

# **Starter Teachers**

A methodology course  
for the classroom

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ISBN 978-0-86355-762-0

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# Introduction

This book is the by-product of a Hornby Regional School held in Libreville, Gabon between 8 and 12 September, 2014. Thirty-five participants from eight francophone West and Central African countries attended a course and spent five days looking at issues and ideas of how to train *starter teachers*. At the end of the course three participants stayed on for a few days and, with the course director, Adrian Tennant, they have written this book.

The objectives of the book are as follows:

- To provide trainers with ideas and materials to use with *starter teachers*.
- To help trainers throughout the region understand the needs of *starter teachers*.
- To provide a resource that can be used for designing sessions and workshops for both pre- and in-service training courses.

To begin with it is probably necessary for us to define what we mean by the term *starter teacher*. The first thing to point out is that *starter teachers* are not just teachers with no experience, but also include teachers who are already in the classroom but have little or no formal training. In many of the countries in the region up to 80 per cent of teachers in the classroom fall into this category, so there is an obvious need to address this issue.

We hope that this book will be used as a resource by those who were lucky enough to be able to attend the course and by many teachers and trainers in the region who would have liked to have attended, but did not have the opportunity. The book has been designed to be as practical as possible – explaining theory but making it relevant to the classroom through examples, activities and tasks.

**Disclaimer:** Wherever possible the original source of an idea has been acknowledged. However, over a career spanning more than 25 years, some of these sources have been lost or blurred over time. All efforts have been made to attribute ideas correctly and a debt of gratitude goes to the hundreds of teachers and colleagues who I have had the opportunity to work with and, who in some way, have contributed to this book.

## Adrian Tennant

*Libreville, Gabon. 16 September, 2014.*

# How to use this book

It is important to realise that this book does NOT contain everything a *starter teacher* needs to know and be able to do. This is just a guide for you, the trainer, to help you think about the needs of the teachers you work with.

Each unit covers a topic area that the authors feel is essential for *starter teachers*. The units include tasks, explanations and notes for the trainers. We have tried to lay out the chapters so that trainers can use each task to refresh their own ideas and memories of key methodological issues relating to the classroom. However, the tasks are also designed to be used with *starter teachers*. As a trainer you may want to select a few tasks, base a workshop around one particular unit, or try to construct an entire training programme based on the entire book. We hope that the book proves a useful resource and provides you with a better understanding of the areas that need to be covered by *starter teachers*.





# Unit 1: How to train *starter teachers*



# Unit 1

## How to train *starter teachers*

### Introduction

#### Task 1 – Who are *starter teachers*?

- Write your definition of a *starter teacher* here:

As suggested in the introduction to the book, the term *starter teacher* is quite a broad one and includes teachers just beginning their career, as well as those who have been teaching for many years but missed out on initial formal training. It can also include teachers who might change **who** they are teaching, or **what** they are teaching. For example, a teacher who has ten years' experience in secondary school, but is starting a new job in primary school can be classified as a *starter teacher*. Or, a teacher trained as a French teacher, but now asked to teach English, may similarly be seen as a *starter teacher*. This does not mean they lack experience, but the relevance and context is different. Even people entering the profession with no experience of teaching themselves have some knowledge of what it entails as they attended schools as learners. In other words, they were exposed to teachers and may have picked up ideas and techniques from them.

Training *starter teachers* implies the need to address both skills and knowledge (see task 4 in this unit). We must remember that just because they are *starter teachers* does not mean they don't have experience. After all, they have attended school and probably also learned at least one other language.

As trainers we need to provide *starter teachers* with ideas that will help them improve their teaching in a typically multilingual African classroom where learning happens in a language other than the mother tongue and make it as effective as possible. It is useful for them to know the difference between language acquisition and language learning.

Acquisition is a subconscious process that leads to use of language in the same way that we learn our first language. Learning, on the other hand, is a conscious mental process. Where possible, teachers should be providing their learners with environments where both can take place. One vital ingredient of this environment is giving learners the opportunity to use the language for communication.

## **Task 2 – How do you learn a language?**

- Answer these questions and, if possible, discuss your answers with other teachers.
- 1. How many languages do you speak and how did you learn them?
- 2. Did you learn English in the same way as you learned the other languages?
- 3. What are the differences between learning a language naturally and learning it in a classroom?
- 4. Is it possible to teach yourself a language successfully?
- 5. Do we all learn at the same rate? If not, why not?
- 6. What are the characteristics of a good language learner?
- 7. Why do some learners find it more difficult to learn a language than others?

## **Task 3 – Methods and approaches**

There are lots of different methods and approaches to teaching, but no single one is 'the best' or the 'right way'. Some methods work for some people and not for other people. The most important things to think about when you are deciding how to teach are:

1. What is the purpose of learning English? (If the purpose is to communicate then the method(s) you choose should facilitate this.)
2. What works in a particular context? (If an idea is based on a particular context i.e. the UK, USA etc. then it might not work in a different context i.e. Asia, Africa etc. unless it is modified.)
3. What suits the teacher and his/her style?

## Task 4 – What a teacher needs

- Think about the skills and knowledge required by a teacher and complete the following chart.

Work in groups and complete this chart. You will need to discuss your ideas together.

Skills	Knowledge

### Suggested answers:

Skills	Knowledge
Classroom management	About the language/subject
Time management	Methodology
Rapport	Of the learners and their background
Empathy	Of the culture (and educational culture)
Motivational skills	Syllabus/curriculum
Awareness of body language	How learners learn
Good listener	Learning styles
Technical skills	

## Conclusion

We must remember that learning how to teach ...

- takes time.
- takes practice.
- is an ongoing process.

Teachers must be creative and flexible to make their classes lively and effective. Including a variety of tasks and topics can be a source of real motivation for the learners. It is also important to remember that you are teaching the learners, not blindly following the book or materials. The focus should always be on learning and lessons need to be adapted to cater for the needs of the learners that are there, not some notional learner made up according to the curriculum or coursebook.

# **Unit 2: Key issues in classroom observation and understanding needs**





# Unit 2

## Key issues in classroom observation and understanding needs

### Introduction

In order to fully understand the needs of the teachers we are working with, we need to observe them teaching to get a clear idea of the areas they need to develop. However, observation can be difficult as *starter teachers* often feel under pressure when they are being observed.

### The purpose of observations

Observations have three main purposes. They can be used as:

- A quality check.
- A tool for teacher development.
- A way of gathering information and classroom data.

### How observations are conducted

Probably the biggest issue is not the purpose of the observation but the way in which it is conducted. An observation, where an observer walks into a lesson, sits at the back reading, leaves after 15 minutes and then later tells the teacher what he or she thought, is clearly going to result in a negative reaction. This is simply judging the teacher without any understanding of the aims of the lesson, the learners or any of the other constraints. Here is a suggested model, which tries to incorporate 'good practice' in each stage.

### Pre-lesson

Observer and observee should meet up and discuss the purpose(s) of the observation, the criteria used to judge whether the teaching is good and effective, issues surrounding the particular class being observed, the aims of the lesson and the plan, how long the observation will be, when and how the feedback will be conducted and the intended outcomes of the observation. In other words, wherever possible the criteria and the intended outcomes should be co-created. When teachers have the opportunity to buy into these aspects of an observation, the whole process takes on a far more positive focus.

## **During**

Observers should note down observations in the form of questions wherever possible. The main rationale behind this is that what you can observe in the classroom is the action and not the thought process. Even when the lesson has been discussed beforehand, there are many instances within a class when teachers need to make decisions that cannot necessarily be planned in advance. Good teachers will be flexible and adapt to the learners' needs during a lesson rather than mechanically following a pre-set plan. By writing their observations in the form of questions, observers give themselves the opportunity to explore issues, clarify what they have seen and ask further questions designed to get teachers to think about and explore their teaching in light of the lesson just taught. Whatever the overall purpose of the observation, this positive focus cannot be harmful.

One reason for using this technique is that many aspects of teaching are unobservable. While things such as classroom layout, use of the board and even the pace of the lesson can be observed, these are all fairly low inference factors – they are measurable, or quantitative; many of the skills employed by teachers are high inference and are fundamentally qualitative. Only through discussion can these aspects be explored and thus the effectiveness of the teaching 'measured'.

## **Post-lesson**

It is also important to remember that before the lesson the observer and teacher agreed the criteria to be used during the observation. It is therefore essential that the observer uses the criteria and doesn't introduce anything new or unexpected into the post-lesson conversation.

Finally, if possible, the observer should tell the teacher something he or she liked or learned during the lesson that he or she would like to incorporate into his or her own teaching. In this situation it is quite likely that the teacher will respond to the observer's feedback more readily. This is not a trick; it is a genuine feeling that there is something positive to be taken out of every lesson and observation.

## **Why don't all observations follow a similar model?**

The main reason is lack of time. An observation process such as the one outlined above is time-consuming. However, if this lack of time results in observations such as the one briefly mentioned in the opening paragraph of this article, then there is little point in carrying them out. Not only will such observations be uninformative, but they will often lead to a distorted picture and are almost certain to increase the negativity towards the process of observation, making it harder to get a true reflection of what is happening in the classroom.

Based on an article: Key issues in classroom observation (see bibliography).

## Task 1 – Questions to ask before the observation

We have talked about the need for the observer and the observee to meet before the lesson to discuss the criteria for the observation so that it becomes more focussed. What questions could you ask the teacher you are going to observe?

■ Write three or four questions here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

■ Now compare your questions to the ones suggested here:

1. What are your objectives for the lesson?
2. What will you do to make the lesson lively?
3. How will you try to involve the learners?
4. What do you expect the learners to do?

## Task 2 – After the observation

■ What questions can you ask the teacher (observee) after the lesson? Write your ideas here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

■ Now compare your questions to the ones suggested here:

1. Do you think you have achieved your objectives? Explain why.
2. What are the positive aspects of your lesson?
3. What training would you like to help you improve your teaching?

## Conclusion

Remember, each lesson is unique. A teacher has to bear in mind that he or she must play different roles depending on the stage of the lesson etc. to make the teaching successful (see Unit 4: Roles of a teacher and motivation).



# **Unit 3: Large classes and minimal resources**



# Unit 3

## Large classes and minimal resources

### Introduction

Large classes are a reality in all the countries represented by the teachers who attended the Hornby School, as well as in many other parts of the world. Classes in excess of 60 learners are not uncommon and present a challenge for most *starter teachers*. However, there are many positives to large classes: they are dynamic and with so many learners there are lots of opportunities for working together, comparing, sharing and discussing ideas.

In addition to this, many teachers in West and Central Africa (as well as in many other places around the world) face the challenge of a lack of resources. However, in the same way that the issues of large classes can be overcome, teachers working in contexts with minimal resources can be more creative and resourceful, taking advantage of the surrounding environment to provide interesting and relevant lessons for their learners.

### Task 1 – Benefits and challenges

- Complete the following chart with the phrases in the box. Then compare and discuss your answers in groups.

Benefits	Challenges

Classroom management is difficult	Providing for individual learning styles
Lots of interaction	Not boring
Quiet learners hide	Learners can learn from each other
Teachers feel out of control	Teachers learn to be creative
Too much marking	Variety

**Suggested answers:**

Benefits	Challenges
Lots of interaction	Classroom management is difficult
Not boring	Providing for individual learning styles
Learners can learn from each other	Quiet learners hide
Teachers learn to be creative	Teachers feel out of control
Variety	Too much marking

**Task 2 – There’s always a solution**

■ The words below are suggested solutions for overcoming some of the challenges in large classes, but the letters have been jumbled up. The task is to unjumble the letters to make the correct words.

- a. taryive
- b. caep
- c. stirnete
- d. intorablooacl
- e. sooslipantianer
- f. ihoecc
- g. sinetour
- h. volinving

**Suggested answers:**

- a. variety
- b. pace
- c. interest
- d. collaboration
- e. personalisation
- f. choice
- g. routines
- h. involving

■ Here are a few activities that require little in the way of materials or preparation and can be used effectively in large classes.

**Word tennis**

- 1. Brainstorm how tennis is scored.
- 2. Elicit a list of categories e.g. colours, animals, buildings, jobs, family members, clothes, sports.
- 3. Learners work in pairs.
- 4. They choose a category.



5. Learner A says a colour e.g. black.
6. Then learner B says a colour.
7. This continues until one player can't continue (time limits can be set i.e. 20 seconds).
8. The winning player gets the points e.g. 15 – Love and chooses the next category.

### **Invisible body**

1. Make sure every learner has paper and pencil/pen.
2. Read out words connected to the body and students should write them in the correct place on the page as if there was a picture of a body on the page.
3. Put learners in pairs to compare and discuss.

**Variation:** names of countries/map; rooms/house; furniture/room; parts of a car/car etc.

### **Board punctuation**

1. Write up a short text (can be from a coursebook) on the board but leave out punctuation, capital letters etc.
2. Students take turns coming up to the board and correcting the text.

### **Where do you live?**

1. Ask a learner the question: *Where do you live?*
2. They must give an answer.
3. Now ask another learner – they must give a different answer.
4. Continue with each learner giving a new answer i.e. *In Pakistan. At home. With my parents. In a flat. In a small town.* etc.

### **Be someone else**

1. Ask for a volunteer to sit on a chair at the front of the class.
2. Tell them you will ask four personal questions and you want them to answer the questions truthfully: Name? Age? Job? From?
3. Now tell them you'll ask the same questions but they should use their imaginations when they answer.
4. Then tell the rest of the class to ask *the character* questions.

**Note:** Adrian Tennant, course director, was first introduced to this activity by Ken Wilson in a workshop at IATEFL Dublin in 2000.

## Collocation pairs

1. Ask participants to form pairs of A and B.
2. Explain that A will write down the first, third, fifth words etc. while B will write down the second, fourth, sixth words etc.
3. Check the instructions have been understood.
4. Dictate the following words:

<i>absolutely</i>	recognition
<i>deserve</i>	information
<i>high</i>	influence
<i>highly</i>	amazing
<i>inside</i>	rise
<i>reliable</i>	unlikely
<i>sharp</i>	evidence
<i>strongly</i>	inadequate
<i>woefully</i>	expectations
5. Ask pairs to make collocates: *high* expectations, *highly* unlikely, *absolutely* amazing, *deserve* recognition, *inside* information, *strongly* influence, *sharp* rise, *reliable* evidence, *woefully* inadequate.

## Rub them out

1. Write up a list of words on the board from recent lessons.
2. Divide the class into two teams.
3. Ask a person from one team to come to the front and explain a word, then rub it out.
4. Next, ask someone from the other team to do the same.
5. Continue until all the words have gone.

**Note:** Coursebooks usually don't recycle new vocabulary enough (a minimum of 20 times is needed!). You need to introduce activities that compensate for this i.e. those above and activities such as Vocabulary Relay (students grouping words in sets on board), *Hot seat*, *Word box* etc.

## Things that are ...

1. Choose a colour e.g. red, blue, yellow.
2. Ask the students to work individually and make a list of ten things that are of the colour you have chosen. Set a short time limit to keep up the pace of the activity.
3. Put students in pairs, but tell them NOT to show their list to their partner.
4. Explain that the aim of the activity is to see who in each pair can guess the most things from their partner's list in five minutes. To do this they will ask yes/no questions. Be sure to check students understand what kind of questions they can ask.

For example:

A: Can you eat it?

B: Yes.

A: Is it a fruit?

B: Yes.

A: Does it grow on trees?

B: No.

etc.

5. Give learner A in each pair five minutes to guess. After the time limit, swap roles with learner B guessing. At the end, find out the who guessed correctly most often.

**Note:** Adrian Tennant, course director, first came across this idea in *Alternatives* by Richard and Marjorie Baudains (see bibliography).

## Your partner

In pairs, interview your partner to find out the following information. Remember to write down the answers.

1. First name
2. Date of birth
3. Your favourite subject at school
4. Your favourite sport
5. Your favourite television programme
6. One thing you don't like

Now write a paragraph about your partner. Begin like this:

My partner's name .....

He/she.....

He/she.....

**Note:** This idea first appeared in *Teaching in low resource contexts* by Mbodj et al. (see bibliography).

## **Conclusion**

In Europe teachers often think that having 30 learners in a class means they are teaching a large class, so it is mostly something that is in the mind of the teacher. Large classes are not impossible to control and the key point is to adapt to what you have in front of you. If the teachers change the dynamic and involve the learners, use pair and group work effectively and create gaps for communication, then working with large classes becomes easier and extremely rewarding.

# **Unit 4: Roles of a teacher and motivation of learners**



# Unit 4

## Roles of a teacher and motivation of learners

### Introduction

In his or her daily practice a teacher can have different roles within a lesson. He or she must adapt to the situation in order to make the learning as effective as possible. What are these roles? Below is a task you can try yourself. (You can also use this with *starter teachers* to help them understand the different roles that they can be asked to perform.)

### Task 1 – Roles of the teacher

- Look at what the teacher does and match the correct role 'name' from the box to each sentence.

assessor	controller	expert resource	language guide	
listener	organiser	prompter	provider of input	reflector

Role	What the teacher does
	The teacher puts learners in pairs.
	The teacher encourages learners to participate.
	The teacher listens to what learners say.
	The teacher finds material for the class to use.
	The teacher makes sure the learners are doing the task.
	The teacher answers the learners' questions.
	The teacher helps learners work out grammar rules for themselves.
	The teacher checks the learners' homework.
	The teacher thinks about how the lesson has gone.

Adapted from an idea in *Learning to Teach English* by Peter Watkins (see bibliography).

### Suggested answers and explanations:

Role	What the teacher does
organiser	puts learners in pairs.
prompter	encourages learners to participate.
listener	listens to what learners say.
provider of input	finds material for the class to use.
controller	makes sure the learners are doing the task.
expert resource	answers the learners' questions.
language guide	helps learners work out grammar rules for themselves.
assessor	checks the learners' homework.
reflector	thinks about how the lesson has gone.

**Organiser:** It's important to organise your classroom i.e. How many people will be in a group? What do they need to do? How long will an activity take? etc. to ensure the best use of the time available in a lesson.

**Prompter:** Sometimes learners are reluctant to participate. There can be various reasons for this including fear of making mistakes, uncertainty of what to say or how to start etc. By asking questions (sensitively) a teacher can often get learners to be more active.

**Listener:** Listening to the learners helps you know how they are doing, what they are good at, what they are finding difficult etc. *Starter teachers* often find listening to their learners difficult as they are concentrating on what they are doing and what is going to happen next. Encourage them to make notes while they listen to the learners to help them remember and give feedback.

**Provider of input:** Selecting the appropriate material, even if this is deciding what to use and leave out from the coursebook, is an important part of the teacher's job. Also, by using English in the classroom, they can provide the learners with valuable input.

**Controller:** Classroom management is important as it helps make the lesson effective. If learners are misbehaving or not doing what they are supposed to do, then less learning will take place than if they are 'on task'.

**Expert resource:** Knowing the subject is important for any teacher, and this is no different in language lessons. It is also important that a teacher is able to explain what they know. Non-native teachers also have the advantage of having learned English themselves and therefore understand the process the learners are going through.



**Language guide:** This is different from the Expert resource role. The Language guide helps or guides learners to discover things for themselves rather than telling them the answers.

**Assessor:** At various stages of a lesson the teacher needs to check that learners have learned something. This could be done through homework, tests, quizzes or other activities where learners need to do something with the language i.e. a role play, a controlled writing activity etc.

**Reflector:** Every teacher needs to think about how their lesson has gone. They should think about their strengths and weaknesses so they can try to improve.

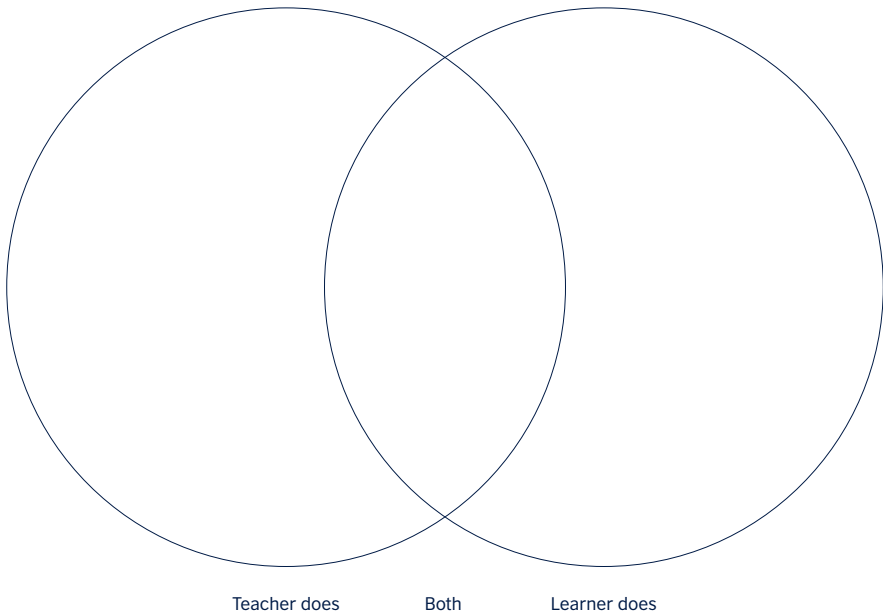
As you can see, the teacher can have many different roles within the classroom. Traditionally, the teacher has often been at the centre of teaching. In other words, everything has gone through the teacher, he or she has made all of the decisions in the classroom and the learners' role has been quite limited. However, in the last 30 years or so people have come to realise that learners can take a much more active role in the classroom and that many of the things that a teacher normally does, can be the responsibility of the learner.

## Task 2 – Why are we teaching?

- Answer these questions. If you are training a group of teachers you could ask them to answer the same questions.
  1. What is the purpose of teaching?
  2. Who are you teaching?
  3. Who does most of the work? Why?
  4. How do people learn?
  5. What do the answers to these four questions tell us about what our classroom should be like? Why?

## Task 3 – The teacher and the learner

- Below is an activity you can use with either trainers or teachers when you are doing a workshop. You could also try to do the activity yourself.
  - a. Put teachers in groups and ask them to discuss and complete the following diagram.
  - b. Afterwards, tell the groups to display their diagrams, walk around and look at the other ones and then ask each other questions.
  - c. Next, put them back in their groups and ask them to think of how they can make the learners more involved. Are there things that the teacher (currently) does that could be done by both the teacher and the learners or even just by the learners?



### **Commentary:**

The idea of moving things that are in the 'Teacher does' segment either into the middle 'Both' or right across to the 'Learner does' segment is an important part of this task. Initially, most people find that they have put a lot of things in 'Teacher does', but then they realise that these can be moved over. For example, assessment or error correction, which are traditionally things the 'Teacher does', can be moved into 'Both' if we try to promote peer assessment and peer correction.

Teachers fear losing control so will often do things to feel they are in control of what is happening in the classroom.

### **Motivation**

Another role of the teacher is to help motivate learners. Motivation is quite a complex topic, so here we simply want to raise awareness of some different aspects connected to the topic.

1. Why is motivation important?
2. How can teachers motivate learners?
3. What is the result if learners are motivated?

We all know that if people are not motivated they won't do well, they won't enjoy what they are doing and they won't learn. One way for teachers to motivate learners is to use a variety of activities and make their lessons vivid and lively. Another way to motivate them is to involve the learners as much as possible in the lesson (this links to task 3 earlier in this unit). However, it is important for teachers to be aware that there are different types of motivation.

## Task 4 – Types of motivation

- Look at the following chart.

Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Integrative
It's fun.	My mother says it's important.	My friend is doing it.

- Can you decide in which column each of these sentences goes?
  - Everyone else understands this.
  - I don't like people saying things I don't understand.
  - I enjoy doing this.
  - I need this for my exam.
  - It's great when the teacher says: 'Well done!'
  - My teacher will be upset if I don't do this.

### Suggested answers:

Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Integrative
It's fun. I enjoy doing this. It's great when the teacher says: 'Well done!'	My mother says it's important. I need this for my exam. My teacher will be upset if I don't do this.	My friend is doing it. Everyone else understands this. I don't like people saying things I don't understand.

**Intrinsic** motivation comes from inside the learner; they want to do the activity for their own reasons.

**Extrinsic** motivation comes from outside them, they do it to please someone else or because they are told they need to do it.

**Integrative** motivation is similar to extrinsic in that the pressure comes from outside, but the driving force is the desire to be part of a group and not to be left out. For example, a group of girls have their hair braided; a girl goes home and asks her mother to braid her hair as she wants to be like the other girls.

## Conclusion

So, we can see that the teacher can have many different roles during the lesson. Choosing the correct role to match the task is an important consideration. As a teacher becomes more experienced he or she will take on the appropriate role without needing to think about it too much.

One of the key things teachers needs to think about is motivation. When we first hear the word we often think of motivation in a one-dimensional way. However, on closer examination we see that motivation is extremely complicated. Having an understanding of different types of motivation can help teachers in their lessons.



# Unit 5: Pair and group work



# Unit 5

## Pair and group work

### Introduction

Something often seems to be wrong when teachers organise pair or group work. The interaction and the communicative aspects they want to develop between learners don't occur because there are no information gaps or any need to listen to each other. In order to demonstrate how an information gap can be created, try the following two tasks with the *starter teachers*.

### Task 1 – Picture information gap

Start by doing a pair work information gap activity, for example a 'spot the differences picture' where there are two similar pictures with a number of differences (i.e. ten differences). Put the teachers in pairs and give each of them a different picture. They must describe their picture to their partner and find the differences.

**Note:** You can often find suitable pairs of pictures on the internet – try searching for 'spot the difference'.

- After you have done the task ask the teachers to discuss the following questions:
  1. What did you just do?
  2. Why did you speak to each other?
  3. Why is it important that you don't both have the same information?

### Suggested answers:

1. Pair work – speaking. Describing a picture and trying to find the differences.
2. To describe the pictures and find the differences. Because we had different information.
3. If the information is the same there is NO NEED to speak to each other.

## Task 2 – Shipwrecked

Make groups and distribute the information in the box below. Tell the groups they need to discuss the situation and come to an agreement. Give them time and monitor groups to see how they are getting on. When one group seems to be near to agreeing, set a time limit for the others of a couple of minutes for them to come to an agreement.

You are shipwrecked on a desert island. There is food and water on the island as well as lots of trees. Choose the five items you want to save from the ship:

A box of matches	A magnifying glass
An axe	A bottle of whisky
An atlas	A radio with batteries
A tent	A camera with 124 pictures
A saucepan	A knife and fork
20 metres of rope	A blanket
A watch	A towel

## Task 3 – A monologue NOT a pair work!

- Put the teachers in pairs.
- Ask the pairs to talk about what they did on the weekend.
- Give them five minutes to discuss.
- Next, ask them if this was a ‘good’ pair work activity and elicit ideas – you might want to write these up on the board.
- Next (unless it has already come up) ask them what the difference was between this activity and the picture activity they started the session with. (Hopefully someone will realise that although there was an information gap with this activity, there was NO NEED to listen as they weren’t asked to do anything with the information.)
- Next, ask them if they can think of a way of adapting the activity to make it more meaningful.
- **Suggested answer:** Talk to your partner about what you did on the weekend. Try to find two things that you both did that were the same and two things that were different.

## Task 4 – A questionnaire about pair and group work

- Read the statements and decide if you agree, disagree or are neutral about each one and why. Then discuss your ideas in a group.
1. You can’t teach grammar in pairs or groups.  
*agree / neutral / disagree*
  2. My class is too large to do pair work or group work.  
*agree / neutral / disagree*



3. Working in pairs or groups gives learners extra time to practise.  
*agree / neutral / disagree*
4. Pair work and group work works well in multilevel classes.  
*agree / neutral / disagree*
5. Learners need to learn how to work together.  
*agree / neutral / disagree*
6. Some learners don't contribute in pairs or groups.  
*agree / neutral / disagree*
7. Learners won't speak English when working in pairs or groups.  
*agree / neutral / disagree*
8. It's impossible to correct learners when they do pair or group work.  
*agree / neutral / disagree*

**Suggested answers:**

1. (Disagree). You might present the grammar to the whole class, but exercises and practice will be far more effective if done in pairs and groups.
2. (Disagree). In fact, pair and group work is important in large classes to give learners more opportunities to use the language. The key is managing the setting up of the pairs and groups and effective monitoring.
3. (Agree). If you have 60 learners in 30 pairs you potentially have 30 learners talking at the same time. Also, it's worth noting that they often learn a lot from each other. Of course, it is possible for them to make mistakes that go undetected but the benefits usually outweigh any disadvantages.
4. (Agree). It's possible to group learners according to their level. Or, alternatively have mixed levels in each group and encourage peer teaching and collaboration.
5. (Agree). You can't expect learners to work together without some training and practice. For example, they need to learn about turn-taking, listening to each other and respecting ideas (whether or not they agree with these ideas).
6. (Agree). This can certainly happen. In groups it's possible for a learner to 'hide' and let the others do the work or for one learner to dominate leading to a lack of contribution from other learners.
7. (Neutral). You could agree with this as it's easier to speak in L1 and there is less chance for the teacher to know. Moreover, if the focus is on getting the right answer, they might wonder why it is necessary to use English. However, you could disagree as pairs or groups are 'safe' places. The spotlight isn't on individual learners. The role of the teacher is to encourage the use of English as much as possible.
8. (Disagree). The teacher can monitor and note down any mistakes they hear and deal with them after the pair or group work has finished. Often this is a better way of handling mistakes as learners learn about what they did wrong but are not 'shown-up' in front of the rest of the class.

## Conclusion

Learners do not communicate when pair work or group work is done silently. Interaction is only necessary when they have something to share such as their experience or their point of view. Some pair work ends up being a monologue because the teacher doesn't build any interest in the activity or any need for the learners to listen to each other. In many activities a simple 'tweak' will mean there is a need for communication and turn the activity into 'real' pair or group work.

# **Unit 6: Developing the four skills**



# Unit 6

## Developing the four skills

### Introduction

An effective session involves a careful handling of the four skills in teaching and learning a language. Although we talk of the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening), they rarely occur in isolation. In many cases activities should be designed to integrate the skills and give a more holistic (whole) learning experience.

### Task 1 – What are the skills?

Look at the chart. Can you complete the missing headings?

Speaking	Listening
Writing	Reading

### Suggested answers:

Productive	Receptive
Speaking	Listening
Writing	Reading

- Think of an activity for each of the skills and complete the chart below:

Skill	Speaking	Writing	Listening	Reading
Activity				

- Here are some practical ideas you can use. If you are working with *starter teachers* try out some of these activities with them as the best way to learn is by doing.

## Writing

One of the biggest issues with writing is that we often neglect to teach the basics of writing, such as copying words correctly, punctuation and writing short sentences or texts. Unless learners can do these things, they won't be able to write longer texts (and the same is true of reading texts as well). Here are two activities designed to help develop literacy.

### Matching

Match the following words on the left with the correct plural on the right.

watch	boys
baby	feet
foot	watches
map	mice
child	babies
boy	maps
mouse	children

### Punctuate that!

■ Put the correct punctuation in these sentences.

- whats your name
- im from london
- i like apples oranges and bananas
- she said this is lovely

Suggested answers:

- What's your name?
- I'm from London.
- I like apples, oranges and bananas.
- She said, 'This is lovely.'

## Speaking

Here are two speaking activities.

Start by doing each of the activities, but keep the time limits quite short.

Then, ask the participants what the key differences were between the two activities and elicit that the first focused more on accuracy while the second more on fluency i.e. control and form in the first (as well as content), and more on ideas and content in the second.

### Guessing games/Question games

In this kind of activity learners need to form questions to guess the answer. The focus can be on the question forms or, alternatively, on short answers. Question games can take the form of Yes/No questions i.e.

Teacher: *What animal am I?*

Learner: *Can you fly?*

Teacher: *No (I can't).*

Learner: *Do you eat meat?*

Teacher: *No (I don't).*

Learner: *Do you live on a farm?*

Teacher: *Yes (I do). etc.*

### *A discussion*

Your local town/city council have just found \$10,000 and have decided to spend it on improving the town/city. They have come up with three ideas:

1. Building a new cinema.
2. Planting some trees in the park and putting in a small lake.
3. Holding a big street party.

Which of the ideas do you think is good, and why?

Making the activity directly related to the learners' own context (i.e. your town/city) means they are far more likely to have an opinion that they want to express.

Remember, give them time to think and prepare and use pair or group work before opening it up to a whole class discussion.

### **Listening**

Here is a listening activity that is slightly different from usual ones. The learners are more active and motivated because they generate the questions **they** want answered.

1. Explain that you are going to tell the participants a story and write the title of the story on the board e.g. 'A nightmare journey'.
2. Put the participants in groups and ask them to write eight questions they would like to ask you about the story.  
**Note:** they do this before they hear the story.
3. Elicit a few of the questions and write these questions up on the board.
4. Next, tell the participants that while they are listening to you telling the story they should see how many of the questions you answer.
5. Tell the participants to put everything (pen, paper etc.) down.
6. Tell the story.
7. After telling the story ask how many of the questions they heard the answers to – you might want to elicit some of the answers.
8. Next, put the participants in pairs facing each other.
9. Explain that you want one of the pair to start retelling the story, but in the first person. However, when you clap your hands they should stop and their partner should continue telling the story.

10. Start the pair work and monitor to see if or when the participants finish retelling the story.

**Acknowledgement:** Adrian Tennant, course director, was shown this idea by two teachers on one of his training courses: Birthe Beigel and Lesley Cook.

## Task 2 – Stages of a reading or listening lesson

- Put these stages in the correct order.
- a. Build interest.
- b. Check as a class again.
- c. Check ideas as a whole class.
- d. Get learners to check their ideas together.
- e. Learners compare again.
- f. Learners read or listen.
- g. Learners read or listen again.
- h. Set an activity for 'gist'.
- i. Set a more intensive or focused activity.
- j. Set an extension activity (if appropriate).

### Suggested answer:

- a. Build interest.
- b. Set an activity for 'gist'.
- c. Learners read or listen.
- d. Get learners to check their ideas together.
- e. Check ideas as a whole class.
- f. Set a more intensive or focused activity.
- g. Learners read or listen again.
- h. Learners compare again.
- i. Check as a class again.
- j. Set an extension activity (if appropriate).

**Note:** If you did this with *starter teachers*, you might want to give them activities or descriptions for each stage (e.g. Look at these three words: cow, giant, beanstalk. What do you think the connection between them or story that links them is?) and see if they can match these to the stages where they happen (e.g. This is to build interest).

## Conclusion

Combining the four skills is important. Learners need to integrate the skills to make efficient use of learning the language. The teacher must help the learners develop all four skills by creating activities which involve participation and help consolidate previous learning.



# **Unit 7: Teaching vocabulary and grammar**



# Unit 7

## Teaching vocabulary and grammar

### Introduction

This unit looks at two of the most important areas of language teaching: vocabulary and grammar.

Vocabulary is essential when learning a language, as without words it is impossible to communicate. The tasks look at different techniques for teaching vocabulary in order to give the *starter teachers* a better understanding of how they can teach vocabulary in the classroom. After trying out a number of techniques, they are asked to come up with advantages and disadvantages for each one, so that they think about which techniques would be most appropriate in different situations.

The tasks for grammar focus more on what grammar is and why it is important to integrate it into teaching rather than treat it in isolation. This is mainly because the traditional way of teaching grammar has focussed on *learning about* grammar, rather than learning *how to use* it.

### Task 1 – Hot seat

- This activity can be used with *starter teachers* to see how well they know key terminology used when talking about vocabulary.
- 1. Start by asking for a volunteer to come to the front and sit with their back to the board.
- 2. Write up one of the words from the box on the board. Tell the volunteer that the other participants will explain the meaning of the word, but can only use English and mustn't say parts of the word i.e. if the word is 'human' they can't say 'man'.
- 3. Play the game and then repeat the activity with two more volunteers and two more words.
- 4. Next, put participants in groups sitting in circles. In each group one chair should face away from the board.
- 5. Explain you are going to carry on playing the game, but this time in groups. As soon as one person guesses the word they should stand up. Then stop all the groups and ask them to look.
- 6. Next, get everyone in the group to move round one chair so a new person is sitting with their back to the board and repeat the activity with a new word.
- 7. Repeat this until all the words have been guessed.

8. Finally, ask what the connection is between the words. (They are all about vocabulary.)

noun	spelling
stress	meaning
verb	connotation
adjective	pronunciation
phrasal verb	collocation

## Task 2 – Ways of teaching vocabulary

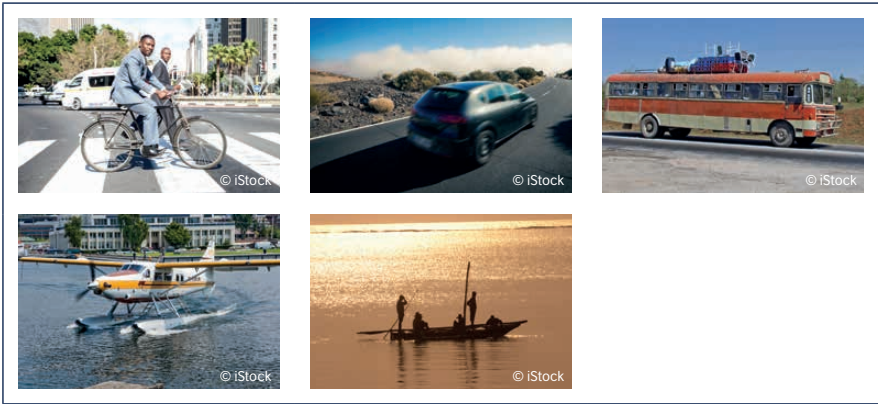
- If you are trying this task yourself, go through the ideas checking you understand each one before trying to complete the chart of advantages/disadvantages. If you are using this in a session for *starter teachers* follow the procedures given.
1. Demonstrate the following activities, spending about five minutes or less on each one. (Hopefully the teachers' level of English is high enough that they know all the words, if not you might need to change the vocabulary used for each activity.)
  2. Then, put up the following chart on the board (or handout a worksheet) and ask the participants to complete it in groups.

Technique	Advantages	Disadvantages

3. Finally, display the chart and ask for volunteers to come and complete it with their ideas. (See the end of the task for some suggested answers provided by the participants on the Hornby School in Gabon.)

### Realia or pictures

1. Show the learners five pictures. For each picture ask the learners what the word is. If they don't know it, tell them the word and ask them to repeat it.
2. Then, put the pictures up on the board and ask the learners to say each word again.
3. Next, write the words under each picture and make sure the learners copy the correct spelling.



**Using charts**

1. Give the participants the following chart and ask them to tick the words depending if they go with 'make' or 'do'.
2. Ask the participants to complete the chart and then check with a partner before checking as a class.

	your homework	your bed	dinner	your best	nothing	a mistake
make						
do						

*Key*

	your homework	your bed	dinner	your best	nothing	a mistake
make		✓	✓			✓
do	✓			✓	✓	

**Words with similar meanings**

1. Hand out word cards to the participants.
2. Explain they need to walk around and try to find someone with a word that has a similar meaning.
3. Next, they sit together and try to explain each word – and the difference between the two.
4. Then, the teacher asks each pair to come up to the front, say their words and explain the meanings.

Suggested word cards:

say/ask	hear/listen	under/below
give/take	warm/hot	happy/delighted
lend/borrow	tired/exhausted	to refuse/the refuse

### Definitions

Elicit words by using definitions. For example:

- What's the word for something you use to write with that uses ink? [pen]
- What's the word for something that you use to make light that needs batteries? [torch]
- What's the word you use when food tastes nice? [delicious/tasty]

### Matching

Give the participants the worksheet and ask them to match the words to the correct definitions. Encourage the participants to work in pairs.

1. Owe
  2. Invest
  3. Earn
  4. Save
  5. Waste
- a. To get money for work that you do.
  - b. To spend money on things that you don't need or are not worth the amount you pay.
  - c. To put money to use, maybe by buying something or putting it into a project with the hope of getting more money back later on.
  - d. When you borrow money from someone you have to repay it to them.
  - e. Not to spend now, to put it away for later.

**Answer key:** 1.d 2.c 3.a 4.e 5.b

### Context

On the board write up the following example (or give out a worksheet):

- *When he tells you to do something you must **obey** him without question.*  
Read the sentence. What does the word **obey** mean?
  - a. To do something you like doing.
  - b. To do something you don't have to do.
  - c. To do something a law or person says you must do.

### Sets/classification

Say the following to the participants and ask them what the superordinate word or classification is:

oranges, bananas, grapes, apples are all ....? [fruit]

flamingo, crow, penguin, eagle are all ...? [birds]

boot, wing, bonnet, clutch are all ...? [parts of a car]

famished, starving, peckish are all ...? [ways of talking about being hungry]

*Suggested answers:*

Technique	Advantages	Disadvantages
Realia and pictures	Best for concrete nouns. Fun, vivid and memorable.	Cannot really be used for abstract words.
Charts	Good for collocations and for reviewing language presented earlier.	Can't be used for all vocabulary and can sometimes be confusing.
Words with similar meanings	Good for recycling and reusing vocabulary previously learned. Helps distinguish between words that are often confused.	Can add to confusion and create frustration. Can be particularly tricky with 'false friends' i.e. words that are similar in another language in form but very different in meaning.
Definitions	Good for consolidating form and meaning.	Don't necessarily teach the use, just the meaning. Can also cause problems if not in context as some words have more than one meaning.
Matching	Challenging and motivating. Good for distinguishing between similar words/ concepts.	Sometimes purely a guessing game rather than a process of deduction.
Context	Helps understand and clarify meaning and shows how words can change their meaning depending on the situation.	Sometimes culturally inappropriate.
Sets/classifying	Helps learners see patterns and links between sets of words.	Wrong set or classification can cause problems later on as learners remember the incorrect answers. Also, rather broad as some words might fit into more than one set.

### Task 3 – Choosing what vocabulary to teach

1. Give the participants the worksheet and ask them to tick the activities they would use.
2. Then, put the participants in groups and ask them to discuss their ideas.
3. Monitor, and listen to some of the ideas.
4. Finally, open the discussion out to the whole class asking the participants to explain their choices.

#### Worksheet

1. Teach words that are in the coursebook.
2. Teach words that are easy to explain.
3. Teach words that learners might need for the next activity. i.e. key words in a reading text.
4. Teach words that learners ask you to explain.
5. Teach words you think learners will find useful in their everyday lives.
6. Teach words that are frequently used in English.

#### *Suggested ideas to mention during the whole class discussion:*

1. Often the writers of coursebooks have put a lot of thought into the words that are included so it usually makes sense to teach these words.
2. At low levels this makes sense, but there will be occasions when you have to explain more complex words. However, you should always try to explain words in the easiest way possible. And, as a rule of thumb, you should always use words in the explanation that are easier than the target word.
3. Although this can be useful as it helps learners with the task, it is not always the best thing to do. Sometimes it is better to do a post-teaching vocabulary activity (i.e. after the activity) where learners are given a task focussing on the words that they have already seen in context.
4. There is usually a reason a learner asks you and it can be highly motivating for them. However, sometimes you might want to note down the word and tell them you will deal with it later. This is a useful technique to use if you aren't sure of the meaning yourself. It is also useful to teach your learner the phrases: 'What's X in English?' and 'How do you say X in English?'
5. Clearly if learners are going to need or use the words on a regular basis, it is useful to teach them these words, especially as it means they will practise them and also because it can be highly motivating.
6. Again, it is far more useful to teach words that are frequently used – after all, they will need these words. And, what is the point of teaching a word they are only ever likely to use once or twice?



## Task 4 – What is grammar?

### Definitions

1. Write your own definition of grammar below.

Grammar is ...

2. Share your definition with your group. Can you combine your ideas?

Grammar is ...

### Thinking about grammar

1. Read the following words and discuss the meaning of the sentence with your partner.

Speak	teacher	school	English	like
child	new	difficult	often	

2. Now try to make a meaning clearer by rearranging the order of the words. You must not change the words themselves!

3. Share your version with your group. Does it make more sense now? This element of grammar (word order) is called

.....

4. Go back to your version. Now you can clarify the meaning further by changing word forms to indicate time, perspective, quantity etc.

5. Share this version with your group. Can you explain any differences in meaning? This element of grammar (word form) is called

.....

**Summary**

Grammar consists of ..... and ..... It is a structured system which is basic to language, in its construction, comprehension and study.

[Thanks to Rachel Bowden for the original ideas for this task].

*Suggested answers* for defining grammar:

- A set of rules to be followed.
- A description of how language works.
- A framework or skeleton to help language work.
- The structure/form of the language.
- The glue that holds the language together.
- The building blocks of language.
- The way in which words are combined or formed to make meaning.

*Answers* for summary:

Grammar consists of syntax (word order) and morphology (word formation). It is a structured system which is basic to language, in its construction, comprehension and study.

**Task 5 – Exploring meaning in grammar**

Look at these two sentences: What is the difference in meaning?

- a. The boy chased the dog.
- b. The dog chased the boy.

The difference is quite big, but is created simply by the word order (syntax) i.e. the grammar of the sentences. This illustrates the importance of grammar in terms of conveying meaning. The question is: how do you teach the difference in meaning? Traditionally it might be a case of talking about subject and object etc. However, this is *learning about* the language not *learning how to use* it. A more effective way may be the use of pictures to elicit the meaning and then matching the correct sentence to each picture.

## Task 6 – How do we teach grammar?

- Look at the following ideas about how to teach grammar. What do you think of each one? Which do you agree/disagree with and why?
- a. You can't teach children grammar, they just aren't interested. Even if you do, they'll make mistakes. It's better to get them to use the language and the grammar will eventually come. You don't teach grammar to children learning their first language so why do we bother with a second language?
- b. Grammar needs to be made meaningful. Most of the time children don't understand grammar because they don't understand how it's used. They need practice and grammar needs to be taught in context.
- c. Children have to learn grammar properly or they will always make mistakes. We should make sure the children are using a piece of grammar correctly before we try to teach something new.
- d. Children need to see how the grammar is used in context as it will help them understand it and be able to use it.
- e. Grammar needs to be activated. It is no good simply teaching children the rules if they don't learn how to use it both in their writing and when they speak.
- f. The only way children can learn grammar is if the teacher explains the rules to them. Grammar needs to be made clear to the children so that they know what the rules are and what is correct.
- g. Children need to 'discover' the rules themselves as this way they are more likely to remember them. The teacher's role is to provide children with the opportunity to discover how grammar is used.

## Task 7 – Guided discovery

- Look at these two ideas about how to teach grammar.
  - a. Explain the rule to the learners and then get the learners to do some exercises to practise the grammar.
  - b. Give the learners some sentences that contain the grammar and a series of questions designed to guide the learners in working out how the grammar is used.
- Which of these approaches to teaching grammar do you use most frequently? Why?
  - Which one do you think is better? Why?

A guided discovery approach is one where learners are provided with examples and then try to deduce the rules from these examples. It clearly doesn't work with all grammar, but is an effective way with a lot of grammar, especially where there is a contrast in use e.g. past simple versus present perfect, going to versus will for future, the use of definite and indefinite articles.

■ Here is an exercise that follows a guided discovery approach.

Look at these sentences:

- a. I've been here *since Monday*.
- b. She's lived here *for three months*.
- c. He's played the piano *since he was six*.
- d. I've been learning French *for ages*.
- e. We've been waiting here *for hours*.
- f. I've been here *since three o'clock*.

What's the difference between *for* and *since*?

By using a guided discovery approach you allow learners to find things out for themselves. This means they are far more likely to remember what they have learned. Helping them develop the skill of 'noticing' also means they are able to learn things for themselves when they read or listen in the target language i.e. when reading a newspaper or listening to a song.

# Unit 8: Dealing with mistakes



# Unit 8

## Dealing with mistakes

### Introduction

In this unit we are using the term *mistake* to talk about all mistakes learners make. In a lot of literature on teaching a distinction is made between an *error* (which is systematic and consistent) and a *mistake* (which is seen as an oversight or slip, which when pointed out the learner can self-correct).

There is often an assumption that all mistakes should be dealt with thoroughly, and that allowing learners to make mistakes is a bad thing. On the other hand, some people say that making mistakes is a sign that learning is taking place.

### Task 1 – What do you think?

- Read the following sentences and tick (✓) the ones you agree with.
- 1. All learners' mistakes should be corrected.
- 2. I try to correct as much as I can, but sometimes I don't notice the mistakes.
- 3. Teachers should not let learners correct each other's work as they don't know the right answers.
- 4. I always try to let the learner correct his/her own mistakes before I do.
- 5. The teacher should never say: '*That's wrong.*'
- 6. Teachers need to look at the content not the form.
- 7. The learner should be trained to learn by making as few mistakes as possible right from the start.
- 8. Making mistakes is an important and positive part of learning a language so they should be dealt with.

Our view is that mistakes are part of the learning process and that learners cannot get everything right from the beginning. Learners need time to develop their language and this includes making mistakes. It is also impossible for teachers to correct everything. Thinking carefully about what to correct, when to correct it and how to correct it are essential skills for a teacher to develop.

## Task 2 – When to correct

Read through the following activities and decide **if, what, when** and **how** you would correct learners' mistakes.

### Example one

You have just presented a number of verbs with irregular past tenses. Your learners are using the verbs to tell a simple story.

### Example two

You have asked your learners to discuss which animals make the best pets and why.

### Example three

Your learners are practising making future arrangements using the present continuous and going to future forms. You hear one of them say 'I'm meet you there at six.'

- Discuss with your group

When dealing with spoken mistakes, all of these decisions – if, what, when and how – have to be made in a split second. For writing the teacher has more time to decide. Asking *starter teachers* to think about correction and all of the questions surrounding it, will help them in the classroom when they have to make these immediate decisions.

## Task 3 – Ways of correcting speaking

- Complete the chart with the cards (the cards are at the end of this unit and need to be cut up before using).

Correction technique	Advantages	Disadvantages

**Note:** If you use this activity with *starter teachers* it would be useful to give them examples of learners' mistakes when speaking and get them to practise the different techniques.



## Task 4 – Correcting written work

How many hours a week do you spend correcting your learners' written work?

What ideas can you think of for reducing this time, whilst ensuring that your learners receive the feedback they need?

List your group's top four ideas.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Listen to the other groups and add any other ideas.

### Summary

- Keep written work short.
- Use correction codes to encourage learners to 'notice' mistakes and correct their own work.
- Don't correct everything. Focus on just one aspect i.e. tenses, word order, spelling etc.
- Look at all the learners' work and try to identify common errors that you can spend class time looking at and helping learners to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

One of the key differences between correcting mistakes in writing and those made while speaking is: **time**. When a teacher is correcting written work they have far more time to decide what to correct and how. Also, one thing that can be done is to have clear criteria for the written work when it is given to learners. The correction can then be based on these criteria and make it easier for learners to understand what is being corrected.

With *starter teachers* it would be good to put all of these ideas into practice as soon as possible. You could try to find some 'real' pieces of writing, or examples of spoken mistakes, from learners and ask the *starter teachers* to discuss and correct.

### Conclusion

As a teacher you will never meet a class where learners don't make mistakes. In fact, mistakes help the teacher plan their lessons as it gives them an idea of the learners' problems and progress. Taking into account the mistakes made by learners is a step in improving your teaching.

### Cards for Task 3

✂---- cut the cards out and mix them up.

Teacher says the correct answer.	Direct and quick.	Learners don't have the chance to 'notice' their mistakes.
Teacher indicates the mistake, but gets the learner to self-correct.	Helps the learner think about what they are saying.	Sometimes learners are unable to correct themselves.
Teacher uses their fingers to 'show' where the mistake was made.	Good for visual learners.	Can sometimes be confusing and only really works for word order or an incorrect or missing word.
Teacher repeats the sentence but indicates the mistake by stressing it, or stopping just before the mistake happens.	Helps learners realise that there was a mistake and where it occurred.	Learners may simply repeat the mistake again, but this time emphasising it as the teacher did.
Teacher writes up what the learner said on the board and indicates the mistake.	Clear and learners can see there was a mistake and what it was.	Unless the teacher then asks the learner to correct the sentence and say the correct version, it's not very useful.
Teacher asks other learners what the mistake was and to correct it.	Makes all the learners think about what was said.	Can be embarrassing for the learner who made the original mistake.

# Unit 9: Assessment



# Unit 9

## Assessment

### Introduction

Teachers are required to assess learners in order to evaluate their progress. Assessment takes many forms, but traditionally summative tests conducted during the course are the most common. However, in this unit we are looking at assessment in a much broader way, including formative assessment conducted by the teacher as well as peer and self-assessment. We also want to highlight that the most important thing in language learning should not be correctness, but the ability to use the language for communication.

### Task 1 – Beliefs about assessment

- Complete the chart. Discuss your ideas with other teachers.

	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
1 Learners should be assessed every lesson.			
2 Assessment can help teachers plan what they need to teach.			
3 Assessment needs to be part of the teaching-learning process.			
4 We should use the same activities for assessment that we usually use for teaching.			
5 It doesn't matter if assessment uses new activity types.			
6 Assessment can motivate learners.			
7 Learners can't assess themselves.			
8 You can use games for assessing learners.			
9 You must give every piece of assessment a mark.			

### **Suggested responses:**

**1** Formal assessment doesn't need to take place in every lesson, but generally teachers are assessing their pupils all the time.

**2 and 3** One of the main functions of assessment is that it informs the teacher about the progress pupils are making therefore it is likely that you agree or strongly agree with both of these statements.

**4 and 5** Look carefully. These are actually the same questions but taken from opposite angles. Therefore, if you agree with one you should disagree with the other. For any assessment to be valid, it needs to assess the pupils on what they have learned so if you use a **new activity** to assess them, you are requiring them to do something they may not have learned and this means the assessment is not going to be fair. You can use the same activity that was used during teaching, or an activity they have come across before used to teach something else. The key is that the activity assesses what you want it to.

**6** Assessment can be positive and motivational. Focus (especially during the feedback) on what the pupils can do, not what they can't, acknowledge when pupils do well and use what you learn to inform your teaching so that pupils can see that you are genuinely trying to help them and that assessment is part of this process.

**7** Of course they can, they can see when they are making progress. However, they will need help learning how to do this effectively – guided activities are good for this.

**8** If you used a game for teaching then it's quite likely that the game is also useful as an assessment activity.

**9** We must be clear that marks do not just mean numbers or letters such as 8/10 or B+, comments such as 'good', smiley faces or stars are also marks, at least in the eyes of many young learners. It's also important to think about the purpose of the assessment.

## **Task 2 – What are we really assessing?**

- Try the following two activities with the group of *starter teachers* you are training and then discuss the questions in the 'Round-up' section.

### **A mime game (reading)**

1. Start by handing each participant two small pieces of paper.
2. Next, ask them to write a verb (an action/doing word) on one piece of paper and an adverb on the other piece.
3. At the front of the class put out two chairs and ask the participants to come and put all the verbs on one chair and all the adverbs on the other.
4. Mix up all the pieces of paper on each chair.

5. Select one person to come to the front, choose a piece of paper from each chair and then act out the action in the way described by the adverb – the other participants have to guess. **Note:** the person miming **MUSTN'T** speak.
6. Do this with three people. Then, divide the class into groups and explain they will do it in groups with people taking turns to come and collect two pieces of paper and then mime the actions.

### A drawing game (listening)

**Note:** For this activity you'll need a simple drawing such as the one below:



1. Ask the participants to have a piece of blank paper and to turn it 'landscape'.
2. Explain you are going to describe a picture and they need to draw the picture.
3. Make sure they are ready, and then slowly describe the picture – you may need to repeat each phrase or sentence twice and give time for the participants to draw each item.
4. Once you've finished, ask the participants to compare their pictures with each other.
5. Finally, show your picture and ask the participants to check and compare.

### Round-up

- What was being assessed in each activity?
- Who was being assessed?
- Could you give an assessment mark? If yes, how? If no, do you think that is important?
- Could you use either of these activities in your classes?

### *Suggested answers*

In the mime activity the main focus is on understanding vocabulary. Of course, in part the ability to 'act' is also being assessed, but this is not the central aim of the activity.

In the drawing activity, the main skill being assessed is listening. However, linked to this is an understanding of the vocabulary and grammar i.e. There is/are and prepositions of place. The key here is that often in 'listening assessments' other skills such as reading and writing are also assessed (i.e. learners need to read the questions or write their answers).

## **Conclusion**

For any type of assessment it is important to have clear criteria for what is being assessed. Criteria should be objective and may take into account factors such as age, culture, level and skills. It is also important to remember that what might seem easy for the teacher may not be the same for the learners.



**Unit 10: Supporting  
*starter teachers* –  
lesson planning  
and managing  
the classroom**



# Unit 10

## Supporting *starter teachers* – lesson planning and managing the classroom

### Introduction

*Starter teachers* need to know how to manage their lessons and their classroom. This includes aspects such as classroom management, the use of L1 rather than the target language and lesson planning. For the last of these, trainers need to think about how they can teach the skills that go into effective planning. A lesson is a combination of various activities that need to fit together and run smoothly, each one building on or complimenting what goes before and helping with what goes after. The ultimate aim is providing activities that develop the learners' fluency and accuracy. Here, again, the role of the teacher is to be selective enough to produce a coherent and rich lesson.

### Task 1 – Why is it important to plan?

- Complete these two sentences:  
*Planning is important because ...*  
*A lesson plan should include ...*
- Now compare and discuss your answers with other trainers/teachers.

### Task 2 – Putting a plan in order

Complete the chart below with the lesson plan cards.

Stage of lesson	What the teacher says/does	What the learners say/do

**Note:** The cards are at the end of this unit and need to be cut out and mixed up.

Trainers also need to help and support teachers when they have concerns for example about their own English language skills, teaching grammar or speaking, giving instructions etc. It is possible to be prescriptive about what these areas are, but it is probably more useful to tackle the problems the *starter teachers* actually identify themselves. Here are two tasks you can use either with trainers or with the *starter teachers*.

### Task 3 – What issues do new teachers have?

1. Put the participants in groups of 4 or 5 and give each group a large piece of paper and some pens (marker pens are ideal).
2. Write up the question on the board as a mind map with the sentence ‘*What issues do new teachers have?*’ in the centre.
3. Ask the groups to spend ten minutes making their mind map.
4. Next, display the mind maps around the walls and the participants to walk around and look at the other ones.
5. Next, draw a blank mind map on the board and ask the participants to come up with one agreed model.

### Task 4 – How can we help?

1. In the same groups, ask the participants how they as trainers or mentors could help the *starter teachers* with the issues identified in the previous task.
2. Monitor, and help the groups where necessary.
3. After ten minutes have a whole class discussion on the solutions the participants have generated.

#### Some suggested ideas:

Issues	Support
Are worried their English isn't good enough.	Encourage them to use English with their colleagues and to read in English.
Are not very good at planning.	Sit with them and co-plan one or two lessons to give them a framework to follow.
Keep explaining the grammar to the learners.	Show them alternative approaches to teaching grammar as they might not be aware of them and often people teach the way they were taught.
Only use the coursebook to teach.	Sit and plan a lesson with them and encourage them to add activities to the coursebook or adapt the ones that are there to make them more suitable for the learners.
Give all the instructions in the learners' L1.	Explain why it is useful to give instructions in English (exposure/input of target language for learners) and encourage them to write down their instructions in English so they know what they want to say.

The last point above regarding instructions highlights an issue that often appears in classrooms around the world, and not only with *starter teachers*: the use of L1 in the classroom.

## Task 5 – Use of L1

- Look at the following statements about using L1 in the classroom. What do you think?
- 1. My learners won't understand what to do if I give instructions in English.
- 2. I'm not very good at English and I don't want to make mistakes.
- 3. I need to explain the grammar in the mother tongue.
- 4. Sometimes the learners are tired and need a break from English.
- 5. It's useful for the learners to translate.
- 6. Sometimes I need to explain the meaning of a word in the learners' mother tongue.
- 7. Using the learners' mother tongue saves time.
- 8. It's better to use the learners' mother tongue to do things like organising the classroom.
- 9. When they want to ask me to explain something it's much easier if they use their own language.
- 10. I use English first and then the learners' mother tongue.

In general teachers should try to use English as much as possible in the classroom. For example, instructions should be in English. The key is to keep them simple, short and use gestures and the board to aid understanding and for reinforcement (i.e. writing the instructions on the board gives learners the chance to read them again). If we take point 7, it's true using L1 will save time, but the whole point of the classroom is to learn and practise English. Learning takes time and the more learners are exposed to English, the faster they will learn. In point ten the issue here is that the learners won't bother listening to the English if they know that the teacher will tell them afterwards in their own language. In many respects this is self-defeating and won't help the learners.

Another thing that helps learners in the classroom is the use of language prompts. Often these can be displayed around the classroom so that learners can refer to them as and when they need them.

## Task 6 – Language prompt posters

When and why would you use these phrases?

Who would use the phrases?

How can you help your learners remember the phrases?

- How do you say ...?
- What's ... in English?
- How do you spell ...?
- What's the word for ...?
- Is ... correct?
- I'm sorry, I don't understand. Can you explain it?
- Can you say that again?
- How do you pronounce it?

## Task 7 – Classroom rules: What do you say?

- Complete the chart.

What 'rules' do you (the teacher) want your learners to follow in the classroom? Write the rule in the left-hand column and then the words you will use to tell the learners what to do or what not to do.

Rule	What the teacher says
Learners must do their homework.	'Please do your homework.'

## Conclusion

*Starter teachers* need support. One way to provide this support is by encouraging them to work closely with their colleagues, advisors and inspectors. This will help them improve and enrich their professional practice and also help them deal with the challenges they will invariably face in the classroom.

## Cards for Task 2

✂---- cut the cards out and mix them up.

<b>Building interest</b>	Teacher tells learners they are going to hear an interview with someone talking about their pet. 'Work in pairs and write five questions you want answered.'	Learners work in pairs and write five questions. i.e. <i>What kind of animal is it? What does it eat? How long have you had it?</i> etc.
<b>Checking questions</b>	Teacher asks learners to read out some of their questions, writes them on the board and checks they are okay.	Learners read out their questions to the teacher and rest of the class.
<b>Listening – gist</b>	Teacher plays the recording. 'Listen, tick the questions you hear.'	Learners listen and see how many of their questions they hear.
<b>Checking – gist</b>	Teacher put learners in pairs and gets them to discuss together before asking a few 'How many of your questions did you hear?'	Learners work in pairs and compare what they heard.
<b>Listen – detail</b>	'Listen again. This time, write down the answers to your questions that were asked.' Teacher plays the recording again.	Learners listen to the recording again and write down the answers they hear.





# Appendix



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