

ELT-18

# Activity Days in Language Learning: Notes for Teacher Trainers

Milestones in ELT

## **Milestones in ELT**

The British Council was established in 1934 and one of our main aims has always been to promote a wider knowledge of the English language. Over the years we have issued many important publications that have set the agenda for ELT professionals, often in partnership with other organisations and institutions.

As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations, we re-launched a selection of these publications online, and more have now been added in connection with our 80th anniversary. Many of the messages and ideas are just as relevant today as they were when first published. We believe they are also useful historical sources through which colleagues can see how our profession has developed over the years.

## **Activity Days in Language Learning: Notes for Teacher Trainers**

This booklet from 1977 accompanied a teacher training film about innovative 'activity days' at the British Council's English Language Teaching Institute in London. Activity days were designed to provide English language learners with a range of intensive, stimulating and personalised language practice tasks. The film shows how students on one particular day selected and performed various activities. The booklet provides notes on the students featured in the film, describes how the day, the activity rooms and the activities were organised, and gives tips for introducing and using the film in teacher training.

A film for language teachers

Activity  
days in  
language  
learning

Notes for teacher trainers  
**THE BRITISH COUNCIL**

# Activity days in language learning

a teacher training film produced by  
**THE BRITISH COUNCIL**  
English Language Teaching Institute

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16mm; colour  
duration: 27 minutes

## **Films for Language Teachers No 3**

The English Language Teaching Institute (ELTI) was a department of the British Council in London specialising in teacher training, materials design and the provision of language improvement courses for selected groups of students coming to Britain for higher academic study or for professional reasons. Its functions have now been largely taken over by the English Language Services Department.

### **Other ELTI teacher training materials**

#### **Films for language teachers**

- 1 **Using magazine pictures in the language classroom**  
16mm; colour; duration: 27 minutes. 1975
- 2 **Using tape recorders in the language classroom**  
16mm; colour; duration: 35 minutes. 1977
- 3 **Activity days in language learning**  
16mm; colour; duration: 27 minutes. 1977
- 4 **Communication games in a language programme**  
16mm; colour; duration: 27 minutes. 1978
- 5 **Pair and group work in a language programme**  
16mm; colour; duration: 27 minutes. 1980

**ACTIVITY DAYS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING**  
was awarded a Diploma of Merit  
at the Rome didactic Film Festival, May 1978.

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\* These notes are intended to assist teacher trainers in deciding how to make best use of the film. Only the Appendices are intended for duplication and distribution to viewers, with full permission of the British Council.



# Notes for teacher trainers

## **Purpose of the film**

The British Council's English Language Teaching Institute in London (ELTI) included among its commitments intensive courses of different kinds for foreign students. The film **ACTIVITY DAYS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING** shows one component of these intensive courses.

Activity Days are designed:

to cope with the needs of the individual student by giving him learning tasks that relate to his linguistic ability, his reasons for studying English and his personal interests;

to give students an opportunity to interact with other students in a learning situation other than the traditional teacher-dominated classroom;

to give variety to the classroom approach and so help student motivation;

to allow students to develop their own study strategies by giving them an opportunity to exercise a choice from a wide variety of learning materials.

The film shows how an Activity Day at ELTI was organised, how and why students selected particular activities for themselves, and how they carried out the various tasks. It also shows the role of the teacher on Activity Days.

The film does not set out to show the 'only' way or the 'best' way of organising Activity Days. We hope that after seeing the film viewers will want to discuss how to adapt ELTI Activity Days to their own situations. We make some suggestions to help this discussion on page 21 *Discussion and Groupwork*.



## The students

The students who appear in the film are typical of students at ELTI. They have recently arrived from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East – and a few from Europe. They have all come to Britain for postgraduate studies or research. Although they have all studied English in their own countries, they need to attend remedial classes on arrival in Britain.

The students' background and environment should be borne in mind when discussing the film.

In the film and in these notes the following students are identified by name:

### Listening Room

**Kim** from South Korea; listens to *Company Report*; studying economics.

**Mohammed** from North Yemen; listens to tape on hydroponics; studying horticulture.

### Press Room

**Rosalba** from Mexico; dressed in yellow and brown, with a flower in her hair; studying economics.

**Mohammed** from North Yemen (see above).

### Research Room

**Carlos** from Colombia; fair-haired, with beard; studying mechanical engineering.

**Mohammed** from Sudan; studying seed-technology.

**Julio** from Chile; works on bus timetable exercise; studying ecology.

### Games Room

**Torkany** From Afghanistan; plays *The London Underground Game* with Carlos and Kim; studying agriculture.

- Benjamin from El Salvador; plays *Ask the Right Question* with Mohammed from North Yemen; studying computer management.
- Rosalba and Mohammed from Mexico and Sudan (see above).
- Soedarmo from Indonesia; wearing Indonesian batik shirt; studying irrigation engineering.

Near the beginning of the film some students tell us which Activity Room they are going to. They are:

- Mohammed from Sudan (see above).
- Carlos from Colombia (see above).
- Hafid from Indonesia; wearing light-coloured T-shirt; studying irrigation engineering.
- Rafael from Colombia; with small moustache and dark curly hair; studying agricultural engineering.

At the end of the film some students comment on Activity Days.

They are:

- Rosalba from Mexico (see above).
- Mohammed from North Yemen (see above).
- Mohammed from Sudan (see above).
- Carlos from Colombia (see above).

## **The students' language course**

The film was made during the third week of an intensive six-week language course. As the students are in Britain for postgraduate studies or research, the course aims to improve not only their general listening and speaking skills but also their skills in academic English.

There are forty-five students, divided at the beginning of the course into three language ability groups. For the morning sessions of the last three weeks they are regrouped according to their academic disciplines (economics, agriculture, etc). The students study five days a week from 9.30 to 4 o'clock, with the exception of Thursdays when afternoons are free and the students work from 9.30 to 10'clock.

On every day except Thursdays the students work with their groups, closely guided by a teacher. Thursdays are Activity Days; students are free to work on their own and to choose whatever learning activities they feel are relevant to their needs and interests.

More details about the course and ELTI Activity Days can be found in *Activity Options in Language Courses* by Marian Geddes and Janet McAlpin (see *Bibliography*).

## **The film**

The film shows the Activity Day of the third Thursday of the course. Students are offered a wide variety of activities designed to give them practice in listening, oral communication, reference skills and extensive reading. Some of these activities also help the students in their social and cultural orientation to life in Britain. The activities are designed for self-study but a tutor is available in each room for consultation.

### **Attendance cards**

Attendance on most ELTI courses was obligatory and therefore attendance cards were issued. In the film students are seen collecting their cards at the beginning of the morning.

Tutors note the time when a student comes in and when he leaves an activity room. The cards also serve as a record of students' work; the student or tutor notes down on the card which activities were chosen in a particular room. This can also be of help in subsequent weeks. For example when Mohammed comes into the Research Room, the tutor Gill glances at his card to see which activities he chose the previous week. She is then able to suggest that he continue working on tasks based on back numbers of the journal *Horticulture Industry*.

ELTI Activity days			Name .....	
			Group .....	
Please return this card to a teacher at the end of the morning				
Date	Room	Arrived	Work done (with title and reference number)	Departed

### Guidance

At the beginning of the course, before the first Activity Day, the students are told what type of activities can be found in each room. However, as they are all mature postgraduate students, aware of their particular language needs and weaknesses, they are given no individual guidance as to which activities they should choose. With younger students it might be advisable to give each student a guidance card based on a diagnostic test and suggestions from the classroom teacher(s). However, if guidance is too specific it may mean that the students no longer exercise a choice and one of the benefits of Activity Days may be lost, (see *Purpose of the Film*). It is not easy to find the correct balance.

### The role of the tutors

Tutors are responsible for setting up their activity rooms before each session. The film shows the four tutors assembling resources, shifting furniture and displaying resources. As far as possible the room in which the particular resources are stored is the room used for the related activities. For example, the Research Room is normally a staff common room, where dictionaries, research materials

and games are stored. The classroom next door to the common room is used as the Games Room.

During the Activity Day the tutor is available for consultation. For example in the Press Room students who have been using the questions on the black-board for guidance may wish to discuss their answers with the tutor, Diana. In the Research Room we see Gill answering an engineering student's question about 'ball bearings' and another student's question about the bus timetable he is consulting.

The tutors work as a team, sharing ideas for activities, collecting resources and developing materials together. This team work is essential; without it not enough materials could be assembled to offer the students a genuine choice from week to week.

During the course one tutor acts as Activity Days coordinator, making sure for instance that the other tutors not only work in the room that particularly interests them but also know what is happening in the other rooms.

### Activity Rooms

The activities are available in four rooms. At the beginning of the film we see students consulting a notice on the staircase landing indicating the four rooms in which they can choose to work: Listening, Press, Research and Games. The room numbers (302, 305, 204, 205) are also shown. Students are free to change rooms at will and to take one short break at any time in the morning that they wish.

In the film some students explain why they are choosing to go to a particular room. Mohammed is going to the Research Room because he feels it can help him with the kind of library reference skills he will need at college: 'I can learn how to pick up books and how to pick up knowledge and can learn many things which can be of great use when I go to the college'\*. Carlos is also going to start the day in the Research Room because he feels the activities there help him to learn to look up and write down references quickly. Later he plans to go to the Games Room because, as he says, 'I enjoy and learn at the same time'. Hafid wants to spend the whole morning in the Listening Room as he feels his greatest difficulty is understanding native English speakers: 'I'm going to go to the Listening Room for to practise my listening in English because you know that the most difficulty is for me in learning English, that is to hear the native English speakers. And I'm afraid I am going, I don't have any time to go to another

\* In this and other quotations from the film no attempt has been made to correct the students' English. Conventional punctuation has been used to make the quotations as easy to read and understand as possible.

room.' Rafael wants to go to the Listening Room and the Games Room: 'I'm going to the Listening Room and then to the Games Room. Listening Room because I like to improve my listening, practising some tapes, record tapes, and then I'm going to the Games Room because I like to practise teaching, talk, talking with people and I practise in some games.'

### The Listening Room

LISTENING is offered in a 16-booth language laboratory. Students at ELTI spend on average two hours a day working on oral-aural practice tapes for remedial practice, or, during the Study Skills component of the course, listening to academic discourse. Tapes in the Listening Room offer further listening practice on topics of general interest as well as on topics that are of interest to only a few individuals. The tutor Jim says: 'The students need to be exposed to a very wide range of different types of language. If we feel that there is a strong interest in a particular programme we'll certainly put it on two weeks running but on the whole we like to offer a different choice of programmes each week.'

Tapes available to students on the day the film was made were:

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#### Listening Library

Programme of 4th August 1977

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#### Booth No. Title

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- |    |     |   |
|----|-----|---|
| 1  | ●   | The Man who Escaped: Episodes 6–10                                  |
| 2  | ●   | The Man who Escaped: Episodes 11–15                                 |
| 3  | ● ▲ | Note-taking Exercises (Units 5–9)                                   |
| 4  | ▲   | Musical Dictation: Fountain of Sorrow                               |
| 5  | ● ▲ | Three Animal Stories (CIEL Experiences)                             |
| 6  | ● ▲ | Three True Stories from the USA (CIEL Experiences)                  |
| 7  | ▲ ■ | Agriculture: Plant Growth without Soil (TITN)                       |
| 8  | ▲ ■ | Audio-Magazine: Public Transport<br>Problems & Solutions            |
| 9  | ▲ ■ | Economics: Company Report Pt 1                                      |
| 10 | ▲ ■ | Biochemistry: Making Cellulose from Straw (TITN)                    |
| 11 | ▲ ■ | Computer Science: The Effect of Computers on<br>Business Management |
| 12 | ▲ ■ | Byne: Listening Comprehension Exercises (Units 11–20)               |
| 13 | ▲ ■ | Agriculture: A Pig Project (CIEL Experiments)                       |
| 14 | ■   | Problems of Adopting to University Life (BCAMP)                     |
| 15 | ■   | Fisheries: Fish-farming Part 2: Turbot                              |
| 16 | ■   | Ecology/Civil Engineering: A Dam Project (CIEL Experiments)         |

- Elementary
  - ▲ Intermediate
  - Advanced
-

A notice near the door of the room lists the tapes that are available for that day. Coloured dots beside the title of each tape indicate whether the tape is at an elementary, intermediate or advanced level. Numbers refer to the numbers on the language lab booths. (Institutions which have a cassette library system would of course be able to offer a much wider choice than ELTI could.)

Scripts, or texts, for each programme are available in folders on a central table for students to check their understanding after listening. Numbers on each folder correspond to the numbers on the language lab booths.

Mohammed, who is listening to a tape about hydroponics, explains what his task is: 'I have to listen to it first without text and second one with text and the third one without text, to compare what I have learned in this if there is difference between first and third listening.' In the film we see him listening without the text. He then asks Jim for it, who tells him to take a copy from the appropriate folder on the table.

Kim, who is listening to a tape entitled *Company Report*, has a more precise task. He is instructed by the tutor to take a worksheet from the appropriate folder on the table. The worksheet guides his listening by requiring him to note down specific information. He then compares his completed worksheet with the master answer card and listens to the tape again to see where and why he was wrong at any point.

Written instructions on pink cards are placed in each language lab booth. The cards that were in Kim's and Mohammed's booths are reproduced opposite. (The reference number in the top right hand corner is the tape and script identification in the ELTI Listening Library.)

The tutor can monitor students' progress from the console. He is also available to answer students' questions, either through the language lab intercom system or by going to the student booth and talking more directly, perhaps with reference to the tapescript.

### **Company Report**

**ELTI LL M10. 1. 3**

You are going to hear part of the Chairman's speech given to shareholders at the Annual General Meeting of an international manufacturing company.

### **Instructions**

1. Take a worksheet from the folder.
2. Listen to the recording and do the exercise on the worksheet. Stop and rewind the tape when necessary.
3. Check your answers with the Answer Card in the same folder.
4. Listen again, this time reading the script as you listen.

### **Hydroponics**

**ELTI LL M15. 1. 2**

You are going to hear a radio interview with an expert on hydroponics. He describes progress made in this field, enabling plants to be grown successfully in water without soil.

### **Instruction**

1. Listen to the tape at least once.
2. Rewind. Listen again, this time reading the script as you listen. Look up in the dictionary any words you do not understand.
3. Rewind. Listen to the tape once more, this time *without* the script. See if you can understand everything.



## The Press Room

PRESS is included as a valuable opportunity for students to encounter a wide range of British newspapers and magazines and to read at length with a consultant tutor at hand. If they wish, they can use some of the questions on the blackboard to guide their reading. The questions written up by the tutor Diana on the day the film was made were:

### Newspapers – Sundays and dailies

1. Find a news item in a Sunday paper, then see how the story has developed in one of the daily papers.
2. Compare a Sunday paper with its daily equivalent, eg Sunday Mirror/Daily Mirror. How do they differ?
3. Which Sunday papers (a) give mainly serious coverage?  
(b) mainly entertain their readers?
4. Look at the list giving newspapers circulation. Why do you think some newspapers have a higher circulation than others?
5. Which newspapers (Sundays and dailies) do you prefer? Why? How do they compare with your favourite newspapers back home?

### Weeklies – Magazines

In which weeklies/magazines would you expect to find articles on:

science	education
entertainments in London	literature
politics	radio and TV programmes
sociology	items for sale
women	humour

As Diana explains: 'In the Press Room we have a kind of progression. In the beginning we very much guide them to look for basic things, for example "Where is the editorial?", to look at for example political bias, look at the general coverage of various items of news. Once they can find these general

ideas, we guide them to look for the same sort of things in magazines. By Week 3 or 4 they're pretty familiar with the newspapers and magazines and then it's very much a question of them choosing what they would like to read themselves.'

In the film Rosalba, an economics student, has been thinking about Question 5 on the blackboard. She comes to discuss *The Financial Times* with Diana: 'She obviously finds this newspaper very useful for her and she's also been looking for a newspaper that will give her information and articles on economics that she can read while she's in Britain. She's been looking at it for about three weeks now so she's pretty familiar with the coverage and the layout. Because she's familiar with it I doubt that she'll come up for a chat any more now. She'll be able to read it on her own.'

While Diana and Rosalba are talking, Mohammed comes into the Press Room. He selects a magazine to read. Diana comments: 'I don't suppose Mohammed will want to come up and talk to me. He's quite familiar with the way the room works. He'll probably read for as long as he likes and then come and collect his card and go to another room.'

### The Research Room

RESEARCH is included to allow students to use published and home-made self-access materials to practise certain library and reference skills. As Gill explains: 'When our students go on to university, time is very important and they have to be able to find the books and the information that they need very quickly. So we have research skills exercises, skimming through the Contents of a book, skimming through an article to find a small detail or a particular piece of information . . . . They have to be able to find their way through a catalogue, find their way through a filing system quickly and efficiently.'

On the day the film was made students were offered a choice from reference exercises to practise using indexes, tables of content, bibliographies, dictionaries, public information sources (eg London telephone directories, newspaper cinema guides, bus and train timetables) and to practise consulting professional journals and pamphlets. (For discussion and examples of some of these exercises see reference in the *Bibliography*). Self-access reading comprehension exercises are always available, and the SRA Researchlab is often used. (See reference in the *Bibliography*.) A wide range of dictionaries is available for students to consult.

The exercises are all self-access. This means that students can themselves select the materials they need and check their own answers. In the film Carlos chooses a yellow Bibliography Workcard from the central Reference Skills Workcard file, and then finds the corresponding Worksheet in the filing cabinet below. The answers to the questions on his Worksheet are on the back of the Workcard.

He borrows a watch from another student because instructions on the Worksheet tell him to note down the time it takes him to complete the exercise; he can then compare this time with that of a native speaker by consulting a list at the front of the central Workcard file. As Carlos explains: 'I have to answer all of these questions about this bibliography. It's a book of science . . . . And then when I've finished I have to compare the answers with the really answers at the back of this page and check the time that I take to do it with the time that an English speaker takes to do it very well'. This timing serves a useful purpose. A student may answer all the questions correctly and think that he has no more need to practise. However when he realises that he took, say, 12 minutes to complete the exercise while a native speaker took only 2½ minutes, he realises that there is more to the skill than accuracy.

Mohammed is a seed technologist and horticulturalist. He chooses to do skimming exercises using back numbers of the journal *Horticulture Industry*. Julio, who will be studying in Aberdeen, is doing an exercise from the Public Information section of the same Reference Skills file as Carlos is using. The exercise requires him to look up a timetable of coaches to Aberdeen.

### **The Games Room**

GAMES are important for the opportunities they give for free oral communication. As the tutor Marion says: 'The Games Room offers an opportunity to the students to communicate, to talk, so that it's a chance for the students to put into practice in an uncontrolled situation the kind of language that they've been learning in a controlled situation in the classroom.'

Most of the games are home-made, for two or more players, but published games are sometimes included. On the day the film was made the students could choose from the following:

- 1 Describe and Draw
- 2 Describe and Arrange
- 3 Find the Difference
- 4 Ask the Right Question
- 5 On the Bus
- 6 What's my Line?
- 7 The London Underground Game

New games are added in the following weeks to provide variety and maintain interest and enjoyment.

In the film we see three students, Kim, Carlos and Torkany, playing 'The London Underground Game'. This game is intended to help students become familiar with the London Underground system and is used only in the first two

or three weeks of a course. They players each have three picture postcards of tourist sights that they must visit by travelling on the Underground. A Start Card tells them at which station they are to start and finish their journey. They move a coloured disc from station to station according to the number they have thrown with the dice. If they throw a 'one' they have to take a Chance Card which quotes one of several London Transport notices commonly found in the Underground and which usually serves to delay the traveller by requiring him for example to miss a turn.

Other games are designed primarily to make students communicate orally with each other. Benjamin and Mohammed (N. Yemen) are seen playing 'Ask the Right Question'. Each player in turn picks up a card from a central pile. He asks his partner a question which will obtain as an answer the word or words written on the card. Rosalba and Mohammed (Sudan) are seen playing 'Describe and Draw'. Rosalba has a picture which she describes to Mohammed. Mohammed, who hasn't seen the picture, has to try and draw it. At the end of the game he compares his picture with Rosalba's.

Each game is kept in a coloured folder which has instructions how to play the game on the front cover. Each folder is kept with other versions of the same game in the box files on the central table.

Descriptions of other home-made communication games used at ELTI, as well as some published ones, are given in the *Bibliography*.

Marion comments: 'I think what's most interesting about the Games Room is perhaps not just the language that is generated by the game or by the activity but that they (the students) interact with each other . . . . They may be in the sort of position where they have to ask each other to repeat, where they have to ask for clarification because they haven't understood their partner correctly and so you get a language of interaction. It may be arguing. For example, in the Underground Game there's often a lot of arguing — of a very friendly kind of course!'

The tutor usually refrains from correcting mistakes: 'As soon as a teacher interferes then that's a different kind of interaction that goes on. It becomes teacher and student, rather than student to student.'

Because students may change rooms at will, a student may arrive in the Games Room at a time when no other student is free to play with him. Short individual activities are provided which a student can do while he waits for a partner: crossword puzzles (colour-coded according to language level), and folders of language jokes and word games using *BBC Modern English* (see *Bibliography*). In the film we see Soedarmo settling down to look at one of these folders while he awaits the arrival of another student who will play a communication game with him.

## **Student comments**

At the end of the film some of the students comment on Activity Days.

Rosalba likes them because they give the individual student the opportunity to concentrate on what he or she needs most: 'I think this is a good method for teaching English because we can choose our necessities, what is the most thing, the most important thing we need.'

Mohammed (North Yemen) is also pleased with the opportunity given to him to concentrate his learning on topics that are particularly relevant to him: 'I think that for myself that's very nice idea to put Thursday by this way because for example last Thursday I had a good time in listening and also today with the agricultural materials. For example today I had tape on hydroponics, which is very important for me because it is on horticulture and this is my subject which I am going to study. I can say that I learned a lot of things, especially new terms, new words and how to listen to the professor while he is speaking.'

Mohammed (Sudan) appreciates the study skills materials in the Research Room and the independence that he learns to develop through being forced to decide for himself what he wants to study: 'When you go to the university you are supposed to be independent; you will find yourself in a position to depend upon yourself in finding the knowledge from books and from your research. Also this choosing of options, it enables you to take, to make the right decision, that is. And when, before you go to any option, you go to the Games or to the Research Room you have to decide for yourself.'

Carlos's favourite room is the Games Room: 'Well, I'd say I love the Games Room because it's the best way to speak very quickly and if you have to speak very quickly you have to think in English, like now, and it's difficult but it's the practice – really the practice of your English.'

## **How to use the film**

How the film can best be used will of course depend on local circumstances, on the teaching experience of the viewers, and on the time available. What follows are merely suggestions, to be adapted as appropriate.

### **Preparation for using the film**

Decide whether to duplicate and use the questionnaire in the Appendix. If viewers are not native speakers of English, it will help to guide their viewing and help them to understand specific points made in the film.

Decide whether to prepare and duplicate a second questionnaire. This second questionnaire could be used to guide viewers through a second viewing of the

film. It could help them to understand points that were not clear on the first viewing and focus their attention on detail. It might include the following questions:

### **Listening Room**

Kim uses a worksheet while he listens to his tape.

What is the worksheet for?

How does he use it?

How does he check his answers?

Mohammed is listening to a tape on hydroponics.

What does he ask Jim for?

Why does he ask Jim for it?

Where does he get it from?

Describe his listening task.

### **Press Room**

What has Rosalba been reading? Why?

Why does Diana not expect Mohammed to come up and discuss with her what he is reading?

### **Research Room**

Describe carefully what Carlos does from the moment you first see him in this room.

Mohammed (the student from Sudan) chooses to do an exercise on the journal *Horticulture Industry* because he is going to study seed technology. How does the tutor Gill know that he worked on one of the issues of this journal last week?

### **Games Room**

Write a clear set of instructions for the games 'Ask the Right Question' and 'Describe and Draw'.

What sort of language is likely to be needed by students when they play these games?

Which of the two players in each game gets the most practice?

Could elementary students play these games?

Allow time for discussion of the film after viewing. A minimum time will be about half an hour. Two or three hours will allow you to show the film and discuss the questionnaire in the Appendix, then to show the film again (perhaps room by room) and discuss how ELTI Activity Days could be adapted to the viewers' own situation. Some people may wish to use the film as a stimulus for a one- or two-day workshop where teachers will not only discuss the film and its implications for language learning and teaching, but will also plan the adaptation of Activity Days to their own situation, and prepare materials.

### Introducing the film

Tell the viewers who the students in the film are. (See page 6 *The students*.)

Explain that most of the students' language course is teacher-centred, with the students learning in groups in classrooms. Activity Days provide an opportunity to individualise learning and to allow students to choose activities which are relevant to their own particular needs and interests. (See page 5 *Purpose of the film*, and page 8 *The students' language course*.)

Tell the viewers that on Activity Days the students are free to work in any one of four rooms: Listening, Press, Research and Games. In these rooms they will find activities designed to give them practice in listening, extensive reading, reference skills, and oral communication. Some of the activities also help the students in their social and cultural orientation to life in Britain.

Suggest to the viewers that, even though their teaching situation may be very different from that shown in the film, there may be many ways in which the ideas and materials shown in the film can be adapted to their own situation.

If you are using the questionnaire in the Appendix, distribute it to the viewers. Explain that the purpose of the questions is to help them understand and notice particular points in the film. Go through the questions briefly.

Explain that Kim, Carlos and Mohammed are the names of students appearing in the film.

### Discussion and groupwork

The major aim of most discussion work will be:

how to adapt ELTI Activity Days to the viewers' own situation.

This will include discussion of the following topics:

student-centred and teacher-centred learning;

coping with individual student needs and interests;

the design and use of self-access learning materials.

In considering how to adapt ELTI Activity Days to their own situation viewers should discuss the following questions:

Who are the viewers' students? (age; level of language learning; reasons for language learning; motivation; number of hours for language study.)

What could some form of Activity Day offer that is not provided for in the existing course design? (See ELTI's reasons for incorporating Activity Days into intensive courses in *Purpose of the film*. Other reasons might include: answering needs for remedial help; encouraging students of varying ability from different classes to work together; immersion in English activities in a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere; encouraging team work amongst the staff.)

How would Activity Days relate to the rest of the course? (in place of existing classroom hours, as at ELTI; an optional extra, perhaps after school hours; an 'immersion' weekend/end of term activity/holiday camp.)

How many classes would work together?

How much space would be available? (one, two or more classrooms; a corner in the school library or listening room; a permanent English language room.)

How many teachers would work together? (See the paragraph on the importance of team work on page 10.)



What equipment would be available? (a language laboratory; one or more tape recorders; junction boxes to allow several students to listen with headphones to the same tape recorder; a videotape recorder.)

What types of activities would be appropriate to the students?

How much guidance should students be given? (See *Guidance*.)

How much time would be available for teachers to develop and to continue developing materials?

References 3 and 10 in the *Bibliography* may interest some viewers. Both accounts describe activities in institutions with resources on a similar scale to ELTI's, i.e. several staff and activities in several places.

Many teachers may feel that they would like to start on a small scale, with only one room; others may have access to only one room. We therefore give some suggestions on how Activity Days could be conducted in one room.

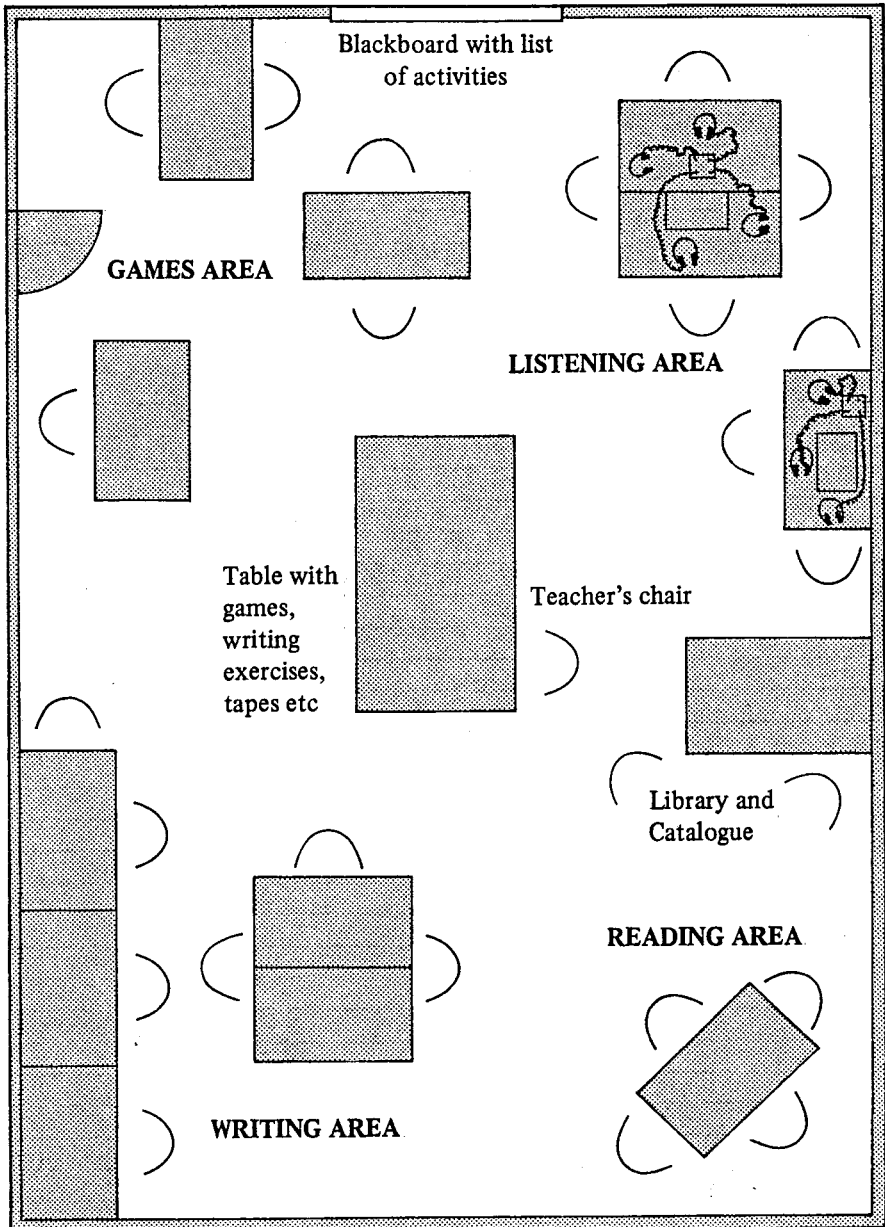
Divide the room into different areas, with each area physically suggesting a unit. This can be done by arranging the chairs and tables in different ways in different areas. You may even be able to use a couple of screens to separate the areas. The layout of the room should suggest variety – variety of task and of patterns of interaction with other students.

The diagram opposite shows a possible arrangement in a classroom for twenty-five students. The classroom furniture has been rearranged: a large teacher's table, thirteen student tables, twenty-six chairs. Two extra chairs have been brought into the room to encourage the students to move freely from one activity to another. The teacher may need to move the extra chairs around during the activities so as to ensure that there is a free place in a popular area.

If the furniture has to be rearranged at the beginning and end of every session, students can be asked to help.

Once teachers have reached this stage in the discussion, they will probably be full of ideas for materials. Here we add a few hints, assuming an arrangement into listening, games, writing and reading areas.

**Listening area:** It is probably better not to include oral drills on tapes as the teacher cannot monitor. Use a junction box so that several students can listen together to the same tape.



**Games area:** Restrict the number of students or the area may become too noisy. Include some quiet games such as writing and spelling games, if these are appropriate for the students.

**Writing area:** This area could include handwriting tasks, remedial grammar exercises and guided composition exercises. Make sure however that the exercises are self checking; otherwise the teacher will find he spends his time correcting instead of being available for consultation and advice. If the students produce written composition work, it should be corrected between Activity Days. Students can each have an envelope into which they put work they have written and find work that has been corrected.

**Reading and research area:** Supplementary readers, magazines and comics can be used for extensive reading practice. A card index and a borrowing system should be designed so that students can finish reading material at home if they so wish. Worksheets with quiz questions can be prepared. These might be for example on British institutions and culture and require students to look up maps, tourist pamphlets, encyclopedias. The students should be able to check their answers on their own with Answer Cards.

## **Activity Days in Language Learning**

### **Appendix**

Appendix 1 and 2 are intended for duplication and distribution to viewers.

# Appendix I

## Activity Days in Language Learning — Questionnaire for viewers

Activity Days in Language Learning shows foreign postgraduate students on a six-week intensive course at the British Council's English Language Teaching Institute in London. The students study five days a week, most of the time in a formal classroom situation. Thursday mornings however are Activity Days, when the students are able to choose their own learning activities according to their individual needs and interests. The film shows the third Thursday of the course.

Before you watch the film read through the question below. They are to help you notice particular points as you watch. After you have seen the film, discuss the answers with the other viewers.

- 1 At the beginning of the morning each student collects a blue card. What is this card for?
- 2 Listening Room
  - a How do the students know what tapes are available?
  - b In this room we see two students, Kim and Mohammed, listening to their tapes. In what way do their listening tasks differ?
- 3 Press Room
  - a Why are there questions written on the blackboard?
  - b Do all the students have to answer the questions?

#### 4 Research Room

- a What do you think is the main purpose of this room?
- b Carlos (the student with the beard) chooses to do a reference skills exercise on a bibliography. Why do you think he times himself? How does he check his answers?

#### 5 Games Room

- a What do you think is the main purpose of the Games Room?

6 At the end of the film four students give their opinions about Activity Days. What points do they make?

7 Which do you think is the best word to describe the role of the tutors: teacher or consultant?

8 In what ways do the students in the film differ from your students?

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# Appendix 2

## Activity Days in Language Learning – Summary for viewers

1 Activity days are one component in intensive language courses for foreign postgraduate students at the British Council's English Language Teaching Institute in London. They are included in the course:

to cope with the needs of the **individual** student. He is given learning tasks that are appropriate for his language level and that are related to his reasons for studying English and his personal interest;

to give students an opportunity to interact with other students in a learning situation other than the traditional teacher-dominated classroom;

to give variety to the classroom approach and so help student motivation;

to allow students to develop their own study strategies by giving them an opportunity to choose for themselves from a wide variety of learning materials.

2 There are four activity rooms. Students are free to work in whichever room they wish: Listening, Press, Research and Games. They can also change rooms whenever they wish.

a Listening is offered in the language laboratory. The tapes offer listening practice on topics of general interest as well as on topics that are of interest to only a few individuals.

b Press is included as a valuable opportunity for students to encounter a wide range of British publications and to read at length with a consultant tutor at hand.

- c Research is included to allow students to practise certain library and reference skills that will be useful to them both in their university studies and in their day-to-day life in Britain.
- d Games are important for the opportunities they give for free oral communication. Most of the games are home-made, for two or more players.
- 3 Students carry attendance cards. These are signed in and out of rooms by tutors. The cards also serve as a record of students' work: students or tutors note down on the card which activities were chosen in a particular room.
- 4 The tutors are responsible for setting up their activity rooms before each session; in general this involves assembling resources, shifting furniture, and displaying resources. During the session the tutor is available for consultation.
- 5 Materials are designed for self-access so that the teacher does not have to spend time correcting work when he should be available for consultation and advice.
- 6 As one of the aims of Activity Days is to allow students to select from a wide range of learning activities, a large bank of appropriate materials has to be built up and continually added to. This is only possible if teachers are willing to share and develop ideas together. An additional advantage of Activity Days can be to build up a strong team spirit amongst teachers.
- 7 The film does *not* intend to suggest that viewers should adopt Activity Days. It is hoped that viewers will discuss how they could *adapt* some of the concepts and ideas of Activity Days to their own situations.

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