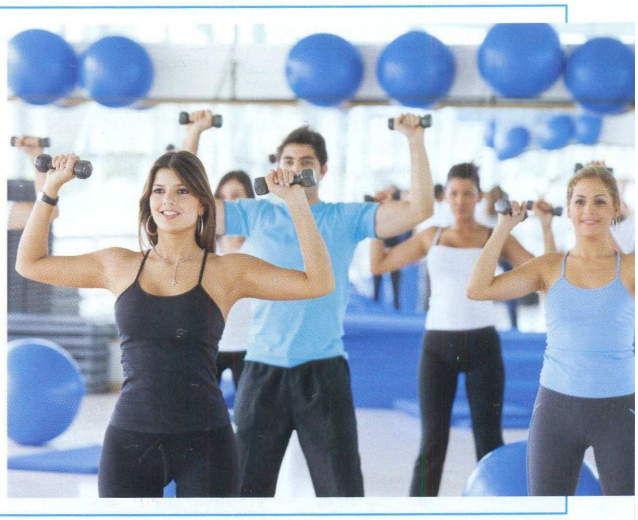
Transport: Train leaves at [2].....

Pool is [3] ..... metres deep.

Entrance costs: £5 for [4].....

and £7.50 for [5].....

The canteen has [6].....
than most restaurants.



(from *For Real Elementary*, p. 15)

- Listening for gist/ global listening

Learners listen for the general meaning of the text, ignoring the details, e.g. *What is the story about? What is the topic of the discussion?*

Example:

Listen to a radio programme. What is the topic discussed?

Except from major strategies mentioned we can list a series of micro-skills of listening:

- Understanding inferred information, e.g., speakers´ attitude or intentions

- Predicting what people are going to talk about
- Guessing unknown words or phrases
- Identifying relevant points and rejecting irrelevant information
- Understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress, which give clues to meaning

Retaining relevant points e.g. note taking, summarizing (Tanner, 1998)

4.3 Methodological approach of teaching listening

In the classroom developing listening comprehension is usually planed in following stages.

Lead-in

The teacher engages learners' interest, introduces the topic and contexts (using e.g. visuals, questionnaires), arouses learners' curiosity, activates knowledge on the topic and introduces some key vocabulary (not all new words).[4]

Pre-listening stage

Learners are given a listening task that will focus their attention on specific information in the text. In other words pre-listening tasks are reasons to listen. They usually take the form of a guiding question.[5]

For the first listening we should start with more general tasks, guiding questions focusing on gist, and only then more detailed tasks (for the second listening).

While listening stage

Some listening tasks are rather simple and do not require learners to do anything but remember one-two details.

Other tasks are more complex and require learners to write answers, fill in a chart, follow a route on a map, take notes, draw something etc.

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[4] Texts for listening and reading are roughly tuned input. Learners should practice the strategy of guessing the meaning of unknown words from the context.

[5] A good guiding question is short, straightforward, easy to answer, and leads a learner towards the most important points of a text. It does not contain any unknown vocabulary/structure.

After each task the teacher should check comprehension and give feedback to learners.

Post listening stage

After learners understand the text (e.g. by checking comprehension questions) we can proceed to a transfer stage and exploit the topic. Learners should be given the opportunity to express their opinions, personal experience, agreement or disagreement with the text (i.e. personalisation of the topic). This way we proceed on from listening to other skills, e.g. writing, discussion, finishing the story, preparing a project, role plays etc.

After listening, we can focus on language points such as new vocabulary, expressions, reminding learners of a particular structure etc.

Task 1

In English course books for primary/secondary schools, find examples of pre- and post- listening activities.

pre-listening	**post-listening**

Principles of facilitating of listening comprehension:

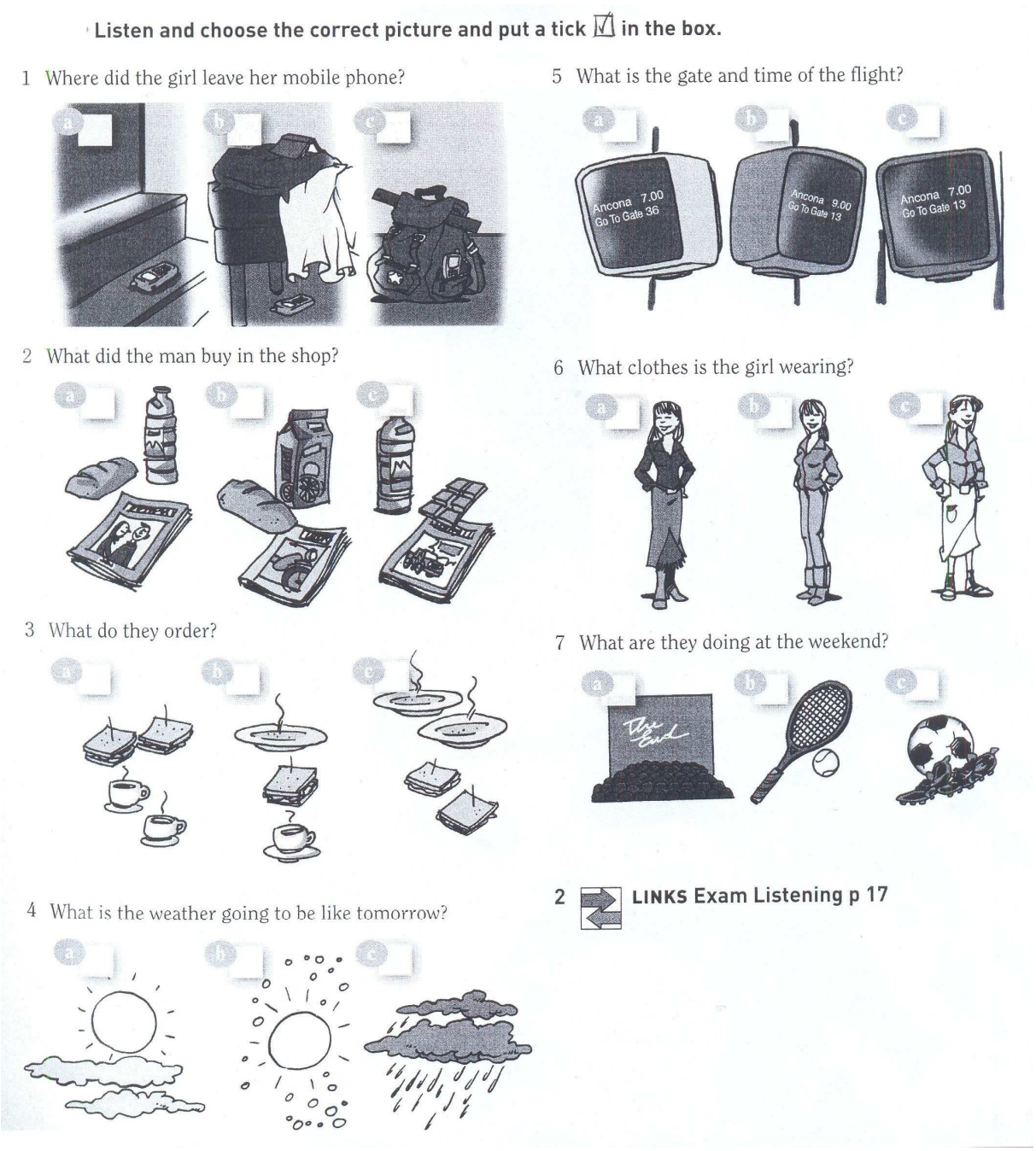
- Pre-teach key vocabulary
- Prepare learners for listening (topic, language, context – number of speakers, situation), use realia and visuals). The topic should be familiar to learners (on their cognitive level).
- Play the tape more than once; as many times as learners need
- Use video extracts to make learners aware of non-verbal communication
- Do not test learners' short-term memory instead use different tasks for each listening and check understanding
- Do not skip over the post listening stage, let learners express themselves, personalize the topic (otherwise they will practice reading and NOT listening).

- **DO NOT let your learners open their books with the transcript of the recording while they listen.**
- For lower levels, include tasks which require non-linguistic or minimally linguistic responses (ticking boxes, filling in details on the map, numbering paragraphs/pictures etc.)

Most reading activities are suitable for use with listening.

Many activities are accompanied by visuals.

Example:



Listen and choose the correct picture and put a tick ☑ in the box.

1 Where did the girl leave her mobile phone?

2 What did the man buy in the shop?

3 What do they order?

4 What is the weather going to be like tomorrow?

5 What is the gate and time of the flight?

6 What clothes is the girl wearing?

7 What are they doing at the weekend?

2 LINKS Exam Listening p 17

(from *For Real Elementary*, p. 145)

Task 2

How would you personalize following texts?

Dealing with CONFLICT

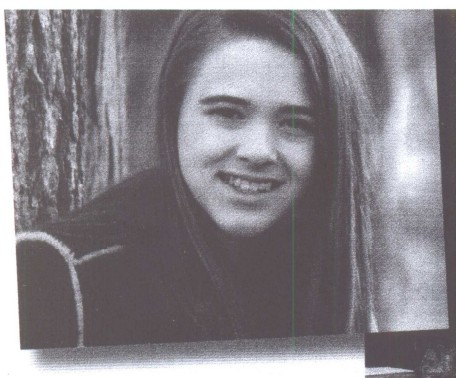
Losing friends is about as easy as making friends if you don't know how to deal with anger and conflict[1]. Conflict is part of everyone's life. It will **show up** at school, at work and at home. It's OK to feel angry, **frustrated**, **annoyed**, disappointed or sad. These feelings are natural, but it's how you deal with them that makes the difference. Some people scream, shout, swear[2], call people names, try to get back at or even hit the person who has hurt them. Others do their best to keep away from disagreements but very few deal with conflict successfully.

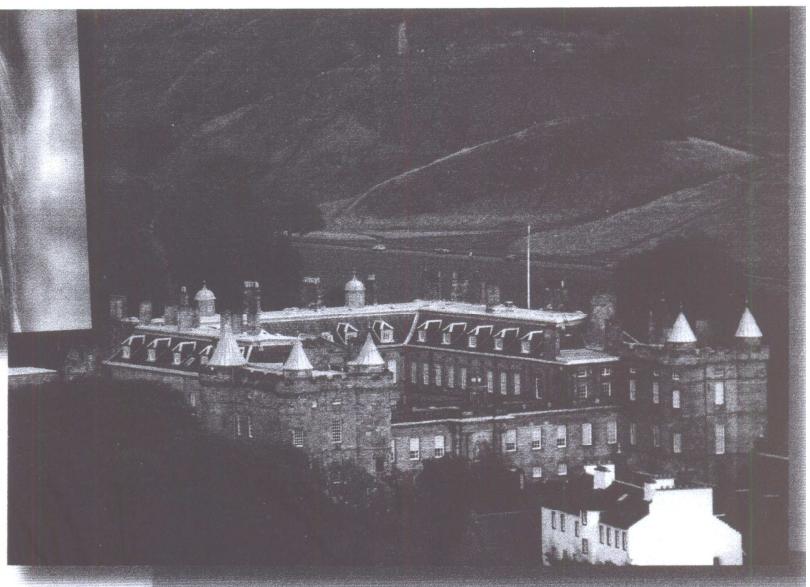
Resolving conflict is a step by step **process**. Before you start discussing the problem, cool off, count to 10, take a deep breath and imagine a relaxing place. Then, say what's really bothering you, but watch how you express yourself. Don't **blame** or accuse. Share how you feel by using "I" statements. For example, don't say "You are always **bossing** me **around**," but "I feel frustrated because you don't pay attention to what I think."

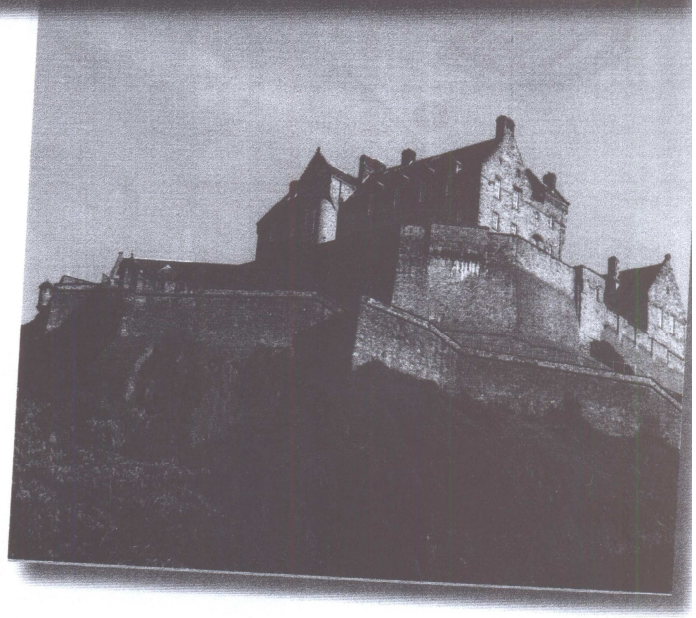
You want people to hear your opinion so make sure you practise what you preach[3]. Listen carefully to the other person and accept that he or she might see the problem in a different way. Be **flexible** and open-minded, willing to apologise, forgive and move on.

[1] serious disagreement [2] use bad language [3] give strong advice

(from *Access*, p. 17)







Listening

5 Listen to Natasha. Circle the correct answer a, b or c.

1 Edinburgh is the capital of
  a Scotland.
  b Wales.
  c Ireland.

2 The population of Edinburgh is about
  a six hundred thousand.
  b four hundred thousand.
  c two hundred thousand.

3 Edinburgh is famous for Edinburgh Castle and
  a the Edinburgh Carnival.
  b the Festival of Scotland.
  c the Edinburgh Festival.

4 Holyrood Gardens is
  a a band.
  b a park.
  c a museum.

5 The problem in Edinburgh is
  a the climate.
  b the people.
  c the city centre.

Writing and speaking

6a PAIRWORK Write the questions for a questionnaire about a city in your country.

1 what / name / your city?
  What's the name of your city?
2 what / population?
3 what / famous for?
4 where / your favourite place?
5 what / problem / there?

6b PAIRWORK You are Raquel, Yue Hwa or Natasha. Ask and answer the questions from your questionnaire.

7a Choose a city in your country. Write the answers to the questionnaire from exercise 6a.

7b PAIRWORK Ask and answer the questions about your cities. Complete the City Fact Card for your partner.

CITY FACT CARD

Name of city:
Population:
Famous for:
Favourite place:
Problem:

(from *For Real Elementary Starter*, p. 13)

Summary

Listening is a skill learners can benefit from in their leisure time e.g. listening to pop songs, and watching videos or other recorded media. In general, listening has a positive effect on learners' vocabulary, grammar and other skills. Through listening, learners acquire new language and absorb appropriate pronunciation and intonation. It is essential to expose learners to multiple "Englishes"

Review questions:

Where can you see differences between listening and speaking?

Complete the following sentence:

A good guiding question should .....

How can the teacher prepare learners for listening?

How can visuals be used in teaching listening?

Further reading:

GOWER, R. et al: *Teaching Practice Handbook.* Oxford: Heinemann, 1995, ISBN 0435 24059 5

HADFIELD, J – HADFIELD, C. *Introduction to teaching English.* Oxford: OUP, 2008, ISBN 978 0 19 441975 8

HARMER, J. *How to Teach English.* London: Longman, 2009. ISBN 978 1 405 85309 5

DOFF, A. *Teach English.* Cambridge: CUP, 1993, ISBN 0521 34864 1

UR, P. *A Course in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: CUP, 1996, ISBN 0521 44994 4

Task 3

In the following article find the most common mistakes teachers make in teaching listening comprehension.

The full text of the article can be found on: http://www.hltmag.co.uk/oct08/sart03.htm

Teaching listening comprehension – where is the problem?

Eva Homolová

Background

When it comes to topics of my lectures and seminars I spent more time on, they could be listed as:

- *Reading aloud and reading comprehension*

  Our teachers and trainees do not consider reading aloud and silent reading to be totally different skills with different learning value. Learners are often asked to read an unknown text aloud, answer comprehension questions or translate sentences into mother tongue.

- *Teacher's reactions to mistakes in learner's oral production*

  Many teachers over correct, they focus on everything wrong in learner's oral/written language production disregarding the aim of the lesson (developing accuracy/fluency). They correct major and minor mistakes the same way.

- *Teaching listening comprehension*

  Teachers let learners listen to an unknown text without giving them reasons for listening. After listening they bullet number of comprehension questions, which learners are not able to answer. So they listen to the text again with course books open.

So these are reasons why I pay more attention to them. Not only trainees but teachers with many years of teaching practice go against basic methodological principles when they deal with areas above.

Each area mentioned deserves our careful attention but I would like to stop at the last „trap" teachers and their learner are caught in – teaching listening comprehension.

An important factor for consideration is the overall objective of this skill. If we consult any reference book on EFL teaching the authors stress the importance of listening comprehension as an aim and means of acquiring language (Harmer 1993, Scrivener 1994, Gower 1995, Ur 1996). I feel that it is not possible to prepare a communicatively competent learner without teaching and practicing this skill. In other words the main objective of teaching listening comprehension should be to help learners in coping with listening and communicating in real life situations. A very clear specification of what is expected from a learner at each proficiency level (A1, A2, B1, B2) is stated in A Common European Framework.

Problems with teaching listening comprehension

The problem I face does not lie in the underestimation of importance of listening but in the way it is taught and practiced in our schools. I would like to begin with a short description of how I deal with listening comprehension topic.

In the lecture I turn trainees' attention to importance of listening, to focused and unfocused listening, various listening strategies, and criteria for the texts selection, extensive and intensive listening, pre-, while and post-listening activities and a basic methodological model for teaching receptive skills (Harmer 1993).

I devote some time to Doffs Unit 17 and in Workbook activity 2 trainees suggest a more effective approach than the one provided. What I stress is the importance of learners having their course book closed otherwise it is not teaching listening comprehension.

To make my presentation of the topic even more transparent and clear I use a taped listening extract (on a beginner level) in which four people are introducing themselves on a business meeting. In my presentation I make as many mistakes as possible ignoring all didactic rules:

- *no lead in – I did not present the topic and setting of the dialogue, did not elicit any expected language and did not introduce speakers and did not give any constructions*
- *no guiding questions – I did not provide any reasons for listening (listening tasks)*
- *I deliberately made noise and moved around, changing volume, coughing*
- *after 1st listening I asked number of tricky (comprehension) questions by which I tested primarily learners' short term memory*
- *I stressed the fact that the chosen text was below their level and despite it they were not able to answer my questions.*

By my apparent ignorance of very basic methodological rules I want to make them aware of problems learners could face if a teacher does not use the right procedure for working with a text.

After being exposed to an example of how NOT to work with a text for listening I concluded our session by pointing out a common sense rule:

"We should teach listening by listening, reading by reading, speaking by speaking and writing by writing which is in my opinion very clear and straightforward". I feel that the value of the way I present the topic of teaching listening comprehension lies in the trainees' getting "hands-on experience".

In the final assessment test at the end of the term trainees are given a text that they have to prepare for a lesson aimed at teaching listening comprehension.

So far so good – test results are usually on a very good level.

As time passes it comes to their first teaching during the teaching practice in a basic school.

Approximately 95% of our basic schools use T. Hutchinson's Project course. As it is accompanied by teacher's book, supplementary materials and each trainee has a compulsory consultation with a tutor one would not expect any major problems in trainees' first teaching.

Unfortunately, recently I have noticed several segments of lessons in which trainees made major mistakes in approaching a text for listening. I could list them as follows:

- *Learners had course/books opened – the teacher did not instruct pupils to close their books*
- *Learners listened and followed the text in the books without any reason to do so*
- *Learners read the text aloud and translated it sentence by sentence*
- *Learners were asked to answer comprehension questions without having an opportunity to go through the text silently*

I could not believe my eyes and ears… why has all the theory collapsed in designing a lesson plan? Was the trainee not prepared or under a stress? Where has the apparent ignorance of theory had its roots?

If we look at a relatively simple model of teaching receptive skills I could not think of any reason why the reality was so disappointing.

Nevertheless after the lesson we had a feedback session and my first comments focused on the model of teaching listening.

The answer I was given was very short and simple: It is written in the course book and teacher's book. The strongest argument one can imagine.

At this point I have to admit that not only novice teachers but also those with many years of teaching practice rely heavily on a teacher's book and they would never doubt instructions provided by authors of student's and teacher's book.

If we have a look at the most of introductory texts in any Project course-book we find the following instructions:

Listen and read (e.g. Project 3, p.28, 50, 74 etc.)

Every section either Comprehension (Project 1, 2) or Language in Use (Project 3) begins with a symbol of a tape and tape script of a story with speech bubbles under the instruction:

Read and listen.

One of the problems we are faced with is the fact that within some units you can see more tape scripts with the same instructions. I have to admit that the texts mentioned are not primarily aimed at developing listening comprehension (but they could and listening is present), their focus is more on presenting grammar functions/structures, lexical items, topics etc. (Project 3, p. 36, 82).

Apart from this type of "listening/reading activities" every unit contains a section on listening comprehension where no tape script for learners is provided.

How should we approach a text with an instructions "Read and listen". Should learners read and understand first and listen, and follow the text afterwards? Or should they be reading and listening at the same time?

In TB p. 94 (Project 3) learners are asked to listen, read and match cues to the correct people. An important dimension of what we do on a lesson is the one of similarity with real life. In my opinion an activity Listen, read and match does not resemble a real life situation learner can come across in everyday life. We either have a text and no recording or we listen to a text without having it in a written form. In other words we either listen and make e.g. notes or read and "communicate" with a text (underline, make comments etc.)

The consequence of a confusing approach to texts is recognizable in lessons of many teachers. Wherever the tape script is available, our learners are often asked to look at it. When it is not included in a student's book, some teachers copy it for their learners. However listening should be practiced by listening and reading by reading, many learners are forced to practice listening by reading and vice versa.

Conclusions

To conclude I want to point out the importance of clear instructions for users in any teacher's books as they have an immense impact on teaching. Undoubtedly, there will always be a large group of teachers who rather rely on teacher's books than on common sense.

UNIT 5 TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION

In this unit you will:

- look at the reading process
- get an overview of various types of tasks accompanying reading texts
- understand the difference between reading comprehension and reading aloud

Keywords: reading strategies, skimming, scanning, extensive reading, intensive reading, reading tasks, guiding question, personalization

5.1 Importance of developing reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is the skill that our learners have to master to become communicatively competent. It is the skill that every learner can benefit from after leaving school; they can read in English in their free time.

In real life we read every day for a variety of reasons. It is rather difficult to imagine a day without reading. We read words, sentences, paragraphs, texts, novels, stories, newspapers, manuals, textbooks, e-mails, SMS messages, various instructions, notices, announcements, jokes, poems etc. It is not possible to function effectively in an English speaking country without being able to read and understand texts.

On the one hand, this skill is considered to be one of the overall aims of teaching English as a foreign language (see the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

On the other hand, it is a skill that provides learners with many of opportunities to acquire, practise and consolidate language. The learner can acquire new vocabulary, grammar structures and spelling through reading. At the same time, the learner sees how the text is organized (discourse competence), which can have a positive effect on other skills e.g. writing, and not forget to mention stylistics and punctuation. In general, reading texts provide a good example of how to construct sentences, paragraphs and whole texts.

To a large extent, learners who read (and listen) a lot seem to improve their general English level much faster. Moreover, reading texts introduce interesting topics related to our learners' lives and interests. They can serve as a springboard for other motivating activities e.g. a discussion, a role play, letter writing, essays, stories etc.

In everyday life we always have a reason for reading – either we want to know something (information, facts), learn something new, or just be entertained.

5.2 Developing reading in the classroom

Reading in the English language classroom should be as similar as possible to reading in mother tongue. In other words, learners should always be given a reason for reading.

5.2.1 Reading strategies

As far as reading comprehension is concerned, every text requires a different approach – we read every text in a different way, which means that we apply a different reading strategy.

We have to train learners for each of the following ways of reading:

- Skimming: looking quickly at the text and trying to find out it is about. This means that the reader wants to get the main idea or the overall meaning. To practice this strategy the teacher can use newspapers or internet articles, cover pages on books, CDs etc.
- Scanning: looking quickly through the text to find particular information. The readers move their eyes rapidly and stop when they see the required information or detail. To practice this strategy the teacher can use pages from newspapers/websites, food containers, packaging from medecine, tea, or coffee, brochures, computer HELP windows etc.
- Intensive reading: very careful and slow reading. When we want to understand and study for an exam, we have to go through the text more than once, often having to take notes or underline important facts and examples.
- Extensive reading: reading for pleasure, e.g. reading a novel, a story, a biography, a poem, Facebook messages etc. In this case, we choose our own pace, read some parts rapidly and others in greater detail.

Skimming and scanning strategies will enable learners to become more fluent readers. It is important that the teacher keeps a record of the time learners take to complete skimming and scanning activities.

Task 1

Can you list other sub-skills related to reading comprehension apart from those mentioned above?

Example: Developing skimming

What is the text about? Read the paragraph and answer the questions below.

When I was at primary school, I used to be terrified of being asked to read out loud, so I kept a hamster in my pocket on 'reading days' and at the moment I saw the teacher's finger point at me and heard the words, 'Now you read, Susan,' I would take the hamster out of my pocket and put it on the desk. Everyone used to make such a noise that I didn't have to read out loud. I made very little progess at school. It was only later that we discovered that I was dyslexic.

What were *you* like in primary school? Did you use to like reading?
What would you do when the teacher asked you to read?
Did you use to be a good student or were you naughty?

Write about fifty words about your life in primary school.

(from *Streetwise Intermediate*, p. 19)

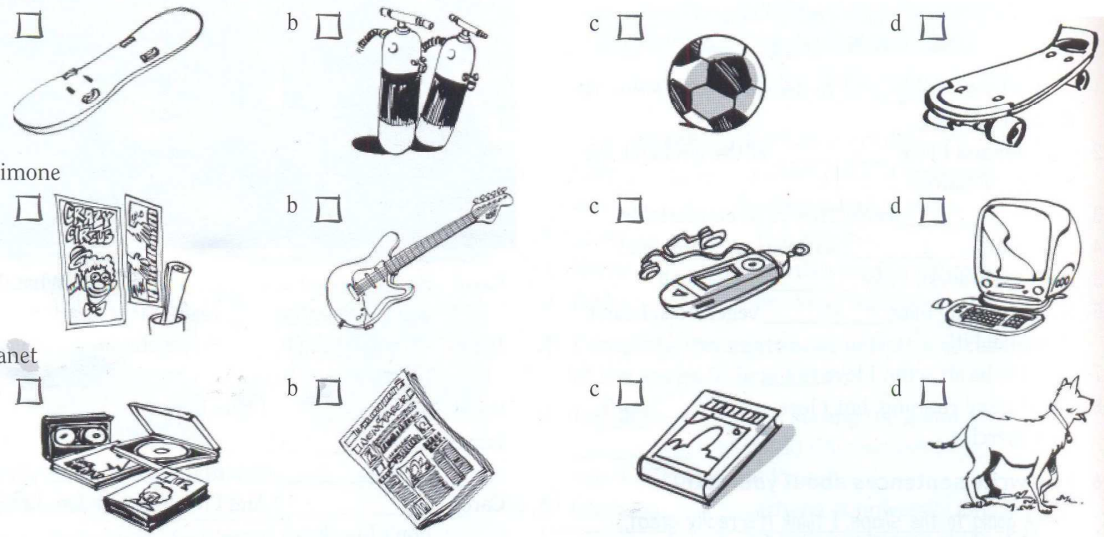
Example: Developing scanning

Skills: Reading – Towards PET (Part 3)

Read the texts and look at the pictures. Put a tick ☑ by the objects the people mention.

Jim

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐ d ☐



Simone

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐ d ☐

Janet

a ☐ b ☐ c ☐ d ☐

My favourite things

Jim

My skateboards are my best friends. (Don't tell Ben – he thinks *he's* my best friend!) I'm no good at extreme sports – I love them though.
I practise every weekend with Ben. He's a great skater. I can't do a 180° turn yet, but I can go downhill. I know – it's not very good, but one day …
I also have a snowboard, but I can only go when my dad takes us skiing in Italy (and that's never!). I have scuba lessons too. It's really cool, but I can't swim very well.

Simone

Music – I love music! I don't buy a lot of CDs. I've got about fifty, but I've got hundreds of songs on my computer.
I use lots of different download sites. You can get music by Lily Allen, Snow Patrol and a lot of other great bands.
My wall is full of posters. I think Chris Brown is fantastic – he's a great singer, a brilliant dancer and he's sooo good-looking. But my favourite thing is my mp3 player. I take it everywhere.
I can listen to hundreds of my favourite songs. How cool is that?

Janet

I love reading so much. I read everything I can – mystery, fantasy, newspapers, the Internet (there are some great websites – the newspapers have all got really interesting websites). My mum says I should go out with my friends more, but I really like staying at home with a great book. I also love Clover, my pet dog. We go walking every morning and evening. Clover's my best friend. He sleeps on my bed.

Circle T (True) or F (False).

1 Jim is very good at extreme sports. T / F
2 He often goes snowboarding. T / F
3 He enjoys scuba-diving. T / F
4 Simone buys lots of CDs. T / F
5 She hasn't got any posters on her wall. T / F
6 She has always got her mp3 player with her. T / F
7 Janet reads lots of different things. T / F
8 She goes out with her friends a lot. T / F
9 She walks with her dog every day. T / F
10 Janet's dog sleeps outside. T / F

(from *For Real Elementary*, p. 55)

Task 2

Can you read this text?

Reading test
I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulactly uesdnatnrd waht I was rdaenig.

THE PAOMNNEHAL PWEOR OF THE HMUAN MNID
Aoccdring to a rseearch at Cmagrigde Uinervtisy, it dosen't mttaer in waht oredr the Itteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and Isat Itteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitl raed it wouthit porbelm.Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey Iteter by istlef but the wrod as a wlohe.

Amzanig? Source: Internet

5.2.2 Methodological approach of teaching reading comprehension

Reading in the lesson should be organized according the following steps:

❖ **Pre-reading stage**

The teacher should:

– Arouse learners' interests;

– Motivate learners;

– Arouse their curiosity (a question, picture), brainstorm;

– Create expectations about the text (guessing the content via keywords, title, visuals);

– Provide learners with background information (if necessary);

– Prepare learners for the topic (a short discussion, true-false statements, questions about what they already know, a quiz, etc.),

– Prepare learners for the new language (revise grammar functions/structures, pre-teach key vocabulary/phrases)[6];

– Set a task to assist overall understanding;

– Ask 1–2 general guiding questions or true/false statements.

Examples:

This is the title of the text you're going to read. Guess what it is about.

These are keywords from the text. Guess what you are going to read about.

Write two questions to which you expect to find answers in the text.

Look at the pictures. How are they related to the text you're going to read?

Write 5 keywords you expect to find in the text about.... (title of the reading text).

Are the following statements true or false? Now, read the text and find out...

❖ **Reading stage**

First silent reading:

– The teacher gives advice about the type of strategy to employ;

---

[6] Not all new words need to be pre-taught. The meaning of most unknown words can be guessed from the context. Guessing the meaning of unknown words is an important skill for learners.

– Sometimes it is necessary to give a time limit – to discourage learners from detailed reading;

– Learners read silently and complete the task;

– The teacher organizes a feedback session and learners discuss their answers.

Second silent reading:

– The teacher sets a task/more tasks to focus on more detailed understanding.

– For the second reading, more specific questions or other tasks related to texts are given (see examples);

– Learners read for the second time, and then the teacher organizes another feedback session;

– More comprehension questions can follow;

– The teacher elicits possible problems concerning comprehension of the text.

❖ **Post reading stage**

At this stage it is important to personalize; the teacher should elicit learners' opinions, compare their experience with that presented in the text;

Learners can respond non-verbally (e.g. by drawing, physical movement), verbally (answer questions, give facts) and critical response to the content (compare their own experience or ideas, state a point of view, experience or opinion, discuss, give arguments for/against etc.).

This stage integrates other skills as well, such as writing, speaking, or vocabulary practice (see examples of post reading activities).

Moreover, this stage can become a springboard for language study; learners can focus on vocabulary, grammar structures presented in previous lessons, text cohesion, punctuation using dictionaries and grammar reference books.

5.3 Reading aloud

In ELT context we have to distinguish between two separate activities:

- reading comprehension (silent reading, reading for meaning)
- and reading aloud.

Reading aloud differs from reading comprehension fundamentally. Its purpose does not lie in understanding a text, but in directly conveying information or facts to someone else. In general, we spend far more time reading silently than reading aloud. In the mother tongue parents read bedtime stories to children, or people read a part of a

newspaper article or a notice to someone who cannot see. Another example of reading aloud are situations when we transcribe a lecture or a conference paper in order to read it later to the audience. In this case, we understand the text as we read our own "sentences". In other words, we know the content of the text thoroughly – we know beforehand what we are going to read aloud.

When reading aloud, our attention is divided between reading and speaking and making the activity very difficult – more difficult than silent reading. English has 26 letters, but far more phonemes, which increases the difficulty of the skill. Obviously, learners often make a lot of mistakes when reading aloud in public, they do not understand what the text is about and the teacher corrects the mistakes they make. This approach makes reading aloud a demotivating and boring activity. Reading aloud in English is not a skill we need in everyday life as much as we need to read and understand.

This does not mean that teachers should completely exclude reading aloud from English lessons. It can be a useful and motivating activity if the teacher does not mix these skills. Nuttal (1982) points out that the main problem seems to be the misuse of reading aloud rather than the activity itself. Most texts in the course books used in our schools are designed for silent reading. In general, for the learners' benefit, the teacher should devote more time to silent reading.

Some useful guidelines for reading aloud in English:

Do not let learners read an unknown text aloud; the one they have not read silently beforehand;

Practice difficult words beforehand (in chorus, then individually);

Choose familiar and short texts;

Practise reading aloud first with the whole class and then individually;

Suitable texts are:

short dialogues, nursery rhymes, sayings, proverbs, notices, slogans, tongue twisters, learners' own texts (e.g. a description of a pet, room, friend)j

Dramatic reading – learners read parts of the characters in a passage from literature (the text itself has to be studied beforehand).

Whenever the teacher asks learners to read aloud, s/he should be well aware of the aim of the activity and how the learners would benefit from it.

5.4 Text-related tasks

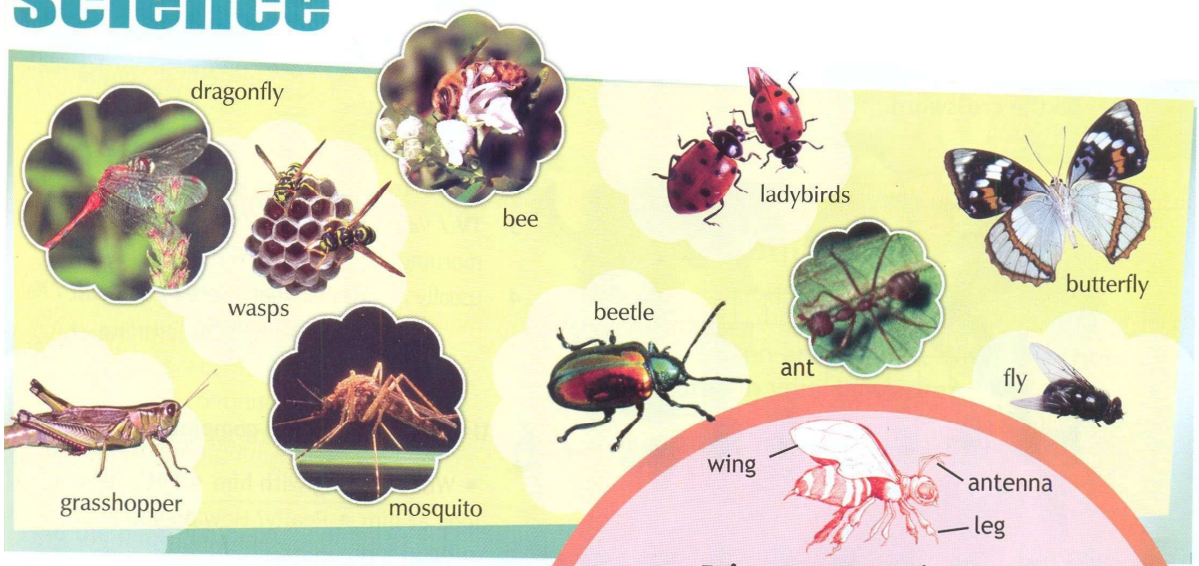
Tasks used before, while and after reading differ depending on the age and level of learners.

Here are some examples:

- brainstorming
- obeying instructions
- filling in blanks
- matching pictures and parts of the text
- arranging jumbled paragraphs
- matching sentences or paragraphs
- filling in charts
- taking notes
- answering questions
- true/false statements
- finishing the story
- summarizing
- expressing their own opinions/experience
- questionnaires,
- role-play, discussion, simulation based on the text
- labelling a diagram, picture
- partial cloze
- creating a dialogue / interview based on the text
- working on the language of the text (guessing the meaning of the words from context, studying grammar (structures, functions), cohesion, etc.
- project work based on the reading text.

Examples of pre-, while- and post- reading tasks:

Science



It's an insect's life

There are about 10 million types of insects in the world. These little creatures live in our homes and gardens. Some live near water, others live in fields, parks and forests. Some insects come out during the day while others come out at night.

Insects are really important. They keep our gardens clean because they eat dead leaves and other waste[1]. They are also important food for birds and other animals. Some insects, like bees, even make food – honey.

[1] *unwanted things, rubbish*

1 Listen and repeat. Say these words in your language.

2 Read the text and answer the questions.

1 How many types of insects are there in the world?
2 Where do they live?
3 Why are insects important?
4 What can bees do?

3 Which facts from the text do you find interesting? Tell the class.

4 *Project:* Become a garden detective - go on an insect hunt.

- Make a list of insects that you expect to find.
- Write down any insects you find on the ground.
- List any flying insects you see.
- Take or find pictures of the insects.
- Describe the insects.
- Talk to the class about the insects.

5 Sing the song!

Bees, bees buzzing in fields
buzzing around
wherever they please
There's nothing so sweet
as a honey bee

6 ICT In groups prepare a short T/F quiz about insects.

You can visit this website:
http://www.earthlife.net
Click on: **butterfly icon**

(from *Access*, p. 55)

Task 1

Are following tasks pre-, while- or post- reading tasks? Categorize them.

Are these sentences are true or false?

a) Ben isn't planning an immediate trip back to the Arctic. (paragraph 1)
b) British explorers are all excessively wealthy. (paragraph 2)
c) Ben's first expedition was badly organised. (paragraph 3)
d) They didn't actually reach the North Pole, so there was no press coverage. (paragraph 3)
e) After his first expedition, he got a contract to write a book. (paragraph 3)
f) It's Ben's absolute conviction that the more you stretch yourself, the more you can achieve. (paragraph 5)
g) Ben is excited that his Antarctic expedition might be achievable. (paragraph 6)
h) Ben says that you have to be especially talented to do these types of expedition. (paragraph 7)

Find the words or phrases in the article that mean the same as the underlined words.

Sentences a–e are from the article.
Match them to the appropriate places (1–5) in the article.

a) I'm absolutely average.
b) So that's one of the lessons I've figured out along the way
c) There are, as Ben says, 'no maps left to be drawn'.
d) Everything that could go wrong did go wrong.
e) Meet Ben Saunders: adventurer, athlete, motivational speaker.

Look at the photos of Ben Saunders on page 37 and discuss the questions with a partner.

a) What sort of expeditions do you think he takes part in?
b) What are the potential dangers he may face on these expeditions?
c) What reasons might he have for going on these expeditions?

Read the article on page 37 and check your ideas.

Ben talks about 'self-belief' and expeditions that are 'doable'. Look at more examples of words formed with the prefix *self-* and the suffix *able/ible*, in the Word formation panel. Complete the sentences.

a) I feel very _____ when I speak English to a native speaker.
b) I don't like working for other people – I'd rather be _____.
c) I have a friend who suffers from low _____ even though she's very successful.
d) I never go to expensive restaurants. I prefer places where the food is good but prices are _____.
e) I recently spent a very _____ evening with my oid school friends.
f) I can't stand the summer. I find the heat and humidity _____.

Are any of the sentences true for you?

Task 3

In course books for primary and secondary schools find examples of different reading activities/tasks. Categorize them.

pre-reading	while-reading	post-reading

5.5 Teaching learners with dyslexia

Dyslexia

The number of learners suffering from learning disabilities is constantly increasing. In the near future every teacher may face the problems of how to approach dyslectic learners in English lessons.

Dyslexia affects the area of the brain that deals with language, leading to differences in the way information is processed. It also affects other skills needed for effective learning: reading, writing and spelling. Dyslexia does not have its roots in a lack of motivation or lower intelligence. Experts in specific learning difficulties (Zelinková, 2009) stress the basic principle in approaching dyslectic learners – multisensory approach. All senses should be involved in processing information as much as possible. Homolová, (2012) uses the term strategopedia and stresses the importance of knowing the most efficient language learning strategies for learners. It is essential for them to find and use their own way of learning that might differ from those employed by other learners. Direct memory strategies such as applying images and sounds, using TPR, creating mental linkages can serve as a way of compensation.

Some basic tips for teaching English to dyslexic learners

- Use plenty of drills
- Present new language by drawing, showing visuals (pictures, real objects), miming
- Use colour for coding different word categories
- Revise and recycle language as much as possible
- Do not ask a learner to read aloud

- Leave visual support on the blackboard (structures, vocabulary)
- Do not use translation activities

Summary

Getting learners to read English texts is an important part of developing their communicative competence and life skills. Reading has a positive effect on learners' vocabulary, grammar and other skills contributing to language acquisition. Through English texts the teacher can introduce new topics and stimulate discussions that can serve as a springboard for learners to express their opinions and ideas.

Review questions

Where can you see differences between reading aloud and silent reading?

What reading strategies do you know?

Do people read different texts in the same way? Explain.

What is the basic methodological model for teaching reading comprehension?

Further reading:

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UNIT 6 TEACHING SPEAKING

In this unit you will:

- look at the speaking process
- understand the process of developing speaking
- get an overview of various types of speaking tasks
- understand the difference between speaking and communication

Keywords: speaking, speaking tasks, monologue, dialogue, controlled speaking, guided speaking, free speaking, communication, interaction, accuracy, fluency

6.1 Importance of speaking

People speak for many reasons – to be sociable, if they need something, if they want other people to do something, and to express their feelings or opinions, exchange information, refer to something in the past, present or future, and so on. Speaking and communicating is a natural part of human behaviour.

6.2 Speaking as a productive skill

Speaking and writing are productive language skills and are thus closely intertwined. They both involve putting a message together, communicating the message and interacting with others. The differences between speaking and writing have been outlined in Unit 5.

Harmer (2009) points out some generalizations about the nature of communication in real situations which have relevance for the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

- Speakers want to say something: they make definite decisions to address other people; they feel the need to speak;
- Speakers have some communicative purpose: they say things because they want something to happen as a result of what they say e.g. giving/asking for information, expressing feelings/opinions etc.;
- Speakers select from their language store: they select the language they think is appropriate for their purpose considering the listener, topic, situation, channel etc.;

- Participants want to listen to “something”: they have a desire to listen and understand;
- Participants are interested in the communicative purpose of what is being said: they listen to language because they want to find out what the speaker is trying to say, e.g. ideas, opinions, suggestions etc.;
- Speakers process a variety of language: the listener has to process a great variety of grammar and vocabulary to understand exactly what is being said.

In short spoken English is often messy – when we speak, we often repeat ourselves, use incomplete sentences, hesitate, and use fillers (short sounds or words that give us more time to think). Written English is much tidier and more organized.

6.3 Aspects of the speaking skill

The process of developing speaking is a complex issue, as there are many factors that influence successful communication. Obviously the learner has to be able to use the language (linguistic readiness), but they also have to be willing to take part in interaction (psychological readiness). The former entries knowledge of language means (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, intonation), the latter depends on the learner’s personality (security, stress, positive/negative feelings, motivation, needs) and the situation in which “speech act” occurs (topic, behaviour of other speakers; peers/teacher, need to express oneself etc). The risk of blurting things out that are wrong, stupid or incomprehensible can be one of the major obstacles learners have to learn to live with in developing speaking skill.

6.3.1 Accuracy and fluency

Both accuracy and fluency are important goals to pursue in developing communicative competence. In the history of teaching English there have been trends when teachers turned away from issues of accuracy in favour of activities aimed towards fluency. Nowadays it is clear that both accuracy and fluency are equally important and have to be practised.

Accuracy involves the correct use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. In controlled and guided activities the focus is usually on the form of the language. Often only one language item is the focus of attention, e.g. possessive case, plural, word order etc. and the teacher generally ensures accuracy by correcting mistakes.

Fluency involves “responding coherently within turns of the conversation, linking words and phrases, using intelligible pronunciation and appropriate intonation and doing all of this without hesitation and unnatural breaks. Speakers can interpret and assess the meaning of what they hear and formulate appropriate responses” (Hedge,

2001). In other words the learner is able to keep going when speaking and gets the message across regardless of grammatical and other mistakes. In the communicative classroom the teacher should maintain a balance between learner's fluency and accuracy.

6.3.2 Appropriacy

Besides fluency and accuracy, the learner has to develop pragmatic/sociolinguistic competence and consider contextual **appropriacy**, which means that the language has to be chosen with regard to the setting, participants, channel, topic and function. In other words it is not only a question of **what** to say, but also **when, how** and to **whom** to say it.

In general, interaction involves more than just putting a message together; it involves responding to other people – responding to what they say, taking turns in a conversation, expressing interest, encouraging them to speak, changing the subject asking them to repeat or explain and using non-verbal communication. These are reasons why the learner needs other competences closely related to developing speaking skill – **compensation strategies.** It often happens that the learner has to find a way out when a gap occurs due to lack of knowledge or stress (Hadfield, 2012).

It can be done by:

- avoiding difficult words, phrases or language constructions;
- explaining ideas the easiest possible way;
- asking for help;
- selecting the topic;
- miming the meaning;
- switching to L1/L3;
- using synonyms, paraphrasing and improvising (Oxford 1990, p. 324).

6.4 Developing speaking in the classroom

In the classroom learners have to practice both production (monologues) and interaction (dialogues). There are two types of dialogues:

Transactional dialogue focuses on conveying a message, information or a fact.

e.g. A: Excuse me, where is the bus station?

B: Go straight and turn left at the end of this street.

A: Thanks a lot.

Interpersonal dialogue focuses more on maintaining social relationships than the transmission of facts or information.

e.g. A: How are you?

B: I'm not very well.

A: What's the matter?

B: I've got a cold.

A: Oh dear, I'm sorry.

One of the most important conditions for learners to speak is to be motivated and have a good reason for speaking. The teacher cannot expect that the learner will speak from the very first day. Young learners start to communicate on the word level (e.g. *Thank you, Please, What?, Yellow…* etc.), then on the sentence level (e.g. *My name is…. It's blue…My cat is very small…*etc.)

Later they are able to communicate on the paragraph/text level (e.g. describing a person, place…) and function in dialogues.

From the very beginning of language learning, learners need many samples of language (finely and roughly tuned input) to listen and absorb.

A speaking lesson can have the following format:

Before: Lead in: Introduce the topic. Give learners some input which will provide them with ideas, e.g. brainstorming or a short introductory listening or reading text.

Language focus: introduce/revise useful vocabulary and expressions.

During: Preparation. Set up the speaking task with clear instruction. Learners work in pairs or alone to brainstorm ideas and plan what to say.

Speaking task: learners work in pairs or groups to carry out the task. While they do this you can circulate, listening and monitoring learners. You can make notes of errors and areas of difficulty for feedback later.

After: Language focus: here you can focus on problem areas and error correction.

Transfer: You can follow up the speaking activity with a writing activity or organize public presentations of the task (Hadfield 2012, p. 108).

6.5 Types of classroom speaking activities

The task the teacher chooses should be at the right level for learners. Many activities can be adapted to different levels. The choice of tasks depends on the aim of the lesson, stage of the lesson, learner's age, level of language proficiency, and learner's

cognitive level and interests. The teacher should base the speaking task on some kind of reading, listening or visual input.

1 1.13 **Listen to Emma talking about the best place she has ever visited. Read the questions and tick the ones she gives information about.**

a) Where is the place? ✓
b) When did you first go there?
c) Were you on holiday?
d) Where did you stay?
e) What did you do there?
f) How many times have you visited the place?
g) When was the last time?
h) What do you most like about this place?
i) Are there any things you don't like about this place?
j) Would you like to live there? Why? Why not?

2 **You're going to tell your partner about the best place you have ever visited.**

- Ask yourself the questions in Exercise 1.
- Think about *what* to say and *how* to say it.
- Tell your partner about the best place you have ever visited.

(from New inside Out, p. 17)

In general, speaking activities can be divided on two main types: accuracy based or fluency based activities.

6.5.1 Accuracy-based practice or controlled practice offers venue for learners first attempts to produce a new language item in a relatively safe, limited context where they do not have to worry or think about multiple language aspects focusing instead on one element only.

Typical examples of accuracy-based activities are oral drills. Using drills, the teacher has a lot of control over what the learners say – they must respond to the teacher or each other, and their answers are fixed – they must answer correctly and according to a precise pattern. In general, drills are mechanical, learners do not have to think or understand what they say.

Example 1

The teacher divides the class into two teams and asks learners to look at the following situations, giving reasons for each situation. Learners should use the present perfect, past perfect simple or past perfect continuous. Each correct reason gets one point.

- Mary's clothes are dirty because ….. *she has been playing in the garden.*
- Peter's head ached because …. he had been sitting in the sun.
- Ann is furious because…
- Mark is excited because

- Terry felt sick because…
- Carol is crying because….

Example 2

Look at Tom's diary for tomorrow.

07.00	Breakfast
07.30	Do my exercises
08.30	Run to school
09.00	Take history exam
13.00	Teach the juniors to swim
16.00	Train at the pool
18.00	Study for my maths exam

What will he be doing at the following times?

Example
At 07.00 he'll be having his breakfast.

a	07.30	***c***	09.00	***e***	16.00
b	08.30	***d***	13.00	***f***	18.00

(from Streetwise Intermediate SB, p. 25)

Another problem is that these drills are limited in terms of keeping learners motivated. Doff (1991) suggests several ways how to turn meaningless and mechanical practice into meaningful practice, e.g. by:

- Letting learners say something about themselves (e.g. likes/dislikes, facts from their personal life etc.
- Suggesting a situation, e.g. What do you say in these situations?

  You want to check your e-mails. *Is there an internet café near here?*

  You want to withdraw some money. *Is there a cash machine near here?*
- Letting them add something of their own (Doff, p. 76)

Types of drill exercises:

- Substitution drills
- Transformation drills
- Functional-situational drills (Lindsay, pp. 62-63)

Other types are: question-answer drill, expansion drill, mini dialogues drill.

Example:

Work in pairs. You are in a department store. Your partner wants to buy some clothes and shoes. Comment on their choice.

ASKING	RESPONDING
• *What do you think of…..?* • *How about this….?* • *Do you like this….?* • *Does it suit me?*	• *It looks nice on you.* • *It really suits you.* • *You look good.* • *It doesn't suit/fit you well.* • *I don't like it.* • *I think it's awful.*

Example:

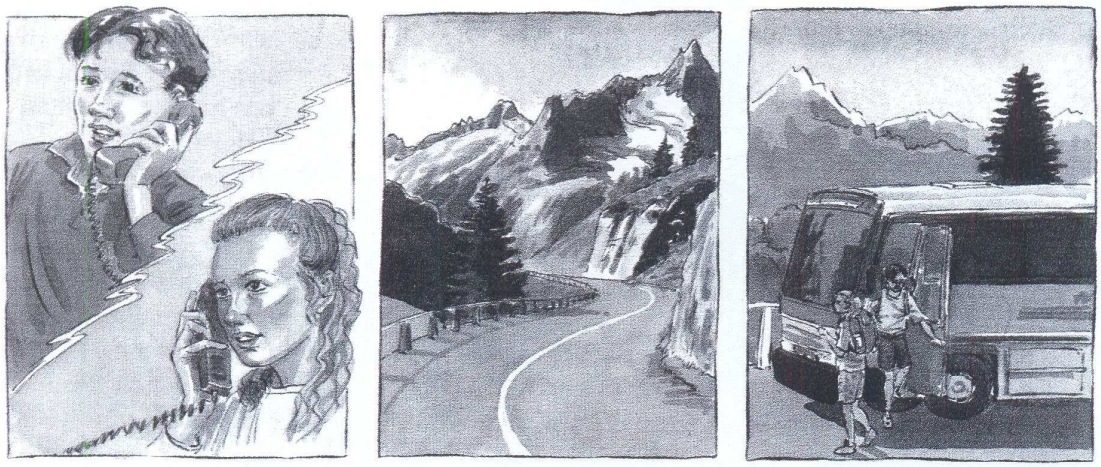
Starting a conversation. Match the given sentences from A, B and C and practice simple dialogues.

A	B	C
Did you watch Wimbledon yesterday?	I´m fine, thanks.	Oh, was it delayed?
It´s going to be hot today.	Hard, unfortunately.	Which match did you watch?
Did you have a good flight?	Terrible.	Makes you stay in the swimming pool, doesn´t it?
How are you doing?	Thanks, I will.	
It´s a nice weather today, isn´t it?	Horribly hot!	What´s the problem?
How do you like working for Orange?	It was quite pleasant.	That´s kind of you.
Just ask if you need my help.	Yes, it was exiting.	How about you?

Another type of accuracy based practice is information gap activities. These are carried out in pairs or groups and usually depend on one or more learners either having incomplete information or no information at all, and the other(s) having the information needed to complete the task so the learners have to ask and share the information they have. Learners often have to fill in various incomplete tables, grids and/or texts. The teacher is usually in the role of controller, manager and assessor. At this stage all mistakes learners make must be corrected.

Example:

Use the pictures to continue the dialogue below. Use the plan given.



Sue: Hello, John, is that you? It's Sue.
John: Hi Sue. How are you?
Sue: Oh, I'm fine. I'm just ringing to ask you if you're doing anything this weekend . . .
(*invite your friend to go walking*)
(*suggest what to take with you*)
(*arrange where and when to meet*)

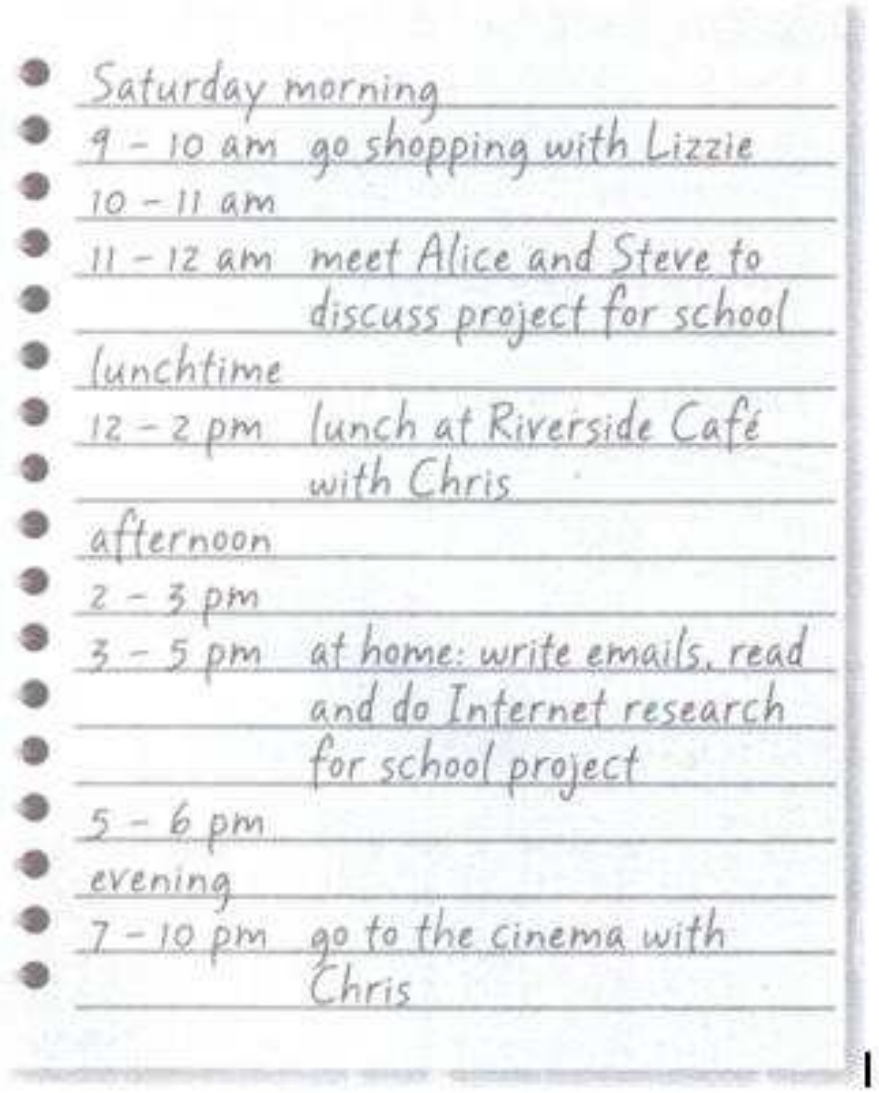
(*from For Real Elementary, p. 133)*

Guided activities include model dialogues in which learners can exchange some facts about themselves (hobbies, favorite foods/drinks, plans for their future or a time, place, etc.), but have to use structures/functions which have been taught beforehand (e.g. the present continuous).

Example:

P ROLE PLAY Work in pairs.

- You want to meet your friend for an hour on Saturday.
- Your diary is here, your friend's diary is in LINKS page 61.
- Ask and answer questions to find out when you can meet.


Saturday morning
9 – 10 am go shopping with Lizzie
10 – 11 am
11 – 12 am meet Alice and Steve to discuss project for school
lunchtime
12 – 2 pm lunch at Riverside Café with Chris
afternoon
2 – 3 pm
3 – 5 pm at home: write emails, read and do Internet research for school project
5 – 6 pm
evening
7 – 10 pm go to the cinema with Chris

(from *Highlight Upper Intermediate*, p. 89)

Task 1

Suggest the activity and prepare a handout for *Find someone who* … for practicing the future simple.

Controlled activities should keep certain principles:

- contextualized practice;
- personalizing language;
- building awareness of the social use of language;
- building confidence.

6.5.2 Fluency-based practice gives an opportunity for learners to focus on conveying the message rather than practicing specific language item(s). Learners are provided the opportunity to experiment with language and see how far they can communicate in situations similar to real life. Interaction between speakers involves making decisions about what to say it, how to say and how to develop communication.

Information or opinion gaps are an essential part of communicative activities. The existence of the gap and its bridging is a reason for speaking, which makes the activity communicative.

The most common examples of communicative activities found in coursebooks are role plays, debates, discussions, simulations, problem-solving activities, quizzes, drama and a variety of communicative games. Some activities may overlap.

The teacher is usually in the role of manager, facilitator, monitor and evaluator. It is not important to stop learners and correct their mistakes unless they hinder comprehension.

Discussion is any exchange of ideas and opinions with the learners talking amongst themselves. It may last just for a few minutes or it may continue for a whole lesson. It may be an end in itself or it may serve as the preliminary or final stage of some group activity. There are two crucial points that determine the success or a failure of a discussion:

1. The stimulus for discussion or the topic must motivate the learners, make them want to talk. This may depend to a large extent on how it is presented to them e.g. a controversial picture/statement may trigger the need to express one's opinion. The topic may be presented through a short text e.g. a story, joke, or song. The topic should be appropriate to the age and level of the learners.
2. The role of the teacher – there are several roles the teacher has to take on during the discussion. As a manager the teacher has to prepare clear instructions, explain the aim of the activity and motivate learners. Later the teacher can also become a participant in the activity. S/he can present own ideas (but not dominate) and encourage learners to express their opinions. Another role the teacher can adopt is

the one of monitor unobtrusively walking around and making mental notes on the activity to use later in feedback.

There are several techniques to maximize learners' participation in discussions, e.g. using talking chips or a pyramid discussion, in which learners discuss questions first in pairs, then in groups of four and later eight.

Example: Discussion bingo

Work in groups of three. Each of you has one bingo card. Choose a topic from the box and start a discussion. As you are speaking you must try to use all the expressions on your bingo card. Each time you use one cross it off. When you have used all the expressions, shout "BINGO!"

TOPICS: learning English, good food, city life, personality, luck, 21st century

CARD 1	**CARD 2**	**CARD 3**
Talking of…	*Frankly…*	*Actually…*
It seems that…	*Gone are the times…*	*It's not known whether…*
When I was younger…	*If only…*	*I really do wish…*
Not necessarily, because…	*There is no doubt that…*	*You must bear in mind…*
I really regret…	*People will always…*	*I tend to…*
Oh, come on…	*Only when…*	*On the whole…*

Role play is an activity in which learners play different parts and act out a situation. The description of the role is on the role card, and learners have to behave according to the instructions on the card. As for the language practice, the teacher can decide whether the learners will be left on their own to use any language or provide some specific phrases or words to be used. There is usually a potential problem or a conflict that learners have to solve through communication. A well-chosen role play can be motivating, funny, similar to real-life situations and have the potential to get learners "hooked" and speak. Learners usually feel much safer using language in pairs or groups rather than in front of the teacher and the entire class. The teacher spends most of the time in the role of manager, prompter, monitor and evaluator.

Form a group of four. You want to go on holiday together but have different ideas. Try to come to an agreement.

Student A	Student B
You want to go on a seaside holiday abroad. You are mainly interested in relaxing in the sun because you need a rest after a very busy year.	*You want to go on an adventure holiday walking and camping in mountains in your own country. You think this would be a cheap and healthy holiday.*

Student C	Student D
You want to relax, but you also want to do some sightseeing. You are interested in museums, art galleries and churches.	*Last year you went on a package holiday and spent two weeks on the beach. You want to do something different this year.*

Guidelines for a communicative activity:

Before the activity:

- Decide on the aims
- Predict problems learners may encounter
- Prepare material and instructions
- Revise/brainstorm useful language
- Arouse learner's interest and motivation

During the activity:

- Set up the activity and check that it is understandood
- Give prompts if necessary (individual pairs/groups)
- Set a timelimit and monitor the activity; do not interrupt learners

After the activity:

- Organize a public check and give feedback
- Remind learners of major mistakes with a focus on how well they achieved their communicative aim

Task 2

Determine differences between a simulation and a role-play.

Task 3

Make a list of possible techniques to be used by the teacher as a reaction to learner's mistakes in communication.

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Summary

Speaking is a complex process which involves constructing a message in a form that other speakers of English can understand, and delivering the message using the correct form (pronunciation, intonation and stress). Speaking involves interaction – communicating with other people which also involves using non-verbal means. To do this, learners need to be able to respond to what other people say, and use the language appropriate for the concrete situation. At the same time they need to be accurate and fluent enough for other person to understand and to fit into the conversation. To be able to do this, learners need lots and lots of practice, encouragement and correction.

Review questions

Where do you see the differences between accuracy and fluency?

Give examples of compensation strategies.

What does the choice of speaking activity in the lesson depend on?

What roles does the teacher take while learners are involved in a discussion?

Further reading

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UNIT 7 TEACHING WRITING

In this unit you will:

- learn differences between writing and speaking
- look at the reading process
- learn about the teacher's approach to a writing lesson
- get to know examples of writing tasks and activities

Keywords: process writing, planning, drafting, writing for learning, writing for writing

7.1 The importance of writing

Writing competence in a foreign language tends to be one of the most difficult skills to acquire. This is true for English as well. What is more, the time learners spend for developing this skill in the classroom is rather low. The reason is obvious – writing needs its time. Moreover it is not only the product (what learners write) that is important, but also the process of writing.

7.2 Differences between writing and speaking

Speaking and writing are both productive skills, and it may be useful to outline the differences between spoken and written communication. These are:

- Permanence

Written discourse is fixed and stable so the reading can be done at whatever time, speed and level. Spoken text is fleeting and occures on in real time.

- Explicitness

The written text is explicit; it has to make clear the context and all references. In speech the real-time situation and knowledge shared between speaker and listener means that some information can be assumed and need not be made explicit.

- Density

The content is presented much more densely in writing. In speaking there are more words e.g. fillers, repetitions with more redundant passages, etc.

- Detachment

The writing of a text is detached in time and space from its reading; the writer "creates" alone. Speaking takes place in immediate interaction with listeners, with immediate feedback.

- Organization

A written text should be organized, carefully formulated and edited before making it available for reading. A speaker can improvise, self-correct, start again and reformulate.

- Slowness of production, speed of reception

Writing is much slower than speaking. On the other hand, we can usually read a piece of text and understand it much faster than we can if we listen while someone reads it aloud to us.

- Standard language

Writing normally uses a generally acceptable standard variety of language whereas speech may sometimes be in a dialect (Ur, 1996 pp. 159-160).

7.3 Writing as a means and writing as an aim

When thinking about writing, we have to make a distinction between **writing-for-learning** and **writing-for-writing** (Harmer, 2009).The former writing is used as a tool to help learners practice and work with language in a written form e.g. copying, substitution exercises, transformation drills, translation tasks etc. for practicing grammar and vocabulary. Writing activities that usually focus on a selected language item (grammar structures, using new vocabulary) are used to consolidate, practice and give reinforcement to learners. In other words, writing for learning is a means for developing linguistic competence.

Example

Rewrite these sentences, beginning *While* ...

1 It was sunny, but there was a cold wind.
While it was sunny, there was a cold wind.
2 She's very clever, but she's got no common sense at all.
3 I know how you feel, but I think you're making a mistake.
4 The job's well paid, but it's deadly boring.
5 I'm interested in economics, but I wouldn't want to work in a bank.
6 The hotel was nice, but it was a long way from the beach.

(from *How English Works*, p. 239)

Example

Write questions and short answers.

1 your mobile phone / have got / a camera ? ☑

Has your mobile phone got a camera? Yes, it has.

2 Jake / be / in the band ? ☒

_____ _____

3 your friends / be / in the classroom? ☑

_____ _____

4 there / be / a computer in the garage? ☒

_____ _____

5 there / be / any museums in Paris? ☑

_____ _____

6 your house / have got / twenty rooms? ☒

_____ _____

(from *For Real, Elementary*, p. 22)

On the other hand, writing-for-writing is aimed at developing writing as a communicative skill. The main difference is that we look at the text as a whole and consider its communicative goal (conveying messages, information, and knowledge to the reader). For many years, the teaching of writing has focused on the written product rather than on the writing process. In other words, communicative writing depends on more than the ability to produce clear and correct sentences. Learners should be able to write whole pieces of communication, to link and further develop information, ideas or arguments for a particular reader or audience, in other words, to develop discourse competence.

In real life, most of the writing we do is written with a reader in mind – a friend we know, a relative, an institution or a person we have never met before. Knowing who the reader is provides the writer with a context, without which it is difficult to know exactly what or how to write.

An example of a task that has very different results if the learner considers the reader and the form:

Explain, in writing, why you would like to study in the USA.

The possible reader could be: a US embassy officer, your friend from the US, your friend from Slovakia, the headmaster from a US high school, your English teacher, the readers of your blog in SME, your Facebook friends etc.

The form could be: a formal letter, an informal letter, a part of the application form, an essay, a newspaper article etc.

Depending the reader and the form, one would produce very different pieces of writing on the given topic.

With the communicative approach to teaching English, the attention is directed towards the **how** of text construction rather than towards the product.

7.4 The process writing

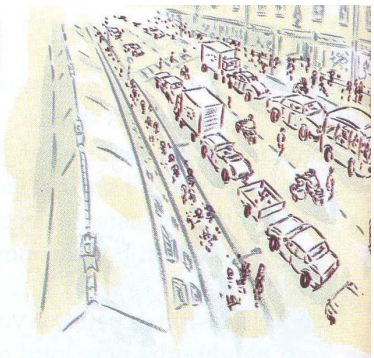
Learners' writing process should involve:

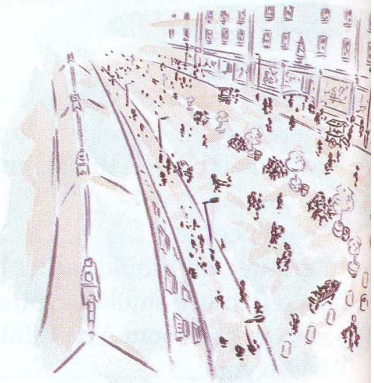
- Planning (what learners are going to write, gathering ideas, discussing the topic, making a list of points, brainstorming etc.)
- Drafting (organizing the ideas into sentences/paragraphs, considering the logical order of ideas and arguments/examples.)
- Reviewing/editing (learners read the text carefully focusing first on the content and in the second reading on correct language – vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.)
- Producing the final draft (after reviewing and editing, learners produce the final draft and get feedback from the teacher.)

Because of this process, writing is time consuming, and the teacher should encourage learners to plan, draft and edit before they produce a final version. Beforehand learners need opportunities to practice various **forms** (letters, job application, CVs, reports) and **functions** (narrative, description, comparison) in writing, and within these to develop different skills involved in producing written texts such as using appropriate word order patterns, expressing one meaning in different grammatical forms, using cohesive devices, conveying links and connections between events and appropriately accomplishing functions (Brown, 2001).

Example

WRITING





Pre-writing

1 The government is planning to build a motorway which would pass close to your town. Some local people are against this plan, and some are in favour of it. Choose points in favour and points against from this list. Reject any irrelevant points.

- less traffic through the town centre
- fewer people stopping in the town
- farmers lose some land
- town less dangerous for children
- local wildlife in danger
- air pollution near the motorway
- noisy for houses near the motorway
- fewer customers for shops
- faster local transport
- more work for local garages
- no more summer traffic jams
- means destroying an old building
- too many dangerous drivers
- new factories come to the town
- pubs lose many customers
- town more attractive for tourists

Role-play

2

Student A	Student B	Student C
You are against the planned motorway. You believe that the existing roads are good enough, and that the new road would damage the environment.	You are in favour of the planned motorway. You believe it will bring more business to the town, and that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.	You are the presenter of a radio programme. You are interviewing Students **A** and **B**. Ask them questions so that your listeners understand both sides of the issue.

Guided writing

3 Complete this letter to a newspaper about the motorway problem. You could use information you discussed in **1** and **2**.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to protest about the government's plan to build the proposed M79 motorway so that it would pass close to the town of Crockhampton. I think that this would be bad for the town for the following reasons. First of all, _____ *(organise your reasons, so that the most serious comes first. Include organising phrases eg. next, as well as this, finally etc.)*

There are some people who think the motorway would benefit our town. They say, for example, that it would _____ _____ *(give some opposing views, but not very strongly)* _____

In my view they are quite wrong, and the building of such a road would be a disaster. We don't want it, and we're not going to have it!

Yours faithfully

_____

Writing

4 Write a short newspaper article in reply to the letter in **3**. Answer all the points in the letter, and point out the benefits of the motorway.

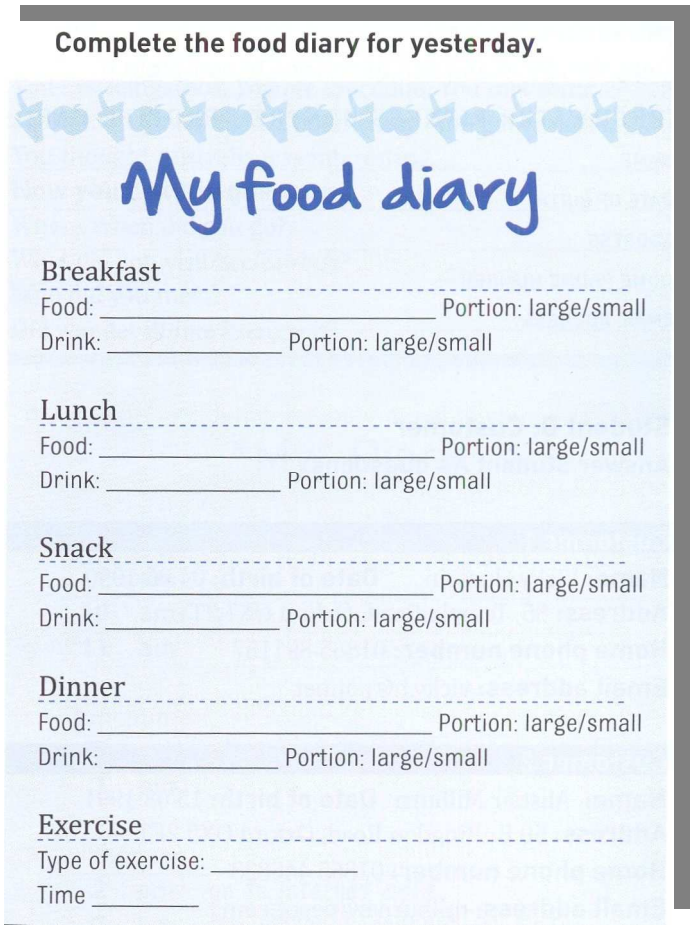
(from *Highlight upper intermediate*, p. 44)

According to Gower (1995) the teacher can help learners to write by:

- encouraging real writing tasks in the classroom e.g. the birthday card for a friend
- let learners work in pairs
- being selective about the kind of mistakes you are going to mark
- displaying finished tasks on the wall e.g. poems, essays, projects
- prepare learners for writing
- providing a clear model
- monitoring
- showing that neat, accurate writing is important and valued

It seems to be very important that learners read and study examples of the piece of writing they are to produce (e.g. postcards, letters, email messages, CVs, essays etc.). In general, writing can be practiced at various levels:

Word level: learners write individual words e.g. a shopping list or a menu for a birthday party.



Complete the food diary for yesterday.

My food diary

Breakfast
Food: _____ Portion: large/small
Drink: _____ Portion: large/small

Lunch
Food: _____ Portion: large/small
Drink: _____ Portion: large/small

Snack
Food: _____ Portion: large/small
Drink: _____ Portion: large/small

Dinner
Food: _____ Portion: large/small
Drink: _____ Portion: large/small

Exercise
Type of exercise: _____
Time _____

(from *For Real, Elementary*, p. 59)

Sentence level: learners write a sentence e.g. an invitation for a party, apology for being late to a meeting.

Paragraph level: learners write a paragraph e.g. "Describe your first impression of the person in the picture."

Writing

Write a paragraph about the political system in your country.

How often do you vote?
How do you vote?
How many parties are there?
Which party is leading the government now?

(from *For Real, Elementary*, p. 53)

Text level: learners write a text on a specific topic for a specific reader and function, e.g. a reply to a first letter from a new penfriend.

Writing (an article about your pet)

Answer the questions. Use your answers to write a short article about your pet for your school magazine. (50-60 words)

1 Have you got a pet?
2 What is it?
3 What's its name?
4 How old is he/she?
5 What does he/she look like?
6 What can he/she do?
7 Why is he/she so special?

(from *Access*, p. 52)

7.5 Types of tasks for developing writing

According to Straková (2005, p. 72) there are the following types of classroom writing tasks:

Controlled tasks

These are activities, in which learners copy words or sentences that they see or hear. In general these are rather mechanical tasks, they can be beneficial for young learners by allowing them to practice association of letters and sounds, visualization etc. Young learners are used to practice copying in their Slovak lessons.

The traditional dictation belongs to this category and it is considered to be artificial, teacher-centered and test-like. However Davies and Rinvolucri (1990) suggest several ways how to turn it into a motivating, creative and communicative task.

Structure-based tasks

These are activities that focus on practicing particular grammar items. They do not allow much creativity and the aim is the grammatical accuracy of the text produced. New grammar structures can be practiced:

- Matching halves of sentences and rewriting them
- Filling in gaps
- Transformation drills
- Translation
- Answering questions

Examples:

Writing & Speaking

Form true sentences about Derrick.

1 he/live/in the Tower of London _____

_____

2 he/start/work/at 9 o'clock in the morning

_____

_____

3 he/take care of/ravens _____

_____

4 he/live/with his friends _____

_____

5 he/work/five days a week _____

_____

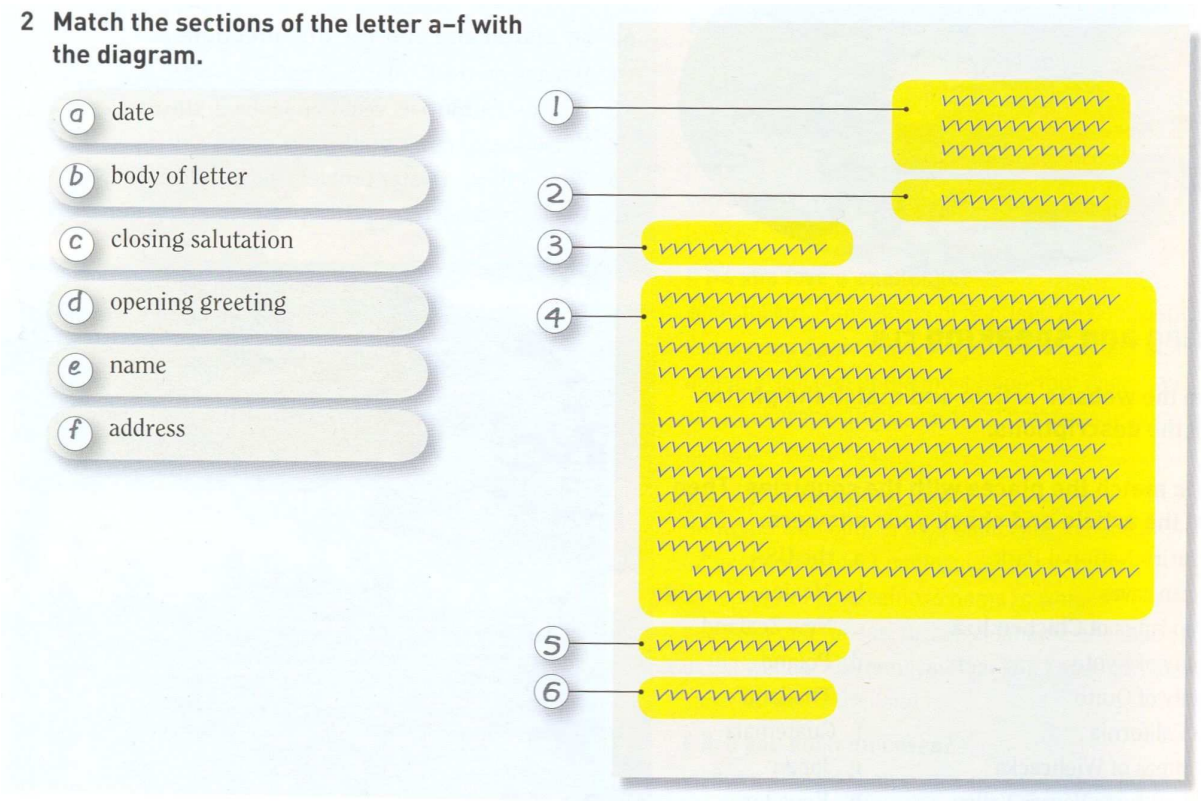
6 he/love/his job _____

_____

(from *Upload*, p. 37)

In authentic writing tasks the reader should be known – in classroom setting it is usually the teacher or peers. Authentic tasks are similar to what one writes in real life: letters, filling in various forms, leaving messages, notices, stories, e-mails, blogs, chats, posting on socials networks, portfolios etc.

Examples:

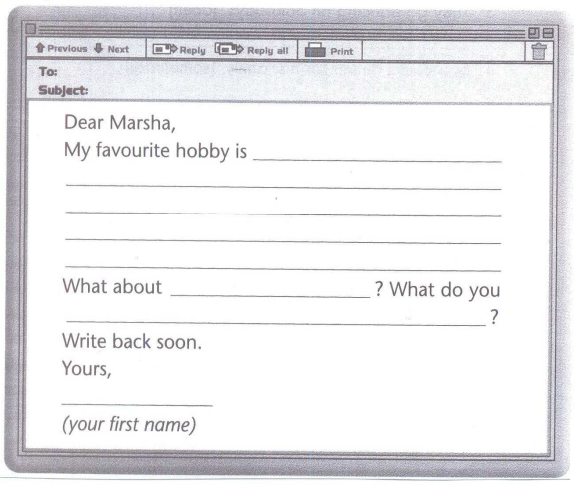


(from *For Real*, *Elementary*, p. 124)

Complete the chart about yourself.

Name
Favourite hobby
How often?
Who with?
Why/like?

Portfolio: Use your completed chart to write an email to your British pen pal about your favourite hobby. Pay attention to punctuation.


Previous Next Reply Reply all Print

To:
Subject:

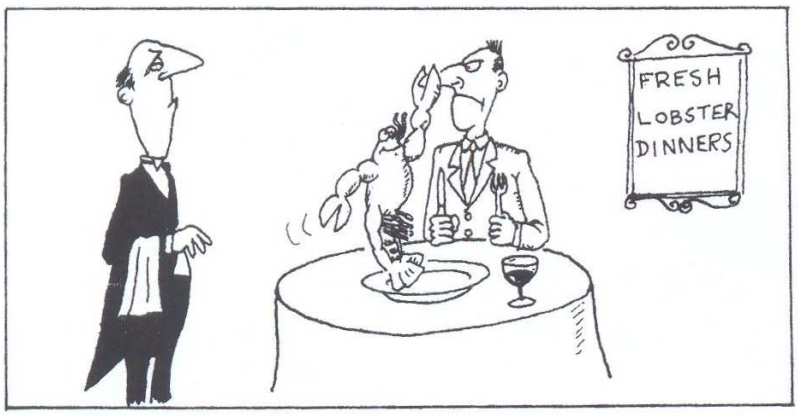
Dear Marsha,
My favourite hobby is _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
What about _____? What do you
_____?
Write back soon.
Yours,
_____
(your first name)

(from *Upload 1*, p. 47)

Writing can be characterized as written thinking. Learners should be encouraged to express their ideas, experiences, thoughts and feelings. Writing can be a means for developing learner's creativity. The ideas for creative writing can be suggested by the teacher, or result from discussions; visual input (works of art), recordings of music, poems etc.

Essay writing is a frequent part of various language examinations. It is a complex and very difficult task in the mother tongue too. The teacher cannot expect learners will be able to write it in English without sufficient training. Learners need to study some examples, identify the structure, and get practice in building sentences, paragraphs and organisation of the essay. It is important to focus on the process first before the teacher starts to evaluate and assess the final product.

Work in pairs. Write the conversation that took place between the waiter and the person at the table. Be ready to act it out for the class.



(from *Streetwise Intermediate*, p. 87)

Task 1

In course books for primary and secondary schools find more examples of communicative writing tasks.

Task 2

Study the Common European Framework of Reference – written production – and compare the levels (A1-C2).

A1	C2

OVERALL WRITTEN PRODUCTION

C2	Can write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
C1	Can write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
B2	Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.
B1	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.
A2	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like ‘and’, ‘but’ and ‘because’.
A1	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.

Summary

As far as developing writing skills it is important to make a distinction between – writing-for-learning and writing-for-writing.

There are many reasons for getting learners to communicate in writing such as emails, letters, messages, projects etc. Learners should be aware of appropriate language use, style, layout and cohesion in the text they produce. Writing allows more “thinking time” than they have in spontaneous oral communication, which many learners appreciate.

Review questions

Where can you see differences in writing for writing and communicative writing?

Explain the differences between controlled writing tasks and communicative writing tasks.

Suggest suitable tasks for developing creative writing.

Explain the ways of the teacher’s reaction to grammatical mistakes in an essay.

What is the basic methodological model for teaching communicative writing?

How can the “target reader” influence the product of writing?

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UNIT 8 TEACHING CULTURE

In this unit you will:

- Look at the role of culture in teaching and learning English
- Get an overview of various approaches to teaching culture
- Understand the procedures designed for raising cultural awareness

Key words: culture, cultural awareness, communicative competence

8.1 Importance of raising cultural awarenss

Culture and language are intricately intertwined in any society. When we learn a foreign language we will also learn something of the culture of the target language community such as customs, values, ways of thinking, feeling, acting and other culturally biased knowledge.Brown states that culture is what binds people together (Brown, 2000). Without the study of culture, English language teaching and learning would be incomplete. Learners should know as much as possible about the people who speak the target language or countries in which it is spoken. The goal of communicative language teaching is developing communicative competence which can be broadly defined as:

- *developing learner`s ability to understand and to express themselves in a foreign language,*
- *fostering student`s positive attitudes towards communicating in a foreign language and*
- *heightening their interest in language and culture, thus deepening international understanding.* (Savignon, 2002).

In other words apart from linguistic and communicative competence, the learners should become aware of social and cultural acceptability of language production. Moreover the teacher should not neglect the enormous positive influence of culture on learner´s motivation to study English.

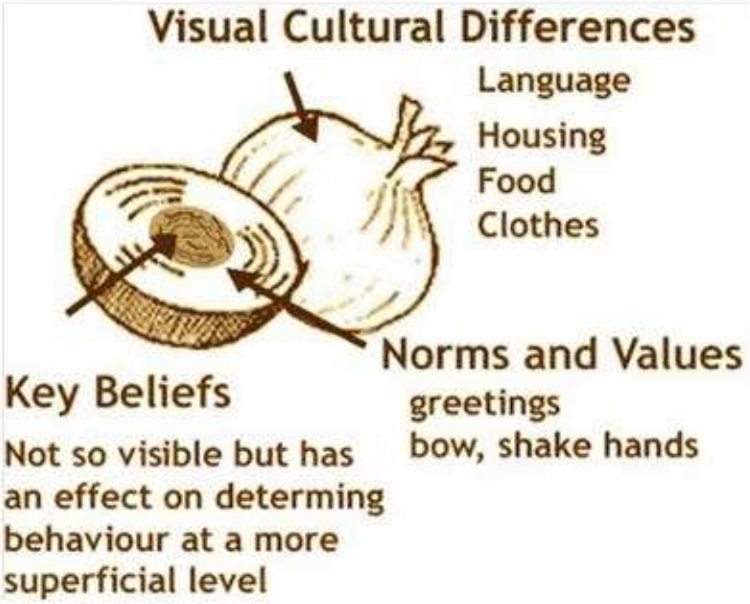
Task 1

Study CEFR and find the position of culture stated in it.

8.2 Different types of culture

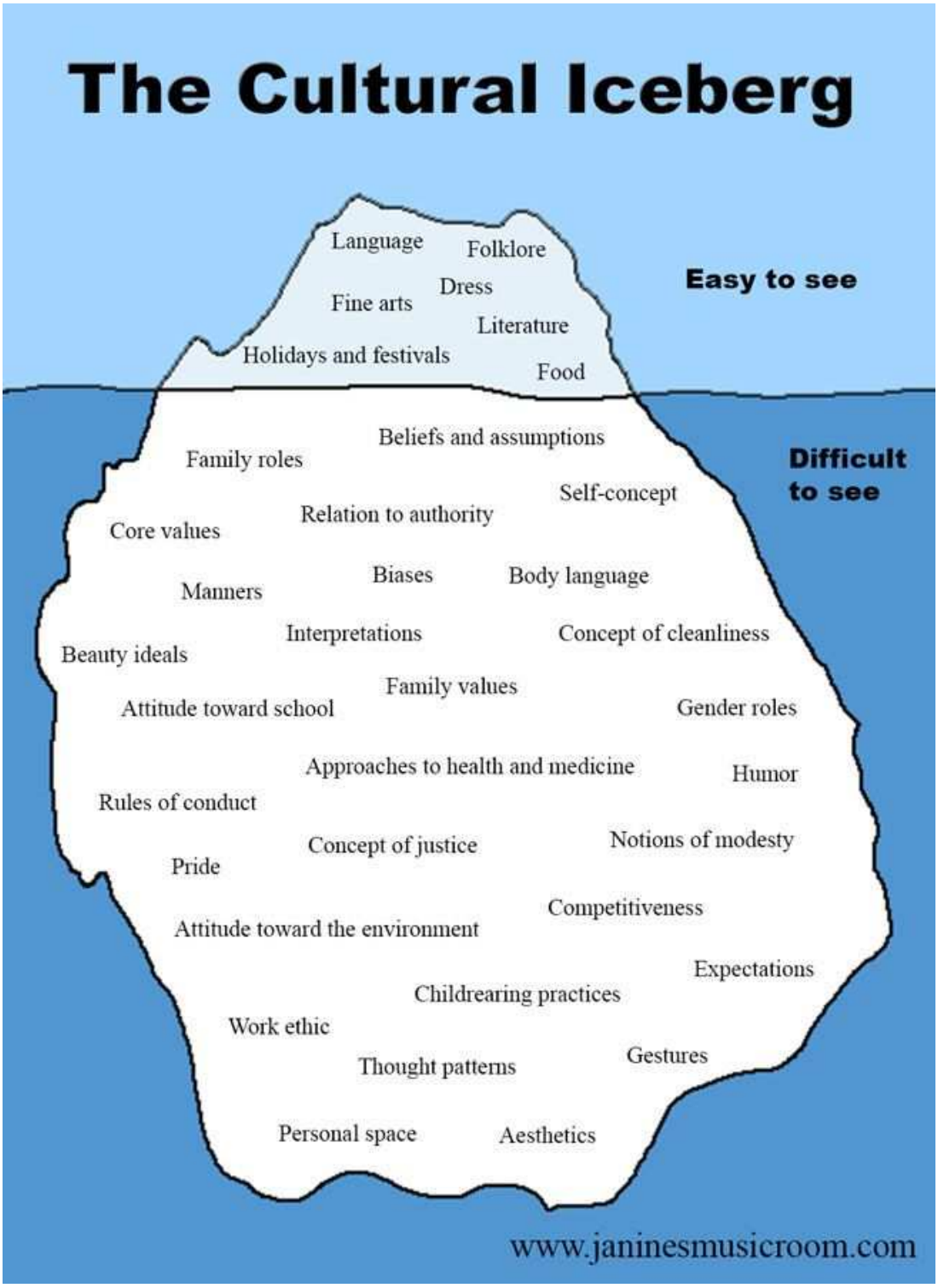
Nowadays most of our learners live in a monolingual and monocultural society and this situation can lead to inappropriate judgements about other people and their behaviour. English lessons can sensitize learners to other cultures, values, similarities and differences among users of English. It seems to be essential to find the answers to question what culture should be taught.To answer this question, Tomalin and Stempleski (1994, p. 7) use terms: *big C culture* and *little c culture*. In general, the former term (achievement culture) relates to literature, arts, films, history, music and institutions. The latter term (behaviour culture) relates to everyday life, values, norms, customs, leisure, food, dress and beliefs.[7] In the following picture, Trompenaars (1997) compares culture to an onion to illustrate its main parts.

"Culture, like an onion, consists of layers that can be peeled off."
(Trompenaars 2003 p25)



[7] Some authors use term *high culture* for big C culture and *low culture* for little c culture. Brooks (xxxx) uses terms *formal culture* and *deep culture*.

The Cultural Iceberg offers a more detailed picture of "*easy to see*" and "*difficult to see*" culture. Any aspect of culture in the picture can become "**the what**" to teach in the lesson. Brooks (1993) points out that if the teachers provide learners only with list of facts (...from literature, arts, history) ....learners are not provided with an intimate view of what life is really like in the target culture. In other words, they will not be able to function appropriately in real life situations.



In the past all these aspects of culture were related to English speaking countries such as Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and Ireland. Nowadays, there is a strong tendency to introduce culture of the EU countries and other world cultures (e.g. Japan, Indian, and African) inEFL materials.

Task 2

Study some EFL textbooks and compare aspects of culture presented in them. Find examples of *big C culture* and *little c culture*.

big C culture	little C culture

When presenting any aspect of a target language the teacher needs to state clear goals. Tomalin and Stempleski (1994, p. 7-8) state following goals of developing cultural awareness:

1. *To help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally-cinditioned behaviours.*
2. *To help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the ways in which people speak and behave.*
3. *To help students to become more aware of conventional behaviour in common situations in the target culture.*
4. *To help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.*
5. *To help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.*
6. *To help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture.*

7. *To stimulate students´ intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.*

8.3 Sources of culture

Nowadays with an unlimited access to technology the teacher and learners do not face problems to discover sources of culture.Obviously, a number of cultural issues are presented in latest English textbooks and accompanying TEFL materials. Most common examples are texts for developing receptive skills, visuals of different kinds (photographs, maps, and advertisements), culturally biased tasks and activities, songs, proverbs and sayings. The teacher can also bring authentic materials of a different kind (newspapers, magazines, menus, calendars, containers, paintings, tickets, leaflets, brochures etc.). Movies and video extracts can focus learner´s attention to a specific cultural issue and lead to project work. A lot of materials on the internet can be adapted to be used in language teaching e.g. google maps, virtulal visits to galleries, museums and other interesting places and sights.

Task 3

Make a list of stereotypes about English, American and Slovak people.

ENGLISH	AMERICAN	SLOVAK

8.4 Methods, approaches and activities of incorporating culture in language teaching

In the past traditional methods of teaching culture focused on big C culture e.g facts about literature, history institutions etc. Learners studied texts focusing on facts related to the cultural topic e.g. a novel, followed by comprehension questions.Nowadays the focus is more on positively sensitizing learners to different cultural phenomena than on knowledge about culture.Following approaches and activities can familiarize learners with the taget culture and make them emotionally involved in developing their cultural awareness. Peck (1993) points out *that foreign language students want to feel, touch,*

smell, and see the foreign people and not just hear their language. She suggests following activities:

The culture island as displays, posters, bulletin boards, maps, and realia can create a visual and tangible presence of the other culture.

The *culture self-awareness technique* aims to raise learners' consciousness of the basic principles that govern their own values, beliefs, and actions. Teachers may use sensitivity exercises, self-assessment questionnaires, problem solving, and checklists of value orientations.

Culture capsules is a brief description of one aspect of the other cultures followed by a discussion of the contrasts between the learners' and other cultures. In this technique, the teacher presents the information orally, and learners are asked to answer questions relating to a typical incident or event in the target culture. It is possible for learners to prepare a culture capsule at home and give an oral presentation during class time, which is combined with realia and visual aids, as well as a set of questions to stimulate discussion. The main advantage of using a culture capsule is that learners become involved in the discussion and are drawn to consider the basic characteristics of their own culture.

The *slice-of-life technique* is a technique whereby the teacher chooses a small segment of life from the other culture e.g. from You Tube. Then it is presented to learners at the beginning of the class. It catches learners' attention and arouses their interest, and does not take up much class time.

The *quiz or multiple-choice* can be used to test materials that the teacher has already taught, but it is also useful in learning new information. It is not important whether learners can get the answer right or not, but by predicting or guessing, they will become more interested in finding out about the answer. The right answer will be provided by the teacher, through reading, watching a video, or other classroom activities. Quizzes are high-interest activities that can keep learners involved.

Role-play is an activity which learners are familiar with. They imagine themselves in an intercultural situation outside the classroom, and perform a role-play about a situation within their own culture or another culture. Experiencing the situation from different perspectives can contribute to an awareness and understanding of one's own culture and the cultures of other people.

The study and compare technique involves studying of authentic materials (visual and printed materials) and compare them e.g. proverbs, stories, jokes, notices and advertisements).

Project work learners gather information and data about a particular cultural issue and present their findings in a form of an end-product (aPP presentation, poster, short video, drama etc.). Learners who carry out projects focusing on cultural issues can get a deeper insight into the target and local culture. Apart from acquiring cultural knowledge they can be emotionally involved in the topic and that would reinforce their understanding of "the difference and otherness".

Many activities and tasks teachers frequently use in the classroom can be easily adapted to use in teaching cultural issues. To give a few examples Williams (2003) mentions: *word association, culture bump (critical incident),meeting of cultures role play, quizzes or questionnaires, brainstorming on stereotypes, analyzing jokes, proverbs, advertisements, street scenes* etc.

Review questions

Explain differences between big c and little c culture.

Which techniques can be employed in the process of developing cultural awareness?

Summary

Nowadays, the digital resources and new technologies enable teachers to adapt the more traditional techniques and create new ones to bring the target culture into the classroom.Technology based activities allow learners to interact directly with L2 culture without any restrictions. Exploring and constructing a deeper understanding of other cultures can be a memorable experience that would increasing not only learner´s communicative competence but their motivation as well.

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Glossary

ACCURACY	the degree of correctness a learner achieves when using language means
AIMS	what a teacher hopes a learner will achieve as a result of teaching; indicated in a lesson plan
ANTONYMS	words with opposite meanings
AUTHENTIC TEXTS	texts written for native speakers; not produced for didactic purposes
BACK-CHAINING	get learners to repeat a sentence bit-by-bit, starting from the back
BRAINSTORMIMG	learners in pairs prepare a topic by suggesting as many ideas as possible in the shortest possible time
BUZZ GROUPS	groups of learners which are formed to brainstorm ideas before a discussion, for example
CHECKING QUESTIONS	asked by the teacher to find out whether learners have understood a grammar, vocabulary, a text etc.
CHORAL REPETITION	all learners repeat a short sentence/phrase/word at the same time and rhythm
CHORUS	all learners speak together using the same words, stress and rhythm
COHERENCE	learners organize their ideas in a logical and coherent way e.g. in writing
COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES	are those where a learner uses English to communicate real meaning, as opposed to practice language
CONTROLLED PRACTICE	is practice where learners concentrate on a specific language point
DEBATE	a communicative activity in which learners discuses or argue different points of view

DEDUCTIVE APPROACH	a procedure when a learner first learns rules and then makes sentences on the basis of those rules
DRAFTING	the stage in the writing process when learners write the first version of a text
EDITING	the stage in the writing process when learners look at the first draft and make corrections and changes
ESA	engage, study and activate: three elements that should be present in a lesson
EXTENSIVE READING	learners read longer texts for pleasure
EXTENSIVE LISTENING	learners listen to longer texts, usually outside the classroom, often for pleasure
FEEDBACK	what the teacher tells learners about how well they have done in terms of language use
FREER PRACTICE	a stage that follows controlled practice and learners try to use the new language in their own sentences and/or dialogues
GIST	a general idea of a text for reading/listening development
GUIDED DISCOVERY	the teacher points learners in the direction of the language they are being asked to understand
GUIDED WRITING	learners are given the shape and sequence of a piece of writing in order to help them to write it
INDUCTIVE APPROACH	the procedure by which learners are given several examples of the language and try to work out how it is constructed
INFORMATION GAP ACTIVITY	learners have different pieces of information about the same subject and have to share this information in order for them both to get all the information they need to complete a task
INTENSIVE LISTENING	learners listen to a text and discuss detailed aspects of the meaning as well as studying the language and text construction

INTENSIVE READING	learners read a text and discuss detailed aspects of the meaning as well as studying the language and text construction
JIGSAW LISTENING/ READING	different learners listen/read different excerpts from a whole and then have to share to get all the information
LANGUAGE CHUNK	a group of individual words which operate as a meaningful unit e.g. *How do you do?*
LEARNER AUTONOMY	the stage when learners are capable of making their own learning decisions, using study skills and various learning strategies and resources on their own without the help of the teacher
LEARNING STYLES	the ways how learners approach learning which of their multiple intelligences they use and how they respond to different stimuli
LOCKSTEP	when all learners are “locked” in the same activity
LONG-TERM MEMORY	where learners store things (language) they have to remember for a longer time
MATCHING EXERCISE	learners have to match words from one group with meanings from another group
MINIMAL PAIRS	pairs of words which differ by one sound, e.g. bit/beat
MULTIPLE CHOICE	learners choose between three or four possible answers and only one is correct
PERSONALISATION	the stage when learners use the language they are studying to talk about themselves and their lives
PROCESS WRITING	the various stages that learners go through in a variety of sequences in order to compose a written text
PURPOSE	the aim, the goal of a speaking or writing activity
REFORMULATION	a way of reacting to a mistake where the teacher reformulates what the learner has just said incorrectly
REPETITION	learners are asked to repeat a sound, word or phrase either individually or in chorus

REVIEWING	a part of the writing process where learners look at what they have written to see if it needs further editing
ROLE PLAY	an activity in which learners are asked to imagine themselves in a situation and are given roles to play in that situation
SCAN	to look over or listen to a text to find out specific information
SELF-CORRECTION	learners can correct their own mistakes after the teacher has indicated incorrectness
SHORT-TERM MEMORY	the ability to remember things for a temporary period only, because they do not get transferred to our long-term memory
SKIM	to read a text to get the general meaning or gist
SYNONYMS	words that more or less mean the same thing
TASK	something the teacher asks learners to do
TIMELINES	when teaching tenses, they represent verb tenses diagrammatically
TTT	stands for teacher talking time, the amount of time in a lesson where the teacher is speaking
VIRTUAL LEARNING	learning over the Internet
VOCABULARY	all the words in English and the ways words collocate (join together) into phrases and chunks
WRITING-FOR-WRITING	activities which are used to train learners to be better writers, the tasks reflect real writing tasks
WRITING-FOR-LEARNING	activities used to practice language learners acquire in written form, e.g. to reinforce something they have been studying

(Adapted from Harmer, 2009)

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