

Understanding learners

Teaching **English**

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How to use this resource

Teachers

Work through the module at your own pace. Do the self-assessment activity on the page after the Introduction to check your skills in this professional practice. The self-assessment activity will help you to decide which elements of practice you want to improve. Each area has four sections:

- A Analyse: Can you advise these teachers?** This section looks at real teachers' situations and a part of the practice they're finding difficult. Think of the advice you would give the teachers in the case studies. This section helps you to think about what you already do, and gives you some ideas to try in your own classes.
- B Think: What do you know?** This section gives an explanation of the area of practice. It might have new terminology. It is a good idea to have an ELT glossary, such as the [Teaching knowledge database](#) on the TeachingEnglish website, open for you to look up any words you don't know. This section also has a short task for you to check your understanding of the area of practice described.
- C Try: How does it work?** This section asks you to try something out in a class or over a number of lessons. The tasks will help you to think more about the area of practice in Section B and also to understand how the area applies to your teaching context. Some of the tasks need resources, but many can be done without any special preparation. It is a good idea to read several in-classroom tasks and then plan which task to do, with which groups of learners, and when.
- D Work together: What will help your teaching?** These sections have ideas for how you and your colleagues can do the activities together and support each other's professional development. If you are working on your own, then choose some of these activities and think about the questions. It's a good idea to keep a journal of your thoughts.

If you can, make a regular time to meet in a teachers' club or activity group, and together discuss your self-reflections. Write a plan for the year, deciding which sections to look at each time you meet. Make sure you consider the time you need for the in-classroom task, as you will need to do some things before the meeting, and so that you have ideas to talk about with your teacher activity group.

Teacher educators

If you're a teacher educator working with teachers, there are many ways you can use this resource. Get an idea of the teachers' strengths and weaknesses using the self-reflection page. You can also use other needs analyses you've done with your teachers, such as observations of classes and informal chats about their professional development.

Next, create a professional development plan for your teachers, choosing three to five of the most useful elements over a school year. Ask the teachers for their input into the plan as well, so they feel in control of their professional development.

If the teachers you are working with are in a group, you can use many of the *Work together* ideas. If you're working with individual teachers, you might like to work through sections yourself first, with your own classes if you have them, or perhaps by team-teaching parts of your teachers' classes, so that you can discuss and compare ideas.

Understanding learners: Introduction

Understanding your learners means considering all the different things that affect their motivation and ability to learn successfully, and then adapting lesson plans, materials, the methodology and the learning environment to suit both individual needs and the general characteristics of a class. Some of the factors to consider are age, culture, home language, level, strengths and weaknesses, personality, confidence, interests, motivation, learning preferences, previous learning experience and ability to work independently.

When you take steps to understand your class, e.g. through observation, discussion and informal chats, you are able to plan lessons that are more effective by building on the experience, knowledge and interests that the learners bring to the classroom. You are better able to meet your learners' emotional needs, and by recognising and using learners' interests and talents you help them to develop a positive attitude towards your subject.

From our research and work with teachers, the six elements of this professional practice that most teachers ask for help with are:

1 Understanding learner characteristics: attainment

In this element you will investigate techniques that give you real-time information about your learners' understanding and how successfully you are achieving the learning outcomes during a lesson. The focus is on questioning techniques, and the use of monitoring to evaluate performance and attainment during learner-centred activities. These techniques let you respond immediately if the learners are confused and make informed decisions about the best way to continue with the lesson/future lessons.

2 Understanding learner characteristics: age

During their school years, learners are developing their physical skills, social skills, ability to think and learn, and ability to manage their emotions. This means learners at different ages respond to different topics, activities and approaches. Understanding the age you teach helps you to teach effectively, increase motivation and enjoyment for the learners, and reduce classroom management problems.

3 Understanding learner characteristics: motivation to learn

A motivated learner wants to learn something, works hard to achieve it, and has a positive attitude towards the subject they are studying. The study of motivation is especially important for teachers because research has shown that motivation and successful learning are closely linked. However, there is a problem when subjects are compulsory at school and the learners may not be interested. How can you make them want to be in your class?

4 Understanding learner characteristics: autonomy

Learners who have autonomy are able to manage their own learning; they can identify their own learning needs, choose appropriate materials/activities to help them improve, and evaluate their own performance. Learner autonomy is interested in the process of learning rather than the results. It asks questions like 'Why did you do that activity? What did you find easy/difficult? What do you need to do next?'

5 Conducting needs analyses and applying the results







When you do a needs analysis, you find out information about the learners, their preferred ways of learning, and their strengths and weaknesses. To apply the results, you first analyse the information to identify the most important needs, the common interests and preferred ways of learning. With this information, you are able to select more appropriate, relevant and engaging materials, activities and approaches, making the learning experience more motivational and efficient.

6 Applying an understanding of the impact of the learning environment on my learners

Take a minute to think about the things that make it difficult for you to work. Perhaps it's a messy desk, being too hot/cold, having no windows, dark walls, or noises from the next room? Feeling comfortable (or not) in the learning environment affects learners' enjoyment, motivation and behaviour. A comfortable, attractive, well-organised space helps to create positive feelings and to enhance learning.

Understanding learners: Self-reflection

The table lists the elements that are included in this chapter. Think about what you already know and what you're good at. Self-assess by colouring in the stars. You can colour in more stars as you progress. The page numbers show where you can find out more about the element and work through some related professional development tasks.

Element	Rating	Pages
1. Understanding learner characteristics: attainment		4–7
2. Understanding learner characteristics: age		8–11
3. Understanding learner characteristics: motivation to learn		12–15
4. Understanding learner characteristics: autonomy		16–19
5. Conducting needs analyses and applying the results		20–23
6. Applying an understanding of the impact of the learning environment on my learners		24–27

References and further reading

Dörnyei, Z and Csizér, K (1998) Ten commandments for motivating language learners: Results of an empirical study. *Language Teaching Research* 2/3: 203–229.

Ellis, G and Ibrahim, N (2015) *Teaching children how to learn: plan, do, review!* Peaslake: Delta Publishing.

Moon, J (2011) *Children learning English*. Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann.

Nunan, D (1988) *Language teaching: A scheme for teacher education*. London: Oxford University Press.

Scrivener, J (2005) *Learning teaching*. Macmillan.

Swan, M and Smith, B (2014) *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

British Council (n.d.) Understanding learners. Available online at: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/teacher-development/continuing-professional-development/understanding-learners>



Introduction

As well as your formal assessment activities, there are a number of techniques you can use during a lesson to quickly check understanding and attainment. In this element, you will investigate questioning techniques that help you check understanding in teacher-directed stages, and the use of monitoring to evaluate performance during learner-centred activities. Both of these techniques give you real-time information about how successfully you are achieving the learning outcomes, and this means you can respond immediately to fine-tune your lesson (i.e. make small changes) as you go along. The learners are less confused and you can deal with small things before they become big problems. The techniques also help you to make informed decisions about the content and timing of future lessons and assessment. It can be dangerous to think that your learners will always learn what you teach. However, when you make frequent checks of understanding and performance you are much more likely to meet their needs, make sure learning happens and achieve your course objectives.

Aims

In this section you will:

- identify problems with checking learners' understanding and attainment in a teacher training seminar
- identify different teacher roles when monitoring
- try some monitoring techniques with your classes to help you make effective decisions about the direction of your lesson and future lessons
- collaborate with colleagues to solve problems with monitoring and create a checklist of dos and don'ts for new teachers.



Kevin is attending a teacher training seminar. How is he feeling? Have you ever felt like that at a seminar?

The seminar is called *How to Teach Speaking*. Kevin is very happy to be there and hopes to learn a lot of new speaking activities that he can do with his learners. The presenter is positive and funny so everyone is enjoying themselves. However, the presenter uses a lot of big words and Kevin isn't sure if he understands them.

'When we talk about teaching speaking we need to be clear about which sub-skills we are teaching. For example, it could be paraphrasing, a really important skill when you want to report what someone else said in your own words. Other sub-skills are hesitation devices, circumlocution, asking for clarification, and other formulaic expressions. Do you understand?'

Kevin gets more and more confused but he is too embarrassed to ask what it all means. Maybe everyone else can understand. Then the presenter asks the teachers to get into groups of four and make posters to show what all the speaking sub-skills are. The presenter goes out of the room for five minutes but the teachers don't understand what to do. They talk about what they are going to do at the weekend instead of making the posters.


Reflection

- Why is Kevin confused?
- How could the presenter check that the teachers understand what she is saying during the seminar?
- Why did the teachers start talking about their weekend plans?
- What should the presenter do to make sure the teachers do the task (making posters)?

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 28.

1B Think: What do you know?

When the learners are busy working on an activity by themselves, in pairs or in groups, you are also busy monitoring. When you monitor, you quietly observe the learners working to evaluate their performance and make decisions about what you need to do during and after the activity. Monitoring should be done unobtrusively (without attracting attention) so it is usually best to observe learners from behind. If, for example, you make eye contact with learners, they will probably want to speak to you instead of focusing on the task. You might help an individual learner or small group but otherwise you don't speak to the class during the activity/monitoring. It's a good idea to carry a clipboard with you so you can take notes about who has correct answers for feedback and examples of any language you want to highlight in feedback. Below, you can see some of a teacher's thoughts while he is monitoring a speaking game.

	A. Hmm they are having problems with irregular verbs.	B. Did they understand the instructions?
	C. Are they nearly finished?	D. How well are they doing?
	E. I need to listen to Sunny and Omar today.	F. Which learners need some help?
	G. Are they making any errors? What good language are they using?	

Activity

Match the different monitoring roles below with the teacher's thoughts.

Teacher monitoring roles

1. Write down examples of good language use and errors to highlight on the board in feedback at the end of the activity.
2. For speaking activities, assess some of the learners in order to give them individual feedback on what they are doing well/need to improve.
3. Decide how well they are achieving the lesson outcomes and whether the learners need more instruction.
4. Notice what problems learners have and plan future lessons to address them.
5. Check that learners have understood what to do and are able to do the activity.
6. Help any individual learners or small groups who need support for a short time.
7. Decide when to stop the activity.

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 28.

Reflection

- Which of the teacher monitoring roles do you think are the most important? Why?
- Are there any of the monitoring roles you don't do? Why not?
- What other things do you do while the learners are busy with an activity?
- Is it possible to monitor all the learners in your classroom(s)? If not, are there any changes you could make to the room layout?

1C Try: How does it work?

Resources: Learner-centred activities, clipboard (optional)

Time: One week

Rationale

Effective monitoring gives you information that helps you make decisions about what the learners need more help with, what to do next, and what feedback will be the most useful.

Instructions

Plan your lessons as usual for the week, and make sure there are some individual activities and speaking activities. During the lessons, monitor the activities using the guidelines below to help you. After each lesson, make notes about what you found easy/difficult, helpful or surprising.

Individual activities	Speaking activities
1. Check learners understand what to do and are doing the activity correctly.	1. Check learners understand what to do and are doing the activity correctly.
2. See if any learners need extra help.	2. If needed, listen and assess a few learners.
3. Check which questions learners are getting wrong.	3. Note down examples of good language use and errors to put on the board in feedback.
4. Check to see when most learners are finished and stop the activity.	4. Check to see when most learners are finished and stop the activity.
5. Put learners into pairs to check their answers. Monitor to note down who has good answers for feedback and which questions were difficult and need to be checked carefully.	5. Let learners discuss the results of their speaking activity with another pair/group.
6. Do feedback.	6. Do feedback.

Reflection

- How did monitoring help your teaching? What helped you the most?
- What (if any) problems did you have? How could you solve them?
- What changes did you make to your lesson plans/future lessons because of your monitoring?

1D Work together: What will help your teaching?

- 1 Share your reflections from 1C, and discuss any problems you had.
- 2 Work together to write a procedure, like the one above, for monitoring a writing activity.
- 3 Imagine you are training a new teacher. Work together to make a list of dos and don'ts for monitoring.



Introduction

Of all the things to consider as you go into the classroom, the age of the learners is one of the most important. Younger children have plenty of energy and enthusiasm but short attention spans. They are curious and willing to take risks but have limited life experience to support their learning. They seem to learn new language without effort but are unable to analyse and study language in formal ways. On the other hand, learners at secondary school can concentrate for longer but often seem less enthusiastic. They are more independent but may challenge the rules. They have more developed thinking but may be less likely to take risks. Learners at different ages respond to different topics, activities and methodology. Understanding the age you teach helps you to teach effectively, increase motivation and enjoyment for the learners, and reduce classroom management problems.


Aims

In this section you will:

- read about some common problems teachers have with different age groups and offer them advice
- think about the general characteristics of learners at different ages
- observe a group of learners you teach to notice how their age affects their behaviour and what they can/can't do
- consider how the learners' ages affects your lesson planning, how you manage the lesson, and the types of activities you use.


2A Analyse: Can you advise these teachers?

Read about the teachers' classes and underline the problem(s) for each teacher.




Vivian

I teach 11- to 13-year-olds and the only coursebook we have is for adults. My learners don't know about some of the topics and aren't interested in others. They get bored. I'm worried that it affects their motivation and how they feel about learning English.




Solomon

I have just changed to teaching younger children who are five and six years old. They are not able to read and write in their first language yet so I don't know how to teach them grammar.



Bishal

I teach teenagers. They work hard at reading, writing and listening, but I can't get them to speak. When I ask them a question, they either answer in their first language (L1) or say nothing. In pair work, they speak in L1 or write what they want to say and read it.



Linh

I teach seven- and eight-year-olds. I try to make the lessons fun and interesting, so I have lots of activities and games. The problem is the learners get too excited and noisy. They really get naughty sometimes. Should I stop using games?

Reflection

- Do you have any of the same problems/questions? What do you do about them?
- What advice would you give to each teacher?
- What do you think are the main differences between teaching primary and secondary learners?

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 29.

Read some of the general characteristics of learners at five to seven years and 12 to 15 years.

5–7 years	8–11 years	12–15 years
Behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short attention span • A lot of energy; need to move often • Curious; ask a lot of questions 		Behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can concentrate for longer periods • Want more independence • May question and challenge rules
Emotions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show strong emotions, which can change quickly • Impatient; don't know how to wait • Want and need individual attention from the teacher • Need a lot of praise 		Emotions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned about what others think of them; want to belong • Sometimes feel confident; sometimes feel nervous and shy • Have usually received criticism and failure when learning a language
Life experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited experience; often learning things for the first time in L2 		Life experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More aware of and interested in the wider world
Thinking and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn holistically • Find grammar rules difficult • Able to cope with not understanding everything • Can follow one- and two-step instructions 		Thinking and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reason and think logically • Capable of abstract thinking • Start to think more long-term • Feel academic pressure and stress • Able to see other points of view • Can follow multiple instructions
Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very keen to communicate • Learning how to make friends 		Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends become more important than the teacher/adults

However, individual learners can be quite different in their maturity and development, and there can be cultural differences as well. The general characteristics will not be true of every learner or every class.

Activity

What do you think are the characteristics of 8- to 11-year-olds? Complete the column in the table above.

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 30.

Reflection

- What characteristics would you add to the different age groups?
- Are any of the general characteristics different in your country/culture? How?
- Think about the age group(s) you mostly teach. What activities work well with them? Why? Which ones don't work? Why not?

2C Try: How does it work?

Resources: List of general characteristics for the class, if different age groups from 2B

Time: Three to four lessons

Rationale

When you are aware of what learners can/can't do and how they generally behave at their age, you are able to plan more effective lessons and respond more helpfully to their behaviour in class. For example, if a five-year-old can't sit still in class, you will remember that learners at that age have a lot of energy and change your lesson so the learners can stand up and move. Remember that all individuals, classes and cultures are different, so don't be surprised if you need to change/add to the list of general characteristics in 2B.

Instructions

Choose one class to research. Get the list of general characteristics for their age from 2B ready. Prepare different activities for the learners to do over three to four lessons. Observe the learners during the lessons and:

- tick any of the general characteristics that are true for most of the learners in your class
- note down any learners who behave differently from any of the general characteristics (but do not show this to the learners)
- look at the general characteristics for the age group above/below your class to see if any of these describe learners in your class, and make a note of these
- add four or five other characteristics that you notice are true for your class's age group.

Reflection

- What did you find interesting/surprising about observing the class?
- Were any of the general characteristics from 2B not true for your learners? Why do you think that is?
- What do you enjoy about teaching this age group?
- What do you find difficult about teaching this age group?

2D Work together: What will help your teaching?

- 1** Work in groups of two or three and share your reflections from 2C. Add any more general characteristics you agree with to your lists. Delete any that are not true for your school/country.
- 2** Work together with teachers of the same age group. Go through the general characteristics and discuss what each one means you should think about in your planning/the classroom e.g. 12- to 15-year-old learners are concerned about what other people think of them, so we shouldn't make them feel stupid in front of the class/we can correct them privately rather than in front of the class.
- 3** Work together to write a list of activities that work well/don't work well with the age group(s) you teach. Think about why they work/don't work.



Introduction

What does a motivated learner look like? How do they behave? Simply put, they want to learn something, they work hard to achieve it, and they have a positive attitude towards the subject they are studying. Research has shown that motivation and successful learning are closely linked. When subjects are compulsory at school, learners may lack motivation and interest in learning them. The question, then, is how to make them want to be in the class.

The area in which you can make the biggest difference is in developing a positive attitude towards your subject. Being confident and enthusiastic, creating a happy and relaxed classroom environment and making the lessons interesting all contribute to learner motivation. It is also important to build a strong relationship with the learners, give them individual attention and build up their self-confidence.

Aims

In this section you will:

- recognise the characteristics of unmotivated learners and identify some of the causes
- think about how teachers can help to develop positive attitudes towards learning their subject
- do a circle time activity with a class to find out about how the learners like learning and the things that motivate them
- share and reflect on the things that motivate and demotivate your learners in order to write a list of motivation strategies.

3A

Analyse: Can you advise these teachers?

Read the report cards for two unmotivated learners. Which learner do you think is the most unmotivated? Why?



Report card for Faizal Ahmad

Faizal is a polite and helpful student who always follows instructions and works quietly in class. He is the first student to help with any jobs in the classroom. Unfortunately, however, he has not made the progress we would like. Faizal daydreams in class and often draws pictures when he needs to pay attention. He looks confused when I ask him a question and he is shy about sharing his ideas. Faizal copies work from his friends. He needs to ask for help when he has a problem.

Report card for Isabella Gómez

Isabella has received average grades this year but she can do much better. Her project on tigers showed good understanding but her written work is often done quickly and with little effort. She needs to slow down so that she can produce better-quality work. Isabella talks a lot during quiet working periods and distracts other students. She often fiddles with things, which is noisy, and gets up and walks around the room for no reason. She needs to focus on working quietly and staying in her seat. Isabella has shown a lot of potential and I am sure that she will be very successful if she concentrates and tries harder.

Reflection

- Underline all the things Faizal and Isabella do that suggest they are unmotivated. Do any of your learners behave in the same ways?
- Why do you think Faizal and Isabella are unmotivated? Make a list of ideas, e.g. the work is too easy, the teacher talks too much. Think about the learner, the teacher and the lessons.
- What causes learners to be unmotivated in your school? How do these learners usually behave?

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 30.

3B Think: What do you know?

Understanding what motivates your learners is important because high levels of motivation generally result in high levels of success. Hungarian researchers Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) wanted to identify what things teachers did in the classroom that made the greatest difference to learner motivation. They asked 200 primary, secondary and university teachers and produced a list of 'commandments for motivating language learners', i.e. things that teachers should do. Dörnyei and Csizér's top six commandments are:

1. set a personal example with your own behaviour
2. create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom
3. present the tasks properly
4. develop a good relationship with the learners
5. increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence
6. make the language classes interesting.

Activity

Look at the list of strategies for teachers below. Decide which of Dörnyei and Csizér's commandments for increasing motivation they help with. Some strategies can belong to more than one commandment. Write the letters next to the appropriate number(s) above.

- A. Know and use the learners' names
- B. Make sure the learners understand the purpose of activities/tasks
- C. Design and adapt materials so they are at the right level, not too easy and not too hard
- D. Ask the learners what activities/topics they like and include them in the lessons
- E. Listen to learners' opinions and respond to what they say
- F. Give lots of praise and encouragement
- G. Be enthusiastic
- H. Smile, laugh and use humour
- I. Break activities down into small steps
- J. Correct learners' errors sensitively, avoid over-correcting
- K. Bring in materials other than the textbook
- L. Get learners curious and interested before you give them an activity
- M. Give clear instructions/demonstrate what to do
- N. Have fun in class; include games
- O. Be well prepared
- P. Vary the activities you use
- Q. Make learners feel that mistakes are a natural and normal part of learning a language

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 30.

Reflection

- What do you find interesting/surprising about Dörnyei and Csizér's top six commandments?
- Dörnyei and Csizér's study was with European teachers. Do you think the results would be different in your country? If so, how would they be different? Are there any other things that motivate learners in your country?
- What other strategies do you have for increasing learner motivation?

3C Try: How does it work?

Resources: A speaking object (soft toy, ball, spoon, etc.) to pass to the person who is speaking
Time: One lesson

Rationale

Circle time is an activity that lets learners share their feelings in a safe environment. It encourages them to help make decisions about their learning and to notice and accept differences of opinion. It also provides you with important information about what the learners like/don't like doing in class.

Instructions

- Choose a class that you feel comfortable trying something new with. If your class is very big, try working with half the class at a time while the other learners do some written work.
- Sit the learners in a circle on the floor or chairs, perhaps outside if you need space.
- Use a shared language for the activity unless the learners have a high level of English.
- Explain that you want to know how they like to learn so that you can plan better lessons.
- Set the rules: (1) only the person holding the speaking object is allowed to speak; (2) no interrupting; (3) people can pass if they don't want to say anything; (4) no put-downs.
- Hold the speaking object and complete a sentence yourself (e.g. *In my free time I...*). Pass the object to the learner on your left to complete the same sentence and then pass the object to the next person on their left. Continue until everyone has had a chance to speak. It's important that you do not interrupt, judge or correct the learners (unless they break any of the rules).
- Repeat with different sentence starters to elicit what motivates them (e.g. *I like a teacher who..., I enjoy lessons when..., I don't like lessons when...*).
- Thank the learners for sharing their ideas. Explain that you will think about what they said when you are planning lessons, but of course you won't be able to do what everyone wants.
- If appropriate, ask your learners to discuss with a partner how they found the activity and then share their feelings with you.

Reflection

- How did your learners respond to the circle time activity? What worked well/didn't work?
- Write down comments you remember the learners saying to share with your colleagues in 3D. What were the most surprising things the learners said?
- What changes will you make to your teaching because of what they said?

3D Work together: What will help your teaching?

- 1 Share your experience of using circle time with your class. What worked well? What didn't work well? How would you change it if you did it again?
- 2 Write two columns on the board – Things that motivate/Things that don't motivate. Together, add all the ideas your learners told you. Discuss and agree on the three that you think are the most important in each column.
- 3 Work together to make a list of ten strategies to motivate learners in your school.



Introduction

Learners who have autonomy are able to manage their own learning; they can identify their own learning needs, choose appropriate materials/activities/instruction to help them improve, and evaluate their own performance. Learner autonomy is concerned about the process of learning rather than the results. It asks questions like 'Why did you do that activity? How did that help you? What do you need to do next?' As a teacher, you need to be always providing opportunities for learners to take control.

In the language classroom, autonomy is especially important since it is difficult to get enough exposure to English in a few hours a week at school. Training learners to take advantage of English opportunities outside of the classroom can greatly improve results. You also want to provide learners with skills and strategies to communicate independently. When you provide learners with strategies to improve their learning or help them to find information/resources and solve problems for themselves, they become more confident and engaged, which increases motivation.

Aims

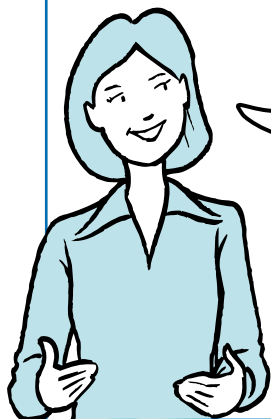
In this section you will:

- consider problems teachers have when asking learners to take more responsibility for their learning and offer some advice
- read about the different skills and behaviours of autonomous learners and match them to appropriate techniques/classroom activities
- try a technique/activity for developing learner autonomy and reflect on the results
- collaborate with colleagues to make a poster of ideas for developing learner autonomy.

4A Analyse: Can you advise these teachers?

Read about the teachers' classes and underline the problem(s) for each teacher.

Cindy



Most classes in our country are teacher-centred and learners are not encouraged to have autonomy. I am trying really hard to help them understand how it will help them, but it isn't part of any assessment so I feel like I'm wasting my time.

Rahul



I can't let my learners have much choice or be independent because they have to pass the test at the end of each term and it takes all my time to teach them everything.

Chen



When I give my learners a choice of assessment tasks they always choose the easiest, do what their friends are doing, or ask me to tell them what to do.

Daniel



Sometimes I ask my learners to do self-assessment, for example, after doing a piece of writing or a speaking activity. They just look at me with blank faces and seem very confused that I'm not doing the assessment.

Reflection

- Do you have any of the same problems? What other problems do you have with trying to develop learner autonomy in your school?
- What advice would you give to each of these teachers?
- What do you do in your classes to encourage learner autonomy?

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 31.

4B Think: What do you know?

The table below shows some of the things autonomous learners can do, and uses the 'Plan–Do–Review' cycle of planning to learn something, do it and then reflect on the learning.

	Autonomous learners can...
Plan	A. Help make decisions about what is to be learned and how B. Select appropriate learning activities/resources
Do	C. Use different learning strategies
Review	D. Reflect on what they have learned and how they learned it E. Understand the purpose of activities F. Evaluate their own performance G. Understand their own preferred ways of learning

Activity

Match the techniques for developing autonomy below with what autonomous learners can do above. Some techniques can belong to more than one letter.

1. Learners practise recording new vocabulary in different ways and choose the ones they like best.
2. At the end of the lesson, ask learners three questions: 'What did we do? Why did we do it? What did we learn?'
3. Ask learners to complete a self-assessment, for example, in the form of 'can do' statements (I can explain what I want: 😊 😐 😞)
4. Model your thinking processes. For example, if writing a formal letter on the board with the class (shared writing) you could say 'I don't know who I'm writing to so I will write *Dear Sir/Madam*'.
5. Tell the learners what they are going to do and why. 'Today we are going to _____ in order to _____.'
6. Ask learners to look ahead at the next unit of work and tell you two things they want to do and one thing they wish was different (two stars and a wish).
7. Ask learners to draw five small pictures related to your lesson in their notebook. (For example, learners could draw five apples for a topic on food.) Ask learners to colour five pictures (if they think they did excellent work), four (very good), three (good), two (OK) or one (if they need more practice).
8. Learners answer questions about how they like to learn. Remember you can use a shared language for low levels.

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 32.

Reflection

- Which of the techniques would your learners find easy/difficult to do? Why?
- Which techniques seem more appropriate for young learners? Which are more suitable for secondary school? Which could you use with any age?
- Which other techniques do you use to train your learners to be autonomous? Where do they fit in the plan–do–review cycle?

4C Try: How does it work?

Resources: The techniques from 4B and any materials you need to make for them

Time: Two weeks

Rationale

The Plan–Do–Review cycle is also useful to help you understand the needs of your learners, plan a strategy or activity to help them, and reflect on how effective it was and any problems you had. This activity will guide you through the process of planning, doing and reviewing a technique for developing learner autonomy with your learners.

Instructions

Plan	A. Choose a learner training technique from 4B to try. B. Prepare any materials you need (if any).
Do	C. Do the technique with your class(es) over a period of two weeks. D. Remember to discuss with your learners what you are doing and what the benefits are for them (in a shared language if appropriate).
Review	E. Complete the sentences below. If appropriate, ask your learners for feedback too. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I enjoyed/didn't enjoy using this technique because ...• The learners found it useful/not useful because ...• Something surprising/interesting was ...• One problem I had was ...• I could improve the technique by ...• I think ...

Reflection

- Would you use this technique again? Why/why not? How could it be adapted for different topics/lessons/levels?
- Do you think some learners are able to learn autonomously more than others? Which learners? Why do you think that is?
- At what age do you think we should start developing learner autonomy?

4D Work together: What will help your teaching?

- 1 Share your experiences and reflections from 4C.
- 2 Discuss any problems you had and brainstorm some solutions.
- 3 Work as a group to make a list of different Plan–Do–Review techniques. Start with the ones in 4B and add your own ideas.
- 4 Work as a group to make a poster with different reflection sentence starters on it like the ones in **E** above. Display this in your classrooms for learners to use (either writing sentences or speaking in pairs).



Introduction

When you do a needs analysis, you find out information about the learners and how they prefer to learn, and you analyse their language and skills to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Just like a doctor treating a patient, you need to collect background information and diagnose the problems before you can offer an effective treatment (course/lesson etc.).

By doing needs analyses, your lessons are more engaging as you make them relevant to your learners' interests and preferences. Perhaps most importantly, learning is more successful and efficient when you stop spending time on things the learners can already do and focus, instead, on their areas of weakness.

Aims

In this section you will:

- give advice to a teacher who has collected information about her learners but doesn't know what to do with it
- read about why, when and how you can carry out needs analyses and the type of information you want to find out
- do some needs analysis with a class, and use the information to plan and reflect on an activity/strategy/lesson that meets one of their needs
- collaborate with colleagues to create a checklist for analysing speaking needs and to plan how to collect information about the learners.

Leila has collected some information about her learners using a questionnaire.

All about you

1. Personal details

1. Name	2. Date of birth
3. Who do you live with (e.g. mother, younger sister)?	4. Main language spoke at home
5. Other languages/dialects you speak	6. Interests/free time activities
7. Things you're good at	8. Things you should know about me

2. Complete the sentences

I like teachers who _____

I like lessons when _____

Interesting topics to study are _____

I prefer working by myself with a partner in a group (tick one).

3. Tick the 8 activities you enjoy most

- Dictation
- Drama
- Games
- Learn about people in other countries
- Listening to songs
- Making things
- Making videos
- Projects
- Pronunciation practice
- Reading stories/novels
- Role-play
- Singing songs
- Speaking activities
- Using technology/iPads/internet etc.
- Watching videos
- Writing

Reflection

- What does Leila need to do now to put all the data from the questionnaires together, analyse it, and find out the most important things for her learners?
- How can she use the information she has collected in her lesson planning and lessons e.g. to choose topics for homework assignments?
- What problems could Leila have with doing needs analyses with her learners? How could she solve them?

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 33.

5B Think: What do you know?

This section looks at doing a needs analysis in more detail.

Activity

Doing a needs analysis

Match the headings to each section below.

When to do it How to do it What to find out

1. _____

David Nunan (1988) talks about three key areas of information you want to collect:

1. the learners' language: what are their strengths and weaknesses (either as individuals or generally for the whole class)?
2. information about the learners (age, interests, languages spoken, etc.)
3. information about how the learners like to learn: what types of activities/approaches should you use more or less of? Do you need to help learners understand the benefits of some activities they don't like?

2. _____

The obvious answer is at the start of the year, and this would be a good place to start. However, some teachers like to find out about the activities the learners prefer by observing them in class or by asking for feedback after they finish an activity. Sometimes it is appropriate to do an analysis of the learners' language needs at the beginning of a topic or the start of a term.

3. _____

There are many different ways to collect information about your learners. The approach you take may depend on their age. For young children who are only beginning to read and write, oral techniques such as a class discussion/brainstorm will be most useful. To make sure you get useful information from the learners, it's important to explain what you are doing and why. It's often appropriate to use a shared language. Your experience and knowledge are also valuable and important in identifying the language needs of the class. Learners may not know what they need to learn/improve, although it should be a goal to help them develop this awareness. Some possible ways to collect information include:

- observation
- testing
- class discussion/class brainstorm
- questionnaires/online questionnaires
- learners create a poster/video about themselves
- interviewing the learners in pairs or small groups
- learners write a letter to the teacher
- learning journals
- recording and listening back to learners' speaking
- using your own knowledge/experience.

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 34.

Reflection

- How do you usually find out about your learners' needs? Have you tried any of the techniques above?
- What personal information is it helpful to find out about your learners (e.g. age, family)?
- Are there any problems with doing needs analyses in your school? Why? What could you do to solve them?

5C Try: How does it work?

Resources: Materials for a writing lesson you are going to teach

Time: Over one week

Rationale

Finding out about your learners' needs allows you to plan lessons, activities, topics and strategies that will make the biggest difference. Language learning is more efficient when you focus on specific areas of weakness rather than spending more time on things the learners can already do. In this section you will analyse your learners' writing to identify the areas they need help with.

Instructions

- Choose one of your classes to do a needs analysis with.
- Explain to the learners what they are going to do and why.
- Get your learners to do a piece of writing.
- Create a writing checklist appropriate for the writing task you set. There is an example in the *Answers and commentary* section on page 34 which you could adapt.
- Evaluate each learner's writing with the checklist.
- Put all the results together to see which areas a lot of the learners need help with.
- Select one or two things from your analysis and plan an activity/strategy/writing lesson to help your learners develop this skill.
- Carry out your plan and observe the learners and their writing, and/or get feedback from them to find out how effective it was.

Reflection

- How easy/difficult was it to analyse the learners' writing? What would you change if you did it again?
- How successful was your planned action? How could you improve it?
- Do the learners still need more practice with the skills you worked on in this section? What are your next steps to help this class with writing?

5D Work together: What will help your teaching?

- 1** Work with a partner. Show them how you analysed the writing and the areas you identified as weaknesses. Ask them what they would do to improve the weaknesses. Tell them about what you did do and how effective it was.
- 2** Work together to create a checklist you can use to identify strengths and weaknesses with your learners' speaking. There are some ideas on the [TeachingEnglish website](#).
- 3** Work in groups of two or three, with teachers of a similar age if possible. Plan how you could collect information about your learners, e.g. designing a questionnaire/observation/discussion. What information would you like to find out? Use the example from 5A to help you.
 - What does Leila need to do now to put all the data from the questionnaires together, analyse it, and find out the most important things for her learners?
 - How can she use the information she has collected in her lesson planning and lessons e.g. to choose topics for homework assignments?
 - What problems could Leila have with doing needs analyses with her learners? How could she solve them?



Introduction

The learning environment can have a big effect on learning, affecting learners' attitudes, enjoyment and behaviour. Imagine a disruptive learner in the class is too hot and is sitting in the hottest part of the room. Making sure that learner is comfortable, e.g. sitting under a fan, could have a positive effect on learning for the whole class. The environment is just as important for the teacher. Wouldn't you prefer to spend your days in a clean and attractive space?

Traditional classrooms are often crowded with furniture that can't be moved. If you have to move from classroom to classroom, you face even more difficulties. While you may not be able to control many things about your environment, it's worth planning how to make the most efficient, effective and attractive use of the space. Involving the learners in the decisions will also help increase motivation. The biggest thing to think about is the arrangement of desks and furniture, but the temperature, lighting, noise, colour, air quality, display of learners' work, ability to move around, and storage of materials and resources are all important.

Aims

In this section you will:

- think about the advantages and disadvantages of different desk arrangements
- evaluate how attractive and effective your learning space is
- explore with the learners any improvements you can make to your learning space
- collaborate with colleagues to make plans for improvements to the learning environment in your school.

6A

Analyse: Can you advise these teachers?

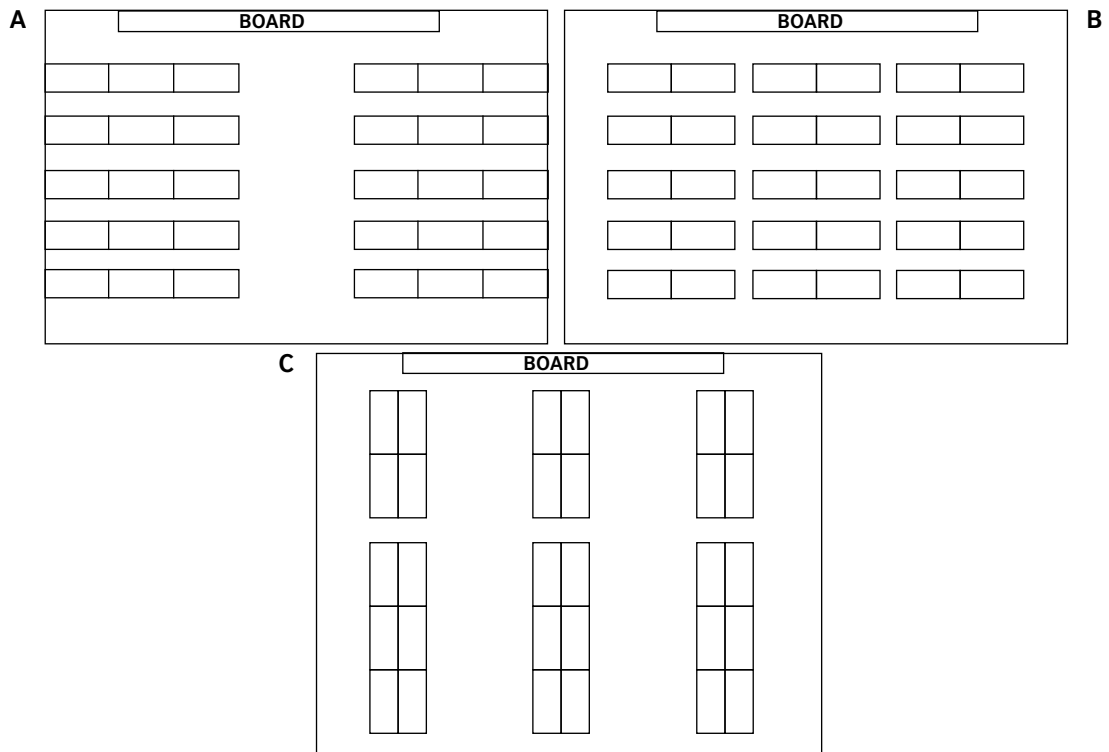
Priya



Alia



Priya is a first-year teacher. She is discussing the best arrangement of desks for her learning space with a senior teacher, Alia. Priya wants to do a lot of pair work with her class and some group work. She has three different plans for her room. They are discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each room arrangement.



Reflection

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each room design?
- Which room design is most similar to your classroom(s)? Why is/are your classroom(s) arranged like that?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the layout of your room(s)?
- What other ways do you know to arrange the desks in a learning space?

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 35.

6B Think: What do you know?

In this section, you will think about your own learning environment and any improvements you can make to it.

Activity

Take a minute to evaluate your classroom, or one of the classrooms that you use, with the checklist below. Tick the things that are true for the room you chose. Cross the ones that aren't.

Classroom arrangement

- Are there enough desks?
- Can everyone see the board?
- Can you make eye contact with every learner?
- Can you move easily from one learner desk to another?
- Is it easy for learners to move into pairs/groups?
- Can the learners move easily in and out of the room/to your desk/to the rubbish bin/to collect any materials?
- Do you have other classroom spaces you could use, e.g. sticking materials on the walls in the classroom or the corridor? What about outside or the school hall?
- Does the room layout let you give equal attention to all learners? Studies show that learners sitting in the front row get more attention.

Lighting and air

- Can you control the temperature in the room?
- Can you open windows to let in fresh air?
- Is there natural light (windows)?

Making the environment attractive

- Do you display learners' work on the walls? Is it up-to-date and attractive?
- Do you have plenty of space to keep resources?
- Are materials and resources clearly named and put away tidily?
- Is your desk and work space tidy and organised?
- Have you or the learners brought in any 'decorations' (e.g. pictures, posters, plants, soft toys) to make the space more like home?
- Are there any broken chairs/tables/windows, etc. that you need to get fixed?
- Are the walls painted an attractive and calming colour?

Reflection

- What other resources does your learning space have? Can you use them effectively? Why/why not?
- Look at the things you marked with a cross. Which ones are things you can change/control?
- What changes, if any, would you like to make to your learning space? Even if you have to share a classroom, there are still changes you could make, e.g. asking for an English display board in the classroom.

Now read the *Answers and commentary* section on page 36.

6C Try: How does it work?

Resources: Paper, crayons/markers for making posters

Time: Two lessons

Rationale

Even making small changes to your learning space can make a big difference to how positive you and the learners feel. Positive feelings both increase motivation and enhance learning. Involving the learners in improving the learning space will also add to their sense of enjoyment and belonging.

Instructions

- Brainstorm with the whole class what makes a good learning space.
- Put learners into groups of three or four and ask them to design/draw on a poster how they would like the learning space to be.
- Learners prepare and practise a one-minute presentation of their ideas in pairs.
- In the next lesson, learners present their ideas to their peers using a gallery walk.
 - Divide each group in half – two learners as presenters, two as school directors.
 - The presenters stick their posters on the walls and present their ideas for one minute to each pair of school directors. All the presentations happen at the same time in small groups. Directors rotate and spend one minute at each presentation.
 - Change roles (presenters/school directors) and repeat the presentations.
 - Learners get back into their first groups and choose their three favourite ideas (of things that are possible) to present to the class.
- Decide with the class (in a shared language if necessary) some changes you can make with their help. Remember to take 'before' and 'after' photos.
- Make the changes and observe any difference it makes. Ask your learners for feedback on the changes (in a shared language).

If your learners are too young to do this activity, there is a different task in the *Answers and commentary* section on page 36.

Reflection

- How did your learners react to the changes?
- How did you feel about the changes?
- Are there any bigger improvements you could make by asking your school director or a business manager in your city for help/money?

6D Work together: What will help your teaching?

- 1 Share your 'before' and 'after' photos from 6C and your reflections.
- 2 Discuss: what changes made the biggest difference? Why?
- 3 Choose one more change to try in your classroom. Tell the group about it and why.
- 4 Think about the rest of your school environment, e.g. the library, the staff room, outside. What improvements could you make? How could you involve the learners? What changes could you recommend to your school director?

Answers and commentary

1. Understanding learner characteristics: attainment

1A Analyse: Can you advise this teacher?

Kevin is confused because the presenter is using words that the teachers don't know. The presenter doesn't explain them and doesn't check that the teachers understand. When she asks '*Do you understand?*' they are likely to say 'yes' because they would be too embarrassed to admit they don't know. It is important that the presenter knows whether the teachers understand her. To check this she could:

- explain difficult terms in simple language and give examples
- ask questions to check the teachers understand. For example, for *asking for clarification*, she could ask:
 - did the listener understand? (no)
 - does *clarification* mean repeating something or making something clear and easy to understand? (making something clear and easy to understand)
 - how do you say *clarification* in 'X' (shared language)?
- ask teachers to compare English with a shared language. For example, she could explain that in English, people will say 'uhm' when they need time to think of what they want to say and give an example. Then she could ask the teachers what people say when they need to pause in the shared language.

Effective questioning helps to make meaning clear, provides feedback to the presenter on how much the learners are understanding, and engages the learners by involving them. To use questions effectively she needs to:

- give learners plenty of thinking time – pause after asking a question before accepting any answers, or ask learners to discuss the question in pairs before doing feedback
- ask one learner to answer then ask another learner to comment on that answer (encouraging learners to listen to each other and helping to get deeper answers)
- encourage learners to ask questions.

The teachers start talking about their weekend plans because they don't understand the task/topic. It's important for the presenter to monitor (walk around quietly to check on the learners) at the start of the activity to make sure they have understood the instructions, and during the activity so that she knows how well they are performing, whether she needs to stop the activity and give more instruction, and when to stop the activity.

1B Think: What do you know?

Answers: 1-G; 2-E; 3-D; 4-A; 5-B; 6-F; 7-C.

2. Understanding learner characteristics: age

2A Analyse: Can you advise these teachers?

Here is some possible advice for the teachers. What other ideas did you think of?

Vivian

Much of an adult coursebook will be unsuitable for 11- to 13-year-olds. Vivian could:

- ask the learners to look through the book and tell her which topics they are/are not interested in
- have the learners rewrite texts/activities in the book that are unsuitable to make them more modern/relevant/interesting for their age
- find other materials to use as well as the textbook, particularly from the many materials on the internet (see the Module 7 Integrating ICT for ideas)
- ask the learners to bring in other materials that could be used in class, e.g. old magazines/newspapers, brochures and photos.

Solomon

Children do not develop the ability to analyse grammar until they are approximately 9–10 years old. Before that age, they learn a second language in a similar way to how they learned their first language(s), i.e. by listening to a lot of language in familiar situations. Solomon needs to give the children lots of input (e.g. songs, stories and chants) with visual support (pictures, gestures, video, etc.) so that they can understand and work out what any new language means. TPR (Total Physical Response) is also effective with this level, so Solomon could include activities where the children listen to commands and respond with actions (e.g. *You are sitting down. You are walking. You are whispering*). By hearing the same grammatical structures again and again, they will learn them without studying grammar like an adult would.

Bishal

Teenagers can be shy and embarrassed about speaking in any language, not just English. Bishal could:

- avoid asking learners to speak in front of the whole class unless they have been able to prepare what they want to say first (e.g. ask a question and let learners discuss it with a partner first)
- find out why learners are speaking L1; perhaps they don't understand what to do or perhaps they don't know how to say what they want to say in English
- give the learners the language they need to do an activity; for example, if the learners are going to play a board game with dice, you could write on the board *It's your turn. Whose turn is it? Where's the dice?* and drill that language
- demonstrate how to make notes for a speaking task rather than writing full sentences
- repeat speaking activities several times with different partners and not let the learners use notes for the last time
- have a discussion with the class (in a shared language) about why they aren't speaking English and the benefits of speaking more in class.

Linh

It's great that Linh is including fun activities in her lessons. To make sure the children don't get too excited and noisy she should think about including 'settlers' (activities that are quiet and calm such as colouring or listening to a story) as well as 'stirrers' (activities that have movement, noise or competition). Linh could plan her lessons by alternating stirring and settling activities (stirrer-settler-stirrer-settler, etc.).

2B Think: What do you know?

8–11 years

Behaviour

- Start to want more independence from parents and family
- Follow rules out of respect for authority
- Still like doing things in class, hands-on activities
- Still need opportunities to move around

Emotions

- Often admire the teacher and older learners
- Can be upset by comparisons with others

Life experience

- Start to show an interest in the world outside their own

Thinking and learning

- Start to develop decision-making skills
- Start to show better judgement
- View situations as right and wrong/black and white; can't cope well with grey areas or uncertainty
- Enjoy codes, passwords and mystery
- Have a lot of interests/hobbies which change quickly

Social

- Prefer to work with members of the same sex
- Like working in groups
- Loyal to groups and clubs
- Girls mature faster than boys

3. Understanding learner characteristics: motivation to learn

3A Analyse: Can you advise these teachers?

Here are some reasons why learners become unmotivated. Add any more ideas from your own list.

The learner...

- is bored because the work is too easy
- has health/learning problems
- has problems at home
- has experienced failure in the past
- doesn't think the subject is important (or their parents don't)
- needs more help and support.

The teacher...

- isn't enthusiastic
- isn't prepared
- talks too much
- has made the learner feel stupid/embarrassed in front of the class
- corrects the learner too often

- hasn't asked the learner what interests/motivates him/her
- doesn't help the learner to understand the purpose and benefit of activities
- is too strict so learners are afraid to ask for help.

The lessons...

- are too difficult; activities need to be broken down into small steps
- are boring (topics/activities/methodology)
- lack variety
- need to change activities more often
- need more 'hands-on' activities
- do not give the learners any choice about what they do/study.

3B Think: What do you know?

1. set a personal example with your own behaviour **G, H, O**
2. create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom **F, G, H, J, Q**
3. present the tasks properly **B, I, L, M**
4. develop a good relationship with the learners **A, E, F, H**
5. increase the learners' linguistic self-confidence **C, F, I, J, Q**
6. make the language classes interesting **D, K, L, N, P**

4. Understanding learner characteristics: autonomy

4A Analyse: Can you advise these teachers?

Cindy: The learners do not understand the benefits of learner training and being autonomous.

- Use L1 or a shared language to discuss the benefits of learner training with the class.
- Aim to keep a balance between school assessment and other motivational factors such as the benefits of autonomy for university, employment or learning for enjoyment.
- Keep trying. It can take a long time for learners to develop autonomy.
- Provide lots of support, particularly if your learners are not used to having choices and making decisions about their own learning. For example: the teacher provides three activities and lets learners decide what order they do them in. The teacher provides two or more activities and lets learners choose which one to do. The learners find some activities themselves on the internet and evaluate them with the teacher's help.

Rahul: Learner autonomy takes too much time.

- Rahul is very busy trying to teach the syllabus, but unfortunately teaching does not always equal learning. Rahul could be wasting class time if the learners are not learning what he is teaching.
- Learner training is best done 'little and often'. Many techniques can be done quickly and make a big difference, e.g. asking 'Why did we do that?' after an activity so that learners begin to understand the rationale for what they are doing, or writing the learning outcomes on the board at the start of the lesson.

With training, and interesting homework assignments, Rahul's learners would be able to achieve a lot more by working outside of class. The trick is to make the assignments interesting and give them some choice. If your learners have the internet, the British Council [Learn English Kids](#) and [Learn English Teens](#) websites are a good place to start.

Chen: The learners are not used to making their own choices and decisions.

- Developing learning autonomy can be a slow process, especially in educational cultures that are usually teacher-centred. If learners have never had to make choices about their learning or think about how they like to learn, you will need to start with simple and well-supported activities/choices.
- Help learners to create a checklist for selecting their own activities, e.g. *Which activity looks the most interesting? Which activity looks the most difficult? What help would I need to do that one? Do I want to choose what looks easy or do something more challenging today? Did I choose writing or speaking last time?* Make a poster to display this on the wall.
- Try to guide learners to making their own choices rather than telling them what to do, e.g. by using the checklist above.
- Ask learners to explain their choices (in a shared language if it's easier).

Daniel: The learners don't know how to assess themselves.

- Show learners exemplars (good examples/models) of the task and discuss what makes it a good example.
- Break tasks (e.g. write a story) down into small parts that learners can identify and evaluate.
- Before learners do the task, discuss with them what they will need to do, to do the task well (success criteria). Write these on the board. These can be used for self-assessment. To write the ending of a story, the learners might tell you it's important to:
 - use past tense
 - use interesting describing words (adjectives)
 - finish with the moral of the story
 - (or anything else you have worked on).
- Discuss the benefits of self-assessment with the class in a shared language, e.g. they will be able to find and correct their own mistakes, they will know how to do better in exams.

4B Think: What do you know?

Answers: 1-C; 2-D/E; 3-F; 4-C; 5-A; 6-B; 7-D/F; 8-G.

An example of how learners can answer questions about how they like to learn.

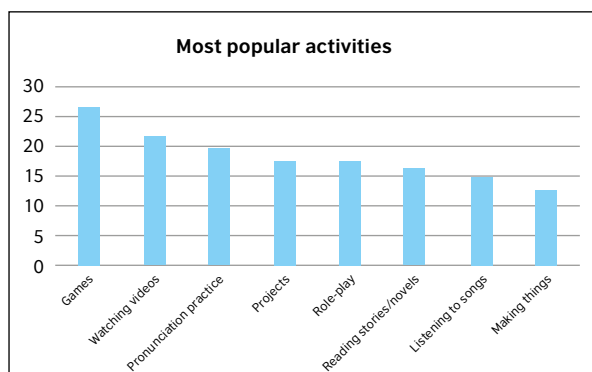
How do you learn vocabulary?			
Tick the things that you like to do, then discuss them with a partner. Are you different or the same? Why do you think that is?			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Look up definitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Say words out loud
<input type="checkbox"/>	Use a bilingual dictionary	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use new words in a conversation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Write words down with a translation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listen to songs and try to understand
<input type="checkbox"/>	Test myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	Make word cards
<input type="checkbox"/>	Write down new words in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	Practise with a friend
<input type="checkbox"/>	Write down words with pictures	<input type="checkbox"/>	Write a sentence with new words

5. Conducting needs analyses and applying the results

5A Analyse: Can you advise this teacher?

Analysing the data

- Leila could ask her learners to complete a questionnaire using online forms and survey tools if the technology is available. These programmes would summarise the results and let her print out reports.
- The diagrams below show some different ways she could summarise all the data from paper questionnaires.



I like teachers who	Kind, funny, care about me, aren't to serious, smile, fun, happy
I like lessons when	It's not boring, we play games, I can work with friends, it's fun, we don't have homework, we can choose what to do, we don't use the textbook
Interesting topics for studying English are	The environment, space, animals, music, films, gaming, sport, jobs, food

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2	Aziz	25/10/2010	2 brothers	Malay	-	football, guitar, gaming	maths, drawing, gaming	going to Australia next holiday
3	Ain	23/02/2010	2 sisters 3brothers	Maly	Mandarin	YouTube, singing, cats	making videos, singing, art	father is a policeman
4	Chen	1/05/2010	1 sister 1 brother	Mandarin	Malay Cantonese	karate, gaming, football	karate, maths, cooking	pet cat

3. Tick the 8 activities you enjoy most

- Dictation
- Drama
- **Games**
- Learn about people in other countries
- Listening to songs
- Making things
- Making videos
- **Projects**
- **Pronunciation practice**
- **Reading stories/novels**
- **Role-play**
- Singing songs
- Speaking activities
- Using technology/iPads/internet etc.
- **Watching videos**
- Writing

How can I make writing more enjoyable?

Using the information

Leila could use the information to:

- start up conversations with individual learners, e.g. about their families, interests or things they are good at, to help build a good rapport with them
- use the learners' topic choices/interests to select units from the coursebook, extra materials for the class, or examples and images to use in lesson
- use the most popular activities to help her with lesson planning decisions
- use the least favourite activities less, or investigate why they don't enjoy them and plan a strategy
- read about the languages her learners speak and find out about the problems learners of those languages have when learning English; a book such as *Learner English* by Michael Swan is helpful
- find and prepare extra resources that meet some of the biggest needs and have them cut out and prepared for use in class (when it fits their syllabus or at the end of a lesson/week/unit as a reward); for example, she could have spelling games prepared, or essays cut-up for learners to put in order (logical ordering)
- make a spinner with some of the areas that are identified in the needs analysis and ask a learner to spin the spinner and identify what they will focus on in the next lesson; she could also put different activities that focus on the needs on the spinner
- set homework tasks to help with the learners' needs and choose project topics based on their interests.

Possible problems with doing needs analyses

Leila's learners (and their parents) may think it is the teacher's job to decide what is going to be learned and how. The learners may rush their answers because they don't understand how important it is. They may not know how they like learning if they have never been asked before.

Solution: Before she starts, Leila needs to carefully explain what they are doing and why, probably in a shared language so the learners can understand easily. She can explain that everyone will be well prepared for the end-of-term/year tests or exams, but there are many different ways that they can learn. By telling her what they like and what they are interested in, they will find the class more enjoyable and learn more.

5B Think: What do you know?

Answers: 1. What to find out 2. When to do it 3. How to do it

5C Try: How does it work?

Writing needs analysis checklist

Instructions: For each learner, tick the things that they can do satisfactorily for their level. Put a cross next to any they can't.

Planner

- Research
- Selecting relevant ideas
- Logical ordering of ideas
- Awareness of the audience (reader)
- Developing ideas; adding detail

Writing

- Range of vocabulary
- Spelling
- Range of grammar used
- Grammar accuracy
- Punctuation
- Connectors (and, but, so, etc.)
- Paragraphs
- Formatting (e.g. where to put the date in a letter)
- Handwriting

Editing and rewriting

- Making appropriate additions/deletions
- Checking that instructions were followed
- Identifying and correcting errors

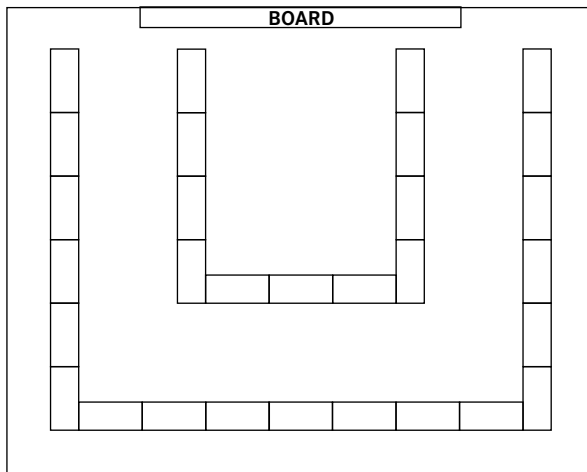
Young learners only

- Appropriate height of letters
- Space between letters
- Placement of letters on/above/below the line
- Capital letters

6. Applying an understanding of the impact of the learning environment on my learners

6A Analyse: Can you advise these teachers?

Room	Advantages	Disadvantages
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective for whole class instruction • The space in the centre of the room is useful for mingle speaking activities • Small group work (three learners) is easy to set up • Groups of six can be set up if some learners turn around to the row behind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair work and group work are difficult • It is difficult for the teacher to walk near to learners sitting next to the walls
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages pair work • Groups of four can be set up easily • Learners are not distracted by too many other learners near them • The teacher can move around all the desks easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no area for learners to mingle unless desks are moved
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners are encouraged to work together and help each other (co-operative learning) • Pair work and group work are easy to set up • The teacher can move around the room easily • Learners can move around the walls so activities can be set up with information on the walls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners can become distracted because they sit looking at other learners (clear rules need to be set up) • Can be more difficult for the teacher to make eye contact with everyone • Learners cannot see the board as easily



The U-shape is another room layout that is popular. This design is useful for whole-class instruction, and pair work can be set up easily. The teacher is able to move around the room if the rows are not too close together. Group work is more difficult to set up. Some learners are not looking at the board.

6B Think: What do you know?

If you don't have your own classroom, it is much harder to make changes, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't. It's important to have a good relationship with the classroom teacher and talk to him/her about things that would help you. They may be happy to try a new seating arrangement or to give you a display board or a shelf/corner for English materials.

When you move between rooms, it takes you some time to prepare to teach once you arrive. Think about having a routine that the learners do in the first five minutes that they can do without you, e.g. a game with your vocabulary bag, correcting homework, silent reading, watching a video, singing a song or writing a learning journal.

If the desks are not arranged in a way that is helpful for learning a language (i.e. easy for group work/pair work), train the learners to move the desks the way you want them. With lots of practice and praise, they will be able to move the desks and chairs for you in under one minute. They usually love the change and it makes their English lesson special and different.

6C Try: How does it work?

A different task for very young classes

- Use the checklist from 6B. Select two or three changes that you want to make to your learning space.
- Make the changes, if possible by involving the learners, e.g. young children's artwork can make an attractive display. Observe any difference it makes and ask learners for feedback on the changes (in a shared language, if appropriate).

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