

# **TEACHING ENGLISH IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS:**

## **Language, Learners and Learning**

**Edited by**  
**Valentina Canese**  
**Susan Spezzini**



EDITORIAL  
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA - UNA



**TEACHING ENGLISH  
IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS:  
Language, Learners and Learning**



# **TEACHING ENGLISH IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS: Language, Learners and Learning**

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Edited by:

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Editorial

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**Teaching English in Global Context: Language, Learners and Learning**

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UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE ASUNCIÓN  
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA



EDITORIAL FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA - UNA

# Dedication

We dedicate this book to our families (Valentina's husband Marcelo and son Martin; and Susan's husband Luis, sons Victor and Dino, and daughter-in-law Melissa) who provided unwavering support and inspiration for converting an undefined idea into the incredible reality of 55 chapters.

We also dedicate this book to the English language teachers in Paraguay and throughout the world who, though often with limited resources, remain passionately committed to providing effective instruction to children, adolescents, and adults and, by doing so, guide their students in striving toward a brighter future.





## About the Editors



**Valentina Canese, PhD**, is director of the Instituto Superior de Lenguas (ISL) at the National University of Asuncion in Paraguay, where she teaches curriculum and applied research methods. She teaches bilingual education, language policies, and advanced research methods at other private universities in Paraguay. Valentina is member of Paraguay's Research Incentive Program from the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT). She conducts research on pedagogical and sociolinguistic issues in language teaching, technology in education, and distance education. Valentina is a board member of Paraguay Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (PARATESOL), an affiliate of the TESOL International Association, and represents Paraguay in

the Latin America and Caribbean TESOL group.

Valentina grew up in Paraguay, a bilingual country, and being from a family of immigrants, she has always been very interested in languages, especially English. She started learning English in middle school and by the time she was in high school, she began interpreting for visitors to Paraguay. For this reason, she was encouraged to study English as a major at the University, which allowed her to begin teaching at a very young age, discovering a vocation for the teaching profession. While in college, she realized that she wanted to continue learning about bilingualism and bilingual education, and with the help of her professors, she was able to secure a scholarship to continue her studies abroad.

Valentina holds a bachelor's degree in English from the ISL/UNA, a master's degree in language education from San Diego State University in the United States of America (USA), and a PhD in curriculum and instruction for language and literacy from Arizona State University, also in the USA. Having earned both of her graduate degrees through support from the U.S. government's Fulbright program, Valentina encouraged Susan to apply to Fulbright for spending several months in Paraguay to research and teach at the ISL and, thus, enhance the preparation of pre-service and in-service English language teaching (ELT) educators. With this support from Fulbright, Valentina and Susan worked together in editing the book, *Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning*.



**Susan Spezzini, PhD**, is professor of English learner education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (USA), where she coordinates teacher preparation programs in English as a second language. Susan conducts research on preparing educators for effectively serving English learners and, also, on helping English learners overcome pronunciation challenges. She has researched the impact of professional development grants on how educators teach English learners and on how teachers help each other through collaborative mentoring. Susan is a board member of the Alabama-Mississippi TESOL affiliate, serves on the regional Southeast TESOL council, and is president emerita of PARATESOL (for which she was a founding member).

Susan has always been fascinated with languages. While growing up on a farm in San Diego County, California (USA)—near the border with Mexico, Susan was in contact with Spanish and, also, German. Her maternal grandparents had immigrated from Germany and her paternal grandparents from Switzerland. After earning degrees in linguistics and language teaching, Susan followed a childhood dream that started when seeing President Kennedy on TV with the inaugural Peace Corps group. That dream took Susan to Paraguay where she served as a Peace Corps volunteer helping girls in rural communities along the Paraná River and, also, teaching English in their recently established high school. After marrying, Susan moved to Asuncion where she and her husband raised their family. Susan taught English at the Paraguayan American Cultural Center and then at the Paraguay-Anglo Center. Later, she taught languages and was curriculum coordinator at the American School of Asuncion. Susan also had the privilege of teaching linguistics in the evening, for almost 20 years, to first-year students at the ISL/UNA.

Susan holds a bachelor's degree in linguistics from the University of California in San Diego, a master's degree in teaching languages from the University of California Berkeley, and a PhD in curriculum and instruction (for ELT) from the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. As a Fulbright Scholar (2021-23), Susan implemented Enhancing the Efficacy of English Language Educators in Paraguay. For this project, she collaborated with Valentina and other teacher educators to create the book, *Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning*, for enhancing teacher preparation in Paraguay and other countries. Susan looks forward to having these 55 chapters used worldwide in the preparation of pre-service and in-service ELT educators.

# Acknowledgment

It was at a program meeting of the English language faculty at the Higher Institute of Languages (ISL), National University of Asuncion (UNA), that the idea emerged for this book. Although early notions of this idea originated before the COVID pandemic, it was after switching to remote instruction that the ISL faculty clearly defined this idea and initiated an action plan. Consequently, our first acknowledgment for this book goes to our ISL colleagues for having conceptualized the idea for *Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning*. Led by Rocio Mazzoleni—coordinator of the ISL English program, these faculty are Jessica Amarilla, Christian Cristóful, Carla Fernández, Ignacio Giménez, Elena Nuñez, Cynthia Rolón, Silvia Terol, and Maura Zalimben. Without your idea, this book would not exist.

Instrumental for converting this idea into reality was financial support from the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program, which is sponsored by the United States of America (USA) Department of State. Supported by the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program (<https://fulbrightscholars.org/>), Susan lived in Paraguay for three months in 2022 and again in 2023 to work with Valentina on the *Enhancing the Efficacy of English Language Educators in Paraguay* grant project. The opportunity to collaborate in person helped us, as editors, to implement all phases of the book, *Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning*. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent official views of the Fulbright Program or the Government of the United States. We gratefully acknowledge the financial contribution made to this book by the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program and the way this program inherently shaped the book's global impact.

We acknowledge the overwhelming support that this book project received from the UNA and, more specifically, from Dr. Ricardo Pavetti, Dean of the UNA School of Philosophy. When first hearing about this project and at all subsequent stages, Dean Pavetti demonstrated full approval with “Adelante” (i.e., “Move ahead”). By having access to the School of Philosophy's Creative Commons license, we were able to shepherd this book from idea to implementation. We also acknowledge the staff of the ISL office and the School of Philosophy Dean's office for their support of this book project, especially with aspects such as procuring the ISBN for the book and a digital object identifier (DOI) for each chapter as well as building the book's website.

We are particularly grateful to the authors for having written their respective chapters (see below). By thus contributing to the book, these professionals in English language teaching (ELT) contributed their experiences and perspectives from nine countries: Argentina, Australia, Colombia, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Russia, United States, and Uruguay. By doing so, our authors enhanced the potential of this book for serving the needs of ELT practitioners worldwide and, more specifically, in the Global South.

*Aida Rodomanchenko*  
*Alberto Roca Álvarez*  
*Amanda Foss*  
*Araceli Salas*  
*Beatriz Damiani*  
*Becky Crosbie*

*Jhon Eduardo Mosquera Pérez*  
*Josephine Prado*  
*Julia S. Austin*  
*Julie Choi*  
*Kailin Liu*  
*Kent Buckley-Ess*

*Briseida Jiménez Velázquez*  
*Bryan Meadows*  
*Carla Beatriz Fernández*  
*Carolina Ortíz Ruffinelli*  
*Catherine E. Davies*  
*Chad Strawn*  
*Christian Cristófol*  
*Clara Onatra*  
*Cynthia Rolón Cañete*  
*Diana Patricia Pineda Montoya*  
*Diane Carter*  
*Elena Nuñez Delgado*  
*Elena Kryukova*  
*Elena Zyrianova*  
*Fernando Esquivel Vera*  
*Gabriel Díaz Maggioli*  
*Gwyneth Dean-Fastnacht*  
*Grazzia María Mendoza Chirinos*  
*Harshini Lahvani*  
*Heather R. Kaiser*  
*Holly Hubbard*  
*Ignacio Giménez Núñez*  
*Jairo Enrique Castañeda-Trujillo*  
*Jessica Amarilla*

*Kristina S. Sandi*  
*Laura Caperochipe*  
*Leslie Barratt*  
*Lisseth S. Rojas-Barreto*  
*Lynn P. Fuller*  
*Mark S. Algren*  
*Matthew Vakey*  
*Maura Judith Zalimben Recalde*  
*Melinda S. Harrison*  
*Mónica Gandolfo*  
*Natalie A. Kuhlman*  
*Nicolás Dantaz Rico*  
*Otoniel Eduardo Carrasquel Zambrano*  
*Remigio Díaz Benítez*  
*Rocio Mazzone*  
*Sandra Palencia*  
*Silvia Terol*  
*Stael Ruffinelli de Ortíz*  
*Stephanie Montiel*  
*Verónica Sánchez Hernández*  
*Vicky Ariza-Pinzón*  
*Yonatan Puón Castro*  
*Yulia Grevtseva*

As the editors of this book, we are indebted to Julia Austin for having served as our book's professional editor. With a Ph.D. degree in rhetoric and composition, Julia was exceptionally well prepared for leading a rigorous editing process and, by doing so, ensuring that all chapters meet the guidelines of the American Psychological Association's style manual (7<sup>th</sup> edition). Julia embraced our vision of creating a free online textbook for ELT professionals worldwide and contributed her phenomenal ability, talent, and passion for reviewing and editing. Julia's unconditional support was key in producing a unique textbook to prepare current and future ELT educators. Upon accepting our request for help with editing this book, Julia wrote: "What a monumental task editing a book with so many chapters and different authors!" Indeed, editing this book was a monumental task.

We would, of course, like to express our heartfelt appreciation to several ELT colleagues who, experienced in the design and publication of edited textbooks, eagerly provided their support during the process of creating this book. Gabriel Díaz Maggioli (ORT University, Uruguay) guided us from the very beginning and often shared ideas and templates, such as the author release form. Leslie Barratt (Indiana State University, USA) was the first author to write an abstract and a chapter, and her manuscripts served as models for the other authors. Grazzia Mendoza (Education Specialist, Honduras) distributed our Call for Chapters to colleagues throughout Latin America and encouraged potential authors to submit abstracts and chapters. Mark Algren (University of Missouri, USA) was a pillar of inspiration from the start of the project and would quickly respond to any request for guidance. Natalie Kuhlman (San Diego State University, USA) provided advice and encouragement whenever needed. We thank all of you for being our cheerleaders throughout this book project.

We would especially like to thank Gabriel, Leslie, Grazzia, and Mark for serving on our book's panel presentation at the TESOL International Association's 2023 convention in Portland

(USA). Moreover, our very special thanks to Gabriel for writing the Prologue and to Leslie for writing the Epilogue.

We appreciate the support of colleagues at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and other institutions who, with great interest, listened to our writing challenges and offered suggestions. We also appreciate the support from Leslie Barratt, Socorro Herrera, Robin Ennis, and Melinda Harrison who reviewed chapters in their areas of expertise and, also, provided advice.

We thank the TESOL International Association for facilitating a room to meet with chapter authors at the 2022 convention in Pittsburgh (USA) and selecting our proposal to present at the 2023 convention in Portland (USA). We thank TESOL affiliates for hosting our presentation at conferences: Latin America-Caribbean (ARTESOL), Regional Southeast TESOL (Carolina TESOL), and affiliate-based (AMTESOL, HELTA, MEXTESOL, PARATESOL). We also thank the Congreso Paraguayo de Lingüística Aplicada (CONPLA) for hosting 42 authors in seven panels at their 2022 conference and for sponsoring the launching of this book at their 2023 conference.

We acknowledge the English language students and the pre-service and in-service teachers with whom we have worked across many decades in both Paraguay and the United States. The desire of students to learn English more effectively and of teachers to teach English more effectively was a driving force for this book.

We are forever grateful to Marcelo Ferrer for volunteering his time and dedicating his extraordinary talent to design the cover, the pages, do the copyediting, prepare the proofs, and create a webpage for each chapter in this book.

Finally, we want to thank our families for having supported us during this two-year project. Our husbands—Marcelo and Luis—shared our vision regarding the potential impact of this book, especially for teachers in the Global South. To help us reach that vision, Marcelo and Luis offered their unwavering support and provided the space and time that each of us needed for moving forward week after week, and month after month.

Valentina Canese  
Asuncion, Paraguay

Susan Spezzini  
Birmingham, Alabama, USA



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# Overview: Welcome to This Book

Susan Spezzini

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Have you ever wanted additional materials to help you become a great English teacher? Have you wanted easy access to useful ideas and free resources specifically designed for your teaching context? If so, *Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning* is the perfect book for you. In this overview, you will learn how and why this book was created. You will learn about the nine parts of this book and its 55 chapters. You will also learn about teaching English to different types of learners, especially in resource-challenged contexts.

## Introduction: What is Special About This Book?

*I think I could be a better teacher if had access to materials of higher quality.*

*I wish my university had an enormous library with all the latest pedagogical materials.*

*If only I could buy everything I see online to help me become a great English teacher.*

Such comments are often expressed by university students worldwide who have limited access to affordable quality textbooks. This situation is especially acute in Paraguay and other countries with similar socio-economic and political characteristics, referred to as the Global South (Hollington et al., 2015).

To provide you and other students with access to quality materials, the English program at the National University of Asuncion created an online teacher preparation textbook with chapters written by local and international educators. Published as an open educational resource (OER) through the university's Creative Commons license, *Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning* addresses the challenge of providing open and accessible education (Trotter, 2018). As such, this book is accessible at no cost to you and everyone else.

*Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning* contains 55 chapters. These chapters were written by 61 authors from nine countries. Each of these chapters contains the following sections:

- Preliminary Sections—Abstract, Keywords
- Text Sections—Introduction, Background, Major Dimensions, Pedagogical Applications
- Activity Sections—Key Concepts, Discussing, Taking Action, Expanding Further
- End Sections—See Also, References, About the Author

To help you know what to expect in these sections, this overview provides information boxes at the top of each section. These information boxes will help you understand the organizational structure of all 55 chapters in this book.

## Background: Why Was This Book Written?



Each chapter has a **Background** section. Here, you will find initial information about concepts in this chapter. Such information could be definitions, historical developments, and current use. The following **Background** section is similar to this same section in all chapters

While pursuing a university degree, you may have experienced the need to have additional materials in your teacher preparation program. The Higher Institute of Languages (ISL) at the National University of Asunción (UNA) has a similar situation regarding its library collection, which is limited and outdated. To address this need with a possible solution, the faculty in the ISL's English degree program conceptualized an online textbook with chapters written by local and international educators. The purposes of this online book are to

- address the need of pre-service teachers (like you) for affordable quality textbooks in English language teaching (ELT), especially in resource-challenged contexts;
- support the preparation of university students (like you) in becoming effective English teachers for learners of all ages in the Global South (Hollington et al., 2015);
- serve as an online textbook from which your university instructors can select chapters to be used in your teacher preparation courses; and
- meet the pedagogical needs of pre-service teachers whose English is at a low advanced level (e.g., CEFR-B2+) upon entry to a teacher preparation program.

This collaboration between the ISL faculty and colleagues from around the world led to a free, open-access book published with a Creative Commons license.

## Major Dimensions: What Process Was Followed in Writing This Book?



Every chapter has a **Major Dimensions** section. Here, you will find detailed insights about concepts provided in this chapter. The following **Major Dimensions** section is similar to this same section in all chapters

Valentina Canese, as ISL director, was the lead editor for this book. She negotiated transactions per UNA policies, obtained approval to publish this book as an OER under UNA's Creative Commons license, encouraged collaborators, and oversaw all aspects. Valentina invited Susan Spezzini, a Fulbright Scholar, to serve as co-editor. Susan reviewed and edited chapters, communicated with chapter authors, invited Julia Austin to serve as the book's professional editor, and guided revisions. Through this project, 61 professionals from nine countries

## Overview: Welcome to This Book

collaborated in preparing this book. The two-year process for preparing this OER publication is outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Two-Year Process for Preparing and Publishing this Book*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<b>Year 1</b>	
1 <sup>st</sup> quarter	ISL faculty conceptualized open access online textbook. Valentina, as lead editor, invited Susan to be co-editor.
2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter	Editors projected 30 chapters and determined chapter layout. Call for chapters was distributed, and proposals were received.
3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter	Editors conducted <i>Meet &amp; Greet</i> sessions and a chapter writing session (virtual). Authors began submitting chapters.
4 <sup>th</sup> quarter	The chapter review process began. Susan, as Fulbright Scholar, was in Paraguay for an initial three-month visit.
<b>Year 2</b>	
1 <sup>st</sup> quarter	Julia joined this book project as its professional editor. Editors reviewed 55 chapters, and authors revised them.
2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter	Subsequent review rounds took place. Authors shared chapters at Paraguay's Applied Linguistics Congress (virtual).
3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter	Chapter revisions approached completion, and authors submitted release forms. Susan was in Paraguay for a follow-up Fulbright visit.
4 <sup>th</sup> quarter	Proofreading and graphic designing took place. Book was published under UNA's Creative Commons license

The actions outlined in Table 1 can serve as a model for other practitioners who wish to undertake a similar project.

## Pedagogical Applications: How Can This Book Be Used?



Every chapter has a **Pedagogical Applications** section. Here, you will find suggestions for applying the information from this chapter into an educational setting. The following **Pedagogical Applications** section is similar to this same section in all chapters

Pre-service teachers can read chapters assigned by course instructors and use activities described in the Prologue. Experienced teachers can select chapters for professional development and implement strategies described in the Epilogue. Following is a preview of the book's nine parts and its 55 chapters:

### **Part I: *The World of English Language Teaching***

This first part orients you to the book and its role in the ELT field.

- **Chapter 1** *The Teaching of English in Global Contexts*. Valentina Canese (Paraguay) introduces the major issues associated with teaching English in global contexts and describes ELT principles for effectively teaching in the Global South.
- **Chapter 2** *The Diversity of Global Englishes*. Leslie Barratt (USA) introduces Global Englishes and offers examples for applying this concept when teaching English.
- **Chapter 3** *The Diversity of English Classes*. Remigio Díaz (Paraguay) outlines the wide array of English classes, thus introducing pre-service teachers to different ways that English is taught.
- **Chapter 4** *Humanism in English Language Teaching*. Bryan Meadows (USA) describes the role of humanism in teaching and suggests strategies for including this in ELT.

### **Part II: *Language Learners***

This second part of the book introduces readers to different types of language learners and users and, also, to the diverse needs that are characteristic of specific learner groups.

- **Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners*. Stephanie Montiel (USA) emphasizes building relationships with learners as a necessity for effective teaching.
- **Chapter 6** *Supporting Learners' Social Emotional Learning*. Grazzia Mendoza (Honduras) validates the role of social emotional learning in schools and suggests including this across all grades.
- **Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners*. Monica Gandolfo, Beatriz Damiani, and Laura Caperochipe (Argentina) recommend ways for teaching English to young learners, especially in contexts with limited resources.
- **Chapter 8** *Teaching and Engaging Adolescents*. Vicky Ariza (Mexico) reviews individual and social characteristics of adolescents and explores using *The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners* (Short et al., 2018) to teach adolescents.



- **Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning*. Maura Zalimben (Paraguay) highlights ways to prepare adults to guide their own learning by becoming autonomous learners of English.

### **Part III: *Language Learning and Use***

This third part examines language as being the target of what is being learned and, also, as having an instrumental role in communication.

- **Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness*. Harshini Lalwani (Paraguay) reports on language awareness and how to build this awareness in ELT.
- **Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness*. Silvia Terol and Jessica Amarilla (Paraguay) evaluate how social media can be used in ELT to increase language awareness.
- **Chapter 12** *Explicit and Implicit Learning in Second Language Acquisition*. Carla Fernandez (Paraguay) defines explicit and implicit learning and examines the necessity of each for facilitating language acquisition.
- **Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning*. Heather Kaiser (USA) identifies elements of learner-centered classrooms as essential to promote active learning.
- **Chapter 14** *Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning*. Kristina Sandi (USA) clarifies how the functions of the brain support language and thought and suggests how to incorporate thinking skills to enhance language learning.
- **Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices*. Kailin Liu and Julie Choi (Australia) examine translanguaging as a concept and offer ways to incorporate translanguaging in ELT.
- **Chapter 16** *Incorporating Interjections to Facilitate Conversational Flow*. Aida Rodomanchenko (Russia) investigates the role of interjections in oral discourse and provides insights on teaching interjections as a technique for managing conversations.
- **Chapter 17** *Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output*. Christian Cristóful (Paraguay) describes types of oral and written feedback and explains how such feedback can help English learners enhance their language output.

### **Part IV: *Context for Teaching and Learning***

This fourth part examines ELT contexts and the physical, social, emotional, and pedagogical aspects within these contexts.

- **Chapter 18** *Teaching English in Different Contexts*. Remigio Díaz (Paraguay) provides a summary of the different contexts in which English is taught and learned.
- **Chapter 19** *Incorporating Inclusive Education Practices in ELT*. Rocio Mazzoleni (Paraguay) affirms the need to incorporate inclusive practices in ELT classrooms and recommends ways for doing so.
- **Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community*. Becky Crosbie and Diane Carter (USA) describe how they created a collaborative learning community of language learners through group projects based on ecology and the arts.

## Overview: Welcome to This Book

- **Chapter 21** *Connecting Student Interaction With Classroom Management*. Grazzia Mendoza (Honduras) reveals how to enhance classroom management by providing opportunities for meaningful student interaction.
- **Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse*. Kent Buckley-Ess (USA) explains how to strengthen English learners' communicative skills by increasing classroom discourse activities.
- **Chapter 23** *Integrating Technology in Language Classrooms*. Holly Hubbard, Amanda Foss, and Chad Strawn (USA) explain how to enhance language development in ELT classrooms by integrating technology applications and digital tools.
- **Chapter 24** *Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms*. Yulia Grevtseva and Elena Zyrianova (Russia) distinguish virtual classrooms from hybrid classrooms and provide examples for maximizing the effectiveness of both types of classrooms in ELT.
- **Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning*. Harshini Lalwani (Paraguay) encourages pre-service English teachers to prepare for classroom instruction by following a step-by-step process to develop effective lesson plans.

### Part V: *Content and Language Integration*

This fifth part focuses on several ways for successfully integrating content and language.

- **Chapter 26** *Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning*. Alberto Roca (Paraguay) focuses on content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and proposes counterbalancing CLIL's benefits and challenges.
- **Chapter 27** *Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT*. Fernando Esquivel (Paraguay) compares gamification with game-based learning and spotlights how a semester-long game narrative can enhance language learning.
- **Chapter 28** *Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature*. Stael Ruffinelli and Carolina Ortiz (Paraguay) explain using authentic literature (e.g., chapter books) with young language learners and share examples from ELT classrooms.
- **Chapter 29** *Using Theater to Teach English*. Carolina Ortiz (Paraguay) and Matthew Vaky (USA) affirm how theater and drama-related techniques can support the teaching of English to learners of all ages.
- **Chapter 30** *Incorporating Music in the ELT Classroom*. Otoniel Carrasquel (Paraguay) compares music and language, explains how music can support the teaching of languages, and provides examples of using music to teach English.
- **Chapter 31** *Using Translation and Interpretation in ELT*. Silvia Terol (Paraguay) proposes three categories of translation and interpretation (T&I)—personal, pedagogical, professional—and shares how pedagogical T&I can enhance language skills in ELT.

### Part VI: *Methods and Approaches*

This sixth part outlines several ELT methods and approaches, provides a historical overview of their development, and identifies trends.

- **Chapter 32** *Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century*. Clara Onatra and Sandra Palencia (Colombia) outline major ELT trends from the 20th century, with some having been popular just briefly and others continuing into the 21st century.

## Overview: Welcome to This Book

- **Chapter 33** *Current Approaches in English Language Teaching*. Nicolás Dantaz (Uruguay) focuses on three approaches that have been popular in the 21st century.
- **Chapter 34** *Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching*. Gabriel Díaz Maggioli (Uruguay) describes how to engage English learners through the implementation of two alternative approaches.
- **Chapter 35** *Developing Critical Thinking Through Inquiry-Based Learning*. Valentina Canese (Paraguay) encourages ELT educators to guide their learners in developing critical thinking by taking an inquiry-based approach to learning.
- **Chapter 36** *Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners*. Ignacio Giménez and Cynthia Rolón (Paraguay) describe the effectiveness of a task-based approach for helping adults learn English.
- **Chapter 37** *Engage-Study-Activate With Adult Learners*. Cynthia Rolón and Ignacio Giménez (Paraguay) assert the benefits of Engage-Study-Activate for teaching English to adult learners.
- **Chapter 38** *A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar*. Catherine Davies, Josephine Prado, and Julia Austin (USA) suggest taking a socio-cultural approach to guide English learners with learning grammatical structures.

### Part VII: *Teaching Strategies*

This seventh part provides strategies for teaching the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), integrated skills, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

- **Chapter 39** *Strategies to Teach Listening*. Elena Nuñez (Paraguay) identifies listening as the forgotten skill, differentiates types of listening, and offers strategies to help learners develop listening comprehension.
- **Chapter 40** *Strategies to Teach Speaking*. Susan Spezzini (USA) describes the role of talking in language development and explains how to help all learners develop speaking skills by using interactive peer-to-peer oral techniques.
- **Chapter 41** *Strategies to Teach Reading*. Elena Kryukova (Russia) and Melinda Harrison (USA) survey historical ELT developments to teach reading and share instructional techniques for the pre, during, and post stages of reading.
- **Chapter 42** *Strategies to Teach Writing*. Melinda Harrison (USA) underscores the role of writing to support language learners and describes strategies to extend the cyclical writing process.
- **Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills*. Lynn Fuller (USA) emphasizes the importance of incorporating at least two of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in each ELT lesson and offers examples of integrated skills lessons.
- **Chapter 44** *Strategies to Teach Pronunciation*. Susan Spezzini (USA) describes common pronunciation challenges facing English learners and provides strategies for helping learners overcome these challenges.
- **Chapter 45** *Strategies to Teach Vocabulary*. Gwyneth Dean-Fastnacht (USA) views vocabulary as key in language development and explains several strategies to help language learners expand their vocabulary.

### Part VIII: *Assessment*

This eighth part explains the role of language assessment in ELT and provides different ways to assess language development.

- **Chapter 46** *Introduction to Language Assessment*. Natalie Kuhlman (USA) reviews the role of assessment to support language learning and offers several insights to the use of assessment for specific purposes.
- **Chapter 47** *Authentic Assessment of, for, and as Learning*. Gabriel Díaz Maggioli (Uruguay) highlights the importance of authentic assessment for teaching and learning new languages and validates the role of assessment as being of, for, and as learning.
- **Chapter 48** *International Framework to Assess Language Development*. Elena Nuñez (Paraguay) describes three international frameworks (CEFR, GSE, WIDA) for assessing the development of second languages.
- **Chapter 49** *E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning*. Briseida Jiménez (Mexico) examines the benefits of e-portfolios to assess language learning and, also, describes effective e-portfolios.

### Part IX: *Career Development and Enhancement*

This ninth and final part of the book provides multiple ideas and resources for professional development accessible to teachers for their ongoing development as ELT professionals.

- **Chapter 50** *Developing Intercultural Competencies*. Lisseth Rojas, Jairo Castañeda, and Jhon Mosquera (Colombia) describe techniques that teachers can use to develop their own intercultural competencies while helping their students to develop theirs.
- **Chapter 51** *Observing in the Transformative Teaching Process*. Veronica Sánchez and Yonatan Puón (Mexico) explain an observation process that supports a transformation in the process of teaching; these authors also provide observation rubrics.
- **Chapter 52** *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner Through Action Research*. Valentina Canese (Paraguay) explains how teachers can become reflective practitioners by conducting action research in their ELT classrooms.
- **Chapter 53** *Doing Research in the ELT Undergraduate Classroom*. Araceli Salas (Mexico) argues why all undergraduate ELT programs should require students to design and implement research projects.
- **Chapter 54** *Promoting Collaborative Professionalism Among Pre-Service Teachers*. Diana Pineda (Colombia) explores how pre-service teachers can participate in activities to promote their own collaborative professionalism.
- **Chapter 55** *Building and Engaging With Your Professional Community*. Mark Algren (USA) explains how pre-service and in-service teachers can build and engage with professional communities and, by doing so, develop their professionalism.

In this overview of *Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning*, you learned how this book evolved from idea to implementation. You learned about OER materials and how colleagues are willing to contribute to global ELT projects. You also previewed the nine parts of this online book and its 55 chapters.



Every chapter has a **Key Concepts** section. Here, you will find a summary of the most important information in this chapter. The following **Key Concepts** section is similar to this same section in all chapters

## KEY CONCEPTS

- Published through a Creative Commons license, this OER book offers free access to 55 chapters written by 61 authors.
- This edited book shares the voices of ELT educators from nine countries to enhance the teaching and learning of English, especially in resource-challenged contexts.
- This book aims at providing future teachers with the necessary conceptual and methodological tools to address the needs of learners in an increasingly globalized world.



Every chapter has a **Discussing** section. Here, you will find questions based on the chapter's content for you to discuss and answer. The following **Discussing** section is similar to this same section in all chapters

## Discussing

Based on the information provided in this overview, answer these questions:

1. How do you think the chapters in this book can help you address the challenges of providing English learners with quality education?
2. How do you feel the process for conceptualizing and writing this book can serve as a model for other educators to create their own OER publication?
3. As you advance towards your goal of becoming an English teacher, how do you feel you can contribute to the community of OER users?



Every chapter has a **Taking Action** section. Here, you will find actions for putting into practice what you learned in this chapter. The following **Taking Action** section is similar to this same section in all chapters

## TAKING ACTION

To practice using what you have learned about humanism in ELT, do the following:

1. The editors intentionally arranged the nine parts of this book in a specific order. Examine the order of these parts, hypothesize the editors' reasoning for having positioned these nine parts in this order, and explain your hypothesis.
2. International experts in teaching English in global contexts wrote the Prologue and Epilogue. Read the Prologue and Epilogue, compare their purposes, and explain how these pieces can help guide readers in using this book.
3. Select one of the nine parts. Read the abstracts for the chapters in this part. Explain how these chapters are related to each other and how they address the overall theme for this part.



Every chapter has an **Expanding Further** section. Here, you will find websites for learning more about the topics presented in this chapter. The following **Expanding Further** section is similar to this same section in all chapters

## EXPANDING FURTHER

- Creative Commons. <https://creativecommons.org/>
- Global South explanation. <https://theconversation.com/the-global-south-is-on-the-rise-but-what-exactly-is-the-global-south-207959>
- ISL/UNA. <https://sites.google.com/fil.una.py/isl/inicio>
- OER policies and processes. <https://oercommons.org/>



Every chapter has a **See Also** section. Here, for the topics covered in this chapter, you will find a list of other chapters in this same book that address related topics. The following **See Also** section is similar to this same section in all chapters.

## See Also

Unique aspects and potential impacts of this book as well as innovative ways for using its chapters are provided in the book's Prologue and Epilogue:

**Prologue** by G. Díaz Maggioli

**Epilogue** by L. Barratt

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Socorro Herrera and Melinda Harrison for having provided insightful suggestions to this overview. I also thank Julia Austin for having served as professional editor for this book.



Every chapter has a **References** section. Here, you will find the sources that were cited in this chapter. The following **References** section is similar to this same section in all chapters.

## REFERENCES

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Every chapter has an **About the Authors** section. Here, you will find information about the authors' educational backgrounds and experiences in ELT as well as ORCID numbers and email addresses.

## About the Author

**Susan Spezzini** is professor and program director in ESL teacher education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), USA. Susan holds a bachelor's in linguistics (University of California San Diego), master's in language teaching (University of California Berkeley), and doctorate in ESL curriculum (University of Alabama). Before coming to UAB, she worked 26 years in Paraguay, initially in Peace Corps and then at the ISL/UNA and other ELT entities. A founding member of PARATESOL, she served in leadership roles during PARATESOL's early years. As a Fulbright Scholar, Susan returned to Paraguay to help create and edit this book.

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# Prologue

Gabriel Díaz Maggioli

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc\\_prologue](https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc_prologue)

Welcome to this book on the status of the art and science in English Language Teaching (ELT) within global contexts. As you read it, bear in mind a few facts. When this book was published, it became one of the 400,000 books that were published around the world on that specific date. This means it was one of the 650 million books to be published during 2023 and, as such, among the 129,864,871 billion books to be published since Gutenberg invented the printing press (Bowker, 2020).

You may be wondering what these figures have to do with the purpose, content, and composition of this book. Seen within the context of these international figures that were provided by the publishing industry, one can say this is merely one more book on ELT published on a particular date during a particular year. However, the why, what, and how of this book makes it stand out from the rest of the publications in 2023.

To start with, this book is the product of a strong process of collaboration across borders, specialties, institutions, and colleagues. It was born out of a specific collaboration between Paraguay and the United States of America (USA) in the form of a Fulbright grant, which is a government-supported program for studying, teaching, or conducting research in a collaborating country. More specifically, this collaboration began with two people—our editors—Valentina Canese, Director of the Higher Institute of Languages at the National University of Asuncion, Paraguay, and Susan Spezzini, Professor of English Learner Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, USA.

This collaboration was spurred by Valentina’s goal to help initial teacher education candidates gain access to knowledge in our ELT field. Living and working in the Global South (a grouping of countries along the lines of socio-economic and political characteristics), Valentina is keenly aware of how the pre-service teachers in her university’s education program often need to rely on second-hand and even third-hand sources because of the lack of availability of such sources at the local level. This, of course, poses problems to those students who are not afforded the same learning opportunities as their peers in other parts of the world. Hence, Valentina invited Susan to join her on a quest to put together a multi-chapter book with a primary focus on producing an open-source volume with up-to-date content and quality editing. When compared to other similar publications, one important innovation offered by this book is how it combines a rigorous editing process with open access to digital material that is freely available to all. Thus, this book provides equitable and democratic access to knowledge.

This initial collaboration between our editors—Valentina and Susan—soon expanded to include 61 like-minded professionals from nine countries on five continents who wrote 55 chapters. In this sense, the makeup of the editors and the chapter authors truly echoes the title of the book: *Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning*.

One key concept behind the term “global” is diversity. After all, we live in a multicultural world where learning and teaching can act as bridges among nations and cultures. Hence, the notion of diversity is at the center of this book and its contents. Just as in real life, this book addresses the concept of diversity from multiple perspectives. There is diversity in the language we teach as evidenced by how World Englishes continue to gain momentum and are recognized as valid varieties of English. There is also diversity in the learners we teach in terms of ages, learning needs, orientation to learning, language proficiencies, and institutions where they receive instruction. Lastly, there is diversity in the approaches, techniques, and emphases that teachers use in their classes to promote learning.

Consequently, because of everything mentioned above, the voices in this volume are representative of the true diversity in the field of ELT. Authors come from different parts of the world and, through their writing, showcase the professional lessons they have learned from their students and their contexts. However, they never overlook the fact that some developments outside their context have a strong potential to impact the way they perceive their profession.

Contributors to this volume are also diverse in terms of their professional background. The book makes salient the voices of classroom teachers, teacher educators, educational administrators, materials writers, researchers, and policy makers. Additionally, writers come from elementary, secondary, and higher education institutions—both private and public. This diversity, no doubt, contributes to making the book a faithful image of the ELT profession in the early 2020s for its use in today’s multimedia world.

If we mention diversity, we must also consider the variety of topics that the book has incorporated. Its 55 chapters have been organized into nine main parts. This was done for the purpose of organization, but it does not mean that each part and the chapters within that part can stand alone. On the contrary, when the editors put together the table of contents and sought authors for the various chapters, their intention was to provide a holistic overview of the field without losing sight of the specialist areas that continue to influence the development of ELT. Hence, every chapter makes explicit connections to other chapters in the book that have a close connection to the topic of the chapter in question or that can enrich how a given chapter is understood by the readers.

Part I *World of English Language Teaching* presents a view of how the field of ELT is being shaped by forces of the early 2020s. Following an introductory chapter on teaching in global contexts (first half of the book’s title), each of the other chapters in this first part focuses on one aspect in the second half of the book’s title: the evolution of World Englishes (corresponds to *Language*), the diversity of English classes (corresponds to *Learning*), and a reconsideration of the power of humanistic language teaching (corresponds to *Learners*). Hence, this first part orients readers to the book and to the state of the art in the ELT field.

Part II *Language Learners* focuses on helping readers understand the learners both as social and emotional individuals, and as language learners and users. These chapters also explore specific age groups and how pedagogy varies according to this variable.

Part III *Language Learning and Use* concentrates on language as an object of learning and the use of language as a resource for communication. Language learning is explored from a wide variety of angles that include translanguaging practices, technology-mediated learning experiences,

approaches for providing feedback on learners' output, support for building language awareness, and the role of explicit and implicit instruction on second language acquisition.

Part IV *Context for Teaching and Learning* examines the contexts in which language teaching may occur as well as the physical, social, emotional, and pedagogical issues that may impact those contexts. This part focuses on topics such as inclusion, community-building, interaction and interactivity, classroom discourse, technology integration, and effective planning.

Part V *Content and Language Integration* highlights the integration of content and language, a feature of ELT that is becoming increasingly popular around the world. Chapters in this part explore how language and content can be successfully integrated by implementing various activities such as drama, music, literature, gamification, and translation.

Part VI *Methods and Approaches* presents the main trends in the field during the early 21<sup>st</sup> century by briefly tracing the history of trends that were first developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that continue to impact the field. Such is the case of approaches such as Task-Based Learning, Sociocultural Learning, Communicative Language Teaching, inquiry-based teaching, and other widespread and alternative approaches used by teachers around the world.

Part VII *Teaching Strategies* explores strategies to teach listening, speaking, reading, writing, integrated skills, pronunciation, and vocabulary. If methods and approaches (Part 6) are the frames for the art of teaching, then these specific strategies and techniques (Part 7) are the canvas for teaching the different skills.

Part VIII *Assessment* positions assessment as a parallel activity to teaching. The chapters in this part provide clear assessment categorizations, assessment tools, assessment systems, and assessment criteria. Also explained is how all these positively influence ELT classrooms in different ways.

Part IX *Career Development and Enhancement* is the final part and includes chapters that are oriented toward providing teachers with resources, ideas, and strategies to engage in continuous professional development. To that end, readers are encouraged to develop new competencies by participating in reflective observations, conducting research, and building personal learning networks and communities of practice.

## **Who is this book for?**

The main audience for this book is aspiring teachers taking initial teacher education courses in countries throughout the Global South. The reality is that it is very difficult to find resources on language teaching that are available locally, affordable to student teachers, and focused on the teaching and learning needs in their respective contexts. However, the use of this book is not limited to this group. It can also be used anywhere in the world for in-service teacher training, for professional development groups, and even for graduate courses in teacher education as an example of materials for that field.

## **How is this book organized?**

Each chapter is purposefully organized so that it promotes growth in the theory of ELT and the practice of ELT through reflections experienced by professionals who are becoming well-

acquainted with both theory and practice. Each chapter starts with an **Abstract** that summarizes its content and provides keywords from the professional lexical system that readers need to know to understand the chapter's topic. This is followed by the main text which is composed of four sections:

- **Introduction**—summarizing the main theoretical lines influencing the development of this topic
- **Background**—offering an overview of historical and other aspects related to this topic
- **Major Dimensions**—providing relevant aspects of the topic needed for teaching and learning
- **Pedagogical Applications**—building a bridge between theory and practice, describing how the concepts, principles, skills, and dispositions depicted in the chapter can be successfully applied in the classroom

These text sections are followed by activity sections to enhance the reading of this chapter by pre-service teachers within their teacher preparation program or by experienced educators for their self-selected professional development. These activity sections are as follows:

- **Key Concepts**— summarizing the issues raised
- **Discussing**—providing prompts for class discussions or independent reflections
- **Taking Action**—suggesting concrete steps for putting this topic into practice
- **Expanding Further**— listing online resources for learning more about this topic

Each chapter finishes with two sections of references as follows:

- **See Also**—identifying other chapters in this collection that are relevant to the topic of this specific chapter
- **References**—providing the sources used to inform the writing of this chapter

As a coda to each chapter, a short **About the Author** section helps readers contextualize the idea of the chapter within the author's reality. Also included are the author's number in the Open Researcher and Contributor Identifier system (known as ORCID) and an email address in case the readers wish to contact the author/s.

## How can this book be used?

Because the goal of this book is to provide a broad panorama of ELT as a field and profession in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, it stands to reason that it will be used to support teaching and learning about ELT. Here are some ideas that might help teacher educators use these materials in a purposeful and interactive way.

- Assign the same chapter to groups of four students and ask them to provide a summary in the following way:
  - Student A summarizes the facts presented in the chapter.
  - Student B writes from 5 to 10 questions based on the chapter.
  - Student C compiles a glossary of key terms (and definitions) from the chapter.

- Student D builds a checklist for the implementation of ideas in the classroom.

These summaries are shared with the rest of the class so that every group receives a copy of the summaries prepared by all the other groups.

- Select one of the nine parts in this book. Within this part, assign each chapter to a different student. In class, students meet in groups (with one student representing each chapter), share and compile their information, and create a graphic organizer on the overall theme represented by the chapters in this part.
- Assign the different sections within a given chapter for students to read between class sessions. Focus first on the **Background** section and **Major Dimensions** section. Along with this reading assignment, provide students with a list of questions (preferably inferential) to be discussed. In the next class, divide students into groups and have them discuss the questions without looking at the book. In preparation for the following class, students read the **Pedagogical Applications** section. For your students' next class, create a teaching scenario. In class, students plan and demonstrate an application of the teaching suggestions as a microteaching exercise.
- Turn the chapters around. In class, divide students into groups and direct them to the questions in the **Discussing** section. Students try to answer all questions based just on what they already know and without having read the chapter. Next, discuss each of the questions by having groups share their respective responses to the questions with the whole class. Invite groups to create additional questions if they feel this can help them better understand the topic in this chapter. Finally, have students read the chapter. Bring the class together to discuss what has been learned. This discussion would not necessarily be responding to the questions. Rather, when compared to what students didn't know before reading this chapter, students discuss what they know after having read it.
- Provide a temporal and physical space (i.e., time and place) during your classes so that students can practice the activities suggested in that chapter's **Taking Action** section.
- In anticipation of the next class, assign students to four roles (A, B, C, D). Based on their assigned role, students do the following as a homework assignment:
  - Student A reads the **Introduction** section, gathers additional information by exploring the websites listed under the **Expanding Further** section, and prepares to report on this information.
  - Student B reads the **Background** and **Major Dimensions** sections and prepares to report on this information.
  - Student C reads the **Pedagogical Applications** section and prepares to report on this information.
  - Student D reads the whole chapter and prepares answers to the questions under the **Discussing** section.

In the next class, divide the students into groups of four with each student in each group having one of the four roles (A, B, C, D). Student D leads the discussion. The

other three students (A, B, C) contribute from what they had been assigned to read and report. All students take notes based on what their groupmates share.

- Ask students to work in pairs. Both students in each pair read the same chapter and, together, create a two-page handout as if they were going to make a presentation on their chapter the following month at a professional conference.

However, before individual instructors can select one of the strategies suggested above when using a specific chapter in their respective teacher preparation courses, the administrators or a faculty council in their pre-service teacher education program might wish to first designate specific chapters for specific courses. For example, Chapter 2 *The Diversity of Global Englishes* would be a perfect fit for a sociolinguistics course. Or perhaps an institutional decision is made for all chapters within one part (from among the nine parts of this book) to be used in a certain course. If so, then all four chapters in Part VIII *Assessment* would be a perfect fit for an assessment course.

I started this Prologue by citing numbers and statistics, which seem to be the norm for describing the value of something or someone. However, to me, the true impact of any human endeavor can only be gauged by the changes in the lives of others that it has managed to affect. In that respect, I believe this collection of chapters on research and practice in the teaching and learning of English has the potential for great impact. Let me wish our future colleagues reading this book, and their instructors, all the very best as they embark on this journey of discovering new professional horizons in the world of ELT.

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Ankara, Türkiye

# World of English Language Teaching

1

*The Teaching of English in Global Contexts*

Valentina Canese

2

*The Diversity of Global Englishes*

Leslie Barratt

3

*The Diversity of English Classes*

Remigio Díaz Benítez

4

*Humanism in English Language Teaching*

Bryan Meadows



Photo by Ivan Shilov on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 1

## The Teaching of English in Global Contexts



# The Teaching of English in Global Contexts

Valentina Canese

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## Abstract

Teaching English in global contexts involves understanding cultural diversity and intercultural communication, as well as being able to adapt your teaching to meet the needs of diverse learners in all contexts. Scholars have proposed pedagogical implications and principles for adopting an international or global perspective toward the teaching of English. These include knowing our learners, promoting multiculturalism, understanding language variation, creating conditions for language learning, designing high-quality lessons, and engaging in a community of practice. This book provides pre-service teachers in international contexts with a quality open-access educational resource that addresses these principles and pedagogical implications. In this first chapter, you will learn about the context of teaching English in global contexts as well as how this book will address these through each of the 55 chapters organized around nine major themes that represent the language, learners, and learning aspects identified in the book title.

*Keywords:* Global English, English language teaching, principles of language teaching, pedagogical implications, open educational resource

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## Introduction

Teaching English has become increasingly important in today's globalized and interconnected world. Through the teaching of English, we prepare students to navigate the growing challenges of global communication (Crystal, 2003). To do this effectively, we must understand cultural diversity and intercultural communication and be able to adapt approaches for meeting the needs of diverse learners in many contexts worldwide. We also need to be aware of linguistic and cultural variations across the English-speaking world (Canagarajah, 2014). At the same time, university students in resource-challenged contexts often face limited access to affordable and accessible quality textbooks (Hilton, 2020; Trotter, 2018). Even scarcer are quality materials to prepare pre-service English teachers in the Global South (countries with similar socio-economic and political characteristics located mainly, but not entirely, in the Southern Hemisphere) (Hollington et al., 2015).

Fortunately, many of these challenges can be addressed by the evolving technology that has revolutionized the instruction of languages and the preparation of language teachers. Although emerging digital tools can represent a different type of challenge, such tools can also offer great promise. The promising potential of technology has given rise to online open educational resources (OER), an increasingly popular way to address the challenge of inaccessibility to teacher preparation materials in the ever-changing world of the 21st century (Hilton, 2020; Trotter, 2018). Inspired by the potential of OER materials, the faculty at an English teacher preparation program in Paraguay conceptualized the book that you are now reading. These teacher educators envisioned providing you, as a future teacher, with access to necessary conceptual and methodological tools for effectively teaching in local venues, which, though local, are influenced by what is happening globally.

In this book's first chapter, you will learn about issues and challenges related to teaching English in global contexts. You will also learn about approaches and strategies needed to become an English teacher in today's globalized society.

## Background

The role of English as a tool for international communication has been growing in importance, especially within today's globalized society. Hence, it has become even more crucial for English teachers to understand the complexities of new contexts and the diversity of users. To address these dynamic issues, scholars have suggested a change in paradigm within the field of English language teaching (ELT). Though these scholars have proposed various frameworks and approaches (often with different names), most agree that the diverse varieties of English are spoken for specific purposes and learned in different ways (Matsuda, 2017).

To teach English today, you need knowledge of the English language as well as an understanding and awareness of issues related to language and its different forms and functions. To address these issues, you also need knowledge about cultural differences and pedagogical strategies. Becoming an English teacher requires you to prioritize the language competence of your learners—their knowledge of negotiation strategies and pragmatics—above simply knowing the norms and conventions of the language (Canagarajah, 2014). Thus, teachers need strategies for helping their learners develop language awareness, rhetorical sensitivity, and negotiation strategies for their students to become more adept at navigating various communicative practices and social relations in a globalized world.

Adopting an international or global perspective toward the teaching of English has pedagogical implications regarding how to include these various dimensions in the ELT classroom (McKay, 2012). These implications include (but are not limited to) the following:

- promoting multilingualism and multiculturalism,
- developing an awareness of language variation and use for all students,
- adopting localized language planning and policies that allow equal access to English learning,
- re-examining the concept of qualified English teachers, and
- taking a critical look at the discourses surrounding the teaching of English.

To meet these needs of ELT professionals, the TESOL International Association introduced six core principles for the exemplary teaching of English (Short et al., 2018). Based on years of research in language pedagogy and language acquisition theory, these six principles are as follows:

- Principle 1. Know your learners.
- Principle 2. Create conditions for language learning.
- Principle 3. Design high-quality lessons for language development.
- Principle 4. Adapt lesson delivery as needed.
- Principle 5. Monitor and assess student language development.
- Principle 6: Engage and collaborate within a community of practice.

Based on these principles, this book aims at providing pre-service teachers with the tools to understand both the theoretical and conceptual issues related to the teaching of English in global contexts as well as the pedagogical or methodological tools to become effective teachers in complex environments. For pre-service and novice English teachers, knowing the principles and concepts mentioned above might seem like a huge responsibility (which it is). This might also seem overwhelming (which it is). However, the editors of this book and the authors of these chapters have worked diligently to present pedagogical strategies in a way that is easily accessible and practical for you to implement.

## Major Dimensions

Based on the cited literature and with input from several of the chapter authors, the editors identified major themes for grouping the book's 55 chapters into nine parts. Each of these parts represents different aspects related to the teaching of English in global contexts.

Part I introduces the three concepts mentioned in the second half of the book's title: language, learners, and learning. These concepts refer to the importance of understanding the different types of Englishes spoken around the world, the variety of ways that English is taught, and how teachers may incorporate humanistic elements in their lessons.

Parts II, III, and IV discuss issues related to language learners, language learning, language use, and the contexts for learning and using language. Understanding language implies understanding the use of language in context. This understanding is paramount to providing English instruction that effectively meets learners' needs. These parts have chapters that will help you

understand these issues. With this foundation, you will be able to provide an experience to learners that is conducive to learning and that, in turn, will allow them to communicate effectively in different contexts and situations.

Parts V, VI, VII, and VIII present topics related directly to teaching and assessing. These parts have chapters that will help you, as a pre-service English teacher, learn about different methods and approaches as well as strategies and assessment techniques aligned with those approaches. You will also learn to carefully select and adapt approaches, methods, strategies, and techniques for meeting the needs of your future students based on their age and purpose for learning English as well as the learning context.

Finally, Part IX focuses on staying current in the ELT profession and participating in a community of practice that supports ongoing development and growth. By becoming a reflective practitioner and by engaging and collaborating with other professionals, you will be able to build your knowledge and understanding of the issues at hand and, also, identify the most appropriate ways to meet your students' needs. In other words, through this book, the editors and authors strive to help you become an effective English teacher.

## Pedagogical Applications

Each chapter in this book offers pedagogical applications that you can use to engage your language learners regarding aspects in that chapter. Following is a synopsis of how, within each of the nine parts, the authors have focused their respective chapters on helping you learn about teaching English in global contexts.

### *Part I: World of English Language Teaching*

The authors in Part I introduce you to the book and its value for you and other ELT educators. First, Valentina Canese briefly surveys the main issues related to teaching English in global contexts, provides some principles for teaching in these contexts, and connects those principles to the contents in the book. Then, Leslie Barratt presents the concept of Global Englishes and explains how to incorporate Global Englishes in ELT classes. Remigio Díaz introduces the different ways that English is taught and how these may be used by novice teachers. Finally, Bryan Meadows presents ways in which we can incorporate humanism in our ELT lessons.

### *Part II: Language Learners*

The authors in Part II focus on language users and learners as well as on the learning needs of specific age groups. First, Stephanie Montiel shows different ways for you to build relationships with your learners given that such relationships are essential for teaching effectively. Then, Grazzia Mendoza offers strategies to incorporate social emotional learning at all levels to promote our learners' holistic development. Monica Gandolfo, Beatriz Damiani, and Laura Caperochipe provide examples of how to teach English to young learners, especially in resource-challenged contexts. Vicky Ariza discusses how to use *The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners* (Short et al., 2018) to teach adolescents so that you can address their individual and social needs. Finally, Maura Zalimben highlights ways to help adults learn autonomously, thus empowering them to guide their own efforts with learning English.

***Part III: Language Learning and Use***

The authors in Part III focus on language as an object for learning and as a resource for communication. First, Harshini Lalwani provides examples of how to build language awareness in our English classes. Then, Silvia Terol and Jessica Amarilla offer suggestions on how we can use social media in our ELT classes to enhance language awareness. After defining explicit and implicit learning, Carla Fernandez exemplifies how both are needed to support second language acquisition. Heather Kaiser demonstrates how we can design learner-centered classrooms to promote active learning. Kristina Sandi provides ways in which we can promote thinking skills to enhance language learning by considering how the functions of the brain are related to thought and language. Kailin Liu and Julie Choi discuss and exemplify how we can explore meaning through the incorporation of translanguaging practices in ELT lessons. Aida Rodomanchenko provides insights on teaching interjections to help students with oral discourse and to facilitate conversational flow. Finally, Christian Cristóful presents how teachers can use different types of oral and written feedback to help English learners with their language output.

***Part IV: Context for Teaching and Learning***

The authors in Part IV explore ELT contexts as well as physical, social, emotional, and pedagogical issues. First, Remigio Díaz outlines several contexts for the teaching and learning of English and explains how each context can provide students with meaningful experiences for critical thinking and learning. Along similar lines, Rocio Mazzoleni provides recommendations for incorporating inclusive education practices in ELT classrooms to meet the needs of all students. Becky Crosbie and Diane Carter explain how to use group projects to support language learners by creating collaborative learning communities. Grazzia Mendoza exemplifies ways in which teachers can use meaningful student interaction to enhance classroom management. Kent Buckley-Ess shows how teachers can effectively create discourse opportunities to strengthen English learners' communicative skills. Holly Hubbard, Amanda Foss, and Chad Strawn present ways to integrate technology applications and digital tools in ELT classrooms to promote language development. Yulia Grevtseva and Elena Zyrianova offer suggestions to maximize the use of virtual and hybrid classrooms for language learning. Finally, Harshini Lalwani outlines a step-by-step process to develop effective lesson plans that enable teachers to be fully prepared for delivering classroom instruction.

***Part V: Content and Language Integration***

The authors in Part V explain content and language integration and explore successful integration. First, Alberto Roca provides suggestions to maximize the benefits of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and to minimize its challenges. Then, Fernando Esquivel shows how to create and implement lessons with game-like actions that support language learning (i.e., gamification framework). Stael Ruffinelli and Carolina Ortiz demonstrate how to use authentic literature to help young learners relate to literature and communicate with others. Carolina Ortiz and Matthew Vaky explain how to use theater and drama techniques to teach English. Otoniel Carrasquel recommends ways for incorporating music in ELT classrooms. Finally, Silvia Terol shares how pedagogical translation and interpretation can enhance language skills.

***Part VI: Methods and Approaches***

The authors in Part VI describe ELT methods and approaches, trace historical developments, and identify trends. First, Clara Onatra and Sandra Palencia describe how the major trends from the 20th century continue to influence language teaching practices in the 21st century. Then, Nicolás Dantaz demonstrates how to apply three approaches used widely in the 21st century within our ELT classrooms. Gabriel Díaz Maggioli showcases how to use two highly innovative approaches to engage English learners. Valentina Canese provides strategies to incorporate inquiry for students to develop critical thinking and become more effective learners. Ignacio Giménez and Cynthia Rolón describe how to use a task-based approach to support adults with learning English. Cynthia Rolón and Ignacio Giménez explain how to use Engage-Study-Activate to teach English to adults. Finally, Catherine Davies, Josephine Prado, and Julia Austin propose strategies for teaching and learning English grammar through a socio-cultural approach.

***Part VII: Teaching Strategies***

The authors in Part VII present strategies to teach the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and integrated skills as well as pronunciation and vocabulary. First, Elena Nuñez offers practices and strategies to help learners at different language levels with developing their listening comprehension. Then, Susan Spezzini recommends interactive peer-to-peer oral techniques for helping all learners develop speaking skills. Elena Kryukova and Melinda Harrison provide instructional techniques for the pre, during, and post stages of reading. Next, Melinda Harrison offers strategies to guide students to be effective writers in English. Lynn Fuller describes strategies to teach integrated skills that will lead students towards authentic language use. Susan Spezzini explains pronunciation challenges and offers strategies for helping learners perceive and produce English sounds and intonation patterns. Finally, Gwyneth Dean-Fastnacht describes techniques for building vocabulary to improve communication skills.

***Part VIII: Assessment***

The authors in Part VIII focus on language assessment and its role within ELT. First, Natalie Kuhlman provides insights regarding assessment to support language learning. Then, Gabriel Díaz Maggioli showcases diverse ways of using authentic assessment in ELT classrooms to support of, for, and as learning. Elena Nuñez describes how to use three international frameworks to identify stages of a learner's language development and to set attainable goals. Finally, Briseida Jiménez outlines the effective use of e-portfolios to assess language learning.

***Part IX: Career Development and Enhancement***

The authors in Part IX suggest resources and ideas for English teachers to engage in continuous professional development. First, Lisseth Rojas, Jairo Castañeda, and Jhon Mosquera explain how teachers can develop intercultural competencies for themselves and their students. Then, Veronica Sánchez and Yonatan Puón outline a systematic approach to observations for transforming the teaching process. Valentina Canese describes how teachers can conduct action research to become reflective ELT practitioners. Araceli Salas provides recommendations on how to include the designing and conducting of research as a requirement in undergraduate ELT programs. Diana Pineda presents ways to promote collaborative professionalism among

pre-service English teachers. Finally, Mark Algren encourages pre-service and in-service teachers to develop professionalism by continually building and engaging with their professional communities.

In this chapter, you learned about the context of teaching English in global contexts and some principles to guide you on this learning journey. You also learned how this book addresses ELT theories and principles while providing tools for meeting the diverse needs of language learners.

## Acknowledgments

I thank the chapter authors for contributing their perspectives from around the world.

### KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about teaching English in global contexts:

- Teaching English in today's globalized and interconnected world requires an understanding of cultural diversity and intercultural communication.
- Teachers need to be aware of the language and cultural variation within the English-speaking world and be able to adapt teaching approaches to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- English teachers need to develop language awareness, rhetorical sensitivity, and negotiation strategies and, also, promote multilingualism and multiculturalism, adopt local policies for equal access, and take a critical look at the discourses related to the teaching of English.
- TESOL's 6 Principles (Short et al., 2018) include know your learners, create conditions for language learning, design high-quality lessons for language development, adapt lesson delivery as needed, monitor and assess student language development, and engage and collaborate within a community of practice.

### Discussing

Based on the information provided in Chapter 1, answer these questions:

1. What do you consider are the main challenges you will encounter as a future teacher of English in a globalized world?
2. Which of TESOL's 6 Principles (Short et al., 2018) do you find most important for teaching English in global contexts? Why?
3. Although you have not yet read any specific chapters, what do you think might be some pedagogical differences when teaching English to children, adolescents, and adults?
4. When you were learning a new language, how did your teachers provide feedback? Was this effective? Why?

## TAKING ACTION

Based on what you have learned, do the following:

1. Consider TESOL's 6 Principles (Short et al., 2018). Think of how you can apply these principles in a classroom setting with children, adolescents, or adults. Make a chart with the six principles listed horizontally in rows and three types of learners (children, adolescents, adults) listed vertically in columns.
2. Make a list of different ways for using music, theater, literature, games, and technology to teach English in global contexts.
3. Based on your own experiences as a language learner, make a list of different activities and techniques that helped you learn to listen, speak, read, and write this new language.
4. Visit three websites in the Expanding Further section, take notes, and share what you feel is most applicable from each website with your college classmates or worksite colleagues.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about teaching English in global contexts, consider visiting these websites:

- TESOL's 6 Principles for the Exemplary Teaching of English learners. <https://www.tesol.org/professional-development/education-and-events/on-demand-facilitated/tesol-me/tesol-me-the-6-principles-for-exemplary-teaching-of-english-learners/>
- Global South. <https://theconversation.com/the-global-south-is-on-the-rise-but-what-exactly-is-the-global-south-207959>
- Paraguay Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (PARATESOL). [https://www.facebook.com/PARATESOLPY/?locale=es\\_LA](https://www.facebook.com/PARATESOLPY/?locale=es_LA)
- TESOL International Association. <https://www.tesol.org/>

## See Also

Related aspects are found in other chapters of Part 1 as well as in the Prologue and Epilogue:

**Prologue** by G. Díaz Maggioli

**Chapter 2** *The Diversity of Global Englishes* by L. Barratt

**Chapter 3** *The Diversity of English Classes* by R. Díaz

**Chapter 4** *Humanism in English Language Teaching* by B. Meadows

**Epilogue** by L. Barratt



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# CHAPTER 2

## The Diversity of Global Englishes

# The Diversity of Global Englishes

Leslie Barratt

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## Abstract

What makes it so difficult to learn English or any other language? Although you can learn language rules and textbook vocabulary, you may still experience difficulties using English in real-life situations. These difficulties are largely due to the various ways people use English. The same challenge is true for using every language because languages are in a constant state of variation and change. English has always had different varieties even at the time of Old English. Such differences were used later by Shakespeare to indicate a speaker's social class. As English became a global lingua franca, even more variations emerged. In this chapter, you will learn about the diversity of global Englishes and some reasons for language variation and change. You will also learn about using online tools to investigate the appropriateness of forms for specific purposes, such as writing an academic paper.

*Keywords:* Global Englishes, World Englishes, language varieties, language variation, language change, lingua franca

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## Introduction

Speakers of a given language can usually identify the origin and social group of others who speak the same language. For example, if you are a Spanish speaker and meet people from other Spanish-speaking countries, you immediately notice their Spanish as being from another country. If you meet people from your own country, you probably notice language differences associated with age, social class, and ethnicity. Such differences are not unique to Spanish but also occur in English and other languages.

Each language varies in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. However, standard English was never adopted in England nor any other English-speaking country. Consequently, what is considered “standard” or acceptable varies from place to place. With the global spread of English and the emergence of innumerable English varieties, linguists coined the term World Englishes, also called Global Englishes. The term Englishes encompasses many varieties used in diverse communities and regions around the world such as where you currently live and use English.

For example, the English spoken in Paraguay can be called Paraguayan English. Used by English learners in Paraguay and native/near-native English speakers, Paraguayan English is a unique variety influenced by both Spanish and Guaraní. It is especially useful for talking about local food, customs, and lifestyles. In Paraguayan English, it is acceptable to say, “We need to buy some more yerba,” by using the Spanish word for an herbal tea (called mate) that is sipped through a metal straw from a horn or gourd (see pictures). Also acceptable is saying, “Let’s have some tereré,” by using the Guaraní word for Paraguay’s iced tea version of this same herbal beverage.



Variation exists in all languages. Yet, despite being natural and expected, such variation presents a big challenge for language learners. By understanding the diversity of global Englishes and why and how English varies, you will be better prepared to guide students in developing their English while also further developing your own English.

## Background

Languages vary because they constantly change. However, why do languages keep changing? Such changes are from contact with new environments or with speakers of other languages. The Spaniards who first settled in the Americas needed words for local species of plants and animals. Because the Spaniards encountered people already living in the Americas, they adopted new words from local languages with “tomato” from *tomatl* (Nahuatl language, Mexico) and “piranha” from *pira-ñá* (Guaraní language, Paraguay). Reciprocally, local people adopted words from newcomers. For example, when British engineers installed Paraguay’s railroad in the 1870s, they planted grapefruit trees, and the word *greifu* was adopted by the local people.

Even without human migration and colonization, languages still change. To understand why language change is universal, think about how babies develop language. Babies acquire their first language(s) from people around them in a natural, untaught way (Wosen, 2020). That is, babies

all over the world hear conversations and acquire language through daily interactions with children, adults, and especially caregivers. Put simply, children do not learn language; rather they acquire or develop it. Even when others try to correct young children, they proceed in their own way at developing their language based on the varieties spoken in their home environment (rather than a more standard variety). Around the world, whether children attend years of formal schooling or no schooling, they develop the ability to communicate their needs, wants, and dreams just like others by using the varieties spoken in their language community.

Caregivers and others in a child's immediate surroundings affect the language being acquired by that child. Later, social groups affect the child's language (Wolfram, 2014). This results in social varieties of language with differences for class, ethnicity, and age as well as gender and gender expression. However, when a social group undergoes significant changes across generations leading to the need for a different type of communication, an earlier variety might cease to be used. This occurred with the English initially spoken in Cosme and Nueva Australia, which were rural Paraguayan communities founded by Australian immigrants in the 1890s (Perez, 2016). The only remaining language vestiges from those English-speaking immigrants are common Paraguayan last names like Kennedy, Smith, Stanley, and Wood.

Babies and young children actively participate in language acquisition and, by doing so, affect language change. When beginning to produce the language around them, they naturally and unconsciously apply rules from that language variety and, also, use patterns from emerging language change. As children enter larger social groups at school and in the community, these changes spread. Hence, children inherently affect the changes that languages undergo.

Both Spanish and English have evolved because of natural language change and colonialization. In Paraguay and elsewhere, modern Spanish is quite different from its mother language, Latin, as well as from its Romance sister languages (e.g., Portuguese, French, Italian, Romanian). English has evolved greatly from its Proto-Germanic roots through various periods: Old English (5th to 11th century), Middle English (11th to 15th century), and Modern English (since the 15th century). During the Modern English period, significant changes have occurred since Shakespeare's time (1564-1616), and such changes continue to take place. For example, during the 21st century, English has added technological words such as "zoom," "google," "whatsapp," "upload," and "download." Some of these words have been borrowed from English into Spanish (zoom, googlear, wasapear), and others served to expand the meaning of existing words (subir, bajar).

Around the world, most English speakers are multilinguals who have learned English after having previously acquired other languages. This worldwide use of English has produced such extensive variation that English has become viewed as plural: Englishes or World Englishes. An excellent example of widespread variation is 100+ terms for a single item "pen drive" (or "USB drive"). Other common terms for "pen drive" include "jump drive," "memory stick," "flash drive," "driver," and "handy drive."

## Major Dimensions

To better navigate the constant variation and expansion of Englishes during your lifetime, take ownership of your own continued learning (Barratt, 2014). This will also help you guide your students to take charge of their own learning. To do so, use resources to learn about World Englishes and strategies to assist your students with navigating change and variation. This

section will describe some available tools. Though you must always be ready to learn new products, start exploring English varieties by using existing software such as Google, Google Images, Google N-Gram Viewer, and Google Trend.

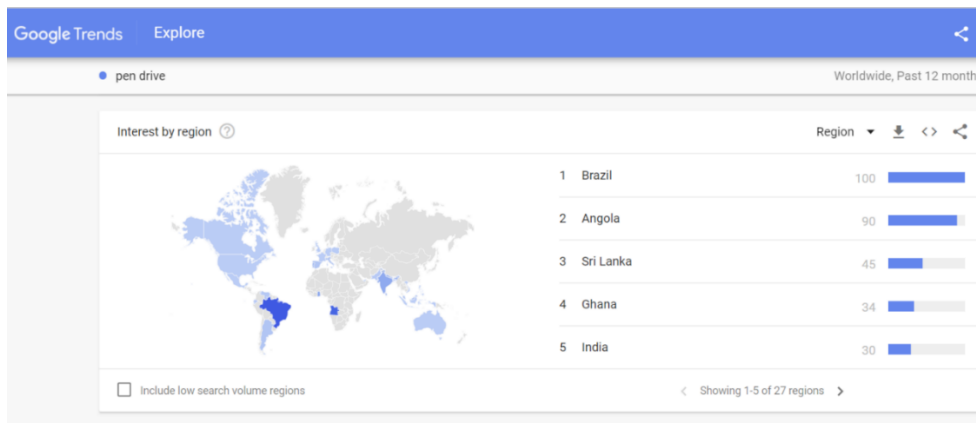
Google works well to search single words or simple phrases. When searching a phrase, use double quotation marks (e.g., “xxx”) so that the search mechanism identifies the entire phrase as a single item rather than individual words within that phrase. For example, searching send me a mail (without quotation marks) yields 3,520,000,000 results while “send me a mail” (with quotation marks) yields only 980,000 results. Though much smaller, the number generated by using quotation marks is still too large to analyze line-by-line. However, such a search is not for micro-analyzing but rather for generating usage frequencies to determine whether to consider using the word “mail” to mean “email.”

Google Images is useful for showing English differences between words such as “lemon” and “lime.” To access Google Images, use the general search function of Google and then click the subheading “Images” or go directly to <https://images.google.com/>. Through Google Images, even young children can learn about differences in language varieties for the meaning and spelling of a given word.

To learn about historical trends, use Google N-Gram Viewer <https://books.google.com/ngrams> and Google Trend (<https://trends.google.com/trends/explore>). Google Trends is more useful as it allows you to see a word’s change and geographic variation. For example, a search for “pen drive” and “USB drive” will show that both have remained popular in the search’s default period, which is the past 12 months. However, to view shorter or longer periods, adjust this time within a range from the past hour to the past 18 years. To see a word’s geographic spread, examine the maps in Figure 1 for “pen drive” and Figure 2 for “USB drive” and then adjust them to search the entire world or a specific country or region.

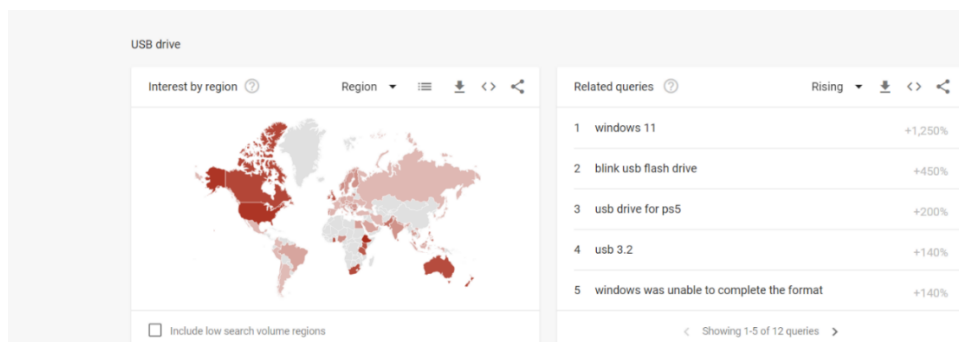
**Figure 1**

*Global Distribution of “pen drive” in Google Trends*



**Figure 2**

*Global Distribution of “USB drive” in Google Trends*



As shown in Figure 1, “pen drive” is used primarily in South America, Spain, Portugal, Italy, India, and a few African countries but not elsewhere. As shown in Figure 2, “USB drive” has a wider distribution and is found across most of the world, including countries where “pen drive” is prevalent. Google Trends will allow up to five phrases for comparison, making it one of the best tools for students who, starting at about 9 years of age, can determine whether specific words or phrases are used outside of a given country.

Though more difficult to use, corpora (plural of corpus) are extremely helpful to improve one’s language. Use corpora to see if your word choices are appropriate for targeted settings such as academic papers and conference presentations. This can be very insightful to consider when deciding to use the word “kid” to mean “child” (rather than “baby goat”) for submitting to a professional journal in the United States. Results of searches in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) for “child” and “kid” are shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*Results of “child” and “kid” in the Corpus of Contemporary American English*

	COCA Total	COCA Academic – N and % of Total
<b>child</b>	360,478	111,063 (30.8%)
<b>kid</b>	111,375	584 (0.5%)

*Note.* Updated from *How Research on Language Can Help All Researchers* by L. Barratt, 2015, Proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Research in Education, Arts, Management, and Science (I-CREAMS). Rajabhat Roi-Et University, Thailand.

While “kid” occurs about one third as often as “child” in COCA, “kid” occurs only 584 times in academic texts, which is a miniscule 0.5% of its total and, also, just 0.5% of academic entries

for “child.” Obviously, serious academic writing in the United States avoids using the word “kid.”

Corpora exist not only for American and British English but also for other global English varieties. See Global Web-Based English (GloWbE), Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), News on the Web (NOW), International Corpus of English (ICE), and others. Also useful for seeking input from language users in other parts of the world are online dictionaries and [urbandictionary.com](http://urbandictionary.com) as well as social media.

## Pedagogical Applications

Textbooks and other teaching materials often provide just one language variety, usually a variety found in the country where the materials are published. To introduce your students to language variation, examine the materials for a given lesson to see if you can find examples where the English being presented does not match what you have encountered before (i.e., what you have heard in your country or elsewhere). For example, the book might contain “Send me an email,” but you might prefer “Send me a mail.” To apply this exploratory approach to your teaching, ask students which expressions they usually say or have heard. After a short discussion, demonstrate how to search using an internet tool and/or encourage students to do their own searches to determine which form is most common and which forms are found in which regions or contexts. Though used more frequently in writing classes, such searches can also be used in general English classes or in classes focused on other skills such as vocabulary or pronunciation. Simple searches can be used by learners of all ages, including those in primary school.

To incorporate discussions of language variation in your lessons, be prepared to respond to teachable moments, which is when questions arise from the lesson or when they are asked by students. In such instances, provide insights to language variation. Encourage your students to investigate on smart phones. Another option is for students to investigate as homework and then report their findings at the next class.

Students can learn to research their own questions about English variation. Heng Hartse (2022) described an assignment for which students find answers to their own inquiries in response to questions suggested by Bamgbose (1998). These questions are as follows:

- How many people use the variation? (demographic)
- How widely dispersed is it? (geographical)
- Who uses it? (authoritative)
- Where is the usage sanctioned? (codification)
- What is the attitude of users and non-users to this variation? (acceptability)

Heng Hartse had his students find answers to their selected questions by using the internet. Heng Hartse had his students find answers to their selected questions by using the internet. Consider thinking of other questions that are relevant or interesting to your own students. However, your goal should be similar, that of opening your students’ eyes to the variations that exist in Englishes, to people’s attitudes towards their own variety, and to the varieties used by others. Help your students become autonomous lifelong learners by first demonstrating online searches and then giving students practice in conducting their own investigations.

Other skills needed by your students include communication strategies to negotiate meaning in English. To understand others and have them understand us, all users of English must be able



to request clarification, repeat and rephrase words, use approximations, ask for help, and remain patient long enough to erase misunderstandings that might occur (Pratama & Zainil, 2020).

Finally, to expand your students' exposure to other Englishes, reach out to the global community of English teachers. Welcome guest speakers to your classroom, either in person, virtually, or via recordings of World Englishes. Have students read works in English from different parts of the world. Start making these connections by joining the TESOL affiliate in your country such as the Paraguay Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (PARATESOL). And, finally, explore World Englishes to increase opportunities to travel virtually around the globe.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some points to help you remember key concepts about World Englishes:

- There is no single standard for English. All speakers everywhere need to choose an appropriate English for each situation.
- Foster an appreciation for linguistic diversity among your students.
- Help your students understand that their textbook and other teaching materials usually present only the norms from the country where they are published.
- Teach your students to search appropriate language for their specific needs.
- Use free internet tools to search what is appropriate for a given context.
- Help students realize that all speakers use communication strategies to negotiate meaning.
- Teach your students how to use communication strategies when they encounter a misunderstanding with other speakers of English.

## Discussing

Think about the English spoken in your country, and develop meaningful answers to the following questions for which Paraguay is used as an example:

1. Are there regional, social class, gender, or ethnic differences among speakers of Paraguayan English (or the English spoken in your country)?
2. How can you distinguish Paraguayans' English errors from Paraguayan English? For example, is "I have 19 years" an error? Or is "I have 19 years" an acceptable form in Paraguayan English (or the English spoken in your country)?
3. Which Englishes have you heard outside of Paraguay (or outside your own country)? Which are most familiar to you?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about World Englishes, do the following:

1. Compare two English textbooks by different publishers (if possible, from different countries). Can you find any differences in what they present as being correct?
2. Watch video clips of news or weather in English from two or three countries. What differences can you hear in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar?
3. Have a conversation in English with a classmate and record this conversation. Choose a topic that the two of you have not previously discussed. Watch the recording together and try to identify communication strategies that each of you used.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about World Englishes, visit these websites:

- English corpora collection at Brigham Young University. <https://www.english-corpora.org/>
- Google Trends. <https://www.google.com/trends/explore#cmpt=q&tz=Etc%2FGMT-7>
- International Corpus of English. <http://ice-corpora.net/ice/index.html>
- Paraguay TESOL. <https://www.facebook.com/PARATESOLPY/>
- TESOL International Association. <https://www.tesol.org/>
- Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English. <https://www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/corpus>
- World Englishes. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_Englishes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Englishes)

## See Also

Relevant discussions related to World Englishes are addressed in other chapters of this book:

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness*  
by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning through Translanguaging Practices*  
by K. Liu and J. Choi

**Chapter 18** *Teaching English in Different Contexts* by R. Díaz

**Chapter 31** *Using Translation and Interpretation in ELT* by S. Terol

**Chapter 38** *Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar*  
by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin

**Chapter 44** *Strategies to Teach Pronunciation* by S. Spezzini

**Chapter 50** *Developing Intercultural Competencies*  
by L. Rojas, J. Castañeda, and J. Mosquera

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# CHAPTER 3

## The Diversity of English Classes

# The Diversity of English Classes

Remigio Díaz Benítez

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## Abstract

In today's world of English language teaching, English classes span a wide range of diversity regarding context and purpose. When categorized by societal context, classes are called English as a Foreign Language or English as a Second Language. When targeted for specific fields or professions, classes are called English for Specific Purposes or English for Occupational Purposes. When the purpose is using English in university settings, classes are called English for Academic Purposes. Yet, when the purpose is meeting the needs of diverse learners, classes are called General English or English for General Purposes. These distinct classes can be further differentiated based on methodology such as Content and Language Integrated Learning, Learner-Centered Instruction, Task-Based Language Teaching, Project-Based Learning, Theme-Based Instruction, and Strategies-Based Instruction. In this chapter, you will reach a better understanding about the diversity of English classes and the reality of our profession.

*Keywords:* diverse English classes, differentiated methodology, different classroom settings, societal contexts

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## Introduction

The English language teaching (ELT) profession has given rise to a wide variety of English classes. In the 21st century, English learners have access to diverse classes for all ages, language levels, cultural backgrounds, and learner needs. All classes focus on effective learning but do so through different methods and techniques. Some classes target oral communication while others take a holistic approach to language learning. This chapter examines the diversity of English classes to inform you about the different types of classes that you might one day be teaching.

## Background

ELT efforts began in the 19th century with the Grammar Translation Method, which focused on translating disconnected sentences from the target language into a student's native language. This “analytical grammar-translation approach became firmly entrenched as a way to teach not only Latin but also, by extension, the vernaculars that had become modern languages” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2014, pp. 4-5). During the 20th century, the way of teaching English emerged into different methods, approaches, and varieties of English classes. By targeting learner needs and goals, these English classes became even more diverse. Since entering the 21st century, the diversity of English classes has become so extensive that it is no longer possible to talk about a single type of class, method, or technique.

## Major Dimensions

This section describes diverse English classes based on context and purpose.

### *English as a Foreign Language*

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) defines the type of classes in countries where English is not spoken as a native language, such as in the Outer Circle and Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1985). In these countries, the majority language is a language other than English; hence the reason for this class being called EFL. Students in EFL settings “do not have ready-made contexts for communication beyond their classrooms” (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 160). This means that EFL students are exposed to English only during class hours. Outside of class, EFL students might interact through the media and social networks or perhaps with their classmates such as when doing homework. By being aware of this potentially limited exposure to English within EFL settings, teachers need to maximize their students’ exposure to English in other ways because extensive exposure is a key element for language learning.

### *English as a Second Language*

English as a Second Language (ESL) defines the type of classes in countries where English is spoken by most people as a native language, such as in the Inner Circle (Kachru, 1985). In contexts where English is the majority language, English learners are immersed in an English-speaking environment for the learning and acquisition of a second language (L2). In other words, they are exposed to English inside and outside the classroom. This situation is especially relevant for teachers because they can select lesson activities using the real language that students encounter outside the classroom. In this sense, ESL learners are usually already “in a target living

community (e.g., Britain, the USA, etc.) and needing the target language (English) to survive and prosper in that community" (Harmer, 2007, p. 19).

#### ***English as a Third Language***

English as a Third Language (L3) describes the learning of English in countries that have two or more official languages with none being English. These official languages and their uses might be present at various levels of social interaction. An example of such a country is Paraguay, which has Spanish and Guarani as official languages. In such contexts, English is learned as a third or subsequent language (L3). This requires the teacher to select activities appropriately for students who are already bilingual and, as such, may experience other types of interference between their existing languages and English. Although certain similarities exist with L2 settings, the educational aspects of teaching English as an L3 differ from those of teaching English as an L2 and might have additional implications concerning the optimal age for introducing different languages and the desired level of proficiency (Jessner & Cenoz, 2007). In other words, teachers need to consider the most appropriate methods, strategies, and activities for classes in which three languages are present, thus ensuring effective teaching and learning.

#### ***English as an Additional or New Language***

English as an Additional Language (EAL) is the term used in Canada and other bilingual countries where English is one of the official languages. Another frequently used term is English as a New Language (ENL). Both terms view English as being added to a learner's expanding linguistic repertoire rather than being the learner's second or third language. When an additional language is acquired, an additional culture is also acquired with "a new path to another type of cognition, another set of emotions, another identity, and even a different filter of reality" (Perna et al., 2015, p. 2).

#### ***English for Speakers of Other Languages***

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is a perspective that emerged in the ELT field as not distinguishing teaching and learning contexts as being either EFL or ESL. This ESOL perspective is useful given that millions of people with home languages other than English now interact daily in English with others around the globe. Because English has become a worldwide language of communication and, as such, today's lingua franca, the learning of English has also become globalized. Rather than as EFL or ESL, teachers can select and adapt content, methods, techniques, and activities for an ESOL-oriented classroom as described here:

The use of English for international communication, especially with the Internet, means that many 'EFL students' are in effect living in a global target-language community and so might be thought of as 'ESL students' instead! Partly as a result of this we now tend to use the term ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) to describe both situations. (Harmer, 2007, p. 12)

#### ***General English***

General English (GE), also called English for General Purposes, is probably the most popular type of English instruction around the world (Harmer, 2007). GE students "often do not have a particular reason for going to English classes, but simply wish to learn to speak (and read and write) the language effectively for wherever and whenever this might be useful for them" (p.

11). In most cases, students enroll in GE courses because they like the language and its customs and, therefore, want to use English to communicate. Other GE students enroll because parents feel that English is a key to their children's future. Most English language institutes offer GE classes and classify them by proficiency levels such as beginning, intermediate, and advanced plus several other variations.

### *English for Specific Purposes*

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is when English is taught and learned for a specific field, such as targeted professions and occupations (e.g., nursing, tourism). ESP is different from GE because language learners usually need to have an intermediate level of GE before taking an ESP class. Another difference is how ESP has two branches—academic and occupational. Hence, ESP can be further divided into “English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which prepares students for studying in foreign universities, and English for Occupational or Professional Purposes (EOP/EPP), which prepares learners for functioning in a particular profession” (Donesch-Jezo, 2012, p. 1).

### *English for Academic Purposes*

EAP classes are found in higher education settings and in centers for researching and publishing. Although EAP differs from ESP by focusing on academic contexts, “the view of EAP as a sub-discipline within ESP still holds,” especially within the applied linguistics and English language teaching fields (Hamps-Lyons, 2011, p. 89). EAP students must already have an advanced level of GE and are expected to be able to use the advanced technical vocabulary needed for their specialization. In their EAP classes, they learn complex grammatical structures for presenting different types of texts required in their academic training and for writing academic manuscripts about their expertise.

### *English for Occupational Purposes*

EOP classes are characterized by teaching and learning the vocabulary of an area of knowledge and, also, by practical applications in real-life workforce settings where students are working or planning to work. Usually viewed as an ESP branch, EOP “covers situations in which learners are studying English for work related reasons. The courses are based on an analysis of their specific communicative needs in their work” (Supriadi, 2019, p. 3). A major part of an EOP class is dedicated to the workplace in which students are already interacting or will be interacting. As such, EOP classes entail workplace-specific knowledge and expressions.

## Pedagogical Applications

The wide diversity of classes mentioned above can be further differentiated based on the methodology being used.

### *Content and Language Integrated Learning*

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is characterized by using the English language to teach content through English. In this otherwise EFL context, CLIL is not an English language class in which students learn English. Instead, CLIL is an approach used at many bilingual schools where academic subjects (e.g., science, mathematics, literature) are taught



with English as the medium of instruction. Often, with no previous English, learners enter these bilingual schools at 3 or 4 years of age and are expected to learn language and content together. While advancing from year to year, they learn age-appropriate content by using progressively higher levels of English. In other words, students learn language through content, and they also learn content through language.

#### ***Learner-Centered Instruction***

Learner-Centered Instruction describes English classes where the students and their interests are at the center of instruction in contrast to approaches with the teacher at the center of instruction. Historically, the teacher was the source of all knowledge and transmitted knowledge without having students participate actively in the teaching-learning process. As other perspectives emerged, attention became focused on students, thus changing that traditional model and converting students into active participants within the language learning process. According to Brown and Lee (2015), “Learner-centered instruction turned teacher-centered models ‘upside down’ by playing down the all-knowing, authoritative role of the teacher and giving opportunities to students to participate in a classroom without fear of being scolded or belittled by a teacher” (p. 45). Learner-centered instruction has become a preferred teaching mode and can be combined with several of the following teaching methods.

#### ***Task-Based Language Teaching***

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) structures the teaching of language around students developing language while doing tasks. In TBLT classes, learners perform tasks by completing activities within a given time period while participating in communication acts similar to those in the real world. Here, the learning of a new language is seen as “a developmental process enhancing communication and social interaction rather than a product internalized by practicing language items ... (where) learners master the target language more powerfully when being exposed to meaningful task-based activities in a natural way” (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011, p. 47). Within TBLT, “task-based teaching makes an important distinction between target tasks, which students must accomplish beyond the classroom, and pedagogical tasks, which form the nucleus of the classroom activity” (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 47).

#### ***Project-Based Learning***

Project-Based Learning (PBL) focuses on student experiences. Such experiences help students use the target language to carry out various activities such as research projects, field trips, and hands-on projects. By performing certain actions, learners use language as a vehicle through which class objectives are achieved. To reach this goal, PBL favors the integration of language macro-skills within classes that incorporate learning by doing, discovery learning, and inductive learning. This type of “experiential learning emphasizes the psychomotor aspects of language learning by involving learners in physical actions into which language is subsumed and reinforced” (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 51).

#### ***Theme-Based Instruction***

Theme-Based Instruction (TBI) is based on the idea that learning should be grounded in meaningful situations or topics. TBI classes are usually found in institutions that use topic-based curricula. Such classes are aimed at intermediate or advanced language learners who wish to learn more about a particular content without ignoring the grammatical aspects of a language. These classes combine thematic content and language skills with the objective “to use content materials to advance students’ language competence and proficiency. The themes are selected

based on their potential contribution to achieve this objective” (Jiang, 2017, p. 170). TBI favors the integration of language macro-skills and motivates students to investigate content of their interest that might not be included in textbooks.

### ***Strategies-Based Instruction***

Strategies-Based Instruction (SBI) is based on making students responsible for their own learning (Moya, 2014). This does not imply ignoring the teacher's role within the teaching and learning process. Rather, in SBI classes, the teacher provides settings where students recognize the value of assuming responsibility for learning. SBI views language learning as needing dedicated time and effort that can only be achieved when learners understand this concept and become responsible for their own learning. With the goal of learners becoming “self-driven independent learners beyond the classroom, they need to be fully aware of their own strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and styles” (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 53). With SBI, the macro-skills of language are integrated with a learner’s search for autonomy.

In this chapter, you learned about many different types of English classes within the diversity of ELT. You also learned how these English classes can be differentiated by their context and purpose as well as by their respective methodologies.

## **KEY CONCEPTS**

Here are some key concepts about the diversity of English classes:

- Diverse English classes are taught around the world.
- This diversity in ELT corresponds to different contexts, purposes, and methods.
- Depending on context, English classes can be EFL, ESL, ESOL, EAL, or ENL.
- As determined by the institution, different English teaching methods are selected for targeting students’ ages, proficiency levels, and needs.

## **Discussing**

Based on what you have learned about diverse English classes, answer these questions:

1. Why is GE more popular than other models of English instruction? Explain.
2. How similar or different are EAL and L3 for teaching and learning?
3. What are two main branches of ESP? What are some major characteristics of an ESP class?
4. What are some major characteristics of learner centered instruction?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about diverse English classes, do the following:

1. Prepare a chart identifying the main characteristics of TBLT, PBL, TBI, and SBI.
2. Observe an ESP class offered in a university's science department, such as the Facultad de Ciencias Exactas y Naturales at the Universidad Nacional de Asunción. Determine if ESP characteristics are present in the class you are observing.
3. Design a project for English students based on PBL.
4. Prepare a lesson plan for teaching a TBLT class with upper-intermediate students.
5. Observe a class that is characteristic of CLIL such as at a school that follows a curriculum from the United States, Great Britain, or another English-speaking country.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about diverse ELT classes, consider visiting these websites:

- Diverse Learners. <https://special-ed.utah.edu/diversity/linguistic-sites.php>
- ESP Resources. <https://eeeaward.com/esp-resources/>
- Interactive Sites:  
<https://researchguides.library.wisc.edu/c.php?g=177873&p=1169756>

## See Also

Relevant discussions related to World Englishes are addressed in other chapters of this book:

**Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners* by M. Gandolfo, B. Damiani, and L. Caperochipe

**Chapter 8** *Teaching and Engaging Adolescent Learners* by V. Ariza-Pinzón

**Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning* by M. Zalimben

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 18** *Teaching English in Different Contexts* by R. Díaz

**Chapter 19** *Incorporating Inclusive Education Practices in ELT* by R. Mazzoleni

**Chapter 24** *Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms* by Y. Grevtseva and E. Zyrianova

**Chapter 26** *Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning* by A. Roca

**Chapter 32** *Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century* by C. Onatra and S. Palencia  
**Chapter 33** *Current Approaches in English Language Teaching* by N. Dantaz  
**Chapter 36** *Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners* by C. Giménez and I. Rolón

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Photo by Annika Gordon on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 4

## Humanism in English Language Teaching

# Humanism in English Language Teaching

Bryan Meadows

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## Abstract

Foreign language classrooms are places where students can develop language knowledge (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) and communicative skills with a goal to participate in language communities of the language being studied. But what if that wasn't everything that students could gain from a language classroom? When we, as language educators, integrate humanistic principles into our teaching, we create spaces where our students feel encouraged to explore who they are and who they will be. In this chapter, you will learn about core humanistic principles and their applications in the field of English language teaching. You will also be invited to consider the added benefit that humanism can provide to your language students.

*Keywords:* humanism, humanistic teaching, language communities, communicative skills

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## Introduction

A language classroom is focused on human communication, and this makes it unique from other school subjects such as mathematics or history. For example, in their English classes, students develop new skills for participating in English language communities. Effective methods for English language teaching (ELT) involve people talking with other people, such as through dialogues and roleplay activities. Measures of success in the language classroom (e.g., exams and performance tasks) are often situated in imagined scenarios of one-to-one communication. This focus on human communication embodies unique potential for students' personal development such as opportunities to develop who they are and who they will be. This is the humanistic side of language teaching. By approaching your language teaching through this humanistic lens, you can capitalize on the inherent focus of human connection. In this chapter, you will learn about why humanism is a welcome presence in the ELT classroom. You will also learn specific things that you can do to make your future classroom more humanistic.

## Background

The philosophy of humanism is anchored in western philosophy. The Greek philosophers of humanism took the fundamental premise that each individual human being has inherent goodness (McNeil, 2015). In the 20th century, education psychologists in the United States explored ways to apply humanism to classrooms. They formalized several principles for humanistic education:

- Humans are inherently good.
- Humans possess free will.
- Humans carry a responsibility to one other.
- Self-concept and growth are central to the human experience.

Inspired by these humanistic connections, language education scholars in the United States adopted these principles for language classrooms in the 1970s and 1980s. Moskowitz (1978) explained that the foreign language classroom was the ideal place to explore the interests of humanism such as self-identity, self-worth, and self-efficacy. In Moskowitz's view, the foreign language classroom is all about people connecting with people. As teachers and students, we often utilize the foreign language classroom as a space where we can express ourselves, learn about one another, and connect with new places and communities.

At about that same time, Stevick (1980) noted that language students are uniquely positioned to benefit from humanistic classrooms. This is because learning a new language is a direct assault on one's ego and self-confidence. Consider your own experience as a language student. You may have felt a loss of agency when unable to express what you wanted or needed to say. This can feel particularly challenging when expressing yourself was such a simple task in your home language environment just minutes before entering the foreign language classroom. As Stevick explained, this can lead to negative thoughts that weigh on one's sense of self-efficacy and self-worth. Thus, the principles of humanism can guide students to confront critical self-talk and experience the language classroom not as a challenge to their self-concept but a chance for personal growth.



These ideas gave rise to three humanistic-based ELT methods: Community Language Teaching, The Silent Way, and Desuggestopedia (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Because of not adapting easily to language classrooms in academic settings, these methods had lost popularity by the 1990s. However, although these three methods might have lost ground, strong evidence exists for re-visiting humanistic pedagogy and for reconsidering how humanism can contribute to language classrooms. With that goal in mind, this chapter invites you, as a future English teacher, to embrace humanistic pedagogy in the 21st century.

### Major Dimensions

When based on humanistic pedagogy, ELT classrooms foster and promote affect, social relationships, self-directed learning, and self-actualization.

#### *Affect*

Affect refers to feelings and emotions. In a humanistic approach to language teaching, affective learning targets are positioned alongside conventional linguistic and cognitive learning targets. When teaching through a humanistic approach, integrate affective learning into your primary curriculum design. Here is an example of combining affective and linguistic targets: Participate in increasingly longer conversations in the target language while using self-relaxation strategies to reduce anxiety. Once learning targets are in place, establish classroom instructional time to prepare students for success in reaching these targets. For example, as part of your lesson, help students identify their anxiety levels. Next, guide them through recognized techniques for self-regulating anxiety. Finally, prompt them to use techniques of identification and self-regulation when using the new language.

#### *Social Relationships*

As described above, language classrooms are ideal places to exercise social relationships because human communication is at the center of classroom activity. In your humanistic classroom, integrate opportunities for students to communicate with one another about who they are and who they wish to be. Weave this into routine language practice exercises. Imagine, for example, that students are learning occupational terms in the new language. To add a humanistic element to this exercise, ask students to share which professions intrigue them and why. In this kind of personal sharing, students can form a greater sense of shared community and connection with one another.

#### *Self-Directed Learning*

In a humanistic classroom, students participate in opportunities that guide their path for learning a new language. This is based on the belief that students will grow intellectually when they are exploring answers to questions that matter most to them. This also stems from a belief that each person is the individual ultimately responsible for their own learning and development. Yet, the principle of self-directed learning does not release the teacher from their leadership position. What is different under a humanistic lens is that the teacher guides the students through the learning space created by the teacher; yet the students remain in control. Let us consider a hypothetical example. In a language unit on family, provide vocabulary and grammatical forms for talking about families in the new language. From there, invite your students to explore representations of family in the new language and through various multimedia sources (e.g.,

videos, websites, movies, textbooks, promo advertisements). Students select representations that interest them. In doing so, they cultivate their own language content to study. The words, expressions, and grammatical features that students find then become the source for their language study about family.

### ***Self-Actualization***

As a humanistic teacher, establish regular classroom routines that encourage students to take inventory of their personal, social, and emotional needs and then to make tangible steps towards meeting their needs. By doing so, students experience personal growth. To help your students along their path of personal growth, provide external supports. Examples include classroom routines that prompt students to identify their immediate needs, strategies to help them meet their needs, and different ways to conduct self-inventories. Through these external supports, guide each student in internal work based on how self-actualization is a personal process. Students who have previous experience with self-actualization will need less external support. Students without previous experience will need more external support from you, the teacher, for doing their self-actualization. From a humanistic standpoint, the important thing is that you have planned for and attended to each student's personal development journey within your ELT classroom.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

If you wish to incorporate humanistic principles in your language classroom practices, consider following these tips.

### ***Cultivate a Safe, Welcoming Classroom Atmosphere***

As of the first day, cultivate a classroom atmosphere that is safe, welcoming, and encouraging for all students. Aim for cultivating a space where students feel safe to express their authentic selves and where they feel respected enough to pose challenges to the teacher, to the content of study, and even to one another. Make intentional efforts to continue cultivating an atmosphere of mutual respect. The ongoing maintenance of such respect requires thoughtful action and counteraction around respectful and inclusive behavior in the classroom setting. When addressing breaches to the classroom climate, keep the conversation focused on the actions and on the impact those actions have had on community members rather than on speaker intent.

### ***Address Student Anxiety and Stress***

Address the anxiety and stress that students often experience when studying another language. Start by setting aside structured time in class for students to complete self-assessments of their anxiety and stress levels. For example, this could be a simple checklist immediately before or after a classroom activity or presentation. Also consider something more formal such as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al., 1986). Give this to students at selected points during the semester. After students have identified their personal levels of anxiety, introduce them to anxiety-reducing strategies. These may include breathing exercises, visualizing exercises, mindfulness (i.e., hyper-awareness of the present moment), and expressions of gratitude. Encourage students to use these strategies when interacting with the target language and then assess the impact on their anxiety levels after having participated. Whenever time permits and presupposing a climate of respect, allow students to share in groups

(or with the full class). In this supportive setting with peers, students share personal reflections regarding their own anxiety levels and their progress towards moderating them.

### ***Practice Daily Affirmations***

Practice daily affirmations with your students, which, though seemingly small, can have a big impact. Affirmations are statements of self-worth such as “I can do hard things” and “I was born to learn.” Select from among different options and incorporate them into your regular classroom practices. For example, have students select a self-affirmation statement from a list. This could be done on a weekly basis or before an exam or major performance task. The important thing is that students choose an affirmation with which they personally identify. Have students move around the room repeating their personal affirmation to one another. Verbally enunciating this affirmation carries a powerful force to help students personally identify with their affirmation. These affirmation exercises can be completed in the target language, home language, or a mixture of both.

### ***Include Storytelling***

Include storytelling in your lessons. Storytelling is a valuable classroom practice based on how we, as humans, are uniquely attentive to narrative. Through stories, we can understand ourselves and the past. As such, narrative is an important tool to use for self-actualization. Make your language classroom into a space for students to share their personal stories with one another: who they are and who they wish to be. Conventional foreign language textbooks often provide storytelling prompts. Consider starting with a prompt such as these: What do you feel most grateful for in your life? How would you like to be remembered? (StoryCorps, n.d.).

### ***Teach Language Learning Strategies***

Teach your students how to use language learning strategies. Such strategies can foster self-directed learning which is integral to humanistic pedagogy. Language learning strategies can be grouped in four sets (Echevarria et al., 2016): metacognitive (i.e., identifying what we know and don't know); cognitive (i.e., monitoring our own thinking); affective (i.e., monitoring emotions, feelings, and anxiety); and interpersonal (i.e., utilizing classroom partners for needed support). Explicitly explain and demonstrate these strategies to your students and clarify the functions of each set. Provide your students with opportunities to practice these strategies in classroom activities and guide them in adopting their favorite strategies as their own. Although language learning strategies have been widely used in classrooms, humanistic teachers are interested in learning strategies for how they support student autonomy (i.e., self-directed learning).

### ***Have Students Assess Self and Peers***

Finally, have students assess themselves and their peers. Self-assessment follows from the principle of self-directed learning. Allow opportunities for students to assess their performance in various language activities and assignments. For example, consider averaging your assessment score of a student's performance together with the student's self-assessment score. A related technique is peer-assessment where students have a chance to connect with each other's learning journey. When assessing peers, students often indirectly self-reflect. To ensure the positive nature of peer-assessment, include it as a low-risk activity for formative assessment during a project's design phase or for reflection following project submission.

In this chapter, you learned about humanism in ELT. You learned how a humanistic classroom embraces affect, social relationships, self-directed learning, and self-actualization. You also

learned how to incorporate several humanistic principles into your language teaching practices. By incorporating these suggestions, you will be able to promote humanism in your classroom.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about humanism in ELT:

- Anchored in western philosophy, the notion of humanism assumes the fundamental premise of goodness; in other words, each individual human being is inherently good.
- Although humanistic language teaching methods briefly found popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, ELT educators of the 21st century should reconsider humanistic pedagogy because its basic principles are still relevant.
- Key humanistic principles for teaching a new language are affect, social relationships, self-directed learning, and self-actualization.
- ELT educators can act on these key humanistic principles by (a) cultivating a safe and welcoming classroom climate; (b) teaching students to moderate feelings of anxiety; (c) guiding students in self-affirmation exercises; (d) capitalizing on the power of storytelling; (e) training students to use language learning strategies; and (f) incorporating self-assessment and peer-assessment techniques.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about humanism in ELT, answer these questions:

1. What principles of humanism have you experienced as a language student? Do you feel that your teacher's humanistic techniques helped you with learning this new language?
2. What principles of humanism do you feel would be easy for you to implement in your future ELT classroom? Which ones would be challenging?
3. What are additional ways to bring humanism to the language classroom that have not been discussed in this chapter?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice using what you have learned about humanism in ELT, do the following:

1. Select a language unit of study and identify at least three different resources related to the topic (e.g., family, climate change, careers). Incorporate these resources as possible pathways for your future students to follow along their path towards self-directed learning.

2. Make a list of at least ten affirmation statements to share with your language students. Select some from the internet and base others on your own experiences as a language learner.
3. Develop several self-assessment checklists. Ask your English students to do one of these checklists before each unit of study. Start by creating one checklist for each of the four modes of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about humanism in ELT classrooms, visit these websites:

- Affirmations for language learners. <https://ellii.com/blog/affirmations-for-english-learners>
- Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. <https://dept.english.wisc.edu/rfyoung/333/FLCAS.pdf>
- Learning strategies. <https://englopedia.com/learning-strategies-with-types-and-explanation/>
- Storytelling prompts. <https://archive.storycorps.org/great-questions-list/>

## See Also

Elements of humanism in ELT are also addressed in other chapters of this book:

**Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners* by S. Montiel

**Chapter 6** *Supporting Learners' Social Emotional Learning* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning* by M. Zalimben

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 19** *Incorporating Inclusive Education Practices in ELT* by R. Mazzoleni

**Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community* by B. Crosbie and D. Carter

**Chapter 29** *Using Theater to Teach English* by C. Ortiz and M. Vaky

**Chapter 32** *Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century* by C. Onatra and S. Palencia

**Chapter 34** *Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching* by G. Díaz Maggioli

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# Language Learners

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***Supporting Learners' Social Emotional Learning***

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***Embracing Young Learners***

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***Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning***

Maura Judith Zalimben Recalde



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# CHAPTER 5

## Building Relationships with Language Learners



## Building Relationships With Language Learners

Stephanie Montiel

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### Abstract

As educators, we must acquire a variety of information about our students in order to build relationships with them and be effective at helping them learn. To do so, we must first consider our students' preferred learning modes, their goals for language learning, their personal interests, and their educational background. To strengthen our relationship with students, we should also target other kinds of information and plan activities and lessons that generate that type of information. This process will help build rapport and trust with students. It will also provide us with personalized information to plan lessons that support our students in learning English. In this chapter, you will learn to prepare effective English language lessons that motivate students in becoming more engaged with their own learning. You will also learn to use personalized lessons to build stronger relationships with your students.

*Keywords:* learner relationships, preferred learning modes, goals, interest, rapport, trust, personalizing lessons

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## Introduction

*Know Your Learners* is the first of six principles being promoted by the TESOL International Association for the effective teaching of English learners (Short et al., 2018). This principle states that teachers must gain knowledge about their English learners and then use this knowledge when teaching to be effective at helping them learn language and content. Effective teachers know their students by building relationships based on the premise that “social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, academic are deeply intertwined in the brain and in behavior” (Jones & Kahn, 2017, p. 4). After learning about our students, we can plan authentic and engaging lessons. When students see that we are invested in them and their learning, they are more likely to want to learn.

To establish a trusting relationship with students and build positive rapport, we must show personal interest in them. We must listen when they talk about their experiences, feelings, and goals. Our attention to students is a signal that we care about them and wish to build a binding relationship. According to Pierson (2013), “Kids don’t learn from people they don’t like.” Therefore, our goal is to build a mentor-mentee relationship where students feel comfortable about sharing their successes and frustrations with us. After gathering meaningful information from our students, we can use our pedagogical skills to incorporate this information into activities, lesson plans, and units for motivating them to learn and achieve their own goals.

## Background

To establish trust and security, Covey (2013) proposed establishing an emotional bank account nurtured through deposits of “courtesy, kindness, honesty and keeping commitments” (p. 198). Initially used in corporations, Covey’s framework was extended to schools through a collaborative effort between school leaders and Franklin Covey Education called “The Leader in Me.” This whole-school improvement model can guide educators in “developing relationships with students and parents, gathering resources, and establishing routines [that] will yield a fruitful learning experience for all” (Ferlazzo & Hull-Sypniewski, 2012, p. 13). Such relationships have led to reduced discipline issues when incorporated within Alpert’s Cooperative Discipline model and Glasser’s Noncoercive Discipline model (Charles, 2005).

When students feel they can trust their teachers, they are empowered to take academic risks. Rather than feeling embarrassed about wrong answers, students view their attempts as learning opportunities. This trusting relationship leads to positive two-way communication. Teachers can implement instructional strategies that also serve for building relationships with students and helping them “feel welcome, accepted, and valued” (Marzano, 2017, p. 89). Through these strategies, teachers can build rapport with students and establish positive relationships that will lead them toward gaining confidence as English users. Once students feel confident, they will take risks with using English and thereby begin the process of language acquisition.

## Major Dimensions

When getting to know our students, we should consider their interests, preferred learning modes, social-economic background, and cultural practices. Some teachers might think, “Why should I try to get to know my students? Their job is to come to school and learn, and my job is to teach.” Although this might be the reality in some educational settings, we—as language

teachers—must build relationships and know our language learners to be able to support their language learning.

### ***Student Interests***

According to Burgess (2018), the secret to creating effective and engaging lessons is taking the time to discover our students' interests and then developing our lessons around these interests. Burgess' shortcut to engagement is spending "less time trying to get students interested in what you are presenting and more time making connections between what you are presenting and what they are already interested in" (p. 20). As English teachers, we must incorporate our learners' interests within our lessons so that they will want to explore, repeat, take risks, and collaborate—all in English—such as they did as young children when learning their first language.

Our students' age determines how we go about identifying their interests. Elementary-aged students share their interests by drawing pictures or participating in show-and-tell activities. Parents are also an excellent source of information regarding children's social interests and learning habits. Secondary-aged students can share their interests on a survey or in an "All about me" assignment. Adult learners can share their interests through online inventories. After sharing their interests, students can participate in goal setting activities (e.g., learning to ride a bike or becoming gainfully employed), which will vary widely depending on their age.

These interest-gathering activities would optimally be done in English to help teach the language. However, some activities for building relationships might need to be done in a student's native language to initially build rapport and trust. Establishing a safe environment and trusting relationship is essential for students who are learning a new language. If language learners perceive the environment as negative, they will not engage in risk taking, which is essential for practicing and learning language. Although all learners make mistakes, they must keep trying.

### ***Preferred Learning Modes***

We can gain a better understanding of our students by learning about their talents and preferred learning modes. Students have different types of intelligences and talents as explained through the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2006). To optimally educate all students, we must consider their intelligences defined by Gardner as bodily-kinesthetic, logical-mathematical, musical, linguistic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and existential. With this information, reflect on the intelligences that you and your students bring to class. This means encouraging students to choose projects and assignments that match their intelligences and that also match their learning preferences. Students can then learn English by using their strongest (or most comfortable) mode of communication.

### ***Social-Economic Background***

Nurturing positive relationships is the foundation of successful classrooms, especially for teaching languages. As teachers, we need to learn about the experiences and backgrounds of our students and connect these to new learning because "(w)hen students feel that they matter, their level of motivation and achievement are more likely to increase" (Ferlazzo & Hull-Sypniewski, 2012, p. 15). This includes considering our students' early opportunities at exploring personal

interests and learning habits as well as their social-economic background. Yet, students from resource-challenged environments have often not experienced opportunities outside of their immediate environment, which, in turn, could hinder their ability to make connections to content in the classroom. Consequently, we should also consider their socio-economic background.

### *Cultural Practice*

When building relationships with students, teachers must also consider cultural practices. Some cultures may view relationships between students and teachers as solely professional and not for sharing personal information. For example, students from certain cultures may find it awkward to divulge about their interests, learning styles, or preferred learning modes. Therefore, we must work within these cultural constraints to learn about our students in culturally appropriate ways.

Depending on our students' cultural practices, we might de-emphasize talking about personal interests and emphasize sharing educational goals (short-term and long-term). A vital ingredient is an environment perceived as safe by all students. Yet, no single solution exists to build relationships with all students. Therefore, because relationship building is inherently an individual experience, we must tailor our approach to match each person's needs, interests, and cultural practice.

## Pedagogical Applications

Upon receiving your student rosters, start planning how to build relationships with these students. On the first day, implement activities for building trust, establishing rapport, and informally evaluating student needs. This will give you insights for the best ways to gather further information about their interests and then to infuse these interests into your instructional activities. The main purpose of these initial activities will be getting to know your students by having them share their interests. If possible, such activities should entail multiple language domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing) such as through surveys, discussions, models, and artwork.

To support relationship building, choose already-known tools and activities. One way to start is by consciously following aspects in Covey's (2013) emotional bank account:

- understanding the individual
- attending to the little things
- keeping commitments
- clarifying expectations
- showing personal integrity
- apologizing sincerely (pp. 200-207)

### *Gathering Information*

Surveys are an excellent way of gathering information from students about their interests. Some surveys are accessed online, and others can be created by teachers. According to Greenwood et al. (2012), surveys can focus on different areas, such as the following:

- **Types of learners.** This can include multiple intelligences (e.g., Music is important to me. I learn vocabulary easily.).
- **Learning preferences.** This is how the student perceives learning (e.g., I prefer working in groups. I learn better when information is presented to me.).
- **Personal interest.** These can be open-ended questions to gain more knowledge about the students (e.g., What is your favorite sport? What do you do to relax?).
- **Background information.** These can be short answer questions. They must be worded according to cultural norms (e.g., Where did you grow up? How many people live in your house?).
- **Generational information.** This is globally relevant and tends to relate to technology and social values (e.g., On a scale of 1-10, how comfortable are you using a computer? Rate these values in order of least to greatest: family, community, self, church group, professional colleagues, personal friends.).

These types of surveys can focus on reading and writing (multiple-choice, short answer) or on listening and speaking (interviews). Surveys provide insights to student interests and learning preferences. When this information is used by the teacher and the students, it serves to establish a fair and equitable classroom where trust is built and fostered. In this supportive setting, students are more willing to take risks and, thus, build confidence in using the target language.

Through surveys, you can discover students' shared interests (e.g., musical artist or political headline). Based on this information, build a thematic lesson around a shared interest and, thus, motivate students to learn technical vocabulary needed for discussion. Include questions about pop culture in a survey or on a daily writing/oral prompt (e.g., What is your favorite song?). Introduce local or world news that impacts your students and can lead to paired or group discussions. Such open-ended questions serve to elicit responses from students and build English language vocabulary and structure. When faced with open-ended questions, students do not feel pressured to produce answers that could be judged as either correct or incorrect. Because of this, they are more willing to take risks and offer a response. This can also help with building rapport.

### ***Building Background***

When students participate in surveys, they are simultaneously building vocabulary and learning basic sentence structures (e.g., My favorite food is chicken. I like to play soccer.). Consider incorporating your students' interests in upcoming lessons. In these initial activities, introduce vocabulary that is based on student interests and, as such, can serve toward building more complex language learning. You might discover that some students prefer lectures and independent work. If so, you can decide to pre-teach using lecture style but then incorporate pair or group work to build student language.

By connecting students' personal and academic experiences to new information, you are building background (Echevarria et al., 2017) that will enhance learning during upcoming lessons. Follow-up activities might be a class competition, news article analysis, or collaborative game as well as sharing short stories, writing poems, watching videos, or answering questions about student interests. Such content can then be incorporated into a grammar activity.

### ***Setting Goals***

Another way to infuse your lessons with student interests is by understanding their goals. Consider doing this by asking your students the following questions, either orally or written:

- Why do you want to learn English?
- What do you want to be able to do?
- What is your timeline for meeting this goal?
- How will you practice English outside of class?
- How much time will you work on learning English outside of class?

After gathering students' answers to these questions, focus your lessons on guiding students toward their goals and tracking their progress. When students feel frustrated, help them refocus by reminding them of their personal goals and, by doing so, support them in reaching success. Sometimes the question "Why am I doing this?" results in a simple answer: "Learning English will help me make more money," or "My parents put me in this class." Such responses might not be that helpful if students are overly frustrated or stressed. Yet, with time, by knowing your students and their goals, you will be better positioned for positively building and maintaining relationships.

As teachers, we should help students dig for deeper reasons to be motivated and reduce stress. The following questions often lead to fruitful discussions:

- Why do you need to make more money?
- What job interests you? Why do you like this job?
- Who has influenced you along this path?

By answering these questions, students' goals and desires will emerge. Such questions, however, can be difficult if students have not previously thought about these topics. In this case, consider asking these questions in a student's native language.

In this chapter, you learned about gathering information from students to build relationships with them and to help them set goals for learning the target language. You also learned that investing time in learning more about your students will result in your students investing their time and effort in learning English.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about building relationships:

- You should get to know your students by building a safe classroom and a trusting relationship.
- Students must be in a caring environment to be confident and take risks in the new language.
- Surveys, inventories, and questionnaires are ways to get to know your students and can be incorporated into language learning activities.
- Goal setting is a powerful tool to build rapport with students, especially when they feel frustrated.

## Discussing

Based on what you have learned about building relationships, answer these questions:

1. How do you think the students' learning styles (and a teacher's learning styles) might influence a classroom environment? How do you think you could use the results from a learning styles inventory?
2. What are some strategies and activities for learning more about students at the grade levels that you teach or would like to teach?
3. What are some challenges in a classroom with students from diverse backgrounds and learning styles?
4. Have you ever set personal or professional goals? What helps you be successful in achieving those goals? Do you think this type of activity could help your students? Why or why not?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about building relationships, do the following:

1. Identify one of your passions. Think of three ways to share this passion with your students.
2. Take a personality test such as the Myers Briggs Free Online Survey
3. Explore learning styles inventories. Some are available online, and others must be purchased.
4. Review Stephen Covey's emotional bank account. Determine if you have made a major deposit today. If not, try to make one.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your background knowledge on building relationships, visit these websites:

- Generational differences in the workplace.  
<https://www.purdueglobal.edu/education-partnerships/generational-workforce-differences-infographic/>
- Generational shifts.  
<https://www.universalconsensus.com/2013/02/19/understanding-global-generational-shifts/>
- Personality test. <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>
- Questions to get to know students.  
<https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/get-to-know-you-questions-for-students>
- Quizzes to strengthen relationships.  
<https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes>
- Student interest survey. <https://careertech.org/student-interest-survey>

## See Also

Ways to build relationships with students are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

- Chapter 4** *Humanism in English Language Teaching* by B. Meadows
- Chapter 6** *Enhancing Learners' Social Emotional Learning* by G. Mendoza
- Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners* by M. Gandolfo, B. Damiani, and L. Caperochipe
- Chapter 8** *Teaching and Engaging Adolescent Learners* by V. Ariza
- Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser
- Chapter 28** *Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature* by S. Ruffinelli and C. Ortiz
- Chapter 30** *Incorporating Music in the ELT Classroom* by O. Carrasquel
- Chapter 32** *Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century* by C. Onatra and S. Palencia
- Chapter 50** *Developing Intercultural Competencies* by L. Rojas, J. Castañeda, and J. Mosquera

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# CHAPTER 6

## Supporting Learners' Social Emotional Learning

# Supporting Learners' Social Emotional Learning

Grazzia María Mendoza Chirinos

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## Abstract

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) was introduced in some educational settings during the 1960s (Comer, 1988). However, it was not until the 21st century that educators began implementing strategic actions to support SEL widely across schools. SEL skills are awareness of self and others, sound decision making, communication strategies, empathy with surroundings, and behavior traits. These skills build emotional foundations and support academic growth. An early inclusion of SEL can provide a holistic approach to help learners build tolerance, respect, and openness to the ideas, personalities, habits, customs, and traditions of other people. SEL also helps learners strengthen their resilience, assume intelligent control of their own emotions, and develop abilities to solve challenges effectively. In this chapter, you will learn about SEL. You will learn how to help students use SEL in crisis and conflict situations. You will also learn several strategies for implementing SEL-based activities in your classroom.

*Keywords:* social emotional learning, tolerance, respect, resilience, crisis situations, solutions, emotional control

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## Introduction

The Social Emotional Learning (SEL) movement has been driven by a vision for children, youth, and adults to thrive personally and academically, maintain positive relationships, engage in life-long learning, and contribute to a more just and caring world. As such, SEL is an integral part of human development and education. It is a process by which people develop skills, apply these skills, nurture healthy attitudes, manage emotions, and achieve goals not just for their own personal benefit but also for the collective well-being of others. SEL allows people to show empathy, maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible decisions based on care and trust.

In terms of academics, SEL promotes equity in education and allows learners to prosper through the support of a tripartite network: school, family, and community. This network strives to promote safe learning environments, valuable experiences, supportive collegiality, meaningful curriculum, effective instruction, and continuous assessment. SEL can serve to bridge gaps within contextual power dynamics, empower all stakeholders, and build agency for children and youth to construct healthy, safe, and fair communities where everyone comes together to co-create learning opportunities, make informed decisions, and solve problems.

## Background

In a study of over 200,000 children and youth who participated in SEL programs, Durlak et al. (2011) identified high levels of improvement in social and emotional skills. Their study took place in modern classrooms with diverse cultural contexts, ethnicities, languages, beliefs, and religions as well as varied identities, motivations, abilities, and skills. Across numerous settings, the schoolwide development of SEL skills was facilitated by school interventions that promoted well designed SEL programs and by school staff who effectively incorporated SEL approaches. Some findings suggested that developing social emotional competencies in students led to elements for convening, engaging, and empowering. Other findings suggested that these SEL programs contributed toward reducing behavioral issues, enhancing positive social attitudes, and increasing academic success. Based on how SEL can contribute toward these positive impacts, Durlak et al. recommended that educators, policy makers, and the public provide support for the healthy development of children and youth by incorporating well designed SEL programs into education (i.e., programs that are based on evidence from research) and by adopting these programs as standard practice.

Several studies have generated findings indicating that SEL can produce a positive impact on outcomes, relationships, and well-being (Durlak et al., 2011). SEL can also influence behavior and attitudes of individuals as well as overall perspectives of others within the same context. Repeatedly, research has shown that SEL is critical for long term success at school and beyond because of how it prepares children and youth to meet academic expectations and face modern complexities (DePaoli et al., 2017; Weissberg et. al., 2015). Although SEL programming varies depending on context, the basic SEL tenets include processes through which “knowledge, attitudes and skills are applied to manage emotions, achieve positive goals, show empathy for others, and make responsible decisions” (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013, pp. 8).

In addition to influencing positive behaviors, effective SEL programming has been shown to increase school attendance, improve academic results, and decrease emotional distress (DePaoli et al., 2017). Several studies have examined schools and classrooms in Latin America where

English is taught and, also, where English is used to teach other subjects. After diagnosing their own context and challenges, these schools successfully implemented SEL programs (Melani et al., 2020). Findings from these settings suggest that their SEL programs exerted positive effects on learners' self-concept, well-being, and school behavior as well as on academic performance—but to a lesser degree as shown by limited consistency across studies. In Honduras, anecdotal results suggest that SEL programming can support students for actively learning in school and, by doing so, has contributed toward increased retention overall. Such experiences also suggest that SEL programming has contributed toward preventing school-based violence. Similarly, SEL programming has been seen to positively influence the development of community cohesion.

Since 2016, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD; 2021) has been conducting surveys to determine the impact of SEL programs. Their findings have revealed relevant aspects regarding gender and social background. After participating in SEL programs, girls experienced higher levels of responsibility and achievement while boys experienced higher emotional skills such as stress resistance, optimism, and emotional control. Regarding social backgrounds, students from advantaged backgrounds often developed higher SEL skills.

Among conclusions from these research studies, the short term SEL programs were seen as having positive outcomes and the long term SEL interventions as contributing to improvements within SEL domains. Subsequent studies have included independent replications in diverse contexts and geographic areas. These studies have been sufficiently rigorous to produce largely consistent results.

### Major Dimensions

As a follow up from these studies, the OECD (2021) and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL; 2020) have identified six SEL domains, five student-level core competencies, and five program indicators. The SEL domains are as follows:

- skills for identifying emotions, self-management, conflict and problem resolution, decision making, and related aspects;
- attitudes about self, one's surroundings, and the social environment that includes helping others;
- positive social behavior that entails establishing relationships, showing concern, developing empathy, and building peace;
- problematic conduct that includes disruptive behaviors, aggression, and discipline issues;
- emotional distress that includes depression, anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal; and
- academic performance related to achievement (or lack thereof), test results, and academic competencies.

Based on these six SEL domains, CASEL (2020) identified five student-level core competencies. These five competencies are as follows:

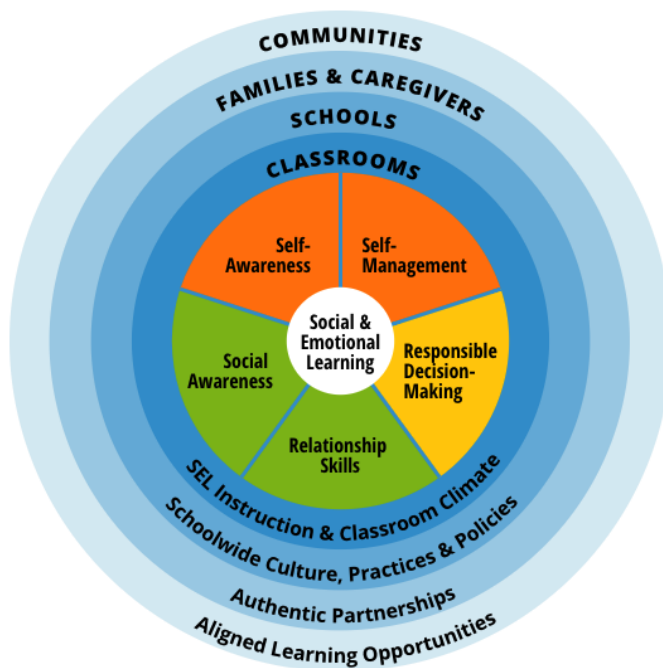
- self-awareness—recognizing emotions and impact on behavior and acknowledging strengths and weaknesses;

- self-management—assuming ownership of thoughts, emotions, and actions;
- social awareness—exhibiting empathy and ethics in home, school, and community;
- relationship skills—maintaining healthy relationships, listening abilities, and conflict resolution; and
- responsible decision-making—choosing how to act or respond by weighing consequences based on ethics and safety.

These student-level competencies are illustrated as the five inner wedges in the CASEL Framework Wheel illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*CASEL Framework Wheel.*



*Note.* From “CASEL’S SEL Framework” by SEL Publications, 2020, (<https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/>). Copyright 2021 CASEL. Social and Emotional Learning Framework. All rights reserved. casel.org. Reprinted with permission.

On this CASEL Framework Wheel (Figure 1), SEL’s student-level competency wedges are surrounded by a circle. This circle is entitled “Classrooms: SEL instruction and classroom climate,” which represents SEL elements implemented as integral parts of classroom instruction. However, for these SEL classroom elements to be effective, they need to be part of a schoolwide SEL program as illustrated by the three outer circles on this Wheel. The first of these outer circles represents schools promoting schoolwide culture, practices, and policies. The next circle represents schools establishing authentic partnerships with families and caregivers.

Finally, the outermost circle represents schools aligning their learning opportunities with communities.

This CASEL Framework Wheel guides schools in promoting schoolwide SEL by incorporating SEL elements into the academic, social, and personal aspects of learners as they move from grade to grade (Durlak et al., 2011). The overarching SEL goal is to prepare learners for future entry into the professional realm. By guiding schoolwide SEL programs and classroom based SEL elements, this Framework Wheel can positively support school environment and classroom climate as well as student behavior, achievement, and success. This framework can also support diversity in services and programs, promote cultural responsiveness, and provide space for the ongoing development of SEL skills.

To support SEL domains in school-based SEL programs and to develop student-level SEL competencies, CASEL (2020, 2022) encourages the incorporation of five program indicators. These five indicators are as follows:

1. SEL must be explicit and integrated into academics with ample opportunity for application and practice.
2. Youth must have a voice, be engaged in the process, and participate as decision makers and agents of change.
3. The overall school climate (including the applied disciplines) must be supportive and must focus on relationship building and restorative discipline.
4. SEL should focus on the entire education community and, by doing so, build family partnerships that are authentic, align to meet goals, and support learners to thrive within the school and beyond.
5. An ongoing system for integrated support should focus on meeting learner needs and ensuring continual improvement.

Most importantly, SEL is not just a few sporadic lessons, short talks, or webinars. For a SEL program to be effective, SEL-based activities must be incorporated systematically throughout the school curriculum, and their results must be monitored.

## Pedagogical Applications

Based on the domains, competencies, and indicators described above, start implementing SEL in your own classroom at any grade level from pre-school through high school. An underlying premise is that the sooner SEL is implemented schoolwide, the more favorable its outcomes. For example, at the pre-school level, students can learn to share. In the elementary grades, they can learn to identify their strengths and weaknesses, express themselves openly and safely, and make agreements to avoid teasing and making snide remarks. In high school, they listen to others' opinions and understand the rationale behind these remarks. Here, students also discuss important terms like empathy, justice, diversity, equity, and equality.

For teaching English as a foreign language, you can integrate SEL through different types of activities and materials (Yagcioglu, 2017). For listening and speaking, the targeted SEL activity can be a song where, after listening, learners speak about ethical values and what people might do in different situations. For reading, the SEL activity can be reading a passage on happiness

and what makes people feel positive. For writing, it can be using a prompt related to what learners appreciate.

When designing and implementing SEL-based activities in your classroom, use CASEL's (2020) program indicators to inform your decision-making. Consider approaching this in different ways such as dedicating different portions of the day to SEL or making SEL a recurring theme throughout the curriculum, which, in turn, will guarantee that the core SEL competencies become more evident to learners. Support SEL by selecting SEL-related topics for journal writing activities, either individually or in pairs. When negotiating their writing, learners engage with peers who can provide needed support at different stages of this SEL-based activity.

SEL can be well supported through class projects. Assign roles to learners such as historic characters who need to make ethical decisions or solve problems. Learners debrief the related conflicts, solutions, emotional implications, and ethical aspects. To monitor progress, create a chart and provide learners with a measurable way to map their achievement. Maximize the time you spend listening by focusing on what the learners are experiencing. Minimize the time you spend lecturing by playing down what you know as a teacher. In other words, focus on building relationships before developing theories and concepts.

Another way is starting the day with check-ins where learners express themselves orally or in writing. For written check-ins, learners can put their responses in a box. Partnered reading and story time are good opportunities for learners to discuss feelings, ethics, and values. This can include the well-known strategy of having students change the story ending or adjust the response given by a certain character. Numerous options exist. For example, in partnered listening-speaking activities, include tasks for politely requesting something from the other partner and then for complimenting one another. To effectively integrate SEL in English classes, be intentional and target specific SEL aspects and domains. Moreover, when preparing SEL activities, consider two important aspects—a time for reflective writing and, also, a place for reflective thinking (e.g., calm, quiet corner).

Yet another way is creating a SEL community of practice (CoP; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). This CoP can be based in an individual classroom for students to share SEL challenges and successes or across a school for teachers to share best SEL practices and learn from each other (CASEL, 2022). These CoPs are safe places for students and teachers, respectively, to establish a support network with like-minded peers. CoPs also foster collaboration and bring SEL out of a silo, thus contributing to the intentional integration of SEL into your daily teaching practice. As such, CoPs are a space for all stakeholders to experience ongoing reflection and continuous improvement.

Of utmost importance is that, by implementing SEL in your classroom and school, you can also help yourself. When designing and implementing SEL activities, you can further develop your own social competence and become more resilient (i.e., less prone to burnout). You can also

- develop nurturing relationships with your learners,
- serve as a behavioral role model for learners, and
- self-regulate and manage your own emotions.



In turn, you will be better able to build family and community partnerships with the goal of valuing norms, ensuring cultural representation, and providing an inclusive environment for decision-making and learner support. Through your work with SEL, you will contribute toward engaging the family and community and, by doing so, support the services they provide to learners. When all stakeholders work together on SEL, a lasting support network will be created for learners.

In this chapter, you learned about SEL domains, student core competencies, and program indicators. You learned about designing and implementing SEL activities in your classroom and school. You also learned about discussing challenges, giving learners equal opportunities to succeed, and guiding them in self-reflection. SEL is both essential and enjoyable. Be sure to incorporate SEL in your classroom so that you and your learners can thrive and have fun.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are several key SEL concepts:

- SEL skills development is key to building autonomy and promoting life-long learning.
- SEL is pertinent at all education levels and within all disciplines.
- SEL builds positive self-esteem and education equity.
- SEL is a tool that recognizes self and others while promoting collaboration and collegiality.
- SEL contributes to informed decision making while managing one's own emotions and understanding others' emotions.
- SEL supports safe learning spaces and allows learners to cope with conflict at home, crisis in school, and overall mental and physical well-being.
- SEL supports stress and anxiety management and helps resolve challenges.
- SEL contributes to emotionally literate people and helps them build positive relationships.

## Discussing

Based on what you know about SEL, answer these questions:

1. How have you experienced SEL in your life as a teacher? What about as a language learner?
2. How do you see SEL contributing positively to your work as an English teacher?
3. Why should SEL be implemented in a school across all disciplines and subjects?
4. What do you believe would be the impact of SEL on children with special abilities or different skillsets?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about SEL, do the following:

1. Explore and read more about SEL and how to adapt recommended practices to your context.
2. Use continuous improvement cycles to facilitate SEL implementation.
3. Allow learners to showcase their own SEL skill development and learn from others.
4. Create a SEL-based CoP among students to serve as a support network.
5. Involve parents in SEL literacy by creating support networks (e.g., family and community partnerships) that will serve to foster trust and promote cultural responsiveness.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge and application of SEL, visit these websites:

- 26 ways to integrate SEL. <https://www.weareteachers.com/21-simple-ways-to-integrate-social-emotional-learning-throughout-the-day/>
- CASEL. <https://schoolguide.casel.org/what-is-sel/what-is-sel/>
- Emotional intelligence and ELT. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/emotional-intelligence-and-elt>
- Psychosocial support and SEL. <https://inee.org/pss-sel>
- SEL assessments. <https://www.panoramaed.com/social-emotional-learning-sel>
- SEL toolkit. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/step-by-step-sel-curricula>
- SEL workshops. <https://schoolguide.casel.org/sel-workshops/>

## See Also

Aspects of SEL are also addressed in the following chapters of this book:

- Chapter 4** *Humanism in English Language Teaching* by S. Meadows  
**Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners* by S. Montiel  
**Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners* by M. Gandolfo, B. Damiani, and L. Caperochipe  
**Chapter 8** *Teaching and Engaging Adolescent Learners* by V. Ariza-Pinzón  
**Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning* by M. Zalimben  
**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani  
**Chapter 19** *Incorporating Inclusive Education Practices in ELT* by R. Mazzoleni  
**Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community* by B. Crosbie and D. Carter  
**Chapter 29** *Using Theater to Teach English* by C. Ortiz and M. Vaky

**Chapter 32** *Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century* by C. Onatra and S. Palencia  
**Chapter 34** *Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching* by G. Díaz Maggioli  
**Chapter 50** *Developing Intercultural Competencies* by L. Rojas, J. Castañeda, and J. Mosquera

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# CHAPTER 7

## Embracing Young Learners

# Embracing Young Learners

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## Abstract

Teaching English to young learners can be challenging, especially when contact hours are limited and instructional resources are scarce. Based on our combined 80+ years of teaching English, we feel that focusing attention on meaning greatly enhances learning. As early childhood educators, we design our lessons to be highly meaningful for young learners. In this chapter, you will learn how to communicate information to young learners and how to use strategies for helping these learners make meaning of new language. You will learn about the need to identify local context and learner culture and to connect these to your lessons. You will also learn how the linguistic features in your instructional materials can facilitate learning and how your responses within learning contexts can impact your learners' language production.

*Keywords:* young learners, teaching English, meaning making, early childhood educators, instructional materials, communicating information

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## Introduction

What does it mean to embrace young learners while teaching them English? What is of greatest importance to help young learners feel successful and not frustrated? To prevent learners from feeling frustrated, we must help them understand what we are teaching. Frustration, especially at early stages of language learning, can lead to a learner's self-concept of being unable to learn.

Several years ago, we told a fifth-grade class that we were going to read a story. They looked happy. Using his first language (L1), one child asked, "In English?" When we answered "Yes," he replied sadly, again in L1, "Then I won't be able to understand." Years later, we conducted research to explore older students' reluctance to learn English as their second or subsequent language (L2). Overwhelmingly, their reason was "I don't understand." Since then, we have always placed meaning at the center of our teaching.

## Background

The early inclusion of English in elementary schools has become a worldwide trend. Proponents perceive English as offering lifelong benefits and, also, an early start as being advantageous. However, evidence does not consistently garner positive outcomes (Singleton & Pfenninger, 2018). We risk delivering lessons that are meaningless if our students are in geographic areas distanced from Anglophone communities, especially if they have limited or no contact with English outside of class. Such is the case in many Latin American countries where the teaching of English has been mandated in elementary schools (Miller et al., 2018); yet contact hours are often insufficient and resources are often inadequate.

For learners to be successful at learning, we must attend to the learning conditions for diverse groups in our classroom and to the socio-cultural and socio-affective characteristics of these learners. Effective methodology requires recognizing our learners' cultural identity, starting with their prior knowledge, and building on their existing language repertoire. Only in this way will classroom experiences be meaningful for our young learners.

## Major Dimensions

### *Texts and Contexts*

In our everyday lives, we experience language in various spoken texts (i.e., conversations) and written texts, which correspond to social use within specific contexts. Even single sounds when uttered in context are part of dialogic events with social functions, such as babies cooing and caretakers responding. Given the importance of this language-context relationship, English learners need L2 texts framed in known social contexts to make meaning and, by doing so, understand the new language. Meanings that might not be understood in isolation can often be understood in context.

If newly presented language is disconnected from the local context, it might have no meaning for students or it might be incorrectly interpreted. However, if this new language is introduced in a known context, it has a much better chance of being understood and correctly used.

To introduce new language structures to young children, establish a context by showing pictures of children who are about the same age as your learners and who are doing something with which your learners can identify. For example, here is a picture of two children at a school fair.



When using this type of picture to teach, follow these steps:

1. Carefully examine the picture. Notice setting and gestures. Does the picture help to understand the language that might appear in the bubbles? For example, which of the following best fits with this picture?
  - a. a. S1: Would you like some cotton candy?      S2: Yes, please!
  - b. b. S1: I like cotton candy!                      S2: Yummy! Me too!
2. If you have access to audio, help your learners analyze how tone, pitch, volume, noise, and silence (pauses) can contribute to understanding the message. Guide them with using such cues to anticipate the meaning before looking at the written words.
3. Pay attention to the written cues in speech bubbles such as words (e.g., cognates), punctuation, capitalization, and spacing. Guide students in using these to understand.
4. Connect the content to learners' culture and experiences as indicated in Principle 1 (Know your students) of *The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners* (Short et al., 2018). The more you know about students' families, social-ethnic backgrounds, and former schooling, the more you can adjust your teaching to meet their needs (Gay, 2018).

Learning through culturally familiar contexts offers many advantages (Sheridan et al., 2016). Lessons should include locally relevant content (Seligson, as interviewed in Nobre & Scholes, 2020). Start with content closest to students' reality. If using materials far from their reality, reflect with students on differences and similarities between their lives and those of the characters and contexts portrayed in these materials. Use an intercultural perspective to guide your students' reflection, that of observing differences based on a deep respect for all cultures rather than placing one culture hierarchically above the other. Consider doing such reflections in the learners' L1, especially during early stages of L2 learning.



### *Vocabulary*

Vocabulary is again being viewed as a major contributor in the L2 learning process. In other words, to communicate meaning, vocabulary is seen as driving grammar rather than grammar driving vocabulary (Cameron, 2001).

If your weekly instructional time consists of only two or three 40-minute classes, minimize the number of new words introduced each week so that these words can remain in your students' long-term memory. In this type of situation, students can usually learn six or seven new words per week, depending on whether the words represent common items (cat/gato), are cognates (banana/banana), or have similar syllable structures (cotton candy/algodón de azúcar). If not, reduce the number of words and be sure to provide multiple opportunities to practice (see Appendix).

If the coursebook introduces too many words for just one week of class, select words from that list to integrate with words from the previous week and, also, to recycle with words to be learned the following week. Use this to advance from week to week. If too many words are introduced at once, few words will be learned, and the learners might become frustrated.

If using your own materials and selecting your own vocabulary, consider the following:

- Increase the number of cognates, as they are of great help to speakers of related languages (Seligson, as interviewed in Nobre & Scholes, 2020). Cognates offer an L1-L2 connection that reduces the learning load. By learning to identify cognates when listening and reading, learners are able to understand texts more quickly and more thoroughly.
- Prioritize your context. Increase genuine opportunities for meaningful interactions by having students initially talk about their surroundings. For instance, have students in a rural school talk about farm animals and those in an urban school talk about pets.

### *Grammar*

Teaching grammar from explicit rules does not work with young learners because of how they perceive patterns within chunks (e.g., “What do you like?” and “I like cotton candy.”). For these learners, a chunk is several words used together as a single unit of meaning (Cameron, 2001). Later, upon noticing that these chunks can appear in other instances, learners begin dividing chunks into separate parts and using them in other phrases (e.g., “Do you like cotton candy?” and “I don't like it.”). When doing so, they show an awareness that “like” carries the basic meaning and demonstrate an ability to combine “like” with other words to express their own ideas.

After your students understand the meaning, guide them in isolating the chunk from the rest of the text. By doing so, children can then focus on its form. Help children visualize the components of this chunk and its meaning by using a pictorial organizer such as shown here



### *Learners' Linguistic Repertoire*

Using languages from your learners' linguistic repertoires positively affects their willingness and motivation to learn and, in turn, supports how well they can learn (Ortega, 2019). Taking advantage of learners' linguistic repertoire is especially important in the expanded English-teaching contexts of the 21st century. However, if such contexts offer little exposure to English outside of class, be sure to maximize opportunities through your lessons for learners to use English in class (Nation, 2003).

### *Affective Aspects*

Affective aspects of language learning have a strong impact on cognitive aspects (Arnold, 2011). To support young learners with learning language, strengthen the affective aspects by being friendly, establishing a low-stress atmosphere, demonstrating positive expectations, providing constructive feedback, and making sure learners understand. This helps your learners feel confident and, in turn, more willing to participate. Always demonstrate an honest, accepting, caring, and encouraging attitude toward all learners (beware of any possible bias!) and toward their attempts at producing English.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

### *Create Connections With Your Learners*

Create connections with your learners. Establish meaningful communication with a learner by mentioning minor changes such as a recent haircut or a new pencil case. Are all of your learners the same? Do some look different? Do some seem sad, bored, or angry? If so, show that you care by helping them express what is wrong (if they so desire). If you wish to dig deeper, consider using the children's L1.

Involve all students, not just those who volunteer. Although calling on volunteers may occur naturally, it does not support teaching and learning. In a non-intrusive manner, identify reluctant students and encourage them to participate. Try involving shy students by standing next to them so that they can whisper in your ear. When students perceive their environment as being non-threatening, they are more likely to participate.

### *Teach Language From Texts*

Teach language by using text. When teaching young children, use text from a picture. In the following example, “I like” is taught as a chunk so children can grasp its meaning as a whole. However, before focusing on vocabulary and grammar, make sure your learners understand the context of the selected picture. Do this by having a conversation with the class as shown below.



Teacher (T): Look! This is Luca. This is Dante. ¿Dónde están? (Where are they?)

Students (Ss): En una fiesta en la escuela. (At a school fair)

T: Is Dante happy? (gesture)

Ss: Yes!!!!

T: ¿Por qué les parece que está contento? (Why do you think he’s happy?)

Ss: Porque está comiendo algodón de azúcar. (Because he’s eating cotton candy)

T: Yes! Cotton candy! (You can invite children to say it). Mmm . . . I like cotton candy! (licking your lips) ¿Qué estará diciendo? (What do you think he’s saying?)

Ss ¡Que le gusta! (That he likes it!)

To expand this pattern, students can say brand names or local foods in L1 (e.g., “I like chipa guasu.”). This allows them to participate in meaningful practice without needing many new words. Later, children respond “Me, too” if they like what classmates say and can reconstruct meaning. (See Appendix for other examples.)

### *Use English in the Classroom*

When using English in a classroom, guarantee that your message is understood. If learners seem scared or uncertain about English, start in L1 and gradually increase L2. Guarantee learners’ understanding of English by staying within the here and now (i.e., present time and place). Give instructions by stressing key words, pointing to things, and pausing to check that all students can see and that all are following the lesson. Only then, move on to the next part of your lesson.

Constantly recycle words and phrases being taught. After students have learned these aspects, introduce new aspects of the language. If too many words and expressions are introduced at the same time, students will not be able to remember everything and might not feel successful. In a Teacher Development Webinar (2022), Ur explained how vocabulary can support speaking in several different activities that are easily adaptable to other contexts.

### *Use Routines, Songs, Chants, and Games*

Incorporate routines, songs, chants, and games within your daily lessons to provide multiple opportunities for learners to practice new language repeatedly and naturally in contextually appropriate situations. This is particularly important for young children. Here are some examples.

- Establish daily routines. For example, use a weather chart with pictures that guide students in learning about weather and using weather-related vocabulary. They will soon be able to respond to daily questions: T: “How’s the weather today?” Ss: “Cloudy.” For students who can read, use the common routine of a poster entitled “Today is” with days of the week. They will gradually be able to produce full sentences (e.g., “Today is Monday”).
- Sing short songs and incorporate chants into lessons. Use a loud voice if students seem drowsy and a soft voice if they seem overly excited. Make sure all students are singing or trying to sing. Make a special effort to encourage reluctant learners to participate.
- Select games that engage young learners. Of great importance is selecting games that recycle vocabulary and language patterns. Stop the game when students are still engaged, rather than continuing until they are tired or overly excited.

### *Use English Beyond the Classroom*

Help students maximize their learning of English by encouraging them to use English outside the classroom. Here are two examples.

- Provide parents with simple songs and nursery rhymes by posting them on a digital classroom platform or via social messaging. Parents and older family members can encourage children to sing songs and nursery rhymes at home. This helps them retain vocabulary and fluency.
- Encourage older students to use language learning apps (e.g., Duolingo). This will help them learn independently.

### *Reflect and Modify*

Reflect constantly on your teaching and your students’ learning. If something works for you and your class, continue doing it. If something is not working well, modify it or switch to something else. If an activity does not fit well to your context, set it aside.

In this chapter, you learned about teaching and embracing young children. You learned to focus on meaningful learning by attending to learners’ linguistic repertoires and their affective needs and by using context-relevant materials. You learned to incorporate texts, stories, routines, songs, chants, and games to maximize the learners’ use of English in the classroom and thus enhance their learning. Now it’s time to be creative and have fun!

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts to remember about teaching young children:

- Meaning should be priority. Make sure learners understand what they hear and speak.
- Language should be contextualized in real life. Context helps with understanding language.
- Vocabulary is central to communicating meaning.
- Carefully selected stories and pictures contribute to language learning.
- A teacher's encouraging attitude promotes children's willingness to participate.
- The languages in a learner's existing repertoire support the learning of new languages.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about teaching young children, answer these questions:

1. Why is it important to accept production inaccuracies in the beginning stages of learning English? What was your experience as a beginner in learning another language?
2. How do you view the relationship between the languages in your linguistic repertoire?
3. Read the story in the Appendix. What characteristics in that story make it exceptionally appropriate for beginners? Could other stories serve as well?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice using what you have learned about teaching children, analyze a set of materials:

1. Examine the context provided in two units of a coursebook. Is the context adequate and familiar? Does it help learners derive meaning to understand the new language? How?
2. Examine the vocabulary. Is it transparent? How many new words does each unit have? Are there too many words for frequent recycling and integrating? Which words or phrases would you select to make sure you can recycle them throughout the year? Why?

EXPANDING FURTHER

These websites provide ideas and materials to embrace young learners:

- British Council. <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/>
- Colorin-Colorado. <https://www.colorincolorado.org/>
- Duolingo. <https://www.duolingo.com/> and <https://schools.duolingo.com/>
- Edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/>
- Reading Rockets. <https://www.readingrockets.org/>
- Super Simple. <https://supersimple.com/>

See Also

Other insights about teaching young learners are offered in the following chapters:

**Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners* by S. Montiel

**Chapter 6** *Enhancing Learners' Social Emotional Learning* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices* by K. Liu and J. Choi

**Chapter 17** *Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output* by C. Cristóful

**Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 28** *Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature* by S. Ruffinelli and C. Ortiz

**Chapter 30** *Incorporating Music in the ELT Classroom* by O. Carrasquel

**Chapter 40** *Strategies to Teach Speaking* by S. Spezzini

**Chapter 41** *Strategies to Teach Reading* by E. Kryukova and M. Harrison

**Chapter 45** *Strategies to Teach Vocabulary* by G. Dean-Fastnacht

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## APPENDIX

# ch.7

## Sample Lesson Series Using Stories for Meaningful Work in Developing L2

Picture books offer a repetitive structure of situations, vocabulary, and chunks which facilitate acquiring language by having students follow the story plot, participate, and retell. The following lesson was taught to Spanish-speaking second graders (6- and 7-year-olds) who had started learning English as an L2 in first grade and who, as second graders, have three 40-minute classes per week. This lesson can be adapted to other L1s.

### Book:

Martin, B. (1995). *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* Puffin.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WST-B8zQleM>

### Students' previous knowledge:

Colors and some animals (cat, dog, fish). This background is important because of needing to balance the number of known words with new words.

### Materials:

Book, animal flashcards, color flashcards, strips of posterboard with animals and colors, small flashcards with animals in color (or outlined in black for students to color).

### General objective:

Understand the story and be able to retell it.

### Specific objectives:

- Learn the names of new animals and colors.
- Recognize the written form of several words in the story (colors, animals).
- Write short phrases describing animals (brown bear, blue horse, etc.).
- Produce simple oral and/or written descriptive sentences (The bear is brown).

### Final product:

Students create their own Brown Bear book and read it to classmates or visitors.

## Introducing the story

Introduce book by showing its cover. Read title and try to elicit the meaning of bear.

T: Brown bear, bear...**bear**... (Point to animal and turn so that everyone can see it.) What animal is it? (If students don't understand, say it in L1. Do not automatically translate.)

S1,2,3,4: ¡Oso!

S5: Bear! (This student might remember teddy bear.)

T: Yes! And this bear is **brown**! (Nod affirmatively.) It is **not black** (Shake your head and gesture with your finger.) or white (Point to objects with the different colors.) Reread **whole title** miming gesture of trying to see something in distance (Place your hand on forehead). Ask students what they think the bear may see (L1). Accept all answers as correct.

## Reading

Read the full story and show the corresponding pictures. Mark the rhythm of the repeated phrases that appear in the book with a gesture or other physical movement so that the students connect each phrase with a specific movement. Later, use this movement to help students recall the phrase and support their storytelling.

## Post-reading

After reading, ask a few questions of this simple story:

- Did you like the story? (Students can clap.)
- What animals appear? (Students can use L1 or L2.)
- What color are they? (Stress color and write it on the board. Students use L1 or L2.)
- Where do you think the animals are? (L1)
- How would you feel with all those animals staring at you? (L1)
- How do you think animals feel when people in zoos or parks stare at them? (L1)

T: ¿Qué animal les gustó más? (Which animal did you like the most?)

S: El pato amarillo.

T: The yellow duck! Yes! ¿Te animás a decirlo? (Do you think you can say it?)

S: .../ielo dok/ (Accept any initial try of students pronouncing this.)

T: Super! Yellow duck! Great! (Clap.)

In subsequent classes, find other reasons to read the book again and again. When rereading it, invite students to participate in telling the story all together. Little by little, let them take over.

T: I see a....

S: Red /b..../ -

S2/3 or T: Bird! Yes!

## Vocabulary work for listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

- **Practicing:** Follow-up in each class with game-like activities to use vocabulary. Remember to go from oral recognition (You say it, and students point.) to production.

- **Touching/Pointing Game:** Place the cards at a distance from one another and visible to all students. Say “yellow duck,” and students point to the card. Reverse roles so that the students say words, and you point.
- **Memory Game (recognition and production):** In front of the classroom, display black-and-white cards with each animal from the story and color cards with each of the colors. Two students stand near the cards. Another student says an animal-color combination. The students in front match the animal card with the corresponding color card. You read the story without showing pictures to have students check if combinations were correct.

### Expansion for Oracy

- **New Sequence.** Give small animal flashcards to students in pairs or groups. Students place the flashcards in the order they appear in the story. Then they invent a different order with other animals (perhaps local animals using L1 names) and change the colors. While children are playing, walk around and practice with students (What do you see? I see a . . .). Encourage children to practice these phrases with each other.
- **Forgetful Teacher Game.** This is like the memory game but with an extended pattern. Pretend not to remember the animal colors. Students correct your incorrect statements.

T: Hmm . . . The bird is blue.

Ss: No, (the) bird (is) red.

At first, students might say bird–red. Accept it but echo using the full form with a happy, positive intonation (Yes, the bird’s red!). Remember to be encouraging! After that, a student acts like the forgetful teacher and says an incorrect statement. The class agrees or disagrees. If incorrect, the class corrects it. Repeat this with other students pretending to be the forgetful teacher.

- **Games in New Contexts.** Introduce games in which students use chunks in new contexts. For example, show a picture for part of an animal and ask: “What do you see?” Encourage students to produce a full statement: “I see a . . .” (but don’t worry if they omit “a”).

### Expansion for Literacy

- **Literacy Games.** Use games to introduce written forms, first for recognition and then for production. Start by focusing on the simplest, most common, or most transparent (cat, dog, fish). At first, accept non-standard versions (e.g., omissions, wrong letters, L1 spelling). Later students can self-correct. Be sure not to block their enthusiasm for wanting to communicate!
- **Own Book.** Students produce their own Brown Bear book with different animals and different colors. Some might be able to write a short phrase describing the animal. Others will take a risk and write the whole sentence. Accept non-standard versions of

spelling and word order. Praise students for their books and refrain from correcting. The following picture shows a learner's production of non-standard spelling which this L2 learner used to create meaningful sentences ("I see a yellow giraffe." "A pink cat." "The cat is pink."). When writing English, this learner used L1 spelling (Spanish) to write L2 words.



- **Learning Log.** Keep a log of learning issues and later review the main difficulties with the whole class. For example, design games like “Spot the mistake” (but never by using students’ own production). For this game, place cards with written model in front and write several words on the board with omissions for students to find. This raises their awareness of sound-spelling relationships.

## Flashcards

Several sets of flashcards can be found on the internet. Search and use these in your classes:

- <https://speak-and-play-english.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Brown-bear-what-do-you-see-flahcards-activities-preschool.pdf>
- <https://speak-and-play-english.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Brown-bear-what-do-you-see-playing-cards-preschool.pdf>
- <https://primaryeflresources.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/ordering-activities.pdf>

## Digital Activities

The internet also has numerous digital activities for use in classrooms and at home:

- <https://wordwall.net/es/resource/12165742/brown-bear-what-do-you-see>
- <https://wordwall.net/es/resource/2704752/brown-bear-brown-bear-what-do-you-see>.



Photo by Kenny Eliason on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 8

## Teaching and Engaging Adolescents

# Teaching and Engaging Adolescent Learners

Vicky Ariza-Pinzón

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## Abstract

Teaching adolescents is often challenging. However, is it challenging because teens are moody, lazy, or rebellious? Or could this challenge be rooted in pre-conceived ideas about teens? To better understand this challenge and any possible myths, we need to examine the developmental stages and key characteristics of young teens, middle teens, and late teens within a broader sociocultural context. By understanding the traits of teenagers and by studying contextual factors regarding second language learning, we will be better prepared for unlocking the potential of this dynamic group of language learners. In this chapter, you will learn about applying The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners (Short et al., 2018) as a guide for effectively teaching and engaging adolescents. Based on these 6 principles, you will also learn how to use several pedagogical applications for teaching and engaging adolescent learners.

*Keywords:* teenagers, adolescent learners, English learners, principles for exemplary teaching, learner engagement

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## Introduction

During your career as an educator, you might find yourself teaching adolescents. To work more effectively with these students, you should first set aside any pre-conceived ideas or myths that you could have heard about teens and how they might be moody, lazy, or rebellious. Instead, you should focus on getting to know your students, what motivates them, and, also, what activates or obstructs their learning. When teaching teenagers, it is important to know their likes and dislikes, social background, relationship with parents and peers, and experiences with other languages. Of course, as an English language teaching (ELT) professional, you also need to know about second language acquisition, the learning process itself, and how contextual factors can affect language learning (Walqui, 2000).

Throughout their time in secondary school, adolescents are affected by aspects related to their physical, psychosocial, and cognitive development (Papalia et al., 2009). By becoming informed about these aspects, you are better able to plan effective lessons. For example, by knowing that teens are sensitive about their appearance, you can plan a lesson in which you build a safe space so that they can express themselves without fearing prejudice. Likewise, by knowing that they are strongly focused on individual relationships, you may include one-on-one activities that address their hobbies and interests.

This chapter describes developmental traits of teenagers so that, as future English teachers, you can glimpse into their world and reach a better understanding of factors that affect how they learn language. This chapter also provides principles for engaging adolescents and suggestions for teaching as well as reflection prompts and other ideas to apply in your own classroom.

## Background

Adolescence has been characterized in different ways. Its original definition was related mainly to biological changes within the human body. Since then, adolescence has been defined as a transformational change between childhood and adulthood entailing physical, socioemotional, and cognitive aspects (Bretón & Castro, 2017). This definition led to classifying adolescents as young teenagers (12-14 years of age), middle teenagers (14-17 years of age), and late teenagers (17-19 years of age) with the latter also called young adults (Lewis, 2007). In short, a teenager is someone between 12 and 19 years of age who experiences biological and psychological changes.

Teachers can effectively teach teenagers by understanding the particularities that define their age group. According to Lewis (2007), young teens (12-14 years of age) and middle teens (14-17 years of age) deserve special attention because they are in a self-recognition process between support and independence. Characteristics for both age spans are provided in Table 1:

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of Young Teens and Middle Teens*

Age Range (years)	Characteristics
Young Teens, ages 12-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibit egoism</li> <li>• Are often emotional and melodramatic</li> <li>• Experience extreme physical changes</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are sensitive about appearance</li> <li>• Want to belong to the “pack”</li> <li>• Are influenced by peers and fads</li> <li>• Waver between independence and need for security</li> <li>• Think they have “figured things out”</li> <li>• Strive to create a “system” to analyze what they see</li> <li>• Test hypotheses and think critically about abstract ideas and concepts</li> <li>• Express strong opinions</li> <li>• See things in black and white</li> </ul>
Middle Teens, ages 14-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are physically mature</li> <li>• Can work independently</li> <li>• Can plan well and work in groups without much supervision</li> <li>• Are less reliant on their own group for support</li> <li>• Focus on individual relationships</li> <li>• Have a stronger sense regarding their place in society</li> <li>• Are aware of opposite sex and begin to mix groups (girls and boys)</li> <li>• Realize how issues have multiple answers, not just black and white</li> </ul>

*Note.* Compiled from *Teenagers* by G. Lewis, 2007, Oxford University Press.

Table 1 describes characteristics of young teens and middle teens. On the one hand, young teens undergo extreme biological and psychological changes that they are still striving to comprehend. They often feel that they are at the center of attention and that nobody understands them. As such, they might become overly sensitive or emotional. On the other hand, middle teens have gained a higher level of self-awareness, insightfulness, and maturation (Lewis, 2007).

In contrast to young teens and middle teens, the late teens (17-19 years of age) have already explored their identity and role in society. Peer pressure no longer exerts as much impact. As such, late teens are usually able to balance their independence from parents while also maintaining respectful connections with them (Papalia et al., 2009).

This age-based generalization of teen characteristics is useful. However, teachers need to be aware that this developmental process can vary from person to person; they need to recognize and appreciate the individuality and uniqueness of each adolescent. They also need to be sensitive to students’ cultural identity (Harrison et al., 2019). By taking a culturally responsive perspective to understanding teenagers, teachers will be able to engage with them in several ways inside and outside the classroom:

## Major Dimensions

After learning about teenagers in general, get to know the students in your class and focus your instruction on meeting their needs. Involve your teens with the lesson content by connecting this content to their personal interests and having them work with peers (Bernstein & Mosenson, 2019). To more effectively teach and engage adolescent learners, follow a pedagogical approach such as The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners (Short et al., 2018).



Upon recognizing the need for a common understanding about second language theory, instruction, and assessment, the TESOL International Association initiated collaborative efforts that led to The 6 Principles® (Short et al., 2018). The 6 Principles are a state-of-the-art approach for educators to make thoughtful decisions about teaching English learners. Although The 6 Principles were designed for teaching all age groups, this inaugural book led to a series of other books targeting specific learner groups (e.g., young children, adult workforce). Within this series, each book is structured around the following principles:

1. Know your learners
2. Create conditions for language learning
3. Design high-quality lessons for language development
4. Adapt lesson delivery as needed
5. Monitor and assess student language development
6. Engage and collaborate within a community of practice

Consider using these same 6 Principles (Short et al., 2018) when working with adolescent learners. Based on how these principles were used for teaching young learners and adult learners, examples are provided below for teaching adolescents.

### Pedagogical Applications

The 6 Principles were not designed to be used in any specific order. Nor were they designed for all six to be included within a single lesson. Instead, focus on the principle that best fits a given lesson and that responds to your students' needs at a given time. For example, to start a new term, use suggestions from Principle 1 Know Your Learners. To promote critical thinking and language learning, use suggestions from Principle 3 Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development. Because mastery comes with practice, focus on one principle at a time. Following are suggestions for using each of these principles to teach and engage adolescents.

#### ***1. Know Your Learners***

Learn basic information about your teenagers' families, languages, cultures, and educational backgrounds to be able to prepare and deliver tailored lessons that more fully engage your learners in class activities. Get to know your learners and implement activities focused on their interests, homes, communities, and cultures. Teenagers are the most valuable source of information about themselves and their experiences. Effective ways for learning about your students are having them participate in interviews, informal talks, and writing prompts. You might be surprised at some of the responses provided by your students. Although the gathering of information works best at the beginning of a term, implement similar activities throughout the term because of changes not only in students' lives but also in local and global contexts.

#### ***2. Create Conditions for Language Learning***

Create a classroom culture to ensure that teenagers feel comfortable in your classroom, especially during critical changes in materials, physical environment, and social integration. When teaching teenagers, class dynamics are just as important as the language content. That's because teenagers are in the process of defining their personality. To create optimal conditions for teenagers to learn, incorporate non-threatening activities such as roleplays or artistic drama

techniques that support students' confidence (Anderson & Beard, 2018). Base these activities on students' individual interests and focus on promoting values of respect, tolerance, empathy, and inclusion.

### ***3. Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development***

Plan meaningful lessons that foster language learning and help teens develop learning strategies and critical thinking skills. Consider students' unique personalities and intellectual capabilities before trying to engage them in language learning activities (Lewis, 2007). Design your lessons based on the models or approaches adopted by the institution where you are teaching. Among many possible models, Project Based Learning offers opportunities for students to develop language learning while also developing creativity, critical thinking, and a sense of self-development. This model, like several other models, fosters the development of individual and group strengths. Whatever model you choose, engage your students with authentic and meaningful topics. Above all, do not be afraid to try something new. Adolescent students are your allies, and they will let you know if your new idea works or not.

### ***4. Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed***

Assess continually by observing your learners' responses, determining whether learners are reaching the learning objectives, and reflecting on how best to meet their needs and interests. As needed, adapt lessons and lesson delivery. Because teens thrive at testing their own hypotheses, use the teens' inner drive to guide them in thinking critically about abstract ideas and concepts. Classes for adolescents often have students at different developmental levels and with different language proficiencies. Help students with differences by strategically including self-assessment activities. Simple prompts (e.g., Now I can...; I need help with...) can provide insights about what certain students might need. Adjust activities to meet their needs. Contrary to some myths, teenagers appreciate challenging activities. However, such activities need to have clear and achievable objectives and, if possible, be differentiated for varying language levels.

### ***5. Monitor and Assess Student Language Development***

Because adolescents learn at different rates, regularly monitor and assess each student's language development to effectively support their learning. To do this, gather data for measuring students' language growth. Teenagers are unique individuals and have preferred learning styles. Help them advance in their language development by keeping record of their progress and offering genuine praise for concrete accomplishments.

### ***6. Engage and Collaborate Within a Community of Practice***

Collaborate with colleagues to support your professional learning and classroom teaching. Engage in communities of practice to learn more about reaching and teaching your teenage students, providing instruction based on their needs and interests, and supporting each teen's personal growth. During your teaching journey, collaborate with peers, teachers, and mentors. When teaching adolescents, seek support from colleagues who are experienced at teaching this age group. If you are a novice teacher, be proactive at creating your own support network. Take initiative and ask experienced colleagues about ELT conferences and other events. Join professional groups virtually or face-to-face. The Online Professional English Network

(OPEN) offers Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for free. Many of these opportunities focus on teaching adolescents.

In this chapter, you learned about teaching and engaging adolescent learners in ELT classrooms. You learned about characteristics that differentiate young teenagers, middle teenagers, and late teenagers. You also learned about using 6 Principles (Short et al., 2018) for effectively teaching adolescent students. By putting these ideas into practice, you will be able to engage teenagers and help them learn English.

## KEY CONCEPTS

The following concepts can guide you with teaching and engaging adolescent learners:

- Teenagers are classified as young teens, middle teens, and late teens.
- The characteristics of teenagers provide a basis for interacting with them in the ELT classroom. Such characteristics are physical, socioemotional, and cognitive, and these vary by age groups.
- When teaching language to teenagers, teachers should take into consideration contextual factors such as language acquisition, the learner, and the learning process.
- Teenagers are unique individuals and thus often need differentiated instruction for becoming fully engaged.
- The 6 Principles (Short et al., 2018) can be used for effectively teaching teens.
- To continually improve, teachers need to engage in a community of practice.

## Discussing

To get to know your adolescent learners, respond to these questions:

1. Review the characteristics of teenagers. How can you use this information to inform and improve your teaching?
2. How can the first principle (Know Your Learners) of the 6 Principles (Short et al., 2018) help you create a comfortable space for language teaching and learning?
3. How do the 6 Principles relate to you and your teaching? To what extent can they be applied in your context?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice teaching and engaging teenagers, do the following:

1. Think of a teenager you know well. This can be a friend, sibling, or neighbor. Make a list of this teenager's personal and intellectual abilities. For example, she likes to play the guitar, solves puzzles easily, is social, and enjoys being with others.

2. Identify the individual characteristics that would help this teenager learn another language. For example, being social helps with learning another language.
3. Design an activity for teenagers (young teens, middle teens, late teens) to do in a classroom setting. Try to include one or more of the 6 Principles.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about engaging teens, explore the following links:

- Music and lyrics for the ELT classroom.  
<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/sing-out-loud-word-play>
- Online professional English network.  
<https://www.openenglishprograms.org/MOOC>
- Podcasts. <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/podcasts>
- Project-based learning to engage teens.  
<https://www.pblworks.org/doing-project-vs-project-based-learning>
- Quarterly journal for English teachers.  
<https://americanenglish.state.gov/forum>
- Questions to scaffold students' thinking.  
<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>

## See Also

Ideas for teaching children and adolescents are provided in the following chapters of this book:

**Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners* by S. Montiel

**Chapter 6** *Supporting Learners' Social Emotional Learning* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners* by M. Gandolfo, B. Damiani, and L. Caperochipe

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 18** *Teaching English in Different Contexts* by R. Diaz

**Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community* by B. Crosbie and D. Carter

**Chapter 21** *Connecting Student Interaction With Classroom Management* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 23** *Integrating Technology in Language Classrooms* by H. Hubbard, A. Foss, and C. Strawn

**Chapter 26** *Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning* by A. Roca

**Chapter 27** *Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT* by F. Esquivel

**Chapter 29** *Using Theater to Teach English* by C. Ortiz and M. Vaky

**Chapter 30** *Incorporating Music in the ELT Classroom* by O. Carrasquel

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Photo by Emmanuel Ikwuegbu on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 9

## Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning

# Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning

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## Abstract

By acquiring autonomous learning skills, adults can become empowered to reach their English learning goals. Around the world, English learners have accessed ever-expanding digital resources and, by doing so, have experienced the benefits of autonomous learning at varying levels of self-directedness (Benson, 2013; Pawlak et al., 2017). Autonomous language learning is evidenced by people who can speak English without having studied it formally in educational settings. Research on learner autonomy has been conducted mainly in developed countries, which have state-of-the-art technologies and resource centers that promote autonomous learning. However, in under-resourced countries like Paraguay, some people have also learned English autonomously such as by watching YouTube videos. Consequently, perhaps the greatest potential of learner autonomy is in developing countries. In this chapter, you will learn about autonomous learning. You will also learn several strategies to promote autonomous learning in English language classrooms with adult learners.

*Keywords:* autonomous learning, adult learners, learner empowerment, learner autonomy, language learning skills, self-directedness

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## Introduction

Studies have shown that learner autonomy is related to academic success (Benson, 2013). Hence, teachers need to help students become autonomous learners. Promoting the autonomous learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) can be challenging due to time constraints and fluctuating motivation. Most adult language learners have multiple life roles and, as such, limited time to study. Nonetheless, teachers can encourage adult learners to use self-monitoring techniques and focus their limited time on learning activities. Teachers can also assist adult learners in building a positive self-image of themselves as English users. This can help learners with effectively using self-regulatory strategies, which, in turn, can positively affect their language learning efforts. These and other strategies are provided in this chapter to help you support your adult English learners with using autonomous learner strategies and reaching successful outcomes.

## Background

Becoming an autonomous learner is generally defined as “the capacity to take control over one’s own learning” (Benson, 2013, p. 2). Language teachers usually aspire for their students to become autonomous learners. However, because learner autonomy is not an innate ability, students need guidance with acquiring skills related to autonomous learning (Holec, 1981). Fortunately, EFL curricula have become increasingly more student-centered, thus positioning learners as active participants in the learning process. However, because most adult English learners have not previously participated in student-centered classrooms, they need help knowing how to optimize their participation, which can then lead to stronger skills for autonomous learning. Consequently, for adult learners to achieve autonomous learning, the classroom must shift from directed teaching to self-directed learning. In formal settings, these efforts could entail embedding this shift within the overall learning process.

For autonomous learning to occur in language classrooms, many students will need to change their view about the learning process. To become autonomous learners, they need to assume responsibility for their own learning and, by using available information, find their own path along this learning journey. As facilitators, teachers are key to fostering learner autonomy among adult learners. Teachers can assign activities (e.g., reflective journals) that assist learners with weighing the cost-benefit outcomes among various activities offered as learning options. By using this self-monitoring process, learners are usually willing to spend more time doing activities that they perceive as having long term value (Ponton & Rhea, 2006). Several studies have identified positive language learning outcomes from classroom activities that promote learner autonomy through specific activities such as online podcasts and weblogs. For instance, when EFL college students in Taiwan used reflective portfolios, they became conscious of learner autonomy and developed autonomous learning skills (Lo, 2010).

## Major Dimensions

For promoting learner autonomy among your adult learners, be sure to consider learner factors, institutional factors, and teacher factors.



### *Learner Factors*

Learner factors often relate to a learner's attitude towards learning and therefore play a major role in developing learner autonomy. Because adults have several life obligations, they are often unable to prioritize time and effort needed to learn a language. From research on persistence and resourcefulness in adult learning, findings suggest that “an adult's persistence in autonomous learning is more related to the anticipation of future rewards of present learning than with the mediating effect of choosing learning over non-learning activities” (Ponton et al., 2005, p. 123). Thus, the question arises on how best to help adults foster learner autonomy. To accomplish this, reinforce your students' self-image as lifelong learners and help them increase their awareness of how learning derives from activity choices. As part of your student-centered approach to language teaching, address students' lifelong learning needs, promote autonomous learning through intentional one-on-one dialogue, and support individual differences (Mynard, 2019).

### *Institutional Factors*

Teachers' intentions to provide learner autonomy materials and opportunities are influenced by institutional factors such as heavy teaching loads, administrative duties, curricular goals, and testing requirements (Pawlak et al., 2017). Such institutional factors can contribute towards a gap between what the teacher considers optimal to promote learner autonomy and what is achievable. The policy makers at any given institution are also instrumental for ensuring (or not) that their adult learners develop learner autonomy (Ahmadianzadeh et al., 2019). Fortunately, most activities to promote language learner autonomy can be implemented in non-school settings and thus do not reduce time initially designated for class instruction. Although the implementation of effective learner autonomy activities require that teachers initially spend time preparing their students, all such time is well spent as evidenced by improved language learning outcomes.

### *Teacher Factors*

Teacher factors also affect the development of learner autonomy skills. As in all instructional settings, teachers have great influence on the learning process. However, if teachers do not learn autonomously, they might be unable to promote learner autonomy among their students (Little, 1995). Some teachers might feel that promoting learner autonomy could generate more problems than benefits. Others might be unaware of the benefits that learner autonomy could provide their classrooms. Such teachers might be ineffective at encouraging students to learn beyond what is required in the classroom (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2019). The best approach for addressing these situations is by helping teachers understand the concept of learner autonomy, believe in positive results from learner autonomy research, and know how to implement learner autonomy strategies (Dooly, 2009). Teacher preparation in learner autonomy “provides teachers with new teaching methods so that teachers are more clear about their roles as learning thought reformer, teaching goal setting, teaching content design, guiding resource utilization, mental consultant, and outcome assessors in the future” (Fang, 2014, p. 54).

## **Pedagogical Applications**

If you wish to promote learner autonomy among adult learners, consider following these tips.

### ***Facilitate the Learning Environment***

As a classroom facilitator, teachers are charged with creating, directing, and supporting the learning environment. Teachers cannot just step back and expect students to work by themselves. Starting on the first day, motivate your students by sharing expected outcomes. When working with beginners, consider using their first language to make sure they understand expectations. Guide learners in establishing their own achievable learning goals so that they can start assuming responsibility for the learning process. This is the first step towards building learner autonomy. Help students if they feel initially challenged at establishing their own goals. Keep in mind that most beginners do not have linguistic resources to express their goals in English. Depending on class size, provide students with needed words from the target language, or have them fill in the blanks with words from their first language. These goals can be written on a poster and placed on a wall or bulletin board. For example, beginning language learners might identify one of their first learning goals as introducing themselves in English. By identifying their own reasons for learning a language, students can see how lesson objectives fit into the larger picture which is an essential step in acquiring learner autonomy. This will help learners stay focused and should increase their persistence.

### ***Guide Students With Setting Individual Goals***

From beginning to advanced levels and especially at the start of each term, work with students to establish learning goals. After setting their own goals, students can begin thinking about how to achieve these goals. To support this learner autonomy process, ask students to write three actions needed to accomplish each goal. Later, have students reflect on the actions they had planned and on which actions they accomplished. If students know where they are now and where they are headed, it is easier for them to track their progress and achieve learner autonomy. Use a calendar for each term and display this calendar on a wall or in an online platform, either provided by your institution or available free for educational purposes. Motivation is key. When students see how far they have come, they view their efforts as having been rewarded and are more willing to become autonomous learners. Their self-image is relevant. If they mention being unable to do something, point to the calendar and remind them about the distance they have already come. With beginning students, emphasize that they have progressed from zero English to short conversations. With intermediate learners, emphasize that they are now able to have interesting conversations in English.

### ***Help Students Reflect on the Learning Process***

Reflective journals are particularly useful for helping adult students reflect on their progress with learning English and advancing towards learner autonomy. As with all activities, guide your students on how to effectively use reflective journals. After reading an online article of their choice (in English, of course), students report about this article by writing in their reflective journals. As a journal entry, they can summarize and reflect on this article and pose questions to enhance their understanding. When reading students' reflective journals, consider not correcting the way they use English. Instead, use these student journals as formative assessment to support the learning process. When assessing these reflective journals, use assessment criteria such as the following: "(1) completeness of original news article, entry forms, reflections, and vocabulary logs (30%), (2) content of reflection (50%), (3) grammar (20%)" (Lo, 2010, p. 85).

However, even in formative assessments such as reflective journals, provide ongoing supportive feedback to your students, especially if learner autonomy is the long-term goal.

### ***Promote Learner Persistence***

New activities can initially be exciting, and this includes starting a new English class. However, this newness soon diminishes over time, and learner motivation might decline. To offset this tendency, proactively promote persistence among adult students, which is key for them to achieve their long-term goals. Remind students of their reasons for studying English, which will help them be persistent and make progress towards learner autonomy. To further promote persistence among your students, select short stories and non-fiction pieces that align with their interests. In classes at all language levels, encourage students to use apps that help in the learning process and suggest other digital resources such as online spoken dictionaries, videos, and content-specific websites (e.g., self-teaching of phonetic symbols). Ask students to choose a digital tool that helps with language learning and to share this tool with classmates. To further build learner autonomy awareness, design homework assignments around questions that ask about the learning process (e.g., What new vocabulary have you learned? What grammar structures did you find challenging?). As students advance to higher levels of English, the class content simultaneously advances to increased levels of complexity. This, in turn, could imply decreased time for activities focused on learner autonomy. Fortunately, complex content can provide other types of opportunities to help students develop their learner autonomy skills.

### ***Maintain Student Interest***

Even when following a set curriculum, promote learner autonomy by maximizing the time spent on topics that are of greatest interest to your students and by recognizing that each student has individual interests. Have students watch a video of a person speaking about their interest and then write about that person's ideas. Writing is effective at promoting learner autonomy because, to accomplish a writing task, students often go beyond their current language skills in order to fully express their emerging ideas. Moreover, by writing, they establish a stronger connection between a topic and their own lives. If possible, use online platforms so that students can create e-portfolios about their interests. To further promote learner autonomy, provide opportunities for class conversations that are so meaningful for your students that they keep exploring this topic outside of class and, by doing so, continue using and developing their English. While students are working on a project in class, move from student to student, either physically or virtually. Show students that you care by asking about their work. When students perceive that you care about them as individuals, they become empowered to further develop their learner autonomy.

In this chapter, you learned about empowering adults for autonomous learning. You learned how learner autonomy is influenced by learner factors, institutional factors, and teacher factors. You learned to support the development of learner autonomy by facilitating the learning environment, maintaining learner interest, and promoting learner persistence as well as by having learners set individual goals and reflect on their own learning process. Nonetheless, despite your best efforts, it will not be possible to control all factors especially when teaching adults. Some learners will not follow your advice. Yet, although everything cannot be perfect, remember to always be the best version of yourself as a teacher. By doing so, you will have a

great impact on your students and can help them, in their own way, become autonomous learners of the English language.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about adult autonomous learning:

- Learner autonomy is the capacity to take control of one's own learning.
- Learner autonomy is not innate; it needs to be acquired and practiced in the classroom environment even among adult learners.
- Teachers have great influence on the development of their learners' autonomous learning.
- Learners should be guided by their teachers through the learner autonomy process.
- Activities that promote learner autonomy might require more time from the teacher, but such activities often lead to positive results.
- Institutional factors should not be seen as limitations but rather as challenges to explore new ways to promote learner autonomy.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about autonomous learning, answer these questions:

1. Thinking back to when you were learning English (or another language), what were some activities that helped you at developing autonomous learning skills?
2. How can technology help with activities in a language class and, also, promote learner autonomy outside of class?
3. To what extent can teachers change their students' beliefs and practices related to learner autonomy?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice using what you have learned about autonomous learning, do the following:

1. Look for free online tools that might work well in helping adults advance in their learner autonomy process and have your students use these tools and/or try using them yourself.
2. Make a list of activities that can be done inside and outside the classroom for promoting learner autonomy and then incorporate them into a lesson plan.
3. Write a reflective journal from the perspective of a pre-service English teacher and think about how this journal might help you analyze your own progress as an autonomous learner.

EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge of empowering adults for autonomous learning, visit these websites:

- Autonomous learning. <http://blog.tesol.org/in-the-aftermath-of-crisis-autonomous-learning/>
- Benefits of autonomous learning. <https://pentila.gr/2021/04/the-benefits-of-autonomous-learning-or-how-to-eliminate-the-teacher/#english>
- Learner autonomy in language classrooms. <https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2020/10/22/promoting-learner-autonomy-choice-voice/>
- Learner autonomy. <https://oupeltglobalblog.com/2013/01/29/learner-autonomy/#:~:text=Learner%20autonomy%20is%20when%20students,proactive%20approach%20to%20their%20studies>

## See Also

Ideas related to autonomous learning and the teaching of adults are addressed in these chapters:

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 14** *Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning* by K. Sandi

**Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices* by K. Liu and J. Choi

**Chapter 34** *Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching* by G. Díaz Maggioli

**Chapter 35** *Developing Critical Thinking Through Inquiry Based Learning* by V. Canese

**Chapter 36** *Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners* by I. Giménez and C. Rolón

**Chapter 37** *Engage-Study-Activate With Adult Learners* by C. Rolón and I. Giménez

**Chapter 49** *E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning* by B. Jiménez

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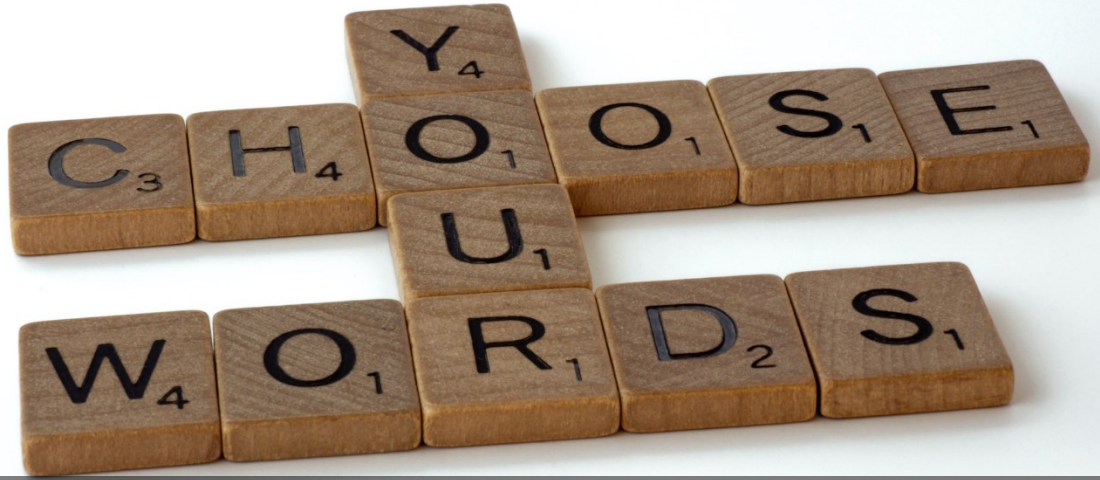


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# CHAPTER 10

## Building Language Awareness

# Building Language Awareness

Harshini Lalwani

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## Abstract

The status of English as an international language requires enhanced awareness regarding what is appropriate and where. Effective communication requires that language users be aware of grammatical structures, pronunciation features, and vocabulary use as well as the socio-cultural effects produced by a language when used and interpreted in different contexts. Because language is intrinsically interwoven with society, learners need to be able to analyze not just the differences between their first language and a target language but also the ways in which a given language operates in various communicative contexts. In this chapter, you will learn how such linguistic and social aspects can guide learners with appropriate usage. You will learn how to use language in your classroom for helping learners understand instructions, explanations, and content. You will also learn how to build your own language awareness and, in turn, guide learners in developing their language awareness.

*Keywords:* language awareness, Language Awareness Features Framework, pragmatic awareness, communicative contexts, socio-cultural effects

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## Introduction

When you were learning a second or subsequent language (L2), you probably noticed that learning this new language was not just a matter of learning its language systems. Simply producing grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation is not enough for being able to communicate successfully with others. Equally important is pragmatic awareness, which is knowledge of how to use the L2 in different social and cultural contexts. In addition to being able to use L2 structures, you need to consider these questions:

- How will your communication style be interpreted in a different culture?
- What types of non-verbal behavior are appropriate in each context?
- Is it acceptable to communicate in the same way with different genders, ages, ethnic groups, and social classes?

Language awareness is being consciously aware about the language and how it is used in society. This supports acquiring L2 structures (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) and using these structures to communicate. As teachers, we help our students build language awareness, which is a cognitive process leading to language acquisition. We can accomplish this by

- acquiring a deeper understanding of what language awareness means in terms of L2 teaching and learning
- helping L2 learners experience the benefits of conscious learning
- facilitating connections between teaching and learning
- knowing how language awareness leads to language acquisition to ensure that our students' language learning experiences are more personal and meaningful.

## Background

Naturalistic and communicative language teaching methods appeared in the 1980s and soon gained in popularity. Such methods were based on the premise that language acquisition occurs when students are immersed in L2 without explicit language instruction. Numerous studies were conducted of Canadian L2 immersion programs, where Anglophone children were schooled in French, and of intensive ESL programs, which were based on communicative language teaching. These studies found that learners could communicate in L2 but had “lower-than-expected levels of linguistic accuracy” (Ranta & Lyster, 2018, p. 41). In a parallel manner, research on foreign language learning in secondary schools in the United Kingdom revealed “notoriously dismal achievements” among many learners (James & Garrett, 2013, p. 3). Subsequent discussions and debates identified a need for “the integration of form-oriented and meaning-oriented approaches to maximize the effects of L2 teaching” (Ranta & Lyster, 2018, p. 41). This led to the creation of the Association of Language Awareness (ALA; Hawkins, 1999).

The ALA describes language awareness as “explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use” and mentions how language awareness was in “widespread use in the United Kingdom in the early 1980s” (n.d., para. 1). In 1985, the National Council for Language in Education defined language awareness as “a person’s sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of the language and its role in the human life” (Donmall, 1985, as cited in Donmall-Hicks, 1997, p. 21). Both definitions suggest that consciousness and sensitivity are not always present at the time of L2

learning. However, these definitions also suggest that consciousness and sensitivity can be activated by teachers through explicit discussion about the language in the learning environment.

In line with these definitions, language teachers who understand language awareness can support their learners in developing language awareness, which is the cognitive process leading towards acquisition. These teachers encourage language learners to use their intuitive first language (L1) knowledge to compare and experiment with the L2. In a language classroom that focuses on language awareness, the learners participate in activities where they reflect on language rules and talk about how language can vary in different contexts and interactions. They also explore their own language learning strategies.

As L2 classes began to focus on building language awareness, their methodologies moved from teaching language systems in isolation towards “teaching of the form (grammar, lexis and pronunciation) within meaning-based instruction” (Svalberg, 2007, p. 287). These methodologies require teachers to know about L2 systems, to know how language awareness leads to language acquisition, and, also, to know how to guide learners in building their language awareness.

### Major Dimensions

To understand language awareness, we must first recognize the complexity of language use as “dynamic and powerful, rarely either straightforward or value free” (Arndt et al., 2000, p. 18.). This recognition views language as constantly changing and as influenced by how society is organized at a given time and space. It also views language as being used in a particular context and as emerging from linguistic choices made by participants.

The features that affect language use and their relationships to each other are displayed in the Language Awareness Features Framework (Arndt et al., 2000). This framework is a useful tool for teachers and students to understand the complexity of language and, in turn, enhance their language awareness.

In this framework, the starting point is language-in-use, which is situated in the middle—similar to the bull’s eye on an archery target. This inside circle is surrounded by three concentric rings. The first concentric ring consists of flexibility and the choice of words and structures.

- *Flexibility*—how you adapt your language use to meet the needs of changing circumstances in your teaching environment. For example, new words constantly appear and are added to the linguistic repertoire, such as “break-out rooms” in virtual teaching venues. Related is how common words take on new meanings (e.g., chatting in person versus chatting online). Help learners gain awareness of these language adaptations.
- *Choice of words and structures*—choices you make in the classroom. For example, when teaching, adapt to learners’ proficiency levels by using simple grammatical structures and vocabulary and to their ages by using appropriate intonation patterns and instructions. Therefore, depending on your students’ age and language level, you might give instructions by using either a command or a request. Similarly, adapt to your learners’ needs and interests as well as to their identities such as by using features from a regional variety, such as American English or Australian English.

The features in this first concentric ring are directly influenced by the second concentric ring, which immediately surrounds it. This second ring contains four items: variety of language forms, medium of communication, attitude, and the effectiveness of language on learners.

- *Variety of language forms*—spoken and written forms of language. This includes style (formal or informal), dialect, accent, and source. For example, use different words (e.g., discuss, debate, argue, chat) when giving instructions, depending on whether the task is written or spoken and, also, whether it is formal or informal.
- *Medium of communication*—channel of communication through which an idea is transmitted. This includes using slightly different words and sentences when writing instructions on an exam than when giving oral instructions during a lesson. For example, include emoticons and netspeak (e.g., LOL or BRB) when texting but not when writing an academic report.
- *Attitude*—sensitivity towards a particular learner or the group. Demonstrate attitude through choice of language and intonation. For example, when communicating with students, use nuances of intonation to transmit your enthusiasm, frustration, stress, or calmness.
- *Effectiveness of language on learners*—effects from your instructional language on learners. This includes ensuring that your message is clear and has the desired effect. For example, carefully select language and adapt structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

The outer-most ring contains context of language use and knowledge of the world.

- *Context of language use*—context in which interaction takes place. The environment, purpose of the interaction, and relationship between participants are just as important as the language itself. For example, use different words and tone when discussing food with peers during lunch than with an external examiner during a language proficiency exam.
- *Knowledge of the world*—what we know by our individual and collective culture and by our learning experiences, opinions, and perspectives. We need to consider our learners' knowledge of the world before making decisions about input materials, language for giving instructions, and relevance. For example, it is difficult to describe a snowflake if we have limited knowledge of how this object interacts within a particular culture.

To become an effective L2 teacher, first focus on developing your awareness of language and the features that affect language use by understanding the intertwined relationships illustrated in the Language Awareness Features Framework (Arndt et al., 2000). Then, based on your enhanced language awareness, guide your students with developing their own language awareness.

## Pedagogical Applications

Your relationship with L2 learners is key to fostering their language awareness (Dufva, 1994; Soons, 2008). Another key is your multi-faceted role as teacher, which includes being arbitrator, facilitator, referee, participant, and authority. To prepare your learners to function successfully in a target community (Suij-Ojeda, 2017), strive to be linguistically competent and culturally knowledgeable. Learn about the grammar structures, vocabulary issues, and phonology challenges facing L2 learners and be able to explain these to your learners in the way that they

learn best. Serve as a meaning negotiator and culture broker by systematically questioning, clarifying, explaining, summarizing, and seeking ideas to support your learners. With a flexible, non-judgmental attitude, discover your students' cultures, perspectives on specific topics, and opinions about how they learn language. Finally, be a model for your students and show them how much you enjoy learning spontaneously in their multicultural, multilingual classrooms.

Within your multifaceted role as teacher, implementing instructional activities is as important as developing your learners' language awareness and language consciousness. Given that everyone learns differently, no formulas exist that can help all students build language awareness in the same way and at the same pace. To start building language awareness, adapt activities for the students' ages, language proficiencies, and preferred ways of learning. Implement activities for helping your students learn theoretical knowledge, acquire pragmatic skills of language use, practice recognition skills, and develop abilities to articulate coherently and write clearly. Here are several ways to build your learners' language awareness:

- Encourage learners to talk about language. Allow time to compare the target language with languages they already know. Plan sufficient time for sharing assumptions, discussions, and debates regarding appropriate language use in given situations. When students share their own experiences with cultures and languages, they enrich what is being taught and learned. Provide opportunities to learn beyond what is in a book such as through group work, cooperative tasks, debates, and small talk.
- Give learners several opportunities to observe and reflect on language use. Direct your learners' attention toward observing the nonverbal behaviors among people of different genders, cultures, and social standings when interacting with each other. This helps build sensitivity regarding the implicit meanings of language structure. Expose learners to how spoken and written language differ and how the same message is expressed differently in different mediums.
- Include real world sources in your classroom whenever possible. Choose instructional materials with native English speakers and non-native English speakers from different cultures and countries. Observe learners as they navigate these resources to discover their interests and the ways in which they learn. Use this information to further improve your interaction and communication with learners.

The complexity and nuances involved in building language awareness may sound intimidating. However, the benefits of creating language-aware learners are so great that your time and effort will be worthwhile. Your efforts at building learners' language awareness will help you identify their respective language challenges. You will also be able to analyze the reasons for these challenges and identify ways to provide support. These intense discussions about a language will motivate your learners and help them relate to the language and its culture.

By understanding the relationship between language and society, learners gain confidence for using L2, build tolerance for accepting differences, and finetune relationships for interacting in multicultural settings. By being aware of "hidden meanings, tacit assumptions and rhetorical traps" (Dufva, 1994, p. 29), your learners will be better able to identify attitudes, biases, and social values. This will empower them for tactfully handling interactions in social situations. When learners participate in discussions about L2, they develop cognitive strategies. They also

organize L2 patterns and rules by comparing them to their L1. Thus, by building language awareness, learners become more efficient at L2 learning and more skillful at communicating.

In this chapter, you learned about language awareness, the Language Awareness Features Framework (Arndt et al., 2000), and the ALA. You also learned how to build language awareness among your L2 learners and how this will lead to language acquisition.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about language awareness:

- When the role of language awareness was acknowledged, this supported a shift in trends from form-focused approaches or communication-focused approaches to an approach that is focused on both form and meaning (with lessons that incorporate both form and meaning).
- Language is complex, everchanging, and heavily influenced by the culture and context in which it is used. The Language Awareness Features Framework (Arndt et al., 2000) illustrates the features that influence language use and their relationships to each other.
- The first step towards making your students more language-aware depends on your knowledge of language systems, your knowledge of language use, and your adaptation of language to build strong linguistic relations with your students.
- Your roles, activities, and techniques in class are greatly influenced by your sensitivity toward language and its use. Apply these to help your students build personal relationships with the language they are learning and, by doing so, increase motivation and confidence.

## Discussing

Based on what you have learned about language awareness, discuss these questions:

1. How would you describe language awareness in your own words? Why is it important for you to continue building your own language awareness?
2. Based on the Language Awareness Features Framework, analyze the language used when one friend says to another: “Stop smoking, dude! It’s bad for you. You know you can die of lung cancer, right?” How can changes in variety, medium, attitude, and effectiveness affect the choice of language used in this scenario?
3. What type of language awareness is needed by learners with intermediate English proficiency when they learn about invitations? How are cultural norms regarding invitations in your country different from those in target Anglophone environments?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about language awareness, choose a grammatical item (e.g., passive voice) from a grammar book or English course book, and do the following:

1. Familiarize yourself with the different forms of this grammatical item (i.e., written structure and pronunciation). Also examine negative forms, question forms, and irregular forms. Explain how this item can vary in its written and oral forms.
2. Convey the meaning of this grammatical item when used in different contexts by providing one or two sample sentences (statements or questions). Explain how the meaning might change when the item is presented in different contexts.
3. Explain the use of this item and identify different uses that it might have.
4. Describe ways for using other structures to convey a similar meaning but one that might be more formal or less formal.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about language awareness, visit these websites and search several related topics:

- Association of Language Awareness. <https://www.languageawareness.org/>
- British Council Teaching English. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk>
- Cambridge University Press. <https://www.cambridge.org/>
- TESOL International Association. <https://www.tesol.org/>

## See Also

Aspects of language awareness are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning* by M. Zalimben

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 12** *Explicit and Implicit Learning in Second Language Acquisition* by C. Fernández

**Chapter 14** *Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning* by K. Sandi

**Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices* by K. Liu and J. Choi



**Chapter 32** *Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century* by C. Onatra and S. Palencia  
**Chapter 34** *Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching* by G. Díaz Maggioli  
**Chapter 38** *A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar* by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin

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# CHAPTER 11

## Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness

# Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness

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Jessica Amarilla

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## Abstract

Have you ever felt that teachers and students might waste time by spending too many hours on social media? While social media might certainly exert some negative influence and might be the root of some evils, it can also be a powerful source of information for both teaching and learning. For example, Instagram and Tik-Tok have profiles devoted to teaching and learning and, as such, can be valuable tools in our English language classrooms. In this chapter, you will learn about applying your management, communication, and research skills to position your English classes along an inspiring journey for using social media tools to help students learn new languages. You will learn about using a collective Instagram account as a pedagogical application to enhance your students' language awareness. You will also learn to access editable material for customizing this type of social media into a project that can meet your students' learning needs.

*Keywords:* social media, digital tools, editable materials, collective accounts, communication, language awareness

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## Introduction

An important aspect of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is the use of social media for educational purposes. Through computers and smartphones, social media can now be found everywhere in our everyday lives. Social media platforms are used for connectivity, communication, and collaboration (Zincir, 2017). Although some educators may feel that social media refers to numerous technological tools used for collaboration (Joosten, 2012), ICT scholars define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Examples of social media may include (but are not limited to) wikis, blogs, virtual games, and social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. Since the start of the 21st century, the use of social media for educational purposes has gained prominence. Because of the myriad of options for social media use in educational contexts, it is often challenging to identify the best option for optimally planning pedagogical practices. Hence, by combining skills in project management, communication, and research, we seek to provide you with a clear guide for the purposeful and meaningful use of social media in English language teaching (ELT).

## Background

Ample literature exists on the use of ICTs to support education. Researchers have explored frameworks for using ICTs in language classes and advantages for integrating technology in lessons as well as barriers affecting ICT use. Technology provides endless opportunities for authentic, meaningful learning through social media. The model for this pedagogical ICT perspective started as Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK; Shulman, 1986) and evolved as Technology, Pedagogy, and Content Knowledge (TPACK; Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

In PCK, content knowledge (CK) refers to the communication and research skills to be taught, and pedagogical knowledge (PK) refers to how the lesson’s instructional aspects are organized. For example, a lesson could revolve around a project where all students are assigned a role to fulfill and various responsibilities to enact. This holds them accountable and gives them ownership of the lesson and its content. Here, PCK is the lesson content (e.g., English language, research skills) and pedagogy (e.g., visual aids in the form of posters). This lesson is student-centered because students exercise their own agency as part of the lesson’s pedagogical strategy. If students decide to display their content and engage with an audience through social media, then the PCK becomes TPACK. For example, if content and pedagogy fit well with Instagram, students might choose Instagram as the social media for their project.

Based on your subject matter knowledge, consider applying this TPACK framework for properly using technological tools and for infusing technology into your pedagogical practice. When using TPACK to infuse technology in your lessons, think about how the selected technology fits your content and pedagogy (and your instructional planning and teaching) and, also, how your content and pedagogy fit the technology.

## Major Dimensions

Social media platforms enhance learning experiences, increase student interaction, and foster engagement. However, just like with other pedagogical activities, understand the why behind what you do with social media. Knowing this reason will guide you with choosing the most effective digital tool for reaching your instructional goals. Be sure to match your instructional goals with digital tools that are accessible on websites and apps. When selecting digital tools, refrain from being attracted to apps with fireworks and flying colors because such highly attractive apps may not necessarily serve your academic purposes nor your students' learning needs. Selecting a social media platform is a practical decision based on making a good fit with a targeted skill. For example, many social media platforms do not fit well with skills such as writing essays and giving formal presentations (Poor, 2016). Yet, these platforms can enhance other pedagogical activities such as classroom assessment techniques by allowing students to provide virtual input about a topic through social interaction (Joosten, 2012).

Several social media platforms have been studied for effectiveness in meeting educational purposes. Rosyida and Sefika (2019) examined the use of Instagram to teach writing. Hamadi et al. (2021) explored frameworks to incorporate social media, especially in higher education settings. Eckert (2021) described the best tech tools for K-12 classrooms. Nuñez (2021) explained using social media to attract online English students. Motteram et al. (2020) provided practical insights for using WhatsApp in language teacher development. The latter offers great promise for countries like Paraguay where English learners are avid users of WhatsApp in their personal and academic lives.

When selecting a social media platform, consider the digital tools needed by students to carry out these social media activities. Depending on the activity and its goals, each student will probably need a laptop or mobile device—and sometimes both (Joosten, 2012). Students also need stable connectivity to post, share, interact, and respond to comments. Decide whether your students will be working independently outside of class or collaboratively during class with instructional time devoted to this project. For the latter, make sure your institution has sufficient connection capacity for simultaneously meeting the needs of all students. Finally, consider your students' age given that many social media platforms are legally available only to users above a certain age. Include all these aspects in your advance planning.

After selecting the activity and digital tool for your students, define your own participation as that of monitoring student users. Take into consideration how this activity, which removes you from a traditional teaching role, might require extra time and effort. As such, determine how to incorporate social media in your academic schedule for ensuring sufficient time to bring the activity to completion. When doing instructional planning, consider incorporating social media into your lessons based on aspects related to student involvement, teacher input, and the tool(s) being employed (Poore, 2016). Consider students' prior knowledge of the platform, their familiarity with digital tools, and their mastery of technological skills. Avoid assuming that students already know how to use tools such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, or any other platform (Joosten, 2012). Demonstrate software and tutorials to help first-time users of selected platforms and digital tools. Finally, provide instructions on accessing open-source design websites ([www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)) and show your students how to use these sources to complete assignments such as designing flyers and creating imagery.

Before implementing TPACK, determine your assessment criteria. An effective way to assess student performance on a social media project is by using a rubric. Rubrics “help students understand what is required of them before they complete a task [and] they force you to clarify what, exactly, you want from students and what constitutes different levels of performance” (Poore, 2016, p. 29). Follow recommended guidelines in designing your social media rubric and use this rubric as a formative tool to ease the assessment process for you and your students. When introducing this social media project to your students, explain how they will be assessed, give them the rubric, and indicate the number of points to be earned for each task in this project.

## Pedagogical Applications

Infinite possibilities exist for using social media in ELT classes. A simple Google search will generate a myriad of ideas and applications. However, because you are the person who best knows your class, the most effective applications will be those that you tailor to meet your students’ interests and learning needs. Here we share a pedagogical application from our ELT classes where students use social media on their collective Instagram account.

### *Collective Instagram Account: Benefits, Goals, and Approaches*

A collective Instagram account is an effective way for using social media to enhance students’ language awareness. Although you, as the teacher, will probably be the person initiating your class’s Instagram account, consider having your students help with selecting a name for this collective account. During this planning stage, decide whether this account is to be used by just one teacher (you) or shared with other teachers who might be teaching in the same subject-specific context. As an example, we invite you to visit our students’ collective Instagram account: [https://www.instagram.com/english\\_beans\\_isl/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/english_beans_isl/?hl=en).

The main goal of a collective Instagram account is to connect academia with society and, by doing so, share language-related content. A related goal is to reach social media users who are interested in learning more about the English language and Anglophone cultures. Another goal is for students to develop skills in research, community management, and content creation. Yet other goals for using a collective Instagram account might be for students to

- anchor their English knowledge by creating language-related content for their collective account,
- conduct research on already existing accounts with similar content that could complement what they are developing, and
- create original social-media content with class topics to be designed and shared in a fun Tik-Tok way with video clips, funny questions, and riddles.

Depending on their needs and interests, students might identify other goals that are even more specific, especially with respect to raising their own language awareness. For example, if they are interested in learning more about languages, students might wish to explore and research one or more of the following topics:

- differences in English between the United States and other Anglophone countries (e.g., United Kingdom, Australia, Ireland),
- opportunities for scholarships and study abroad,

- false cognates and idiom equivalencies, and
- common pronunciation errors.

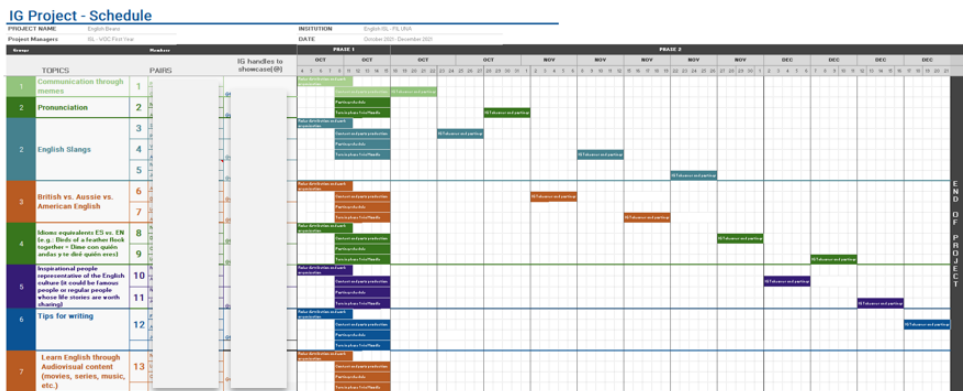
Select topics from this potentially endless list by taking a participatory approach that involves your students or a unilateral approach that involves just you (the teacher). When planning, consider whether your students will be working individually or with partners (i.e., in pairs or groups). Just like with your instructional goal, these decisions will depend on the characteristics of your targeted group of students.

**Collective Instagram Account: Project Organizer**

When we have implemented social media projects in our own ELT classes through a collective Instagram account, we have systematically used a project organizer. We prefer the downloadable organizer that is accessible here because it is editable and adaptable for any type of project and content, for any target audience and grouping structure, and for any social media platform. A copy of this project organizer is provided in the Appendix and as Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Instagram Project Organizer*



*Note.* Adapted from the GoogleSheet Templates, Project Timeline by SmartSheet, 2020. In the public domain.

Figure 1 shows the completed Instagram project organizer used by students in one of our classes. These 31 students worked in groups of two, three, or four students per group. The second column shows the topics selected by each group. The third and fourth columns are for student names and group handles (which have been removed for publication purposes). The other columns show project activities from October through December. We posted this organizer on Google to better guide our student groups in the successful implementation of their Instagram projects.

Consider using a project organizer like this when implementing a collective Instagram account (or other social media project). As the teacher and oversight person for your students’ Instagram account, review all content before it is posted. Guide your students in making language and content corrections before their project is posted on social media. Because this is an educational



account, it is prone to errors. Therefore, these posts should include an educational error disclaimer to inform the Instagram world that the content is produced by English learners.

In this chapter, you learned how social media can enhance language awareness among EFL students in today's multimedia world. You learned about benefits, challenges, and approaches for implementing social media to foster language learning. You also learned about having students participate on a collective Instagram account and using a project organizer. After further exploring the potential of using social media as a teaching tool, consider incorporating social media into your ELT classroom.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about using social media in ELT classrooms:

- Educational technology is the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources (Januszewski & Molenda, 2013).
- TPACK (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) is a framework that attempts to identify the nature of knowledge required by teachers to integrate technology into their teaching while addressing the complex, multifaceted, and situated nature of teacher knowledge. The TPACK framework extends Shulman's (1986) earlier idea of PCK.
- Social media is a term used to describe technological systems related to collaboration and community (Joosten, 2012). Social media is often described by examples that can include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, multimedia platforms, and virtual game worlds.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about using social media, answer these questions:

1. Reflect on your own experiences (as teacher or student) with working in teams regarding challenges and opportunities. What worked well and what didn't work as planned? What would you have done differently?
2. How has your view of using social media changed from having read this chapter or from having planned or implemented social media projects with your students?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of how this social media project was organized regarding its focus and scope? What would you suggest for addressing other challenges?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice using what you have learned about social media in ELT classes, do the following:

1. Think of a social media project that you would like to do with your students and identify the teaching-learning goals that will later serve to guide your evaluation criteria.
2. Determine the time and effort you will need for this project to succeed.
3. Choose a social media platform that meets academic needs and ensures student engagement.
4. Identify the topics you would like to target via social media based on your students' interests and pedagogical needs.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To further explore using social media to enhance language awareness, visit these websites:

- Google Academic: search “social media for language teachers” and related topics.
- Instagram account “English Beans” used by our students during an undergraduate course in their English degree program.  
[https://www.instagram.com/english\\_beans\\_isl/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/english_beans_isl/?hl=en)
- Other ideas on how to use social media in education.  
<https://bridge.edu/tefl/blog/>
- Resource toolkit. <https://www.edutopia.org/social-media-education-resources>
- TPACK website. <http://tpack.org/>

## See Also

Aspects related to social media, language awareness, and rubrics are also addressed in other chapters of this book:

**Chapter 2** *The Diversity of Global Englishes* by L. Barratt

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices* by K. Liu and J. Choi

**Chapter 21** *Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 23** *Integrating Technology in Language Classrooms* by H. Hubbard, A. Foss, and C. Strawn

**Chapter 24** *Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms* by Y. Grevtseva and E. Zyrianova

**Chapter 27** *Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT* by F. Esquivel

**Chapter 38** *A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar* by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin

**Chapter 49** *E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning* by B. Jiménez

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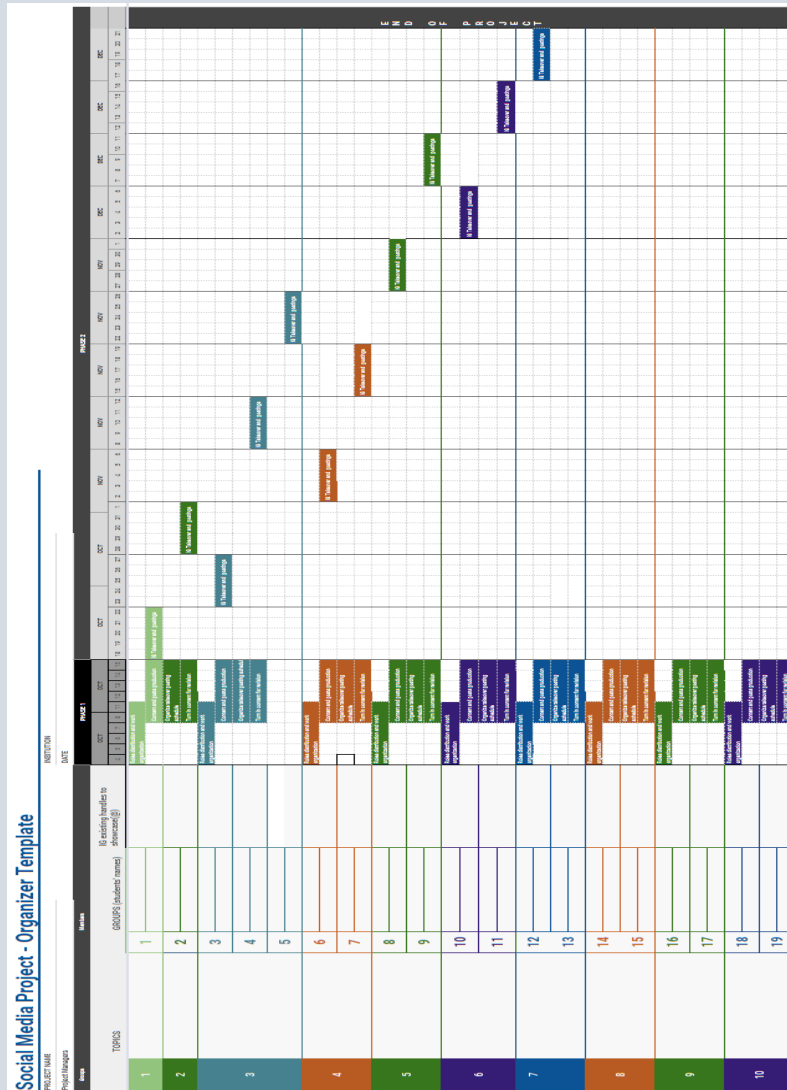
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# APPENDIX ch.11

## Template for a Project Organizer



Source: Adapted from the GoogleSheet Templates, Project Timeline by SmartSheet, 2020. In the public domain

Flowers need  
time to bloom.  
So do you ♡

Quando comisar  
e p

Quando estiver ino  
MUITA PRESSA, LEMBRA

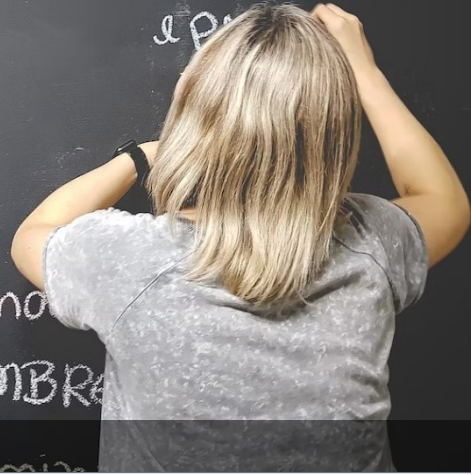


Photo by Leonardo Toshiro on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 12

## Explicit and Implicit Learning in Second Language Acquisition

# Explicit and Implicit Learning in Second Language Acquisition

Carla Beatriz Fernández

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc\\_ch12](https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc_ch12)

## Abstract

Evidence exists regarding potential benefits to language learners from explicit instruction, and findings from emerging literature highlight the benefits from implicit instruction. Explicit instruction provides learners with guided, intentional, and cognitively aware activities for using a target language, which includes the explanation of rules, structures, and meanings. Implicit instruction immerses learners in a target language, thus providing them with opportunities to learn about structure and meaning in their own way and at their own pace. When explicit instruction and implicit instruction are effectively combined, this taps into two complementary, cognitive mechanisms and leads to enhanced language acquisition. In this chapter, you will learn about implementing classroom activities that combine explicit and implicit learning, thereby maximizing benefits for language learners and ensuring their success with second language acquisition.

*Keywords:* second language acquisition, explicit learning, explicit instruction, implicit learning, implicit instruction, cognitive mechanisms

## How to cite this chapter:

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## Introduction

Teaching a new language involves several aspects that instructors need to consider for ensuring learner success. Of utmost importance is how instruction is provided. On the one hand, explicit instruction consists of learning opportunities that focus on students acquiring knowledge through guided, intentional, and cognitively aware activities with examples and resources for learning targeted rules (Hulstijn, 2005). On the other hand, implicit instruction consists of learning opportunities that focus on students acquiring knowledge through exposure (without stated or guided intent or conscious effort) rather than through guided attention by the instructor (Ellis, 1994). This chapter examines explicit instruction and implicit instruction, describes aspects to be considered for including explicit and implicit learning opportunities in your language classroom, and offers suggestions for ensuring explicit and implicit learning by your language learners.

## Background

Across several decades in the English language teaching (ELT) field, a debate has taken place over explicit and implicit learning and which of these is most beneficial for students when learning (or acquiring) a new language (Berry & Dienes, 1993). As with most aspects in psycholinguistics, the answer is not simple, especially regarding second language acquisition (SLA). Successful SLA occurs as a result of effective strategies and techniques for teaching learners of varying ages and motivation, time dedicated by students to using the target language, and structural similarities between the students' first language (L1) and second language (L2). Extensive evidence exists that successful SLA relies on both explicit learning and implicit learning (Van Patten & Smith, 2022). Because explicit and implicit learning take place through two complementary, cognitive mechanisms in the brain (Yang & Li, 2012), both mechanisms are needed to fully support the learning process and, thus, ensure effective SLA. Of great importance is strong evidence showing that implicit learning opportunities are essential if our goal is to develop the neural structures needed for effective SLA and, thus, facilitate reaching a high level of competence in the L2 (Morgan-Short et al., 2012).

Based on these research findings, it is crucial for instructors to recognize the benefits of designing an ELT curriculum that includes classroom opportunities for both explicit learning and implicit learning. To do this effectively, instructors need to be informed about scientific findings regarding the nature of language acquisition, particularly as it pertains to explicit and implicit learning. After reaching a better understanding of how to incorporate both types of learning in your classroom, you will be better prepared to provide appropriate experiences and opportunities (explicit and implicit) for students to successfully acquire English. To maximize the benefits from providing both explicit instruction and implicit instruction in your ELT classroom, keep yourself informed about evolving research findings, maintain ongoing communication with colleagues and supervisors, and incorporate the following dimensions and applications.

## Major Dimensions

To prepare for including explicit instruction and implicit instruction in your ELT classroom, further your knowledge about the following:



### ***Learning Opportunities for Explicit Learning and Implicit Learning in SLA***

Provide opportunities in your ELT classroom for both explicit learning and implicit learning. Consider including some direct instruction (i.e., explicit), often viewed as traditional teaching. Also include some unstructured experiences in authentic real-life situations, which can go beyond the textbook and, thus, provide implicit learning opportunities. For example, have students watch a movie or documentary without captions or converse freely with peers, guests, and experts—either in person or virtually. These experiences and conversations tend to be student-centered learning opportunities for actual practice that can lead students toward implicitly acquiring knowledge. After participating in these opportunities for implicit learning, students can combine their implicitly learned knowledge with knowledge that they learn through explicit instruction (which can occur either before or after the implicit learning opportunities).

Many variations exist for implementing classroom opportunities that include both explicit and implicit learning. However, of great importance is recognizing that no single recipe exists for how best to support all students with successful SLA. In many ways, this recognition might provide instructors (and ELT institutions) with the freedom to experiment among various combinations of explicit learning and implicit learning for effectively promoting SLA. Such freedom is key in the ELT field given that our language learners represent a myriad of individual differences, come from a wide range of previous experiences with the L2, and might have experienced different opportunities with explicit and implicit learning (Lengkanawati, 2012).

### ***The Implicit Learning of L1***

Infants acquire language mostly through implicit learning (Perruchet & Pacton, 2006). They are exposed to language without any particular intent or guided attention to specific rules and structures. This is not surprising given our innate human ability to identify patterns in language. In other words, babies are born with the ability to learn a language and internalize its rules through innate and subconscious learning (Christiansen, 2019). This is how they, as L1 learners, keep track of the distributional aspects of that language to comprehend and then construct their internalized grammar. The way that babies learn L1 is different from SLA in important ways. For example, to support SLA, we must consider individual differences among L2 learners, such as their age at initial exposure to the L2 and their learning styles and preferences (DeKeyser 2012). Consequently, although attempts have been made to support SLA by replicating the implicit learning of L1 in L2 settings, such settings tend to be more effective for SLA (especially among older learners) if complemented by some type of explicit learning (Lichtman, 2013).

### ***Insights from Scientific Findings on Explicit and Implicit Learning to Support SLA***

For language instruction to be effective, we—as language teachers—need to remain updated about emerging research findings, especially when transitioning from being a novice teacher to an experienced educator. New scientific insights are constantly being generated in the fields of cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and psycho- and neurolinguistics. Such findings can serve to guide instruction with the goal of emulating actual learning mechanisms in the brain (Lichtman, 2013; Morgan-Short, 2012; Yang & Li, 2012). This is of vital importance for SLA because such cognitive mechanisms are inherently different for explicit learning and implicit learning. Consequently, to ensure meaningful learning, we need to implement classroom opportunities for both types of learning (explicit and implicit). By combining explicit and implicit instruction in our lessons, we can embark on an integrative pathway for supporting

SLA. This integrative pathway leads to explicit learning and implicit learning, which, in turn, can lead to improved outcomes in learning a new language. The improved ability of language learners to communicate indicates that they are gaining competence and advancing from their previous language level. Based on these improved outcomes, the combined use of explicit and implicit instruction is becoming increasingly more common in our language classrooms. This is further supported by new and emerging advances regarding our understanding of the brain mechanisms needed to support successful SLA.

## Pedagogical Applications

To incorporate both explicit and implicit learning opportunities in your classroom, consider the following suggestions:

### *Use Explicit Instruction for Teaching Grammatical Structures*

Explicit instruction can support SLA in many ways, such as for helping students learn grammatical structures with highly irregular forms. However, although such instruction is explicit, this does not mean that you should simply tell students everything at the beginning of a lesson. Instead, implement several activities that are designed for intentionally guiding learners to become cognitively aware and that focus their attention on the targeted grammatical structures. Following is an example of explicit instruction for helping language learners understand and use English past tense forms (regular and irregular).

For the explicit instruction of past tense verb forms, start by placing students in groups and have them locate the verbs in a written text (which necessarily includes many verbs in the past tense). Go from group to group and make sure that your students are successfully identifying verbs and doing the subsequent tasks in this lesson. You may think that having students do an exploration is not explicit learning. However, this task is the first in a multi-step lesson about past tense verb forms and fits the definition of explicit learning, that of students participating in guided, intentional, and cognitively aware activities supported by examples and resources (Hulstijn, 2005).

For the next step in this explicit lesson, have each student group classify their identified verbs into sets with similarities based on criteria that the group determines (i.e., not with criteria that you, as their teacher, pre-established). Each group then identifies a structural pattern evidenced in each of the verb sets they created. While circulating among groups, ask questions for guiding students in how they are thinking about these verbs and classifying them into sets. Bring students back to a full class activity where each group shares their verb sets and describes the patterns that they identified. Finally, lead the class with discussing and comparing these sets and patterns. Here is where you, as the teacher, can directly explain the past tense rules (if you wish to do so).

Although the exploratory phase of this past tense lesson might take time, it is time that is well spent. When students explore and classify verb forms through this explicitly guided lesson, they create a knowledge base for productively receiving your subsequent explanation of past tense forms. They also assume a type of ownership for their growing verb knowledge. End your lesson with students working in pairs to practice what they have learned explicitly. Guided practice can consist of students working together to fill in blanks, select multiple choice responses, and do

matching activities. Consider having students share and explain their reasons for having made choices in this guided practice exercises. Students then do guided conversations for using the past tense verb forms and, also, open-ended conversations for describing events and actions that occurred in the past (e.g., yesterday, last week).

In conjunction with your explicit explanation of past tense verb forms, consider providing an explicit explanation of how the irregular past tense forms of Modern English (16th century to present) are remnants from regular past tense forms of Old English (5th to 13th century). Explain that today's irregular verbs did not undergo (for some unknown reason) a regularization process that historically led to today's regular verbs. Language learners are often fascinated with this historical nugget about the English language. Not only does this historical explanation raise their overall language awareness, but it can also influence how these learners view you and your knowledge about the English language. Perhaps for the first time ever, someone (you) has responded to their inquisitive inquiry about irregular English forms ("Why?") by offering a concrete reason rather than the common, unenlightened reply ("Because it's an exception"). For some learners, your explicit explanation regarding the history of the English language helps make English come alive (rather than being just an object to study). Such explicit learning might even serve to personalize a student's language learning journey.

### ***Provide Opportunities for the Implicit Learning of Complex Topics***

After introducing a complex topic, provide implicit learning opportunities for students to use their newly acquired knowledge in real-life situations. Such opportunities can be free flowing conversations about interesting topics that take place among peers or invited guests (either in person or virtually). These real-life conversations provide an opportunity for students to engage with complex topics in a more naturalistic manner. Such implicitly based learning opportunities can be creatively designed to fully engage all students.

A good way to engage students in the implicit learning of the English language is to introduce critical topics that school-aged students are studying in their other classes (e.g., science or social studies) or that adult students face in their everyday lives. Caring for the environment might be a topic being studied in a science class and, also, one that can be of interest to adult learners. First, divide students into pairs or groups where they share their personal experiences on this topic. Students then read short internet clippings, perhaps in the news feeds on their phones, and then view a short video clip. Based on authentic communication mediums used by L1 peers of their age group, students create a communication blurb about this environmental issue. Then, they invite one or more people to meet with their class (perhaps virtually) for authentic real-life conversations. These open-ended, student-driven activities can lead to the implicit learning of L2 grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Also consider introducing other types of complex topics such as political trends, ideologies, and philosophies as well as sports, movie stars, and new electronic devices.

### ***Create Opportunities for Combining Explicit Learning and Implicit Learning***

As explained earlier, opportunities that combine explicit learning and implicit learning can support learning in different ways. Explicit and implicit learning tap into complementary, cognitive mechanisms. Consequently, these two types of learning are not mutually exclusive. Both are needed to maximize student learning. Because of this, be sure to design your lessons

by including opportunities for both types of learning—explicit and implicit. For example, plan the first half of your class for explicit learning and the second half for implicit learning. When following this lesson design, start by implementing a series of activities that focus your students' attention on structures and rules (e.g., past tense verb forms) to support their explicit learning of these structures. Then, provide implicit learning opportunities for students to use these structures to explore a topic of interest (e.g., caring for the environment). Choose readings and video clips with environmental events that have already taken place (i.e., past tense). By working with these materials, students become implicitly engaged with the past tense and, thus, use this tense beyond the earlier activities that focused on explicit learning. When combined, explicit and implicit learning opportunities allow for students to share their reactions by participating in discussions and/or writing their thoughts. However, the former (explicit) is guided and focused while the latter (implicit) is mainly unstructured.

Another consideration when combining explicit and implicit learning opportunities is students' preferences and learning styles. Some students might be more inclined towards explicit learning and others towards implicit learning. By recognizing and discussing these differences in class, you can introduce students to the neuroscience of SLA and explain how explicit learning and implicit learning work together to help them learn. By knowing this, students may be more prone to becoming engaged with both types of learning opportunities.

In this chapter, you learned about explicit learning and implicit learning, how each is processed by different brain mechanisms, and how both are needed to fully support SLA. You learned how to provide classroom opportunities for explicit learning and implicit learning to support your students in learning and acquiring a new language. You also learned that, after an appropriate curriculum has been designed with explicit and implicit learning, it should be constantly updated in light of new information. Finally, you became aware that the future is bright when instructors bridge from basic science to actual practice, thus ensuring student success in SLA.

### KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about explicit learning and implicit learning for enhancing SLA:

- Explicit learning requires an intent together with cognitive guidance and effort.
- Implicit learning does not require conscious attention nor intent.
- Applied concepts in real world settings are opportunities that allow students to implement what they have learned in natural settings.

### Discussing

Based on what you have learned about explicit and implicit learning in SLA, provide meaningful responses to these questions:

1. How can SLA be supported in a more innovative way?

2. What are some aspects of implicit learning to be taken into consideration?
3. Are opportunities for explicit learning and implicit learning mutually exclusive? Why?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about how explicit learning and implicit learning can both support SLA, do the following:

1. Create a T-chart with one column for explicit learning in SLA and another column for implicit learning in SLA. In each of these columns, list characteristics and benefits.
2. Describe an action plan to implement learning opportunities in the classroom that support SLA through explicit learning and implicit learning.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about explicit learning and implicit learning and how these relate to SLA, explore these websites:

- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.  
<https://www.ascd.org/resources>
- Global Research Anthologies. <https://www.igi-global.com>
- Implicit Language Learning.  
<https://www.brainscape.com/academy/implicit-language-learning/>
- Implicit Learning.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/neuroscience/implicit-learning>
- Papers on Implicit Learning and Explicit Learning.  
<https://sites.google.com/site/finalresearchpapers/implicit-and-explicit-learning>

## See Also

Aspects about explicit learning and implicit learning in SLA are also addressed in other chapters of this book:

**Chapter 9** Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning by M. Zalimben

**Chapter 10** Building Language Awareness by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 11** Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 14** Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning by K. Sandi

**Chapter 15** Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices by K. Liu and J. Choi

**Chapter 26** Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning by A. Roca

**Chapter 34** Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching by G. Díaz Maggioli

**Chapter 38** A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin

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Photo by Van Tay Media on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 13

## Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning



# Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning

Heather R. Kaiser

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc\\_ch13](https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc_ch13)

## Abstract

Approaches to teaching English as a second or subsequent language have advanced greatly since the 1960s. Grammatical and teacher-centered methods have given way to cognitive and communicative approaches that promote student-centeredness through meaningful, hands-on tasks. With education viewed as a dynamic process, teachers commit to active learning and involve students in the learning process through active, meaningful interactions within real-life situations. Other than site-based or immersive experiences, the optimal environment for this type of active learning is a learner-centered classroom. Learner-centered classrooms allow students to work together actively in the target language and learn content through reflection and engagement with the material. In this chapter, you will learn key characteristics of active learning environments and tasks to promote active language learning. You will also learn about active learning, active learning environment, cooperative learning, and Kagan structures.

*Keywords:* learner-centered classrooms, active learning environments, language learning, student-centeredness

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## Introduction

Learner-centered classrooms can promote active learning as illustrated by this vignette about Ms. Wend, who teaches third-grade English learners in Paraguay. Ms. Wend has designed a reading unit on a beloved children’s book whose main character, Pippi, likes doing adventures outdoors (Lindgren, 1950). Ms. Wend’s routine includes reading aloud as the students follow along and pausing to ask comprehension questions. In this story, Pippi goes on a picnic with friends. Ms. Wend is unsure if her students have the contextual knowledge for understanding the concept of an American-style picnic. To demonstrate, Ms. Wend prepares a picnic basket with snacks, drinks, napkins, and a large blanket for a surprise picnic so that her students can participate in the story. As students arrive, Ms. Wend greets them and asks them to take their seats. First, she activates learners’ recall by having them explain what had happened in previous chapters. Then, she prepares students for the new chapter by projecting key words with visual illustrations. When the word “picnic” appears, she asks if anyone has been to a picnic in the United States or knows about it. As suspected, many children shake their head “no.” Ms. Wend briefly explains the concept, spreads the blanket on the floor, and invites students to join her. Excitedly, the students make their way to the blanket and sit around the teacher. Upon noticing the basket, they wonder aloud what might be inside. Ms. Wend opens the basket, pulls out various items, and distributes them. While the children enjoy their picnic, Ms. Wend reads the new chapter to them. When she gets to the word “picnic,” everyone smiles in understanding.

## Background

The approaches for teaching English as a second or subsequent language (L2) have advanced since the 1960s. Grammatical and teacher-centered methods have given way to cognitive and communicative approaches for promoting student-centeredness and meaningful, hands-on tasks (Chamot, 2009; Herrera & Murry, 2016; VanPatten, 2017). As Ms. Wend’s picnic activity demonstrates, active learning strategies often create excitement in the classroom and foster learning well beyond the bounds of traditional lecture, notetaking, and rote memorization (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Brame, 2016). Through active learning, which is defined as “an instructional approach that understands education as a dynamic process . . . involving the application of content in ‘real-life’ situations” (Ovando & Combs, 2018, p. 423), teachers seek to involve students meaningfully in the learning process. Other than on-site experiences, the optimal environment for active learning is a learner-centered classroom. Such classrooms provide an environment where students actively work together in the target language and develop knowledge of content through reflection and engagement with the material. This chapter explores key characteristics of highly effective, learner-centered classrooms and examines four key aspects of the learning environment: physical, social, psycho-emotional, and cognitive. Environments that meet these four needs can be highly conducive to learning. However, active learning strategies must also be included as both a means and an end for creating such an environment, given that learning strategies and learner-centered environments mutually reinforce each other.

## Major Dimensions

Learner-centered classrooms are active learning environments (ALEs) that are comprised of four key aspects: physical, social, psycho-emotional, and cognitive.

### *Physical*

An ALE's physical setting is learner centered. It facilitates students interacting with their teacher and classmates as well as with the learning materials (Herrera & Murry, 2016). Some teachers may find it difficult to depart from the traditional teacher-centered configuration in which teachers lecture and students listen and take notes. This might still occur in large classrooms where lecturing is considered efficient for teaching large groups of students (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). In such cases, the classroom is often configured with rows of desks facing the instructor. However, research on student engagement calls for flexible learner-centered seating (Scott-Webber et al., 2014). Both arrangements are shown in Figure 1. Here, traditional teacher-centered seating is in the left picture, and flexible learner-centered seating is in the right picture.

**Figure 1**

*Traditional Teacher-Centered Seating and Flexible Learner-Centered Seating.*



*Note. Licensed under CC BY-ND, <https://www.steelcase.com/research/articles/topics/active-learning/how-classroom-design-affects-student-engagement>*

In Figure 1, the seating arrangement in the right-hand picture illustrates the potential for being quickly reconfigured. For example, swivel seats allow each student to rotate and face another classmate in different direction. The furniture's lightweight structure allows students to move their chairs (with attached desks) to other locations. Such reconfigurations allow optimal engagement of students when listening and interacting with their teacher, when working in pairs and groups, and, also, when working individually. This seating arrangement is so fluid that it can be changed several times during the same class period. As shown in the opening vignette, Ms. Wend did not even use desks for her picnic-based lesson. Just like Ms. Wend, teachers can explore different options, such as floor spaces, to immerse students into learning. In this way, students can learn while being part of a learning community in which all have equitable status as contributors (Herrera & Murry, 2016).

### *Social*

The social aspect of ALEs is how students view themselves in relation to others and their interpersonal connectivity. Because language is a social activity, the social aspect of ALEs needs to be generously cultivated. This supports the physical aspect of ALEs in that students can see each other's faces and gestures as they talk (Herrera & Murry, 2016). In this way, students actively engage in learning through conversation, as well as by supporting and extending each other's understanding of concepts through cooperative work (Brame, 2016). Ms. Wend's picnic

lesson incorporates the social aspect of the ALE when she invites the students to sit and share experiences with each other as they talk about their reading and make new discoveries together.

### *Psycho-Emotional*

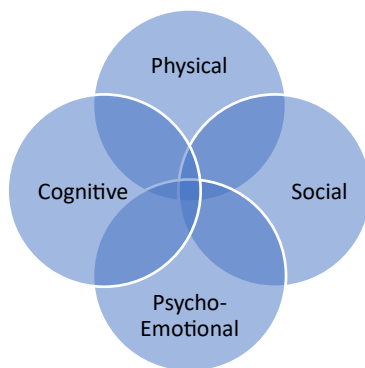
As explained by Horwitz et al. (1983), “No other field of study implicates self-concept and self-expression to the degree that language study does” (p. 128). Yet, language learning can also evoke language anxiety, which is “the anxiety that results from learners’ emotional responses to the learning conditions they experience in a specific [L2 learning] situation” (Ellis, 2015, p. 55). Because language anxiety is considered a psychological factor affecting second language acquisition that triggers learners’ emotional responses, these comprise one category. Factors that frequently increase language anxiety include learners comparing themselves with others, speaking spontaneously in the target language in front of others, being evaluated negatively, and taking tests (Ellis, 2015; Horwitz et al., 1983). Because of how L2 learning can trigger language anxiety, Krashen (1981) posited an “affective filter” (p. 22). Learners with low affective filters can more effectively receive and process language input. Thus, we strive to create ALEs in which students’ affective filters are low and their psycho-emotional needs are met to the extent possible. The successful ALE is inclusive, supportive, and welcoming as well as conducive to reducing anxiety among students (Herrera & Murry, 2016), thus allowing them to take risks (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). In her picnic lesson, Ms. Wend does not distinguish between “picnic experts” and “picnic rookies,” which could have raised students’ anxiety. Nor does she demand that students explain “picnic” in front of the group. Rather, she invites them to share and learn collaboratively in a low-pressure environment while sitting on the classroom floor. Here, social and physical aspects are interwoven within the ALE’s psycho-emotional aspect.

### *Cognitive*

In addition to the physical, social, and psycho-emotional aspects described above, the ALE also entails a cognitive aspect. To help you understand the interconnectedness of these four ALE aspects, I have conceptualized them as the graphic in Figure 2. Here, the ideal ALE is at the center, and all four aspects converge.

**Figure 2**

*Conceptualizing the ALE.*



As illustrated in Figure 2, the ALE comprises physical, social, psycho-emotional, and cognitive aspects. To specifically meet learners' cognitive needs, ALEs need to be language-rich and authentic. Such ALEs incorporate content, academic terminology, and the explicit use of learning strategies (Chamot, 2009). When ALE content incorporates major subject areas, the input authenticity increases, and connections are made across disciplines. Environments rich in academic language serve to enhance language skills “through cognitively demanding activities . . . assisted by contextual supports and scaffolded instruction” (Chamot, 2009, p. 6). In ALEs with explicit teaching of learning strategies, such as inferencing and prediction (Ellis, 2015), students can “learn, retain, and be able to use new information more effectively” (Chamot, 2009, p. 6). Cognitively effective ALEs offer challenging curricula, high expectations for learning, and tools for success. In Ms. Wend's classroom, these aspects come together as she presents a lesson that is rich with content—authentic piece of children's literature, ripe with various word types—comprehension words and academic words, and inclusive of learning strategies—prior knowledge, inferences, and “kinesthetic sense” (p. 183)

## Pedagogical Applications

To design your learner-centered classroom so that it can promote active learning, be sure to implement several of these activities, strategies, structures, and tasks.

### *Activities that Reduce Language Anxiety*

Activities that reduce language anxiety serve to foster social and psycho-emotional aspects of language learning. This can be done by students getting to know each other while using English. For example, on the first day, put students in groups of three or four and have them chat for a few minutes in their native language. After that, ask groups to tell you what they talked about. With student input, co-construct a list of all questions asked and write these on the board. Many questions will be the same, such as “What is your name?” Compile a list of all questions asked, omitting repetitious or odd ones. Translate these into English with the native language as a scaffold. Explain that these questions are useful almost anywhere and that it is important to master them for conversational fluency. Help students with pronouncing the questions in English and teach them appropriate replies, such as one- or two-word responses that are appropriate for beginners. Create a routine for regularly practicing these questions (e.g., as a warm-up to start class). Occasionally mix the groups. Not only will students get to know their peers, but they will start gaining confidence when speaking conversational English.

### *Cooperative Learning Strategies*

No matter how traditional your teaching style, you can promote active learning by including strategies that encourage students to engage with each other and that tap into higher order thinking. For example, imagine that you are about to demonstrate an English grammar structure (verb tense). Instead of explaining the structure, write some examples on the board and guide students in discovering patterns. Have them write their thoughts and discuss with a partner. Students compile their thoughts: One student is the “recorder,” and another is the “reporter.” Continue with the demonstration and then reveal the structure. Afterwards, ask students to compare their prediction with the actual pattern. This procedure “asks students to test their understanding of a system by predicting an outcome” (Brame, 2016, p. 3). It also has students

reflecting upon and mentally processing information in a more active way while working with peers.

### ***Kagan Structures***

Kagan structures are cooperative instructional strategies that teachers use in myriad contexts for different contents and instructional targets (Kagan, 2013). One strategy is Numbered Heads Together, which can serve to monitor reading comprehension and ensure that all students understand. In this strategy, you need to form groups of four students, or use a flexible seating arrangement (Figure 1). If the class size is not divisible by 4, some groups might have only three students (and that's ok). For example, if you have 18 students, you can form three groups with four students and two groups with three students. Within each group, students count off 1-2-3-4. In groups of three students, the third student has numbers 3 and 4. Ask a question and provide think time. Without talking, each student writes an answer on paper or a small erasable board. After you call time, students share their answers with groupmates, discuss within their respective group, and reach consensus. All groups participate simultaneously in their respective intra-group discussion. After groups have discussed for about a minute, you repeat the question and randomly call out a number from 1 to 4. In each group, the student with that number shares the group's answer with the rest of the class. Everyone applauds these numbered students, and constructive feedback is provided. In this Numbered Heads Together strategy, students benefit by coaching, tutoring, and supporting each other, and this leads to everyone mastering content. In other words, all students participate and are responsible for knowing the answer (adapted from Kagan, 2013, pp. 20-23).

### ***Tasks With a Communicative Purpose***

Classroom tasks should “involve the expression and interpretation of meaning [and] have a purpose that is not language practice” (VanPatten, 2017, p. 80). Interpretation of meaning for an authentic purpose engages learners and stimulates language acquisition. VanPatten believes that meaningful tasks can be accomplished by students at all levels of language proficiency. For example, in beginning language classes with teenagers and young adults, VanPatten suggests using the task “At What Age” (pp. 80). In this task, students predict the average age when people might experience major life events such as graduating from college, getting married, and having their first child. After individually writing down their predictions, students interview each other in pairs, compare their responses, and discuss differences in how they had predicted ages for these events. Afterwards, the teacher elicits predictions from all student pairs and writes them on the board. Based on these combined responses, the class establishes a class-based prediction of the average age for each life event. Next, the teacher reveals data from the latest census and compares the data with these class-based predictions. This task involves more than language learning and use. It is interdisciplinary (e.g., social studies, math, statistics), connects students with one another for a shared purpose, and allows students to use prior knowledge for making cultural comparisons.

In this chapter, you learned about designing learner-centered classroom environments to promote active learning. You learned that an effective learning environment includes physical, social, psycho-emotional, and cognitive aspects. You also learned that these interlocking aspects are reinforced by active strategies and tasks that encourage learners to take risks, work cooperatively, activate higher order thinking, and use language for authentic purposes.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about learner-centered classrooms and active learning:

- Active learning is learner-centered instruction for engaging students in tasks to construct knowledge and understanding and, also, for using both higher order thinking and metacognition (Brame, 2016).
- Classrooms become environments for active learning (i.e., ALEs) upon meeting students' physical, social, psycho-emotional, and cognitive needs (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).
- Cooperative learning is active, social, interactive, and collaborative. Such learning uses knowledge and skills of individuals working together to perform tasks or solve problems (Ovando & Combs, 2018).
- Kagan structures are repeatable, content-free, cooperative instructional strategies for all teaching contexts, especially language learning (Kagan, 2013).

## Discussing

Based on knowledge from this chapter, develop meaningful answers to these questions:

1. To what extent does your current classroom meet the four ALE aspects (physical, social, psycho-emotional, cognitive)? What might you change or add?
2. What active learning activities and strategies do you currently use, and which ones would you like to try?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned, do the following:

1. Examine your physical classroom. Arrange seating so that learners can see and interact with each other. Display work and add interactive elements so that the space is never static.
2. Reduce language anxiety. Continually gauge your learners' anxiety. Allow students ample time to practice speaking alone and in groups before speaking to the class. When students speak, do not interrupt them to correct errors. Explain to students how and when you will be assessing their participation and language output.
3. Incorporate active learning into your teaching practice. For lectures, pause after 12 minutes for students to discuss in pairs and rework their notes. For student-centered approaches, incorporate Kagan and cooperative learning structures.

EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about learner-centered classrooms, visit these websites:

- Alternative views. <http://www.teawithbvp.com> (Episode 71)
- Flexible seating configurations.  
<https://www.steelcase.com/research/articles/topics/active-learning/how-classroom-design-affects-student-engagement>
- Kagan structures.  
[https://www.kaganonline.com/free\\_articles/dr\\_spencer\\_kagan/281/Kagan-Structures-A-Miracle-of-Active-Engagement](https://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/dr_spencer_kagan/281/Kagan-Structures-A-Miracle-of-Active-Engagement)

See Also

Aspects of ALE are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 2** *Enhancing Learners' Social Emotional Learning* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners* by M. Gandolfo, B. Damiani, and L. Caperochipe

**Chapter 14** *Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning* by K. Sandi

**Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community* by B. Crosbie and D. Carter

**Chapter 21** *Connecting Student Interaction With Classroom Management* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 28** *Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature* by S. Ruffinelli and C. Ortiz



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# CHAPTER 14

## Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning

## Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning

Kristina S. Sandi

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### Abstract

Language and thinking are inextricably connected. Language expresses thoughts. How, what, and why we choose to express those thoughts via a particular language requires additional thinking. In academic settings, language learners may struggle if they lack the tools and vocabulary needed to engage in metacognition and higher order thinking. Within such settings, learners' affect can also influence language learning. By focusing on higher order thinking skills and by understanding how the brain functions, you—as the teacher—can maximize your learners' mastery of English. In this chapter, you will learn about the language areas of the brain, cognitive development within the context of language learning, and different levels of thinking. You will also learn how to integrate thinking tools and cognitive language into your English classroom to engage your learners more meaningfully with language and content learning.

*Keywords:* thought processes, higher order thinking skills, thinking tools, metacognition, cognitive development, brain composition and functionality

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## Introduction

A major goal in English language teaching (ELT) is to help students obtain functional levels of communicability in English and, by doing so, maximize the benefits of language learning. To do this, we need to understand the different levels of thinking and then create learning conditions in our English classroom for students to think at these different levels. Thus, by promoting different thinking skills among our students, we can enhance their efforts at learning a new language.

Successful language learning requires time, effort, and meaningful engagement with the new language. When you engage with learning a new language, you use your first language (L1) and metacognition about your L1 to make progress with learning your second language (L2). Metacognition is your awareness and understanding of your own thought processes. Your confidence and willingness to take risks during L2 learning are also influenced by your affect and your self-concept of being able to learn and use L2. These can positively influence L2 learning or exert a negative influence through anxiety, inhibitions, and self-consciousness.

Regardless of what you are trying to learn, whether it be math, science, or a new language, activities that generate higher-order thinking (HOT) can create opportunities for more effective learning (Elyas & Al-Zahrani, 2019). HOT goes beyond memorizing material for recall on a test. Instead, HOT uses language in meaningful ways that support the brain in making new and stronger connections such as between L1 and L2. One type of HOT is critical thinking, which involves objective analysis and evaluation of information for making choices. In this chapter, you will learn about promoting HOT to enhance L2 learning.

## Background

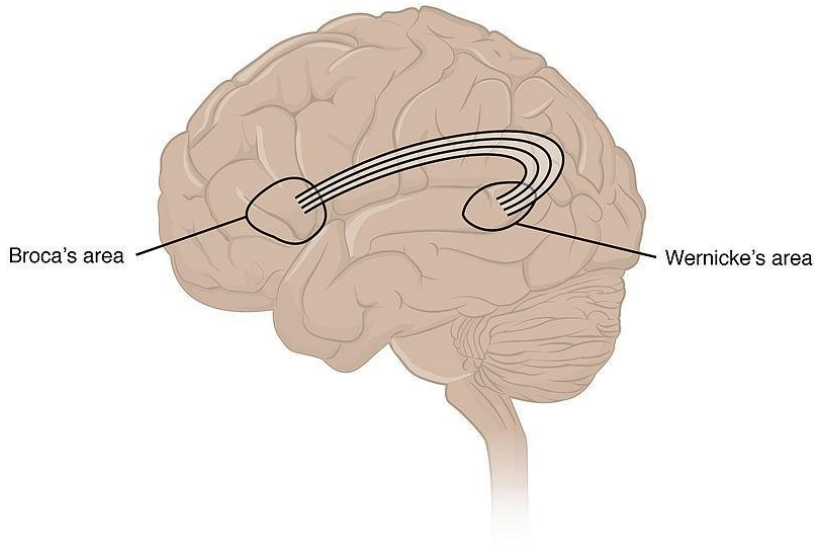
Learning creates changes in your brain. Studies show that learning a new language rearranges your brain and creates new connections and pathways (Kennedy, 2006). Multilingualism can even help preserve brain function while aging (Anderson et al., 2018). In other words, when acquiring and using a new language, the human brain undergoes cortical adaptation to accommodate multiple languages (Kennedy, 2006). This occurs either by recruiting existing regions used for L1 or by creating new cortical networks in distinct adjacent areas of the cortex to handle certain functional aspects of L2.

Nonreflexive behavior (including language and cognition) normally involves the unconscious and seamless coordination of activity between both hemispheres of the brain via fiber bundles or cerebral commissures (Kennedy, 2006). Although information is processed between the right and left hemispheres, language is handled mainly by the left hemisphere in over 90% of the normal population (Kennedy, 2006). Broca's area, which is in the left frontal lobe, controls the mechanics of speech sounds. Wernicke's area, which is in the left temporal lobe, facilitates the formulation of meaning gathered from words and sentences for then being connected into speech. These language roles also receive support from other regions in the brain. For example, one part of the temporal lobe supplies nouns, and another part joins nouns and verbs together with other parts of speech to create logical sentences.

Broca's area and Wernicke's area are located in the brain as illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1

*Global Distribution of “pen drive” in Google Trends:*



*Note.* Retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1605\\_Brocas\\_and\\_Wernickes\\_Areas-02.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1605_Brocas_and_Wernickes_Areas-02.jpg). Image adapted from Anatomy & Physiology: Connexions. <http://cnx.org/content/col11496/1.6/>, June 19, 2013. OpenStax is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution License v4.

Brain cells called neurons have a cell body and dendrites, which are small branching connectors. The volume of cell bodies and dendrites constitutes gray matter. An increase in the density of gray matter is an indicator of a healthier brain (Kennedy, 2006). White matter refers to a fatty substance that covers the axons, which are the main projections coming out from neurons and connecting them to other neurons. White matter allows messages to travel fast and efficiently across nerve networks on their way through the brain. Therefore, the larger the volume of white matter in your brain, the easier it can be for you to use language for effectively communicating.

Active bilingualism was seen to contribute toward prolonging white matter integrity throughout the adult lifespan (DeLuca & Voits, 2022). Multiple studies have linked L2 learning to increased gray matter density in several areas of the brain. Some studies have suggested that L2 learning can preserve white-matter density (Anderson et al., 2018). Hence, these and other studies have shown that being bilingual and learning languages can serve to improve and preserve brain function.

## Major Dimensions

To explore how HOT can enhance language learning, we need to reach a better understanding of learning. To do this, we will examine the Information Processing Model (also known as the Multi-Store Model) and Bloom's Taxonomy.

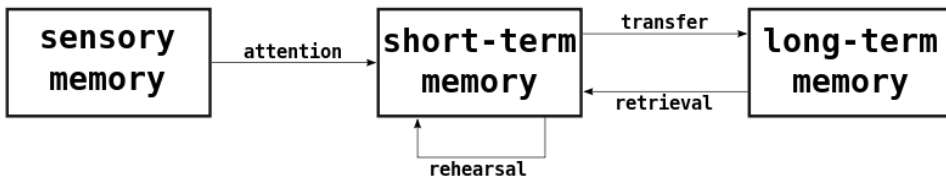
*Information Processing Model / Multi-Store Model*

One of the most widely accepted theories of learning is Atkinson and Shiffrin’s (1968) model. This memory model is called the Information Processing Model or the Multi-Store Model. This model is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

*Multi-Store Model of Memory.*

**MULTI-STORE MODEL**



*Note.* Retrieved from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Memory\\_multistore\\_model.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Memory_multistore_model.svg). Jens Himmelrath (Uploader of original file was Kurzon at wikipedia), CCO, via Wikimedia Commons. This file is made available under the Creative Commons CCO 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication

As shown in Figure 2, several elements and processes interact along the path to learning (Slavin, 2008). Because perception takes place almost instantaneously, such information is held for just a few seconds as sensory memory. Information that receives attention is processed into short-term memory, also called working memory. Repeated rehearsals lead to connections with already stored information, and this information is saved in and retrieved from long-term memory.

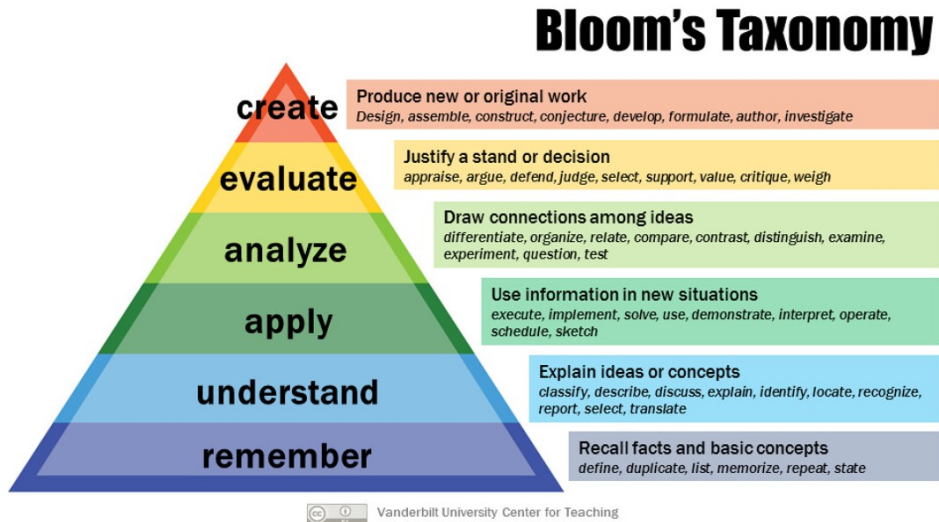
This Multi-Store Model is a theory of learning and, as such, oversimplifies the complexities and workings of the human brain. Nonetheless, we can use it to inform L2 learning and teaching. Based on this model, we know that meaningful and complex connections are needed for a new language to be effectively learned and stored in long-term memory. For example, the rote memorization of vocabulary leads to storing information in short-term memory and allows a student to pass a test. However, unless transfer occurs to long-term memory, the new vocabulary is forgotten soon after the test. In contrast, HOT creates stronger and longer-lasting connections in the brain and, as such, is critical for effective L2 learning and for greater student success in the L2 classroom and beyond.

*Bloom’s Taxonomy*

Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom, 1956) was developed by American psychologist, Benjamin Bloom, along with collaborators Max Englehart, Edward First, Walter Hill, and David Krathwohl. Called Bloom’s Taxonomy, it offered a framework for categorizing educational goals and created a way to organize levels of mastery in learning. Revised in the early 2000s, this framework is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3

*Bloom's Taxonomy.*



*Note.* Armstrong, P. (2010). Bloom's Taxonomy. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>. This image is released under a Creative Commons attribution license

In Bloom's Taxonomy, the top three levels (analyze, evaluate, create) correspond to HOT. The lower three levels (remember, understand, apply) do not correspond to HOT. This framework is a useful guide for teachers in their planning, teaching, and evaluating. Teachers should use this framework to guide their planning, teaching, and evaluating. While not all language learning activities might incorporate HOT, studies have shown that adopting HOT instruction in the language classroom can lead to greater gains in vocabulary retention (Elyas & Al-Zahrani, 2019).

In addition to creating HOT learning activities and using HOT questions, language teachers also need to provide students with opportunities to talk about language learning and thus make metacognitive connections with HOT. Based on the Information-Processing Model, connections to prior knowledge from long-term memory are essential to ensure long-term learning.

## Pedagogical Applications

To incorporate HOT activities in your ELT classroom, consider following these suggestions.

### *Build Relationships With Your Students*

The first thing that you need to do in your ELT classroom is to build relationships with your students and learn about their interests and backgrounds. Having this information is essential for you to build their motivation for learning, establish a connection between students' prior knowledge and new content, and introduce HOT activities to facilitate critical thinking. When

students feel comfortable with taking risks in the L2 classroom, they are much more open to learning and thinking (Krashen & Terrell, 2000).

### ***Provide Model Phrases to Target HOT Skills***

Depending on the subject matter and the level of the HOT activity, provide model phrases commonly associated with the cognitive task. For example, when targeting the verb analyze as the HOT skill for your lesson, ask learners to compare and contrast by using transitional phrases (e.g., regardless, similarly, conversely, on the other hand).

Help familiarize students with the different levels of HOT by providing manipulatives, hand-outs, and poster charts with question stems based on Bloom's Taxonomy. Have students analyze question types and identify the HOT level for each of these questions. Guide them with creating their own questions for any content by targeting each of the levels in Bloom's Taxonomy.

### ***Engage Students in Metacognition***

Facilitate long-term L2 retention among your students by providing them with ways to think about what they already know and what they need to learn. Provide them with goals or help them write their own goals for a given lesson. To involve students in metacognition, use rubrics for assignments, especially when assignments have been designed to foster HOT. The use of rubrics has been shown to improve critical thinking skills (Saiz Sanchez et al., 2014). Be sure to clarify the terminology used in the rubric and create opportunities for students to use this rubric for self-evaluating themselves upon completing the assignment. The language and complexity of your rubric should be based at your students' age and education levels. An alternative would be to have your students create their own rubrics.

To engage students in metacognition, consider using the inquiry method in your classroom. If this is not feasible given your teaching situation, consider giving students several choices in assignments as this will increase agency, enhance motivation, and lower the affective filter. This, in turn, will create conditions for learning. Model your own metacognition by using the language you want your students to use and by sharing your own thinking processes. Also model for your students how you go about reflecting on which strategies work best for you to understand, practice, and retain new information.

Finally, use retrieval practice strategies instead of simply reviewing the prior lesson. Do this by asking students to explain, demonstrate, and evaluate the most important information from the last class. Provide learners with feedback and opportunities for self-reflection and revision.

### ***Develop a Growth Mindset and Pay Attention to Perceptions***

For successfully promoting HOT, help your students develop a growth mindset. Self-efficacy is indeed a powerful learning tool. Adjust your perceptions of students' abilities and refrain from underestimating what they can do. Unfortunately, many English language teachers avoid giving HOT questions and HOT tasks to English learners who are at lower language levels. By not doing this, they seem to be associating the students' L2 level with their HOT ability. Instead, engage all students in HOT. As needed, give extra time to students at lower L2 levels to answer



questions and perhaps allow some students to write their thoughts instead of responding orally. Another way would be for students to discuss their ideas with a partner before answering.

### *Incorporate HOT into Lesson Plans*

Whenever possible, incorporate HOT into your lesson plans. When selecting activities and materials to meet standards and achieve learning objectives, consider incorporating HOT-based activities through reading, writing, listening, and speaking. These HOT activities can be debates, graphic organizers, thinking maps, and cooperative learning. A quick google search will generate many other possibilities.

In this chapter, you learned how to promote thinking skills to enhance language learning. You learned about the language areas of the brain, Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) for levels of thinking, and the Multi-Store Model for learning. You also learned about building relationships with students, providing model phrases to target HOT skills, engaging students in metacognition, paying attention to perceptions, and incorporating HOT into lesson plans. To promote your students' thinking skills, incorporate these suggestions in your ELT classroom.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about how thinking skills can enhance language learning:

- Multilingualism has many benefits for the brain.
- Storage of information in long term memory requires activation and connections to prior knowledge.
- HOT activities aid retention and, therefore, facilitate greater L2 acquisition and use.
- Students should explicitly be taught L2 vocabulary associated with cognition and HOT.
- Cognitive barriers to language growth can be reduced by lowering affective filters, building trust, and cultivating a supportive classroom culture.

## Discussing

Based on this relationship between thinking skills and language learning, develop meaningful answers to these questions:

1. How can you use this information about the effects of L2 acquisition on the brain to guide your work with L2 learners?
2. What would be the most appropriate way to promote HOT activities among children, adolescents, and adults?
3. Which of the following do you feel is of greatest importance in ELT classrooms: accuracy, fluency, or critical thinking? Why?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about thinking skills and language learning, do the following:

1. Consider TESOL's 6 Principles (Short et al., 2018). Think of how you can apply for each level of Bloom's Taxonomy, write at least one question about how the promotion of thinking skills can enhance language learning
2. Depending on your students' age and level of English, create visuals similar to Figure 3 (Bloom's Taxonomy) to use as a reference in your classroom. Develop manipulatives that illustrate the levels of HOT and, also, the vocabulary associated with each level. Use these manipulatives frequently to support the development of HOT among your students during the process of learning a new language.
3. Look through a textbook that incorporates readings and comprehension/discussion questions. If you wish, do this by choosing another chapter in this ELT book that you are currently reading. Independently or with a partner (or partners), try to identify the level of Bloom's Taxonomy for the questions being asked.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about developing language and thinking skills, visit these websites:

- Additional information about why and how to incorporate retrieval practice strategies in your teaching. <https://www.retrievalpractice.org/>
- Bloom's Taxonomy. <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>
- Carol Dweck's Ted Talk: The Power of Believing You Can Improve. [https://www.ted.com/talks/carol\\_dweck\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_believing\\_that\\_you\\_can\\_improve?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve?language=en)
- More suggestions on teaching critical thinking skills in the classroom. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-eight-instructional-strategies-for-promoting-critical-thinking/2021/03>
- Sample question stems for asking HOT questions. [https://www.saydel.k12.ia.us/cms\\_files/resources/general%20HOTSQuestionCards.pdf](https://www.saydel.k12.ia.us/cms_files/resources/general%20HOTSQuestionCards.pdf)
- Undergraduate student learning strategies based on Bloom's Taxonomy. <https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/higher-order-thinking/>

## See Also

Insights to thinking and language learning are also addressed in other chapters of this book:

- Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners* by S. Montiel
- Chapter 12** *Explicit and Implicit Learning in Second Language Acquisition* by C. Fernández
- Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser
- Chapter 19** *Incorporating Inclusive Education Practices in ELT* by R. Mazzoleni
- Chapter 26** *Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning* by A. Roca
- Chapter 33** *Current Approaches in English Language Teaching* by N. Dantaz
- Chapter 35** *Developing Critical Thinking Through Inquiry-Based Learning* by V. Canese

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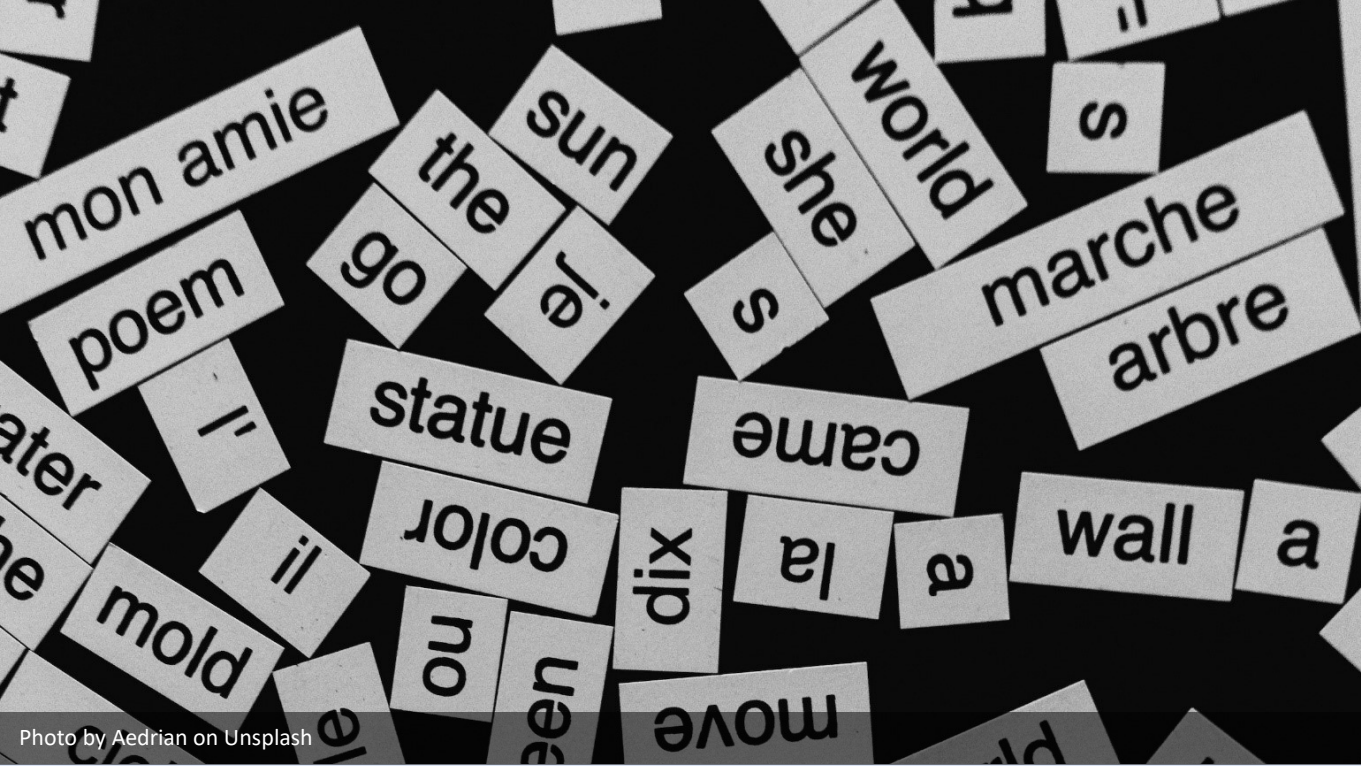


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# CHAPTER 15

## Exploring Meaning through Translanguaging Practices

## Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices

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### Abstract

Translanguaging is a perspective in language education that welcomes learners to use their own knowledge resources while learning to make meaning through their languages. In the context of teaching multilingual learners, some might think this simply means allowing learners to translate ideas between two languages. However, such translation from Language A to Language B does not fully reflect the complex processes of how multilingual learners make meaning. In this chapter, you will learn about a multilingual learner who enacted translanguaging practices to explore the meaning and use of an English word (which inherently incorporated translation). You will learn how translanguaging practices can expand your learners' meaning-making repertoire. You will also learn how to apply translanguaging practices in your teaching and learning context.

*Keywords:* translanguaging, making meaning, translating, multilingual learners, learning context

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## Introduction

Multilingual learners use diverse language and knowledge resources to make meaning. They often expand their meaning-making repertoire through a process called translanguaging (Canagarajah 2011; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; García & Wei, 2014). Although the translanguaging process includes translation, the way in which multilingual learners negotiate meaning involves more than simply translating ideas between languages. The following example shows how Kailin (first author) used translanguaging to explore the meaning of “besides” (Choi & Liu, 2021).

Kailin was unaware of having incorrectly used “besides.” She had learned that “besides” and “in addition” both meant *lingwai* (adding a point) in Chinese. She did not know that “besides” is a connective used orally to provide a reason to justify or persuade (e.g., I didn’t come because my mum didn’t allow me. Besides, I felt sick.). Upon discovering her misuse, Kailin read sample sentences and noticed that her original understanding of “besides” did not always fit (e.g., We save a lot. Yet we are not obsessed with money. Besides, who doesn’t love money?). She tried understanding this passage by imagining a social context (e.g., people fighting over money). She left a blank for “besides” and translated the passage to Chinese with emotions fitting that context. When the Chinese *zaishuo* emerged, Kailin realized that “besides” had another meaning. She compared *lingwai* and *zaishuo* in the same Chinese passage and noticed that “in addition” (*lingwai*) is for adding a point, and “besides” (*zaishuo*) is for providing a persuasive reason.

Kailin’s problem-solving process demonstrates how exploring meaning is more than simply translating ideas from Language A to Language B. Rather, it is a complex process called translanguaging, which involves diverse knowledge and strategies to negotiate and expand meaning. To help you better understand and employ translanguaging, we first discuss historical insights (with some theoretical considerations) and then provide pedagogical applications.

## Background

The concept of translanguaging emerged in the 1980s in Welsh-English bilingual education contexts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Translated from the Welsh term *trawsieithu*, translanguaging describes pedagogical practices that purposefully and systematically use two languages for teaching and learning within the same lesson. For example, students may be asked to read and listen in one language and then to speak and write in another language. By doing so, they develop proficiencies in both languages.

Since then, the concept of translanguaging has expanded to cover multilinguals’ use of diverse linguistic, semiotic, and multimodal resources in various contexts. Translanguaging challenges the perspective of language that situates languages as separate and standardized systems like neatly contained boxes in our mind. Instead, translanguaging views language as a fluid social practice, where we, as multilinguals, draw on different language features and resources in our unitary repertoire to make meaning based on our needs and social contexts (García & Li Wei, 2014). An example of translanguaging is how multilinguals, when reading an article in a second language, might naturally use first language resources, knowledge, and strategies for taking notes. In terms of pedagogy, translanguaging values the whole knowledge repertoire that teachers and learners bring into the classroom and views this as facilitative for language teaching and learning.

## Major Dimensions

Implementing meaningful practices of translanguaging is neither easy nor straightforward. To achieve effective translanguaging, consider the following dimensions.

### *Understanding Translation as a Translanguaging Practice*

Translation is usually seen as transferring meaning from Language A to Language B. However, translanguaging allows us to think more complexly about translation. From the translanguaging perspective, translation is not a simple transfer of meaning from A to B. Rather, it is a complex social practice that uses diverse linguistic and cultural resources, knowledge, and skills to interpret and make meaning. During this process, emerging bilinguals are not simply transferring meaning but also changing and diversifying meanings. For instance, you and your classmates may find the same dictionary definition for a word. Yet, as different individuals, each of you brings your own unique interpretations, understandings, competencies, and histories, which, in turn, diversify meaning at the moment of translation.

We see translation as an essential part of translanguaging. Translation is not simply the product of moving from Language A to Language B but rather a complex process of combining knowledge and skills through translanguaging. If your goal as language educators is to help students expand their meaning-making repertoire, examine what your learners have translated, and, of greater importance, seek to understand how your learners went about translating, what meanings they tried to make, and how they made those meanings. While doing this, identify your students' competencies and limitations and then target your teaching on your students' language level for assisting them to negotiate and expand meaning.

### *Understanding Learners' Language and Literacy Practices*

To better meet your learners' needs, develop a rich understanding of their language and literacy practices and then design appropriate multilingual activities. Identify what languages your learners speak, how they use these languages in their everyday lives, and why they use them in these ways. Because such information is often not reachable through surveys and questionnaires, create a fuller picture by doing language portraits, language mapping, and trajectory grids.

**Language Portraits** (Busch, 2012). Give learners the silhouette of a body printed on a piece of paper. Invite learners to map languages that shape who they are on this silhouette and give reasons for their mapping. For example, languages for expressing emotions might be mapped at their heart and languages for doing studies might be mapped at their brain. This activity allows you to learn about learners' resources, beliefs, and experiences with different languages.

**Language Mapping** (Dutton et al., 2018). Learners make a visual representation about their language and literacy practices by using questions: Who do you usually talk with? How do you communicate? In what languages do you communicate, when and where? This activity can help you and your learners understand how they use language resources for social purposes in different places.

**Language Trajectory Grids** (Choi & Slaughter, 2021). Learners plot their language practices, emotions, and life circumstances onto a chronological grid and give a detailed account of their



language history. This activity can help you and your students understand the complexity of their language journeys as multilinguals.

### *Understanding Your Teaching and Learning Context*

To create a balance between work expectations and translanguaging practices, develop a deep understanding of your teaching and learning context. This includes knowing the challenges, possibilities, and opportunities in your workplace. Given explicit monolingual policies in many institutions, translanguaging and translation might not be welcomed, encouraged, or understood. Develop a socio-political awareness of how language practices are viewed in this institution, who benefits from such views, who can become excluded, how these views are shaped, and how these views might shift. This understanding is important not just for yourself but especially for your learners because many might feel obligated to leave their non-English competencies outside the school. To identify opportunities to support students' multilingual practices, carefully examine the curriculum, materials, policies, time, setting, and language ideologies. Open a safe zone for learners to value all their languages as learning resources and help them with translanguaging practices. In turn, this will help you implement associated multilingual pedagogies.

### *Understanding Language and Pedagogy*

Finally, further develop your understanding of language and pedagogy. To extend learners' meaning-making repertoires, develop an explicit knowledge of English form, meaning, and use in various contexts. This includes (but is not limited to) phonology, lexicography, syntax, discourse, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and communicative strategies. Reach an understanding of how second language learning and teaching work together. For helping learners use their multilingual resources to make meaning through translanguaging, implement the pedagogical approaches and strategies described in the next section.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

To help your learners use translanguaging to extend their meaning-making repertoires, consider implementing these practices.

### *Design Meaning-Based Problem-Solving Tasks*

To better help learners investigate and negotiate meaning, design problem-solving tasks. These tasks should have sufficient flexibility for students to apply multilingual resources in natural and meaningful ways. Avoid pressuring learners to use a specific language. Instead, have learners follow the process Kailin used to explore the meaning of “besides” (Choi & Liu, 2021). To do this, identify words that are puzzling or challenging for your learners. Have students explore the meanings of targeted words in various contexts. Regardless of whether learners use translation to solve a linguistic problem, have learners discuss these meanings and share their problem-solving practices. For example, ask learners:

- How did you solve this problem?
- What did you do first? What did you do next?
- What's the difference in meaning between A and B?

Encourage learners to create sentences in relevant contexts that include the targeted words. If learners struggle to solve this problem, encourage them to use some of multilingual strategies described in this chapter.

### ***Support Translanguaging Practices Through Multimodalities***

To support learners' translanguaging practices, help them use multimodalities, such as signs and semiotics (symbolic communication). Connect language, color, music, body movements, creativity, and emotions to help learners expand vocabulary, build metalinguistic and meta-semiotic awareness, and engage in a richer and more sensory literacy experience (Ollerhead, 2019). For instance, to help students expand vocabulary to describe moods, consider using colors to stimulate thought. First, have students brainstorm as many color words as possible in their first language, describe what these colors represent for them, and explain how these colors can make them feel and think. Then encourage students to work together collaboratively with translating these color words into English. Finally, have students share with the whole class. Such activities create rich opportunities to negotiate meaning and facilitate learner engagement.

### ***Build on Learners' Existing Translation Practices***

To build on learners' existing translation practices, ask them about the translation processes they used to negotiate and facilitate meaning. For example, ask questions such as the following:

- How did you translate it?
- Did you use any tools?
- How did you use them and why?
- Did you encounter any difficulties?
- If so, what did you do?
- Could there be any other translations?
- Why did you choose this translation and not one of the other translations?

Some learners might have translated by using Google Translate, and others might have done so by using various digital resources and other strategies. Determine how learners applied these practices to create meaning and were then able to identify possible limitations for extending these practices. Show them how to explore meaning by using different types of online dictionaries (e.g., monolingual, bilingual) and, also, how to do so by using corpus sites (<https://www.english-corpora.org/iweb/>). Design tasks for learners to use these new practices. Guide your learners in using these practices to negotiate and explore the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in the types of contexts being examined. Among these tasks and practices, none would require that you know the first languages spoken by your learners.

### ***Implement Translation Tasks to Facilitate Negotiation of Meaning***

Finally, implement translation tasks to support learners with exploring how meaning is created, negotiated, and diversified during the translanguaging process. For example, Kim (2011) suggested that learners can have their writing translated by a peer who shares a common language (other than English). Together, they can use the following questions to reflect on their respective meaning-making processes:

For the writer: How accurate was your partner's translation of your writing? Was there any miscommunication? If so, where was it and what do you think caused it?

For the translator: How clear was your partner's writing? Are there any areas where you think your partner needs to clarify?

Additionally, guide learners to create and compare their individual translations. Pacheco et al. (2015) explained how such practice can be conducted to deepen learners' reading comprehension of target texts, and Kiernan et al. (2016) showed the possibility of creating and comparing translations to develop audience awareness and metalinguistic knowledge. French (2019) suggested a series of tasks such as comparative song analysis to help learners utilize translation to explore how meanings are made in their everyday lives. Regardless of the form taken by these tasks, help learners focus on translation as a translanguaging practice, discuss the intended and conveyed meaning, and explain how this meaning was accomplished.

In this chapter, you have learned that translanguaging is a meaning-making process used by multilinguals and that translation is inherent within this translanguaging process. You learned about the need to understand your learners' languages and literacy practices and your own teaching and learning context. You also learned how to design meaning-based problem-solving tasks, support translanguaging through multimodalities, build on learners' existing translation practices, and implement translation to negotiate and facilitate meaning.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about translanguaging:

- Translanguaging is when multilinguals use diverse language and knowledge resources to make meaning.
- Translation is not a simple transmission from Language A to Language B. Rather it is a complex process requiring linguistic, cultural, and social skills and, as such, is an essential part of the translanguaging process.
- Meaning becomes expanded and diversified through the translation process.
- Focus on process (not product) to help learners use translanguaging to make meaning.
- Enrich your understanding of learners beyond any questionnaire-type profiles.
- Develop your knowledge about language and how meaning is conveyed in different contexts.
- Engage learners in the process of exploring meaning by encouraging them to use their linguistic repertoires. Even if you don't know your learners' home languages, you can guide them with using multilingual strategies.
- Design problem-solving tasks for learners to explore meaning in context.
- Tap into learners' multilingual resources as they do their own translanguaging.
- Guide learners to reflect on translanguaging processes for exploring how meanings are made.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about translanguaging, answer these questions:

1. Why do you think some teachers try to limit the use of languages other than English in their English classrooms? How would you respond to that?
2. Have you already translated texts? If so, what was your process? What made this translation process easy or difficult?
3. How do you feel about learners using Google Translate to write their assignments in English (or any other target language)? In which cases could this tool be problematic and why?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about translanguaging, do the following:

1. Translate a short news item from English to the language of your local audience. Compare your translation with your classmates' translations and discuss your choice of language. Be sure to explain why you made certain translation choices.
2. Select a curriculum, textbook, or lesson plan from your teaching context. Are there any opportunities or tasks in these materials that may involve translation? Do these tasks help learners explore meaning or are these tasks simply for translating from Language A to Language B? If the latter, how could you modify the task to help learners focus on making meaning?

## EXPANDING FURTHER

For additional information about translanguaging, visit these websites:

- Multilingual approaches. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/using-multilingual-approaches-moving-theory-practice>
- New York State initiative on emergent bilinguals. <https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/translanguaging-resources/>
- Translanguaging in ELT classrooms. [http://www.jasonanderson.org.uk/downloads/Jasons\\_ideas\\_for\\_translanguaging\\_in\\_the\\_EFL\\_ESL\\_classroom.pdf](http://www.jasonanderson.org.uk/downloads/Jasons_ideas_for_translanguaging_in_the_EFL_ESL_classroom.pdf)
- Translingual writing approach. [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/teacher\\_and\\_tutor\\_resources/translingual\\_writing/the\\_translingual\\_approach\\_in\\_the\\_classroom.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/teacher_and_tutor_resources/translingual_writing/the_translingual_approach_in_the_classroom.html)

## See Also

Aspects related to translanguaging are also addressed in the following chapters of this book:

**Chapter 2** *The Diversity of Global Englishes* by L. Barratt

**Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners* by M. Gandolfo, B. Damiani, and L. Caperochipe

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 23** *Integrating Technology in Language Classrooms* by H. Hubbard, A. Foss, and C. Strawn

**Chapter 31** *Using Translation and Interpretation in ELT* by S. Terol

**Chapter 38** *A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar* by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin

**Chapter 45** *Strategies to Teaching Vocabulary* by G. Dean-Fastnacht

**Chapter 50** *Developing Intercultural Competencies* by L. Rojas

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# CHAPTER 16

## Incorporating Interjections to Facilitate Conversational Flow



## Incorporating Interjections to Facilitate Conversational Flow

Aida Rodomanchenko

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### Abstract

Have you ever been in a situation where you lost your train of thought because of being asked a question mid-talk or were distracted by a side comment? Probably, like others, you struggled to get back on track. Although such interruptions are part of authentic conversations, they are rarely addressed in English classes. In this chapter, you will learn about strategies for dealing with the unknown and unexpected in conversations and other speaking situations. You will learn about conversational elements, different types of interruptions that can occur in conversations, and various ways to use English interjections when responding to such interruptions. You will also learn how to incorporate interjections to facilitate conversational flow.

*Keywords:* interjections, interruptions, conversational flow, authentic conversations, conversational elements, discourse strategies

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## Introduction

We participate in everyday conversations to express ourselves and share our views. In these conversations, we use words and phrases for targeted purposes such as giving instructions and receiving information (Lewis & Hill, 1985). To participate effectively in such conversations, English learners need to acquire specific skills and strategies. They might learn vocabulary, pronunciation, and accuracy in their English classes. However, they are rarely taught skills for managing conversations or strategies for using interjections (Thornbury, 2005). By acquiring such skills and strategies, English learners can participate more actively in conversations and, by doing so, become better prepared to perform on international exams and interact at professional events. However, interjections are rarely included as a topic in the curriculum and textbooks for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), perhaps because of not being viewed as a separate linguistic category (O'Connell & Kowal, 2008).

Interjections can be short sudden expressions of emotion that serve as conversational fillers. When used like this, interjections are not overly problematic for EFL students (Rodomanchenko, 2014). However, our students are challenged by interjections when used, either intentionally or unintentionally, to interrupt conversations. This interrupting function is reflected in alternative expressions for interjections, such as interruptions coined by O'Connell and Kowal (2008) and interventions coined by Farr (2006). Through targeted instructional strategies, EFL students can learn to handle interruptions and incorporate interjections for facilitating conversational flow.

## Background

Among speaking skills, an invariant kernel is the ability to initiate and maintain a conversation while speaking at a normal pace without long pauses. This is assessed at the B2-C1 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2018). This ability includes several micro skills such as handling interjections, reporting back (e.g., confirming or rejecting), and responding spontaneously and effortlessly. Although handling interjections is crucial in academic and professional contexts, this skill is often not used consistently by EFL learners in their everyday conversations (Rodomanchenko, 2014).

Interactional conversations belong to a communication genre that has social interaction as its main goal. Such conversations comprise small talk, casual interactions, discussions, roundtables, and debates. This type of conversation, whether planned or unplanned, is usually co-constructive. Effective speakers utilize a variety of interactive conversation elements and are attuned to the schematic structure of a given conversation (Thornbury & Slade, 2007). Such structures include prosodic principles that are characteristic of the specific genre for that conversation.

Effective participation in a conversation leads to communicative achievement. This achievement presupposes psychological aspects of spontaneous spoken discourse such as intersubjectivity, perspectivity, verbal integrity, and open-endedness as well as a readiness to actively listen and co-construct the direction of a conversation in real time (O'Connell & Kowal, 2008). To ensure communicative achievement, effective speakers use discourse knowledge, respect cooperative principles, and observe quality, quantity, relevance, and manner (Grice, 1975). Such speakers also control and manage their speech for thematic organization, coherence, cohesion, logical ordering, style, register, and rhetorical effectiveness (COE, 2018).

In conversations, communicative achievement also requires agenda management (often called topic management). As a vital dimension of conversational structure, agenda management is the way a speaker might introduce, develop, and change topics (e.g., We've got two issues...). When one topic ends, the speaker introduces a new topic or reintroduces a previous one by using a transition element or another aspect of functional language (Thornbury & Slade, 2007). To keep the speaker talking, others might provide verbal and non-verbal motivational cues (Richards, 2008). When speakers are interrupted, they use interjections to compensate for this unexpected deviation and, by doing so, recover their agenda management.

## Major Dimensions

We can discover how native speakers participate in conversations, deal with interruptions, and use interjections by examining the scripts from four conversations (A, B, C, D) provided in the appendix. Each conversation has a speaker (person initially talking) and an interlocutor (person initially listening). The speaker and interlocutor interrupt each other by using interjections. They respond to the other person's interruption by doing one or more of the following:

- ignore the interjection or interrupt the interrupter
- acknowledge the interjection verbally or non-verbally and then continue or switch topics
- view the interjection as a technique for maintaining an interactive conversation and then change perspectives or switch topics

The speakers and their interlocutors initially responded in the above ways when first being interrupted (Appendix: Conversations A, B, C, D). However, after these initial responses, they employed the following strategies when handling ongoing interruptions and, also, when using additional interjections.

### *Turn-Taking, Interjecting, and Backchanneling*

Conversations entail turn-taking, interjecting, and backchanneling as well as multiple overlaps and other types of interruptions (Thornbury & Slade, 2007). These elements are part of normal conversations and, as such, do not occur randomly. Speakers and interlocutors unconsciously understand culturally specific signals, both explicit (e.g., questions, adjacency pairs) and implicit (e.g., pauses, including long awkward pauses). For example, native speakers of a given language are adept at knowing when and how to take their respective turns, especially in the frequent turn-taking of casual conversations. However, when coming from different cultures with varying cultural norms, a speaker might view an interlocutor's backchanneling as intrusive and hostile.

In conversations with greater degrees of informality, interruptions occur with greater frequency. For example, speakers and interlocutors tend to complete each other's turns and frequently interject and backchannel. Interjecting and backchanneling are key elements in a conversation. These two elements may appear to be similar; yet crucial differences exist. Interjecting serves to introduce or recycle a topic. Backchanneling shows interest in a topic without adding new information; it is an active listening skill that supports a conversation and helps the flow.

During each of these four conversations (Appendix: Conversations A, B, C, D), the speaker and interlocutor employed different ways of interjecting and/or backchanneling. They made choices based on their familiarity with each other and, also, on the format and tone of their respective conversations. From these conversations, I selected the following examples of interjecting and backchanneling:

- polite interjections (Conversation A)
- intrusive interjections (Conversation C: lines 2, 4, 6)
- backchanneling (Conversation A: line 5)
- functional language (Conversation D: lines 1, 2, 4, 6, 8)
- neither backchanneling nor functional language (Conversation C)

### *Cultural Perspectives of Politeness*

Speakers and interlocutors must understand cultural perspectives of politeness for effectively being able to interrupt a conversation and use interjections. For example, because interrupting is usually seen as impolite, interlocutors use functional language when interjecting (e.g., I'm sorry to interrupt.) and, upon doing so, assume the speaker role (Conversation D: line 6). Perceptions of interjections differ among cultures, contexts, and gender. Among Australians, teasing and friendly ridicule occur more frequently in male groups, whereas storytelling and opinion voicing occur more frequently in female groups (Thornbury & Slade, 2007). Americans, with a time-is-money mindset, tend to interrupt swiftly (Schmidt, 2010). British, known as over-polite masters of indirect communication (Gibson, 2010), are less inclined to interrupt and, also, expect not to be interrupted by others. However, whenever British interrupt a conversation, they use functional language preceding the interjection. Speakers from cultures where people do not mind interrupting others are less likely to be offended by being interrupted themselves.

### *Responses to Interjections*

In genuine conversations, interlocutors do not wait patiently for speakers to give them the floor. As questions and comments arise, the speaker is interrupted. After handling the interruption and resuming the speaker role, a speaker usually does not return to where the interruption occurred but, instead, might continue with a new dynamic (O'Connell & Kowal, 2008). Effective speakers often regard interjections as springboards to keep conversations going (Conversation A: line 5). When dealing with an intrusive interjection, the speaker might

- change the topic (Conversation C: line 11),
- ignore the interjection (Conversation C: lines 3, 5, 7, 8, 10),
- interrupt the interrupter (Conversation C: line 9), or
- try to continue speaking.

Depending on their conversational goal, speakers might not switch topics; instead, they might simply acknowledge the interjection non-verbally (nodding a head) or verbally (e.g., Thank you for the question. I'll come back to it later.).

## Pedagogical Applications

Explicit strategy instruction helps EFL students use functional language for politely interrupting and casually interjecting, which, in turn, can help them manage conversations in a native-like way (Thornbury & Slade, 2007). Such strategies also help when addressing an audience and being interrupted by questioning and heckling (Rodomanchenko, 2014). When interrupted, native speakers often struggle to get back on track; this is even more challenging for EFL speakers. Help your EFL students deal with interruptions and manage conversations by having them take part in activities for roleplaying interruptions, practicing interjections, and recognizing politeness norms as well as for pausing and backchanneling.

### *Roleplaying Interruptions*

EFL students often follow a classroom rule (written or unwritten) of not interrupting one another. Instead, they patiently wait their turn or use a narrative juncture to signal turn-taking. This type of implicit no-interruption rule can hinder a teacher's attempt at spontaneous dialogue and generate polite monologues without the characteristics of spontaneous discourse, such as open-endedness and co-construction (O'Connell & Kowal, 2008).

To help your students sidestep this overpolite situation, suggest a controversial issue, and then limit the length of time for turn-taking. For example, in my British Studies class, I used a balloon debate, which is an activity where students debate something controversial, such as deciding who to save in a damaged hot-air balloon (Thornbury, 2005). This type of debate generates diverse opinions and thus triggers interruptions requiring the use of interjections. In my class, I tracked the time it took students to complete the first debate round and then allowed half the initial time for the second round. The more engaged my students became, the more they used interjections for interrupting and responding. Consider engaging your students with authentically using interjections by selecting controversial issues (e.g., balloon debates) and arguable topics (e.g., favorite actors).

### *Practicing Interjections*

In a safe classroom environment, EFL students can practice interruptions in semi-spontaneous roleplays. As a full-class activity, one student gives a speech or shares a lengthy opinion while the other students continually interrupt by asking questions or heckling (either nonverbally or verbally). Stopping briefly, the student in a speaker role acknowledges the interruption nonverbally or verbally (e.g., Yeah, true), answers the question, and then continues speaking (Rodomanchenko, 2014). To facilitate this roleplaying activity, give each student a card with a specific role. The instructions for these roles can be as follows:

- Interrupt others with brief intrusive interjections.
- Ignore interruptions and continue talking.
- Backchannel to encourage others to speak.

Adapt this activity for diverse topics and, also, to meet the distinct ages, backgrounds, and needs of your students.

***Recognizing Politeness Norms***

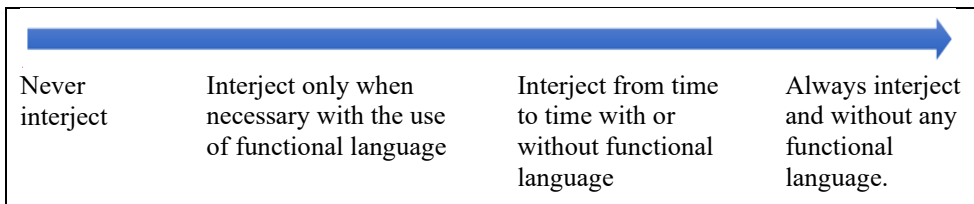
The politeness norms for interrupting conversations are culturally bound. Because of this, EFL learners are often challenged at recognizing politeness strategies in English and might use a strategy that is inappropriate for a given situation (Cohen, 1966, as cited in Thornbury & Slade, 2007). Two culture-bound examples from my own EFL classes are as follows:

- My students from Russia are accustomed to taking long turns in their first language without being interrupted (which is considered rude in their culture) and thus refrain from interrupting others.
- My students from Morocco and Saudi Arabia openly voice their opinions by frequently interrupting others and are not offended when being interrupted.

To help my EFL students understand differing norms, I have students examine cultural differences of politeness for interrupting conversations. When all students in a class are from the same culture, I have them compare cultural differences between Britain and the United States. When the students in a class are from different cultures, I have them share their own cultural norms for interrupting conversations and then plot these norms along a value line for specific contexts as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Value Line for Cultural Differences of Politeness Norms When Interrupting*



After creating this value line of cultural norms for interrupting conversations, my students participate in an activity such as Crowd Reactions for informal contexts and Game Interruptions for business contexts (Keller & Warner, 1988). In these activities, students initially brainstorm opposite views about a controversial issue and identify phrases for agreeing and disagreeing. After this initial preparation, a student who strongly favors an issue explains her perspective. The other students listen attentively and, while respecting the speaker’s cultural norms, interrupt her by using functional phrases to agree or disagree.

***Pausing and Backchanneling***

Pausing and backchanneling are essential for maintaining a conversation (Thornbury & Slade, 2007). They are also culture specific. My Italian and Saudi Arabian students use shorter pauses between turns to maintain a constant flow. My Chinese and Taiwanese students use longer inter-turn pauses, which, to others, appear to break the flow. I have my students watch movies and talk shows to observe pausing and backchanneling among speakers from the same culture and from different cultures. When sharing their observational discoveries in groups, students from the culture represented in a movie (or talk show) act as experts on that culture’s conversation

elements. This activity raises student awareness of the role played by culture for managing a conversation and for interrupting.

In this chapter, you learned about conversational elements, the types of interruptions that occur in conversations, and ways to use English interjections. You also learned how instructional strategies can help EFL students incorporate interjections to facilitate conversational flow.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Several key concepts related to using interjections are as follows:

- Being fluent in English does not presuppose knowing how to handle interjections.
- Interjections are an indispensable part of our everyday communication; yet their explicit use is not included in many textbooks.
- Interjections are culture-specific and thus depend on the context of the conversation.
- Implicit rules underlie turn-taking and the use of interjections in authentic conversations.
- Students can learn how to use interjections through specific instructional strategies.
- Roleplaying in a classroom's safe environment is instrumental for students to practice using interjections and responding to interruptions so that they will be prepared for doing this in real-world conversations.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about interjections, answer these questions:

1. Is it acceptable in your culture's academic and professional context to interrupt others? How is this done? Do the strategies we use in our L1 differ from those in L2?
2. Do interjections hinder or support productive conversations? Think of advantages and disadvantages from interrupting others.
3. What does the way that people interrupt each other tell us about their context, culture, and willingness to participate in a specific conversation?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about interjections, do the following:

1. While having everyday conversations in your first and second languages, make a mental note of how prone you are to interrupt others. Note specific contexts and, also, the strategies you use in each language to cope with interjections.
2. Watch live interviews with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Note the way they interrupt each other and deal with interjections.
3. Have a round-table discussion with your peers on a controversial issue (e.g., censorship). Record your discussion. When later replaying the discussion, note the frequency and quality of interjections at the beginning of the discussion and then later when it becomes more intense. Identify the strategies you used for dealing with interjections.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about interjections, visit these websites:

- Arguments in education and interjections in argumentation.  
<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10000955/1/Andrews2009Importance%28lecture%29>
- Interruptions and cognitive load theory.  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211949320300156>
- Specific expressions in video clips. <https://youglish.com/>
- Teaching speaking for interaction and transactional purposes.  
<https://www.professorjackrichards.com/teaching-speaking-interactional-versus-transactional-purposes>

## See Also

Ideas for interactive conversations are also offered in the following chapters of this book:

**Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning* by M. Zalimben

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess

**Chapter 29** *Using Theater to Teach English* by C. Ortiz and M. Vaky

**Chapter 40** *Strategies to Teach Speaking* by S. Spezzini

**Chapter 50** *Developing Intercultural Competencies* by L. Rojas, J. Castañeda, and J. Mosquera



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# APPENDIX

## ch.16

### Conversation A

*Barack Obama and Michelle Obama Answer Children's Questions*

Barack Obama and Michelle Obama answer a kid's question about the nastiest thing their dogs have ever done in the White House, which is pooping [Entertainment Weekly, online, 3:34-4:43]. <a href="https://youtu.be/md68cIq-I4g">https://youtu.be/md68cIq-I4g</a>		
Obama:	. . . sometimes I'll be in my office and I'm doing my work and I'll see this like scurrying and I've got to get up and run before she does her thing 'cause if I'm too late then . . .	(1) <i>describes a situation</i>
Michelle:	But she . . .	(2) <i>interrupts</i>
Obama:	. . . there's a little gift that she leaves . . .	(3) <i>ignores interjection</i>
Michelle:	She hasn't done that in a while. She's gotten much better.	(4) <i>interrupts again, trying to switch topic</i>
Obama:	She's gotten better but . . .	(5) <i>backchannels and consents to switch the topic</i>
Michele:	. . . she doesn't do that as often. She's grown up.	(6) <i>interrupts and develops the new topic</i>
Obama:	Terrible!	(7) <i>finishes his idea</i>

### Conversation B

*Emma Watson Talks With Jimmy Fallon.*

Emma Watson talks to Jimmy Fallon [The Tonight, online, 0:34-4:43]. <a href="https://youtube.com/clip/UgkxSCYi5CW1d-XKz36PXCZJTTcQCSOGm1vM">https://youtube.com/clip/UgkxSCYi5CW1d-XKz36PXCZJTTcQCSOGm1vM</a>		
Jimmy:	Last time you were on this show, and this is late night, we just had met. We'd never met each other.	(1) <i>starts the conversation</i>
Emma:	We'd never met before.	(2) <i>backchannels</i>
Jimmy:	And you couldn't be nicer and sweeter, and, gosh, I'm a fan of yours. And you came out, and you sat just the way you're sitting. . .	<i>continues his idea</i>
Emma:	Just here, in this seat.	(3) <i>backchannels</i>
Jimmy:	. . . very nice and we were talking, and I just gave you a compliment, and then you said, "Before you continue . . ."	<i>continues his idea</i>
Emma:	"Before you even start the interview . . ."	(4) <i>interrupts and provides correct line</i>
Jimmy:	Yeah	(5) <i>backchannels</i>
Emma:	I just dove straight in with "I love that Halloween candy thing that you do."	(6) <i>continues her idea</i>

## Conversation C

*Presidential Debate Between Clinton and Trump*

Clinton and Trump trade blows during the presidential debate [Guardian News, online, 0:04-0:30]. <a href="https://youtu.be/DBhrSdjePkk">https://youtu.be/DBhrSdjePkk</a>		
Clinton:	I was against it once it was finally negotiated, and the terms were laid out. I wrote about that in . . .	(1) <i>expresses her position</i>
Trump:	You called it the gold standard . . .	(2) <i>interrupts</i>
Clinton:	. . . I wrote about that in . . .	(3) <i>ignores the interjection</i>
Trump:	You called it the gold standard . . .	(4) <i>interrupts again</i>
Clinton:	. . . well, I . . .	(5) <i>tries to ignore the interjection</i>
Trump:	. . . You called it the gold standard of trade . . .	(6) <i>continues interrupting without losing a bit</i>
Clinton:	. . . and . . .	(7) <i>tries to ignore the interjection</i>
Trump:	You said it's the finest deal you've ever seen . . .	(8) <i>ignores Clinton's attempts to step in and continues expressing point of view</i>
Clinton:	No	(9) <i>gives up continuing her thought and starts answering the blow</i>
Trump:	. . . and then you heard what I said about it and all of a sudden you were against it.	(10) <i>ignores Clinton's interjection and finishes his idea.</i>
Clinton:	Donald, I know that you live in your own reality, but that is not the facts.	(11) <i>finally, switches from informing the audience about her position to answering Trump's blow</i>

## Conversation D

*NHS England and NHS Improvement Board Meeting in Common - 30 January 2020 (abridged)*

NHS England and NHS Improvement Board Meeting in Common - 30 January 2020. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPAOt0mRrW4&amp;t=5887s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPAOt0mRrW4&amp;t=5887s</a>		
Dido Harding:	Any other points? Having personally visited  Okay. Thank you very much Bill. So I think I get hand it over to you, my lord.	(1) <i>thanks Bill for sharing view</i> (2) <i>gives the floor to David</i>
David Prior:	We've got two issues to discuss under specialized services. [. . .] I think John, you're going to kick off, aren't you, supported by David Sloman and - good to see you, Mike Richards again.	(3) <i>outlines the agenda</i> (4) <i>gives the floor to John</i>
John Stewart:	This item covers two distinct, yet I think linked areas of NHS England's direct commissioning responsibilities for specialized services. [. . .] But if we kick off, first of all, with cardiorespiratory . . .	(5) <i>puts his ideas across</i>
David Prior:	Okay, John, I'm sorry to interrupt. I should have mentioned that Amanda has a conflict of interest because of her role at Guy's and St Thomas's. I think the rest of	(6) <i>interrupts John to introduce a new idea</i>

	the Board of NHS England don't have a conflict. [. . .] Ara's a consultant at the Royal Marsden, so has a sort of, has a sort of a conflict there as well, but I don't think it's so great that you should feel that you can't talk on this if you wish to.	<i>(7) expresses his position and gives the floor back to John</i>
John Stewart:	I shall be very, very brief, David. I hope the paper is very clear. It's probably taken me longer to introduce it than it would take me to read it, so I won't dwell.	<i>(8) acknowledges the interjection</i>



Photo by Headway on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 17

## Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output

# Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output

Christian Cristóful

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## Abstract

As teachers, we guide learners in producing oral and written English that is developmentally appropriate for their ages and language levels. When our learners speak and write, they produce language output. Based on their output, we provide feedback to help them further develop their new language and improve their accuracy. At times, however, we might feel unsure about how best to offer constructive and useful feedback to our language learners, especially when trying to help them recognize and correct certain errors. We might be concerned that such corrective feedback could threaten our learners' emerging and fragile self-esteem as users of the English language. In this chapter, you will learn about providing effective feedback to guide learners in reflecting on their language output, developing their language proficiency, and building their self-esteem as English users. You will also learn about providing effective feedback based on learners' ages, language levels, and learning goals.

*Keywords:* language output, effective feedback, error correction, English learners, developing language proficiency

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## Introduction

During the process of learning a second or subsequent language (L2), learners develop receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing). L2 learners develop their productive skills by producing language output, which is speaking and writing. However, this L2 output naturally contains developmental errors as an inherent part of the L2 learning process. Such errors represent the language learning phases through which L2 learners advance as they develop their productive skills by speaking and writing. Through supportive feedback from teachers and peers, learners can gain greater awareness of their L2 errors. By doing so, these learners become enabled for continuing to develop their L2 output.

As teachers, we can provide supportive feedback to language learners by responding to their L2 output. However, instead of simply correcting their errors, we need to recognize their efforts and demonstrate our empathy. When L2 learners receive our positive feedback, they feel empowered for making corrective adjustments (Herra & Kulinska, 2019). Supportive feedback also helps L2 learners become aware of their language development and gain confidence as L2 users. Knowing how to provide such feedback is essential for becoming an effective teacher.

## Background

Language learners naturally make errors when speaking and writing. These errors change in nature as these learners gradually move to higher levels of L2 production. As they learn more, they expand and improve their L2 output. They can be helped by receiving meaningful feedback that recognizes what they did well and explains “what they did wrong or may still need to improve” (Woolf, 2020, p.1). Such feedback is “a critical variable in student learning in general and particularly in developing language proficiency” (Gebriel & Brown, 2020, p. 1). While advancing through the various stages of L2 development, language learners are able to recognize and correct their own errors through supportive feedback from teachers and peers as well as through reflective feedback techniques.

Teacher feedback is when teachers give feedback to L2 learners to support their language learning efforts and to suggest ways for correcting errors (Gan et al., 2021). Effective teachers learn to balance the following:

- teaching new language forms,
- keeping learner motivation high,
- providing feedback on learners' language attempts, and
- knowing how students might react to feedback—especially corrective feedback.

Teacher feedback is usually “mediated by teacher conceptions of teaching, student relationships with their teachers, and structural constraints, such as modularized programs or large classes” (Gan et al., 2021, p. 3). With experience, teachers know which feedback techniques are most useful in which situations, which errors are appropriate for corrective feedback based on the learners' age and language level, and which types of feedback can most effectively lead to increased fluency and accuracy.

Peer feedback is when peers provide feedback either one-on-one, within a group, or in a full class setting. Depending on their own L2 proficiency, peers have varying abilities for identifying



ways to help each other improve their respective L2 output. When two or more peers give feedback to the same classmate, they frequently have different ideas for how this classmate can improve vocabulary and grammar, which, in turn, can enhance the potential of such feedback (Karim et al., 2018). After modeling for students on how to give peer-to-peer feedback, assign one or more of the following peer feedback tasks:

- As a one-on-one activity, a peer gives individual feedback on a classmate's writing.
- As part of a group activity, peers give feedback to each other on something they have spoken or written.
- As a full class activity, peers give feedback on a classmate's presentation by identifying one aspect they like and giving suggestions for improving another aspect (Cavallo, 2019).

Reflective feedback is when language learners reflect on their own L2 output (oral and written) and identify ways to improve. Here, learners assume “responsibility to correct their own errors” (Karim et al., 2018, p. 123). Although L2 learners might initially be challenged at self-critiquing and self-correcting, they can be guided in using these self-help strategies (Budden, 2008). By knowing how to reflect on their own L2 output, language learners

- build confidence in using L2,
- develop self-esteem as L2 users, and
- become empowered for progressing toward more advanced L2 levels.

During cyclical feedback interactions, learners learn to reflect on their own output when guided by others (e.g., teacher and peers). Such interactive feedback is effective at helping L2 learners critique their oral and written output, identify what to correct, and ultimately self-correct.

### Major Dimensions

Effective interactive feedback helps learners focus on their L2 output and make improvements (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Although feedback might look different when responding to oral output versus written output, the goal is the same—support learners for improving L2 output and for gaining confidence as L2 users.

#### *Responding to Learners' Oral Output*

When responding to learners' oral output, use various feedback techniques. For example, when you teach or give feedback, accompany your words with non-linguistic cues to help L2 learners feel comfortable and understand your intended message (Ferlazzo & Hull Sypniewski, 2018). Such non-linguistic cues are facial expressions, gestures, and other types of body language.

On the first day of class, start guiding learners with understanding your non-linguistic cues. Explicitly explain that you will be communicating through facial expressions, gestures, and body language. Consistently use the same non-linguistic cues to convey the same meaning (Bartolomei-Torres, 2019). Explain to learners that these non-linguistic cues provide feedback for recognizing something good as well as for signaling errors and guiding self-correction.

When giving feedback on learners' oral output, use facial expressions and head movements to convey specific messages. Smiling and nodding convey "excellent job," "bingo," and "that's it!" A questioning smile and shaking head convey "no, not exactly," "not quite," and "try again." Such non-linguistic cues provide instantaneous feedback. However, avoid using overly drastic expressions. Depending on the learners' home cultures, exaggerated expressions might be inappropriate and, thus, discourage rather than encourage.

Gestures can also serve to provide feedback and are especially useful in classes where students represent diverse learning preferences. Keep in mind, however, that body language varies greatly among cultures. For example, the thumbs-up gesture is positive in many cultures (representing positive feedback) yet vulgar in other cultures. Nonetheless, when well selected, body language is effective at giving instantaneous feedback to learners' L2 output. As feedback, gestures affirm output efforts and encourage learners to keep talking. Gestures and other body language can also help learners understand new L2 vocabulary, such as illustrated by these examples:

- **Pronouns.** To communicate "I/me/my," point to yourself. For "you/your," point to a student in front of you and at a conversational distance. For "she/her/hers," point to a girl at a slight distance. For "he/him/his," point to a boy at a slight distance. For "they/them/their," point to several students at a distance and make a circular motion.
- **Demonstratives.** Touch a single item (e.g., one book) to show the meaning of "this." Touch three items (e.g., three books) and make a circular motion to show "these." Point to a single item in the distance for "that" and to three items in the distance for "those."
- **Actions.** When giving oral L2 instructions, act out what is expected of students (e.g., speak, listen, read, write, cut, look, click). Also, act out action verbs (e.g., sit, jump, fly, drive), animals (e.g., dog, cat, bird, snake, elephant), and other vocabulary that can easily be represented with actions.
- **Time and Tenses.** Point backwards with a hitchhiking sign to show the meaning of "past/yesterday/before." Point repeatedly to the floor in front of you to show the meaning of "here" and "today/present/now." Make a rolling index finger movement and point forward into the distance to show the meaning of "tomorrow/future/later."

Through non-linguistic cues (facial expressions, gestures, actions), your teaching will soon resemble acting. However, of greater importance is that your non-linguistic cues will serve as positive feedback to oral output produced by your learners and, as such, will keep them talking.

### ***Responding to Learners' Written Output***

When responding to learners' written output, use a variety of feedback techniques, including non-linguistic feedback. For example, consider using emojis and happy faces in response to their written output just like when using smiles and gestures in response to their oral output. Similarly, in response to both oral and written output, delay the corrective feedback of grammar errors until later in the learning process. Instead, employ feedback techniques that do not interrupt the flow of L2 discourse (oral and written).

Depending on the learners' ages and language levels, vary your feedback to their L2 written output (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). When providing such feedback, be sure to

- recognize the efforts of your L2 writers (even if they wrote just a few words),

- build the confidence of L2 learners as emerging writers, and
- encourage language learners to keep writing.

Beginning learners might be writing words in a list or phrases in a graphic organizer (which are analogous to brief utterances). Advanced learners might be writing essays and reports (which are analogous to oral presentations). Regardless of the genre, writers at all language levels need to receive feedback letting them know that they are on the right track (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Otherwise, they may stop trying. Here are some tips:

- Write brief suggestions to the student writer (e.g., Remember to add “s” for plural).
- Include a congratulatory and encouraging comment at the end of each writing task.
- Have task-specific writing conferences with individuals, pairs, and/or small groups.

When L2 learners write essays and other complex pieces, give feedback at each stage of the writing process. These stages are often identified as brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, and finalizing (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Do not postpone feedback until the end of the writing process such as when grading the final product. Consider following these suggestions:

- Focus your feedback on the goals for the stage in the writing process being reviewed.
- Provide feedback on ideas, content, and organization in the early stages.
- Delay giving feedback on grammar and punctuation until later stages.

Focus the writer's attention on the first occurrence of an error by providing a suggestion (e.g., Remember to use “s” for plural nouns). Identify later occurrences of this same error by circling, underlining, or highlighting. Another way would be to use codes such as T for tense, CAP for capitalization, and slash (/) for delete. Finally, instead of writing a comment like “awkward” or “run-on,” share your experience as a reader by writing: “I'm confused. Can you help me understand by dividing this sentence into two separate sentences?” Students usually respond positively to helping you—their teacher—to understand their intended message.

### Pedagogical Applications

Use several strategies (implicit and explicit) to provide feedback that is appropriate for L2 learners' ages and language levels. When selecting strategies, consider the following:

#### *Providing Feedback to Learners in Different Age Groups*

Young learners need consistent guided feedback for effectively learning new vocabulary and structures. Be consistent and repetitive with patterned structures and targeted forms. Keep in mind that younger learners often become discouraged when corrected. Therefore, make sure they understand why you are giving feedback to their oral and written output. This is important for helping learners monitor their L2 output and be able to self-correct. Above all, when giving feedback, be genuinely kind and encouraging.

Adolescent learners are motivated by what they perceive as interesting (Garside, 2018). Based on their interests, guide them towards fluency and accuracy by designing dynamic classes with ongoing feedback from you and their peers. Because teens usually welcome peer feedback, create peer-feedback activities to support collaborative learning.

Some adult learners might eagerly accept your feedback, apply your corrective advice, and try again. However, depending on their personality, others might avoid trying again. Such differences are often due to self-esteem (Abrams, 2014). For supporting all learners, be tactful and reaffirm their efforts. Ask them how they would like to receive feedback (Budden, 2008). Because adults often seek explanations for grammar and pronunciation, prepare in advance to answer such questions or reply that you will find out for the next class. Above all, be patient and smile.

### *Providing Feedback to Learners at Different Language Levels*

Beginning learners are just starting to use the L2. Because this might be their first experience with a new language, explicitly guide them in how to go about learning. Explain the gestures, facial expressions, and body language that you are using when presenting new vocabulary and structures. As appropriate, use facial expressions and body language when giving feedback on learners' oral output (and, also, their written output). Guide them in how to receive feedback.

Because intermediate learners understand non-verbal cues and are experienced about receiving feedback, offer constructive feedback of greater substance. For example, after students finish a group activity, have them work individually on a graphic organizer. Move quietly around the room, stopping for a few seconds by each student. In a soft voice, offer personalized feedback, both affirmative (e.g., I like how you described ...) and corrective (e.g., A better word is ...).

Advanced learners can communicate about complex topics. Nonetheless, although they can participate in interesting discourse (oral and written), they still need feedback. To help advanced L2 learners reach greater accuracy, provide constructive feedback. For example, while students are doing individual work (e.g., writing an essay), move quietly from desk to desk offering positive feedback and constructive suggestions. Or do a follow-up class activity at the board showing common grammar errors and explaining ways to correct these errors.

### *Providing Feedback in Response to L2 Errors*

When providing feedback in response to L2 errors, find a balance between correcting for accuracy and maintaining high motivation. Be flexible and encouraging with respect to learners' emerging output—both oral and written. Although a learner's utterance might be grammatically inaccurate, consider accepting it as developmentally appropriate (Woolf, 2020). However, when you do identify a need for corrective feedback, select feedback techniques that are appropriate for a learner's age and language level. To determine the best way to provide corrective feedback, first get to know your students—individually as well as in groups. Then, use feedback techniques that support their personal learning needs.

For many learners, error correction creates anxiety and hinders progress. To avoid demotivating students, refrain from over-correcting. Too much correction can negatively affect students' self-esteem and discourage them to the point of refusing to participate (Buden, 2008). Yet, regardless of these recommended feedback practices, some teachers still try to correct all errors and seem surprised when such efforts do not lead to intended outcomes (Buden, 2008). Instead, help your students view errors as learning opportunities (Ferlazzo & Hull Sypniewski, 2018). By raising their awareness, you can guide your students with self-correcting. This, in turn, can help foster greater accuracy.

For some learners, error correction can serve to advance their learning. This is often the case regarding pronunciation errors. For example, Spanish speakers often misplace English stress on words such as “category.” In anticipation of providing corrective feedback, first compile several English words where L1 interference might lead to using stress patterns that are incorrect in L2. Explicitly explain L2 stress patterns to learners and have them practice words in isolation and context. Because most learners are unaware of having previously used incorrect stress patterns, they are usually appreciative of explicit corrective feedback and opportunities to practice.

In this chapter, you learned about the importance of providing positive feedback to English learners regarding their language output. You learned about feedback techniques for responding to learners' oral output and written output. You also learned about responding differently to learners' L2 output depending on their ages and language levels as well as their learning needs.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are key concepts about providing effective feedback:

- Providing feedback to language learners fosters their learning and performance.
- Balance is essential because feedback greatly influences motivation.
- Tailored feedback is based on determining a student's learning needs.
- No single recipe exists for providing feedback or correcting errors.
- When based on raising awareness, error correction can foster L2 accuracy.

## Discussing

Regarding feedback on learners' language output, answer these questions:

1. Which feedback strategies are suitable for your students? Why? Why not?
2. Should language learners be corrected less frequently as they advance in their language skills? Why or why not?
3. How can marking every single mistake influence a student's self-esteem?

## TAKING ACTION

Apply what you have learned about providing feedback on learners' language output:

1. Identify classroom activities designed to develop fluency and accuracy.
2. Reflect on useful feedback strategies and include these in your lesson plans.
3. Identify feedback strategies and error correction techniques that you use more frequently. Describe how you can make your feedback more meaningful to students.
4. Think about which error correction techniques work for each of your student groups.
5. Explain factors that most influence your use of specific error correction techniques. Describe how you might consider students' ages, language levels, and learning needs.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about providing feedback to learners' language output, visit these websites:

- Effective feedback. <https://www.actfl.org/resources/guiding-principles-language-learning/effective-feedback>
- Error correction games for students to correct their own writing. <http://www.kenlackman.com/files/WritingErrorsBook10A4.pdf>
- Giving feedback to language learners. [www.cambridge.org/us/files/4415/8594/0876/Giving\\_Feedback\\_minipaper\\_ONLINE.pdf](http://www.cambridge.org/us/files/4415/8594/0876/Giving_Feedback_minipaper_ONLINE.pdf)
- Providing effective feedback for learning. <https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/20-ways-to-provide-effective-feedback-for-learning/>
- YouTube: Search for "effective feedback" and "error correction."

## See Also

Aspects about providing feedback are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

- Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning in Translanguaging Practices* by K. Liu and J. Choi
- Chapter 40** *Strategies to Teach Speaking* by S. Spezzini
- Chapter 42** *Strategies to Teach Writing* by M. Harrison
- Chapter 44** *Strategies to Teach Pronunciation* by S. Spezzini
- Chapter 46** *Introduction to Language Assessment* by N. Kuhlman
- Chapter 47** *Authentic Assessment of, for, and as Learning* by G. Díaz Maggioli

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# CHAPTER 18

## Teaching English in Different Contexts

# Teaching English in Different Contexts

Remigio Díaz Benítez

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## Abstract

Context is an important element in the teaching-learning process. Context can alter meanings of words with the same phrase conveying different meanings in different places. Similarly, context can alter ways of teaching English with the same goal being approached differently in different schools, institutes, and universities as well as different countries. Each educational institution is its own context with unique contextual characteristics such as the students' home cultures and languages as well as their age, gender, and level of language proficiency. As a teacher, you will need to use the methods, techniques, and strategies that are most suitable to ensure learning within a given context. You must also design and deliver classroom activities that promote critical thinking and meaningful learning among the learners in that context. In this chapter, you will learn about the different contexts where you might one day be teaching English.

*Keywords:* teaching contexts, contextual characteristics, learner differences, English learners, English teaching

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## Introduction

Upon entering the English language teaching (ELT) profession, pre-service teachers often wonder about the places where they might one day be teaching. Places are context, and context is crucial. One type of context is a public school where students are usually in large classes and have English two hours weekly. Another context is a language institute where students are often in small, leveled classes and have English several hours weekly. Yet another context is a bilingual school where, from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, students learn language and content at the same time. Numerous other ELT contexts also exist.

In this chapter, you will learn about different ELT contexts and, by doing so, become immersed in the teaching and learning of English. As a teacher, first reach an understanding of the context where you are or will be teaching. After that, identify and implement methods, techniques, and strategies. By doing this, you can better guide students to use English for communicating, expressing themselves in interpersonal relationships, and reaching academic and professional goals. So, let's now explore the various contexts in which English is taught and learned.

## Background

English is the most widely used language worldwide (Lyons, 2021). However, of these English users, only a small percentage have English as their native language. This means that English is “the most commonly studied foreign language in the world” (para. 7). Based on where learners live and their access to learning opportunities, they study English in different types of contexts.

In all ELT contexts, cultural and socio-political aspects are of utmost importance. Teachers and students come to class with their own beliefs, norms, and values, and these may or may not be the same. Every teaching context is so complex that “most people who engage in cross-cultural interactions are not aware of the indelible impact of the invisible culture—their own and that of other participants—on practically all social uses of language” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2014, p. 396). For this reason, it is important for teachers to create an environment of mutual tolerance and respect in order to generate a meaningful learning environment. This will enable students “to question how their own values influence how they interact with and think about individuals who differ from themselves” (Muhamed, 2009, p. 1).

For teaching and learning English, other contextual criteria include the learners' age and English proficiency level. Based on their ages, students learn English in pre-school, elementary school, middle school, and high school as well as in various adult settings. Based on their language proficiency, students are placed at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels plus other levels between and beyond. This is a general way for classifying students. Precise levels are provided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which offers a detailed scale based on learners' language proficiencies.

Upon accepting a teaching position in a new context, learn about the context and about your students and their needs. After that, establish criteria for your English classes so that this context becomes a positive experience for you and your students.

## Major Dimensions

Having determined the importance of context, let's look more closely at common ELT contexts.

### *K-12 Schools*

The context of K-12 schools is one of the most common places for the teaching and learning of English. Schools are usually organized by grade levels such as pre-kindergarten, primary, elementary, middle, and high. These schools can be public or private with corresponding differences in class size, instructional time, and teacher preparation. In Paraguay and other countries where English is learned as a foreign language, private schools often provide English instruction from elementary school through high school. Such classes are taught several hours weekly by well-trained teachers who probably provide instruction based on a communicative teaching approach. Meanwhile, the public schools in many of these countries might be under-resourced and might just provide English in high school. Depending on a country's curriculum and economic resources, English classes in public schools might occur just two hours weekly and be taught by teachers who focus instruction on vocabulary and grammar.

### *Bilingual Immersion Schools*

Bilingual immersion schools represent a specialized type of K-12 context. Here, the purpose is for students to acquire a target language while learning curricular content through both the target language and home language. A dual immersion approach “immerses students equally in both languages and generally uses both languages in all curriculum areas” (Hadi-Tabassum, 2004, para. 4). In other words, English is not just taught in language classes but also used as a medium of instruction from preschool through 12th grade. For example, bilingual immersion schools in Spanish-speaking countries use both Spanish and English as channels of instruction. Children with Spanish as their home language are learning two languages (Spanish and English) from early childhood. Children with another home language are learning three languages (Spanish, English, and their home language). In the context of bilingual immersion schools, the parents and educators believe that “The acquisition and maintenance of more than one language can open doors to many personal, social, and economic opportunities” (Lightbown & Spada, 2021, p. 30).

### *Language Institutes*

Language institutes represent another context for the teaching and learning of English. In this ELT context, classes are offered for children, adolescents, and adults with materials and methods tailored for each age group and language level as well as for specific learning goals. Upon completing a series of leveled classes, students often take a standardized exam and, depending on the institute's goals, might earn an internationally recognized certificate. As in other ELT contexts, some language institutes focus on American English and others on British English, while yet others might focus on English as an international language.

### *Institutions of Higher Education*

Another ELT context is the teaching and learning of English at institutions of higher education. This context includes post-secondary colleges and universities that provide English language instruction for their undergraduate and graduate students. Some of these institutions offer their

own discipline-specific English classes while others have agreements with language institutes for general English courses. If these English classes focus on the content of a specific academic discipline (e.g., business), such instruction is called English for Specific Purposes.

### ***Company-Contracted Classes***

Another common ELT context consists of site-based English classes where companies provide employees an opportunity to learn English in the workplace. For these classes, companies usually contract a language institute or hire an individual teacher to provide English lessons during a schedule that matches employees' availability. Even if this company does not provide an actual classroom that is appropriate for teaching and learning English, the teacher needs to be flexible in adjusting instruction and learning activities for the designated space. Another format for company-contracted classes is online instruction.

### ***Hospital Schools***

A special type of ELT context is that of hospital schools. Here, programmatic content is provided to children who must be hospitalized for long periods of time. The curricular content is taught with necessary adjustments for the hospital context. If children had been learning English at their respective schools, they will continue to receive instruction when hospitalized as part of their learning process. The aim is for children undergoing treatment to continue their education, thus avoiding isolation and, also, ensuring the sustainability of rehabilitation efforts. This allows for “long-term ill children to achieve academic goals to regain their usual socio-pedagogical environment after the end of treatment” (Ivanova et al., 2021, p. 4).

### ***Schools in Indigenous Communities***

Schools in indigenous communities often represent multilingual ELT contexts. An excellent example is Paraguay's Yalve Sanga school, which is supported by the interethnic cooperation of the Asociación de Servicios de Cooperación Indígena-Menonita. Located in the central Chaco region, the Yalve Sanga school serves families primarily from the Nivaclé, Enhlet, Ayoreo, and Sanapaná indigenous groups and, also, from other ethnicities such as Lengua, Angaité, Guaraní Nandeva, and Yshir (Chamacoco). This school follows Paraguay's national curriculum and, as such, provides instruction in both official languages, Spanish and Guaraní. At the Yalve Sanga school, reading instruction is initiated in a child's home language and then provided in Spanish and Guaraní. Later, students start learning English. The English teacher collaborates with other teachers at each grade level to integrate multiple cultures in a single classroom where students work together. To better meet students' learning needs, the English teacher learns about basic phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic elements in the children's other languages. At Yalve Sanga and other schools in indigenous communities, “specific cultures can be explored, and several models of bilingual or trilingual (i.e., Spanish, English, and an indigenous language) educational activities can ultimately help students to improve their proficiency in English” (Barfield & Uzarski, 2009, p. 3).

### ***Incarcerated Instruction***

The incarcerated instruction of English occurs in a context where students are deprived of their liberty. These students might have different home languages and cultures. They might also be learning English as a second or foreign language—depending on their place of confinement and

the majority language to which they are exposed. The goal of English language instruction is to provide those deprived of their liberty with an opportunity to be rehabilitated, thus providing tools for later re-entering society. Incarcerated instruction differs in different countries and jurisdictions. However, “while there are differences in philosophies, approaches, programs, and practices across the range of jurisdictions, there are also common characteristics that link the practice of education in prison worldwide” (Behan, 2021, p. 20). For example, although the curriculum might be informal with limited availability to libraries, the inmates usually need training in languages and digital literacy. If inmates can have access to quality education, they are more likely to find employment after serving their time.

## Pedagogical Applications

Having now identified several ELT contexts, let’s examine aspects within those contexts that can affect the teaching and learning of English.

### *Class Size*

A major aspect in ELT contexts is class size, which refers to the number of students in a class. When teaching at a public school, you might have a large class with 20 students or an even larger class with over 40 students. When teaching in a language institute, you might have a class with 10 or 15 students. When teaching privately, you might have a class with just one or two students (which is often called personalized instruction). Each situation has advantages and challenges. Some research studies have examined the relationship between class size and student learning. Their findings suggest that the class size interacts with factors such as teacher competency and resource availability and that, together, these influence student learning (Aoumeur, 2017).

### *Multicultural Classrooms*

Some ELT contexts comprise multicultural classrooms with students from several different home languages and cultures. These classrooms represent a different type of context for the teaching and learning of English. Here, people from different languages interact in English. In this type of classroom, assume a more universal vision of what type of content is to be delivered and how the activities need to be implemented. Be careful not to create unintentional misunderstandings between different cultures represented in the classroom, including those of the Anglophone world. When we teach language, we must always “be aware of the complex and dynamic relationship between language and cultural customs, values, and beliefs that are embedded in language practice” (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 157).

### *Face-to-Face Classes*

Another aspect related to ELT contexts is instructional delivery. Language instruction has traditionally been delivered through face-to-face instruction in a “traditional or conventional classroom in which the instructor and the students are in a place devoted to instruction, and teaching and learning, therefore, take place at the same time” (Nazara & Wardaningsih, 2016, p. 81). Many teachers and students prefer face-to-face classes where, based on social interaction and human contact, language learning interactions can be dynamic. In such face-to-face settings, learners often engage more easily in activities, especially when these are implemented with a communicative purpose. Furthermore, when doing their teaching practicum at a host educational institution, pre-service teachers usually teach face-to-face classes.

### *Virtual Classes*

In the 21st century, “English lessons are no longer taught solely by means of printed books and chalk and blackboard, but via electronic learning management systems (e.g., Blackboard, Moodle) or digital tools (e.g., Skype, wikis), which extend learning beyond the classroom” (Barreno Avila & Ergüez Mayorga, 2020, p. 65). This context of virtual instruction can offer many advantages for teachers and students given that the materials and assignments are posted on virtual platforms, and the sessions are recorded. In 2020, almost all English classes converted to virtual because of pandemic-mandated conditions. Later, many ELT settings continued to offer some virtual classes to meet learners’ needs. To work effectively as a virtual teacher, seek training on how to use the platform(s) adopted by your institution. Among the best-known platforms are Moodle, Teams, GoogleMeet, and Zoom. Within each platform, learn to use digital tools for effectively teaching content. To maximize the advantages of virtual classes, consider incorporating virtually based social opportunities for teacher interaction with learners and, also, for learner interaction with other learners.

In this chapter, you learned about the teaching of English in different contexts. You learned about K-12 schools, bilingual immersion schools, language institutes, institutions of higher education, company-contracted classes, hospital schools, schools in indigenous communities, and incarcerated instruction. You also learned how each of these contexts can vary depending on class size, multicultural settings, and instructional delivery (face-to-face versus virtual).

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about different ELT contexts:

- English is taught worldwide in many different contexts.
- Context influences how you teach English and how students learn English.
- Culture is a context-related aspect for English teaching and learning.
- Learning another language implies learning another culture.

## Discussing

Based on the ELT contexts described in this chapter, answer these questions:

1. Which of the ELT contexts in this chapter are found in your country?
2. What challenges might you face when teaching in a multicultural context?
3. In which ways will your students’ cultural background determine the activities that you select for teaching English in a specific context?
4. Which aspects best define the various ELT contexts?



## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about different ELT contexts, do the following:

1. Compare and contrast virtual English classes with face-to-face English classes.
2. Help teach English in a context that is new for you, such as a hospital school.
3. Observe an English class in an indigenous community.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about different ELT contexts, visit these websites:

- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-balancing-act-of-bilingual-immersion>
- Hospital School in Durham. <https://www.dpsnc.net/hospital-school>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378059/PDF/378059eng.pdf.multi>
- Yalve Sanga School. <https://www.ascim.org/index.php/en/colegio-yalve-sanga>

## See Also

Different ELT contexts are also addressed in other chapters of this book:

**Chapter 3** *The Diversity of English Classes* by R. Díaz

**Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners* by M. Gandolfo, B. Damiani, and L. Caperochipe

**Chapter 8** *Teaching and Engaging Adolescent Learners* by V. Ariza-Pinzón

**Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning* by M. Zalimben

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 19** *Incorporating Inclusive Education Practices in ELT* by R. Mazzoleni

**Chapter 24** *Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms* by Y. Grevtseva and E. Zyrianova

**Chapter 26** *Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning* by A. Roca

**Chapter 32** *Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century* by C. Onatra and S. Palencia

**Chapter 33** *Current Approaches in English Language Teaching* by N. Dantaz

**Chapter 36** *Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners* by C. Giménez and I. Rolón

**Chapter 48** *International Frameworks to Assess Language Development* by E. Nuñez

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Photo by Jess Bailey on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 19

## Incorporating Inclusive Education Practices in ELT

# Incorporating Inclusive Education Practices in ELT

Rocio Mazzoleni

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## Abstract

Language educators are often asked if students with learning difficulties can learn a new language. People who pose this question seem to assume that these students will become so frustrated when exposed to another language that it would be better for them not to be placed in language classrooms. Fortunately, all students—including those with learning difficulties—can learn new languages within inclusive learning environments. In this chapter, you will explore how the field of English language teaching can offer powerful tools to maximize learning opportunities for all students. You will learn about choosing appropriate materials and adapting lessons to address a student's learning difficulty. You will also learn about assessing the second language development of students with learning difficulties. Finally, you will learn how to build confidence among students with learning difficulties and include these students rather than exclude them.

*Keywords:* inclusive education, inclusive practices, learning difficulties, language learners, appropriate teaching materials, adapting lessons

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## Introduction

As educators, we are entrusted with creating inclusive educational environments for all students, which necessarily includes students with different strengths and weaknesses as well as diverse learning difficulties. Similarly, we need to incorporate these inclusive educational practices in our English language teaching (ELT) classrooms where students may have diverse abilities and preferences for learning English. As of the beginning of their language learning journey, students need to experience English in ways that positively foster a desire and an ability to learn. We can ensure positive experiences for all students in our ELT classrooms by using inclusive practices.

To determine the best way to incorporate inclusive practices, we must first establish a basic understanding about learning processes and learning differences as well as about differences in languages and language learning. We must realize that, although everyone's brain has similar structures, people learn languages differently. We must also be aware that some learning differences are, in fact, learning difficulties. To guide us in reaching these goals, this chapter examines learning differences and difficulties among students in ELT classrooms, identifies common difficulties observed in such classrooms, and explains ways to assess these learners' language skills. This chapter also provides suggestions on how to help students with learning difficulties (diagnosed and undiagnosed) for learning new concepts and new languages.

## Background

A learning difficulty can be defined as a “disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to think, speak, spell or do mathematical calculations” (Alfonso & Flanagan, 2018, p. 53). We can further define a learning difficulty as a “type of special needs, such as reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, etc.” (NHS Data Model and Dictionary, 2022, para. 1). This type of learning difficulty can be specific or multiple and at a moderate, severe, or profound level.

Learning difficulties are not usually related to a cognitive ability or capacity for language learning. If English language learners are diagnosed with a learning difficulty, they are usually still able to learn English (Perras, 2014). Their learning difficulty means that their brains are wired differently, and they will therefore learn differently.

As ELT educators, we need to first reflect on our own attitudes, values, and behaviors regarding language differences vis-à-vis learning difficulties. We then need to identify each student's strengths and weaknesses while, of course, recognizing that language-related differences do not necessarily represent learning difficulties (Kormos, 2017). However, if we suspect that a student might be overly challenged at learning English and perhaps exhibiting signs of a learning difficulty, we should share our observation with a school professional (e.g., psychologist). After gathering additional information, the school psychologist will share our mutual concern with the student's parents. Then, together, we work as a team to define this difficulty, set goals, implement actions, and provide needed support to the student so that the desired learning can take place. By working as a team, we can usually reach favorable outcomes.

## Major Dimensions

When we suspect that a student might have a learning difficulty (though yet undiagnosed), we need to provide additional support in our English classroom so that this student can make optimal progress. We can do this by taking the following into consideration.

### *Possible Signs of Learning Difficulties*

As teachers, we need to ensure that children can access learning in an inclusive and equitable learning climate (Read, 2020). The sooner we suspect or detect possible signs of learning difficulties, the sooner we can use inclusive instructional practices to meet our students' learning needs (Bender, 2012). If possible, we should do this before an official diagnosis of learning difficulties so that, by immediately meeting the needs of our students, we can prevent them from feeling frustrated or developing low self-esteem. The best way to start is by asking key questions of parents when they first enroll their child in school or at an ELT institute. Their responses provide valuable insights for later identifying possible signs of learning difficulties that might arise as children progress to higher grade or language levels and are therefore expected to use advanced vocabulary and more complex language structures. Through inclusive practices provided by teachers, these students learn to cope with their learning difficulties. By preparing lessons to meet the needs of these students, we can mitigate the potentially negative effects of their learning difficulties and give them strategies to be successful at learning.

Early childhood educators are in a privileged position to perceive possible signs of learning difficulties when children are still young. If teaching the English language, these educators observe and assess students when learning and using English to listen, speak, read, and write. If teaching other subjects, educators observe and assess how students learn content through their first language (L1) or second language (L2), such as when trying to make connections between previous knowledge and new knowledge. In their lessons, educators adjust materials, activities, and assessments to better meet learning needs of students experiencing learning difficulties, whether diagnosed or not. In other words, we should not wait until learning difficulties are diagnosed before adapting our instruction and providing inclusive practices.

When learning difficulties are initially suspected, ask parents about the process undertaken by their child when learning to walk (Berk, 2013). This is important because young children express themselves through their body (Sanchez, 2001). In other words, they enact in their body what is being learned in the brain (Goddard, 2002). Therefore, to obtain insights to how a child's brain is functioning, ask parents a few questions such as the following:

- Did your child go through all stages for learning to walk?
- As a baby, did your child sit before crawling and then crawl before walking?
- After crawling, did your child pull himself/herself up on furniture?

Another question to ask parents is about the laterality exhibited by their child before starting school. Laterality is one side of the brain being dominant when doing activities. This is exhibited by preference for one side of the body, such as right-handedness versus left-handedness when throwing a ball (Sánchez et al., 2008). Laterality might also influence reading and writing (Le Bouch, 1987).

Knowing aspects about a child from birth until starting school helps detect early signs of learning difficulties. It also helps determine whether a child is acquiring developmentally appropriate preliteracy skills. Moreover, if a child is later diagnosed as having a learning difficulty, this early information also helps identify appropriate teaching strategies in an inclusive education setting to support the child for experiencing success as a learner.

### ***Common Learning Difficulties in ELT Classes***

Learning difficulties commonly seen in ELT classes are dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD; Hudson, 2015). Although these difficulties can overlap, each represents a different set of behaviors and abilities that can affect learning. Also common is the high end of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), which has been referred to as Asperger's Syndrome.

Dyslexia is characterized by difficulty with written language evidenced in reading, writing, and spelling. If students experience difficulties with L1 phonemic awareness, this might be a sign of dyslexia (Kormos, 2017). However, if English learners experience difficulties with English phonemic awareness, this might signal a language difference rather than a learning difficulty.

Dysgraphia is characterized by difficulty with writing as evidenced in spelling, poor handwriting, and putting thoughts on paper. Dyscalculia is characterized by difficulty with numbers. Dyspraxia is characterized by difficulty with movements and calculations (Hudson, 2015). Because these conditions might resemble other learning difficulties, great care is taken when trying to diagnose the exact learning difficulty.

ADHD is characterized by a short attention span and lively and impulsive behavior (Hudson, 2015). OCD is characterized by obsessions (e.g., unfounded fears) and compulsive behaviors (e.g., repetitive behavior patterns). ASD, which has different severity levels, is characterized by awkward social interactions, preoccupations with very narrow interests, and communication based on factual unimagined speech.

After a student is referred by a teacher as possibly having a learning difficulty, the school psychologist administers several tests, preferably in a student's L1. Based on testing outcomes, a diagnosis is reached. Sometimes this diagnosis includes two or more learning difficulties. Extreme care must be taken when testing and diagnosing L2 learners who have been referred for inappropriate behavior and problematic performance. Instead of a learning difficulty, an L2 learner's behavior and performance could stem from L1/L2 differences or delayed second language acquisition. Some English learners might have a dual diagnosis that includes a learning difficulty and a slower rate of second language acquisition.

### ***English Learner Behaviors With Language-Based Explanations***

L2 students might exhibit behaviors that could reflect a learning difficulty among L1 students in a special education context. However, in an ELT context, these same behaviors might not reflect a learning difficulty. Instead, these L2-related behaviors could represent a language difference resulting from a slower rate of second language acquisition. Several behaviors typical of English learners and the corresponding language-based explanations are provided in Table 1.



**Table 1***Behaviors of English Learners With Possible Language-Based Explanations.*

Behaviors of English Learners	Language-Based Explanations in an ELT Context
Add unnecessary words or delete necessary words	Probably do not know these words or might not have internalized this word usage, thus requiring more practice and rehearsal
Often get distracted	Probably do not understand L2 and are overloaded with information, thus needing more visual/concrete support
Have great difficulty with following directions	Probably do not know L2 vocabulary in the instructions, and these instructions might represent an unknown concept in the learner's culture, thus requiring more help with learning the needed vocabulary and concepts
Can complete math calculations but cannot solve word problems	Probably do not know L2 vocabulary in math problems or do not have former experience with content, such as U.S. or U.K. currency, thus needing to learn vocabulary in word problems and, also, the content (e.g., currency)
Do not complete writing assignments	Probably lack confidence or avoid multiple drafts before final version, thus requiring personalized support to build confidence and to understand the writing process
Cannot retell story sequence or summarize plot	Probably do not know story's L2 vocabulary and so did not understand what happened, thus needing additional help in building vocabulary

*Note.* Adapted from “Language Acquisition Difficulty or Learning Disability? How to Differentiate and Support English Language Learners With a Learning Disability,” by C. Perras, 2014, LD@school (<https://www.ldatschool.ca/language-acquisition-difficulty-or-learning-disability/>).

The examples in Table 1 serve to guide us regarding other behaviors that are typical among English learners. When we observe an English learner's behavior as not meeting expectations, we should not automatically associate that behavior with learning difficulties to be diagnosed through testing. Instead, behaviors that might resemble learning difficulties among L1 students often represent differences in rates of second language acquisition among L2 students

## Pedagogical Applications

By taking a multisensory approach in our ELT classroom, we can help students who are experiencing difficulties with learning English. Multisensorial lessons are especially helpful for students with learning difficulties—even if yet undiagnosed. To help these students, incorporate

physical actions, such as by having them wiggle when hearing a certain word. Also, consider using a ball in your classroom to further develop young children's laterality, such as the eye-hand or eye-foot coordination needed to throw or kick (Sánchez et al., 2008).

Visuals that reinforce concepts and vocabulary can help all students learn but are especially helpful for students with learning difficulties. Also important for these students is joining cooperative learning groups, which should include mixed ability groups as well as leveled groups. Depending on the activity, ASD students might be unwilling to participate in groups; however, they can be supported via peer tutoring.

Of utmost importance, provide multiple opportunities for all students to use English, including those with learning difficulties. To guide language learners with expanding their L2 knowledge, expose them to English just above their current level, which is called *i+1* (Krashen, 1981). However, if some language learners exhibit anxiety because of not understanding L2 at this level (*i+1*), help them overcome their language anxiety by using their L1 and translanguaging.

When creating assessments for your students with learning difficulties, consider adjusting an assessment's format and/or content. Also consider shortening an exam or perhaps assessing only certain skills. Another option would be to allow students to demonstrate content learning through their L1. For major assessments, work with the school's professional team to ensure that your planned adjustments and inclusive practices meet institutional criteria.

To provide optimal support to English learners who have learning difficulties (diagnosed or undiagnosed), consider following these suggestions (Read, 2020):

- Ensure that each learning environment is engaging for all students while remembering that some students become easily distracted. For example, multiple wall posters are distracting to some students with learning difficulties.
- Clearly express lesson objectives, make sure outcomes are understood, and provide expectation criteria.
- Group the instructions into stages, divide each activity into simple steps, and rehearse clearly saying your instructions aloud (at home) before explaining these instructions to your students. Keep in mind that less is often better.
- Establish standard routines in your classroom.
- Differentiate instructions from tasks. Students need to understand this difference.
- Prepare your lessons to address different ways of learning.
- Concentrate on what students can do and give positive comments (rather than negative).
- Make sure that all students participate in some way.

In this chapter, you examined inclusive education practices in ELT. You learned about possible signs of learning difficulties and, also, common learning difficulties in ELT classrooms. You learned that, although certain behaviors of English learners might resemble learning difficulties, such behaviors often represent differences in rates of second language acquisition. Finally, you learned to support students with learning difficulties by taking a multisensorial approach and reinforcing concepts through cooperative learning.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about inclusive education practices:

- Establish and maintain an inclusive learning environment.
- Build positive relationships with all students, especially those with difficulties.
- Identify possible signs of learning difficulties and adjust lessons accordingly.
- Describe what you observe in the class, but do not diagnose.
- Keep yourself informed about learning difficulties but do not confuse these with delayed second language acquisition.

## Discussing

Based on inclusive education practices described in this chapter, answer these questions:

1. What is a learning difficulty?
2. What are the learning difficulties typically found in an ELT class?
3. What inclusive practices can we use to support English learners with learning difficulties?
4. How should we assess English learners with learning difficulties?

## TAKING ACTION

To optimize your growing knowledge about inclusive education practices, do the following:

1. Engage in a self-reflection cycle and identify your attitude towards your students, especially those with learning difficulties.
2. Think of ways you can modify your lessons to make them more inclusive.
3. Create a list of techniques for assessing students with learning difficulties.
4. Talk with other professionals at your school and discuss ways to collaborate for meeting the needs of students with learning difficulties.

EXPANDING FURTHER

Additional information about inclusive education practices is provided on these webpages:

- Basics in learning disorders. <https://ldaamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Why-is-My-Child-Struggling-ppt.pdf>
- Identifying learning disabilities among English learners. <https://youtu.be/sZVDnSisCZw>
- Inclusive practices for English learners. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eYksDbJ6kNH3F5KkyIWHfaORdXV8OQ8I/view?usp=sharing>
- Distinguishing language acquisition from learning disabilities. <https://youtu.be/kSU2JFv2WE>
- Relationship between laterality and reading/writing. [https://reunir.unir.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/2997/Adelaida\\_Perez\\_Lopez.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](https://reunir.unir.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/2997/Adelaida_Perez_Lopez.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y)
- Separating difference and disability. [https://ldaamerica.org/lda\\_today/what-every-ld-educator-should-know-separating-difference-disability/](https://ldaamerica.org/lda_today/what-every-ld-educator-should-know-separating-difference-disability/)
- Separating language differences from learning disabilities. <https://www.colorincolorado.org/author/dr-catherine-collier>

## See Also

Aspects related to inclusive practices are also addressed in the following chapters of this book:

**Chapter 4** *Humanism in English Language Teaching* by B. Meadows

**Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners* by S. Montiel

**Chapter 6** *Supporting Learners' Social Emotional Learning* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 12** *Explicit and Implicit Learning in Second Language Acquisition* by C. Fernández

**Chapter 14** *Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning* by K. Sandi

**Chapter 17** *Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output* by C. Cristóful

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# CHAPTER 20

## Creating an ELT Classroom Community

## Creating an ELT Classroom Community

Becky Crosbie

Diane Carter

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### Abstract

You are starting an amazing journey in English language teaching (ELT). On this journey, you will help students learn English as a key for opening doors to their future. How can you best share your excitement to inspire students for learning English? Start by designing thematic, project-based instruction to engage the whole class, provide students freedom to choose how to develop their focus of study, and give them opportunities to share their interests and enthusiasm. In turn, this will develop strong bonds and a sense of community. To make learning even more fun and meaningful, implement diverse ways to incorporate reading, writing, listening, and speaking in your ELT classes. Conclude each thematic unit by displaying students' finished projects in the school (classroom, auditorium, hallway) and community (public library, museum, offices). These displays will make your students feel valued, successful, and confident in their abilities and will compliment your motivating, nurturing classroom environment.

*Keywords:* classroom community, English learners, thematic units, nurturing environment

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## Introduction

When you were a student, what made a class your favorite? Was it feeling that you were part of a group where your thoughts and opinions were heard and respected? Did the teacher listen to your opinions and value them? Did all class members feel comfortable participating in the learning process by sharing and discussing their points of view? Did everyone listen and show interest in others' ideas? Did the group share common and individual goals? Did this experience leave you energized? If so, you belonged to a classroom community.

Classroom community is a cohesive and supportive group (students and teacher) with common goals and responsibilities, characterized by positivity and tolerance. Members of this self-reliant community work together productively and share a sense of fun. According to McLeod (2018), building a classroom community is important because it promotes active student participation in discussion and group activities. Members explore, discover, and challenge academic materials together while assuming ownership and responsibility for their learning. Classroom communities succeed by using social activity to stimulate learning.

## Background

Interest, motivation, and emotional engagement are essential components of healthy classroom communities, especially classrooms dedicated to English language teaching (ELT). Historically, such classrooms were teacher-centered with vocabulary, book exercises, and verb conjugations. Insights to cultural aspects were brief and based on film clips and other artifacts (postcard, pottery, music). Such cultural aspects were usually not used as springboards to engage or motivate students and hence did not serve to build a classroom community.

Freire, the famous Brazilian educator, posited a theory of education where, by using problem-solving skills to gain knowledge, students change from being passive receptacles to being active learners participating in the learning process (Freire Institute, 2022). When students engage in thought-provoking conversations about real life issues, they take charge of their own education. Uninspiring methods become replaced with song, drama, roleplaying, storytelling, and other thought-provoking activities. Interactive and project based, these nurturing activities lead to student-centered classroom communities where students reflect on ideas and issues as they practice and expand their English language skills.

Learning a language is not just learning letters, words, and grammar; it entails learning about a culture's customs and behaviors. When taught together, culture and language promote successful language learning and prepare students to navigate a multicultural world (Ho, 2009). Reluctant learners, living in communities where English is seldom encountered, might not recognize value in learning a new language and might not care about English-speaking cultures. Their interests may awaken when an instructor brings English-speaking cultures to life through guests, movies, and e-pals. Students become motivated by engaging in online and offline opportunities with English speakers who share their same interests. Such activities support classroom communities where students use English to learn about English-speaking cultures.

## Major Dimensions

In positive, flexible classroom communities, students have fun while working cooperatively to complete projects and reach goals. Community defines what a class “is” rather than what a class “does” (Cheney, 2002, pp. 51-52). To begin creating a classroom community, implement the following activities in your ELT classes.

### *Introductory Letter/Email*

Before the term starts, send a letter or email to students introducing yourself. This shows students that you care about them and have time for them. In this introduction, include information about your interests, adventures, hobbies, and favorites (e.g., food, music, films) as well as pets and anything else to foster rapport with students. Also include your experiences with learning new languages and your philosophy of language learning. Though students can be encouraged to reply, it works best if this is not required. Through this initial written communication, establish the groundwork for a positive classroom community.

### *Initial Ice Breaker*

Set the tone for your classroom community by providing a warm welcome on the first day. In your initial ice-breaker activity, consider using students’ home language if students have a low English level. Following are three ice breakers that have worked well in our classes.

**Interview/Introduce.** In pairs, students interview each other using these and other questions: Do you have a hobby? What is something unique about you? What is your favorite food? What is your greatest fear? Students take notes. After about 10 minutes, the students in each pair switch roles. When the class reconvenes, the students in each pair introduce each other to the class.

**Find Someone.** Each student has the same list of about 20 items (e.g., owns a cat, knows how to juggle). All students move around the room. Each student interacts individually with a classmate, asks questions of that first partner to see if this person fits one of the items, writes that person’s name next to that item, and then moves to find a new partner. Students try to talk with as many classmates as possible. The student who completes the most items is the winner of this activity.

**Two Truths and a Lie.** Each student tries to fool their classmates by telling two truths about themselves and one lie. The other students vote on which of the three statements is a lie.

Look for other icebreakers online (Turner, 2021), or use one that you have used before. An effective ice breaker triggers brief discussions, which can help students get to know each other.

### *Student-Generated Rules*

After students have more information about their classmates, they are ready to join you in establishing rules for their new classroom community. Offer some broad concepts for them to consider (e.g., respect, tolerance, collaboration, responsibility, compromise). The actual rules will be created through collaborative student effort. This process is important because when students have a voice, they take ownership of their learning (Plotinsky, 2019).

### ***Relationships***

Your classroom community is about relationships between students and between you and your students. A climate of trust, respect, and appreciation is the backbone of the learning process. Unlike written work, classroom community strategies are not time fillers used sporadically after the usual lesson. Rather, community building starts before your first class and permeates your daily activities throughout the entire year.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

In your classroom community, nurture a fertile and productive environment for students to develop English language skills by following time-tested teaching suggestions.

### ***Rituals and Routines***

Rituals and routines serve to promote healthy language development. Students value routines and steps that have clear directions because they feel secure when knowing what to do. This is especially the case during transitions such as entering the room or switching from whole class to groups (Williams et al., 2009). Students feel valued when allowed to make their own choices. One choice could be agreeing to have weekly class meetings where students express thoughts and reactions about instructional materials, propose ideas for upcoming topics or projects, and introduce concerns or interests to be investigated in their classroom community.

### ***Interactive Oral Activities to Promote Literacy***

Acquiring oral language is essential for developing English literacy. When oral activities are meaningful and engaging, students can connect content from the oral activity to the reading and writing process (Williams et al., 2009). Content-based activities are effective for strengthening English language skills while reinforcing and expanding content learning (Peregoy & Boyle, 2009). Interactive thematic activities should include speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

### ***Cooperative Learning Groups***

Learning groups allow students to cooperate with each other during project work. In cooperative groups, members focus on an area of study, make choices based on common interests, and decide group roles. Each group member has a productive, valuable role such as director, spokesperson, recorder, timekeeper, or artist, plus any other role identified by a group. Although students with low English proficiency might see group work as letting others talk, they are encouraged to talk by another student whose role is making sure that everyone participates (Bondie et al., 2014).

### ***Group Projects***

Group projects serve to activate the curriculum, motivate students, and strengthen the classroom community. For their project, members in each group choose an inquiry focus connected with the subject matter. To develop their group project, students discuss, negotiate, debate, and use problem-solving strategies. Each group's final presentation includes written products of some type, oral presentations (e.g., dramatizations), and hands-on products (e.g., maps, models, artwork). This facilitates differentiated instruction and self-reliance, nurtures a

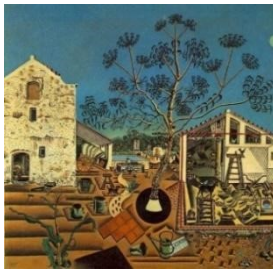
comfort zone to demonstrate knowledge in different ways (WIDA, 2022), fosters responsibility and cooperation, and uses multiple aspects of English literacy such as researching and note-taking.

To demonstrate how to plan content-based group projects, we share three projects that we did in our classes with English learners. As with all major activities, we have selected names for these projects: Aesthetically Speaking, Otterly Fun, and Storyteller. As you read about these three projects, think about how you might adapt them for your classes. Based on these ideas, plan your own projects and interactive lessons to match your students' interests and language levels.

**Aesthetically Speaking.** Our Aesthetically Speaking project was initially inspired by the famous artists and their artwork that our English learners were studying in their art class. To implement this Aesthetically Speaking project, find photographs of original paintings. These paintings need to have people, objects, colors, and landscapes for students to describe as shown in Figure 1:

**Figure 1**

*Paintings Used in a Lesson That Builds Classroom Community*



*The Farm*  
Juan Miro



*Thunderstorm*  
Grandma Moses



*A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*  
Georges Seurat

The steps for implementing this project are as follows:

1. Divide students into groups with about six students per group. For example, a class of 30 students will have five groups of students, and each group will have six students.
2. Select a painting such as those displayed in Figure 1. Make two large copies of this painting and scan it into your computer.
3. On your computer, slightly adjust this painting in four different ways. You can adjust it by adding or deleting objects or by changing the color of objects. Print one copy of each of the four altered paintings and two copies of the original painting. This will give you a set of six paintings. Now prepare five complete sets of these six paintings so that each of the five groups will have their own set of six copies (four adjusted and two original).
4. Two members in each group receive an original painting (but they do not know this). Each of the other four members in that group receive a painting that was adjusted and is, therefore, different from the original. This means that two students in each group have paintings that match while none of the other students have a painting that matches anyone else's painting.

5. Within each group, students talk in pairs but do not show their paintings. They ask a partner about the other's painting by using questions such as these: How many people are in your painting? Is there a white house with a blue roof? Are there boats on the water? After sharing questions and answers with the first partner, each student rotates to a new partner. The goal is for students in each group to identify the two group members who have identical paintings.

**Otterly Fun.** Our Otterly Fun project was initially inspired by our students' growing interest in ecology, endangered species, and, more specifically, the plight of river otters. We did this project in a middle school biology class that included several English learners. Students were studying endangered species and learned that the river otter had become extinct from excessive trapping and hunting. They also discovered that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) planned to reintroduce otters in local rivers. Students in the ELT class shared information and researched the topic. They made ceramic wind chimes (in their art classes), wrote stories about otters to be attached to the wind chimes, and sold the chimes to raise money for the DNR's otter program. To show appreciation, the DNR invited students and teachers to the media-covered release of otters at a state wildlife preserve and provided a student workshop. Everyone enjoyed the fieldtrip, and English learners experienced authentic language learning. Adapt this for your ELT classes by identifying an ecological concern in your area and collaborating with an agency.

**Storyteller.** Our Storyteller project was initially inspired by art from indigenous communities where elders tell stories for passing on cultural wisdom to children. This project consists of preparing sculptures where the storyteller is surrounded by children as shown in Figure 2. Here, the storyteller has an open mouth to show that he is talking

**Figure 2**

*Storyteller Project*



*Note.* Designed and created by Becky Crosbie, sculptor.

When we did this project, our students worked in groups and researched storytellers and their respective cultures. Each student selected a storyteller from their own life (e.g., grandfather) who told stories for teaching life lessons. Students wrote questions to use when interviewing their storyteller. They used this information to write narratives about their storyteller in English and, also, in their native language. Community members who were literate in both languages helped students write this narrative in their native language.

After the interviews, students sculpted their storytellers from clay. They fashioned a sculpture with a central figure resembling their real storyteller regarding clothing and personal items (e.g., pipe, chicken). This figure was usually surrounded by small children listening. Art teachers helped by providing clay and by firing the students' clay sculptures. Instead, consider another option such as self-hardening clay.

After finishing their clay sculptures, students videoed themselves reading their narratives. This Storyteller project was displayed for several months in the local museum's education section. The students, joined by their parents and teachers, celebrated their work with a fieldtrip to the museum where they could also see an exhibit of authentic storyteller art.

In this chapter, you learned about building an ELT classroom community. You learned about writing introductory letters, welcoming students to brightly decorated classrooms, conducting an ice breaker, having students create classroom rules, and nurturing relationships. You also learned about using rituals and routines, interactive oral activities, cooperative learning groups, and group projects. Finally, you learned that such projects can be exceptionally positive when based on local concerns (e.g., environment) and cultural heritage (e.g., storyteller).

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some important points from this chapter:

- Classroom community fosters student ownership of learning in a positive, cohesive, and cooperative atmosphere.
- In a healthy classroom community, students have choices and take ownership of learning.
- English learners need to recognize the value of learning both culture and language together.
- Students must be active participants in the learning process rather than passive observers.
- Interactive activities heighten student engagement and foster English language skills.

## Discussing

From what you have learned in this chapter, decide what you would do in each of these teaching scenarios, make some notes, and share your ideas with your colleagues:

1. How can I teach language and culture together?
2. How can I organize cooperative learning groups in my ELT classroom?

3. My English class seems to be running smoothly, and student participation is good, except for Carlos. Everyone else is taking an active role, but he seems totally uninterested. What can I do to motivate Carlos?

## TAKING ACTION

By using the ideas in this chapter, do the following:

1. Write a letter of introduction for your new class of students.
2. Plan an ice-breaker activity for the first day and for your rule-making session.
3. Decorate your classroom (physical or virtual) so that it feels inviting.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about creating a classroom community, visit these websites:

- Interactive ideas. <https://share.america.gov/topics/everyday-conversations/>
- Other types of resources. <https://libguides.wccnet.edu/oer-subjects/esl>
- Several other options.  
<https://www.oercommons.org/browse?f.keyword=esl>
- Teacher resources. <https://americanenglish.state.gov/>
- For access to the paintings used in this chapter, go to these websites:
- A Sunday on La Grande Jatte by Georges Seurat.  
<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/a-sunday-on-la-grande-jatte/twGyqq52R-lYpA?hl=en-GB>
- The Farm by Juan Miro. <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.69660.html>
- Thunderstorm by Grandma Moses.  
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/155796468333525764/>

## See Also

Aspects about classroom communities are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 4** *Humanism in English Language Teaching* by B. Meadows

**Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners* by S. Montiel

**Chapter 6** *Supporting Learners' Social Emotional Learning* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 11** *Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 21** *Connecting Student Interaction With Classroom Management* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess

**Chapter 27** *Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT* by F. Esquivel

**Chapter 28** *Using Theater to Teach English* by S. Ruffinelli and C. Ortiz

**Chapter 34** *Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching* by G. Diaz Maggioli

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Photo by Zainul Yasni on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 21

## Connecting Student Interaction with Classroom Management

## Connecting Student Interaction With Classroom Management

Grazzia Maria Mendoza Chirinos

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### Abstract

As of their first day in a classroom, new teachers need to manage their class, promote interactive engagement, and ensure meaningful learning. However, when combined, classroom management and student engagement can be very challenging, especially for language teachers who need to implement oral interactive tasks as frequently as possible. Though pleased when students are fully engaged and interactively learning, we might worry when student interaction increases so much that it could lead to unruly behavior. In this chapter, you will explore evidence-based strategies, techniques, and tips to promote student engagement as an essential part of positive classroom management. You will learn how to adapt these strategies in varied learning contexts while promoting positive student behavior. You will also learn about encouraging students to engage and interact freely, helping them assume responsibility for their own actions, and guiding them to reach higher levels of dependability.

*Keywords:* student interaction, classroom management, interactive engagement, mindfulness

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## Introduction

In our respective teacher preparation programs, we learn techniques and strategies to establish classroom management, foster positive student behavior, and maintain discipline. While pursuing our degree programs, we read extensively and observe frequently but often have limited opportunities to put management ideas into practice. When we become teachers in our own classroom, we begin implementing management techniques and strategies to determine if they will work in a specific context. We discover that some strategies work well while others fail miserably. The latter may make us feel frustrated and may even generate tension and a negative classroom ambience. By trying out several different management strategies, we begin identifying some that work well for us.

During your own studies and practicum experiences in English language teaching, you probably read different guidelines for classroom management, researched strategies to maintain discipline by keeping learners on task, and perhaps observed creative management styles of teachers in diverse contexts. During this time, you may have also worked as an English teacher. If so, perhaps you planned a lesson in detail only to witness it fail because of issues related to classroom management. This chapter can help you minimize such issues by proactively planning and implementing strategies that connect student interaction with classroom management. By making such connections, you can enhance lesson delivery and ensure effective learning.

## Background

Effective classroom management is of such importance in meeting lesson objectives that it is a major feature of most teacher preparation programs (Davis, 2017). Exploring issues related to classroom management often start early in a teacher preparation program even though the teaching practicum might not occur until much later. Based on research, several recommended techniques can be very effective at helping manage classrooms while also maintaining positive student behavior (Hepburn & Beamish, 2019).

Classroom management is much broader than student discipline, calm environments, seating arrangements, and smooth transitions between activities. Classroom management also entails learner motivation, engagement, and empowerment as well as learner interaction during team activities (e.g., pairs and groups). It even includes a teacher's ability for capturing learner attention, for directing and facilitating activities, and for ensuring relevant learning. Practical experiences for helping teachers put into practice all aspects of teaching, including classroom management, can often be found in teacher preparation standards. For example, the national standards of Paraguay inform content requirements and require that teachers have "substantial practical experience through a mentoring program" (World Bank, 2012, p. 6). This implies that teachers-in-training receive competency development and classroom management experience.

To ensure effective teaching and learning, teachers need to know about classroom management tools and, also, participate in relevant activities. Such activities entail ample teaching practice and classroom experiences for pre-service teachers and continuous professional development for in-service teachers. Such preparation presupposes teachers' awareness of pedagogical goals and of learner interactions at the classroom level. However, to facilitate these outcomes, classroom management practices must go beyond managing discipline and ensuring silence within the classroom and, instead, be focused on managing for learning. Classroom management for learning considers organization, engaged and orderly work environments, and established

routines (Tsui, 2003). It also involves maintaining the learners' motivation while ensuring their engagement.

To implement an integral classroom management process, Embry and Biglan (2008) described kernels that are “fundamental units of behavioral influence” and used these kernels to define actions that support classroom management. Kernels, as described in the clinical psychology realm, provide the basic support needed to develop relationships with learners, provide sound strategies for classroom management, and are quite intuitive for teachers to use. Kernels include non-verbal clues, extensive modeling, discreet praise, greetings, mindfulness, on-the-spot feedback, recognition of changes in student behavior, and responsible decision making. Using kernels is an important contribution and practice not only as tools to build peaceful classroom environments but also as instructional strategies (Kosar et al., 2020). Validated by research, such strategies are simple to incorporate into lessons without causing unnecessary disruptions.

Abundant research worldwide shows that classroom management is a fundamental piece of effective teaching. Yet, such research also shows high levels of disengagement in classrooms and increased numbers of behavioral issues in schools (Armstrong, 2018). To bridge this gap, practitioners in different contexts have incorporated strategies that maximize learner engagement and minimize behavioral disruptions. In other words, by implementing multiple opportunities for active learner participation, you can link learner engagement with classroom management. By doing so, you will create a strong foundation of structure and support for learning while, also, forging a path toward positive classroom ambience.

## Major Dimensions

To be an effective teacher who facilitates student learning in your classroom, incorporate recommended management strategies when organizing your instructional setting and planning your student activities. Many of these strategies are related to behavior, environment, expectations, materials, and activities. Other strategies are related to active learning, relevance, assessment, and curriculum. To further enhance positive behaviors and self-regulation, consider incorporating strategies that foster social emotional learning (SEL; Bridgeland et al., 2013) and mindfulness (Kosar et al., 2020).

To support positive student behavior, enter the classroom with happy facial expressions and a positive attitude. Offer encouraging phrases, provide on-the-spot praise that is real and from the heart, and do actions that represent fairness and respect. Create a welcoming environment in your classroom with visuals that stimulate learners and are strategically organized to set the stage for learning. Make sure that the lighting is appropriate for learners to meet the learning purpose. Establish expectations in collaboration with your learners based on their needs and interests while also considering the curriculum and your teaching goals. Design a roadmap of how the lessons will evolve with input from all involved and establish agreements (“contracts”) regarding learner behavior and teacher behavior. Select materials at the learners' level with sufficient challenges to promote growth and learning. Make sure that such materials are varied, permitting exposure to different technologies for developing student competency. Provide additional resources for learners who wish to further explore these topics. Finally, choose activities that enhance the learners' experience by piquing their curiosity, appealing to their interests, and sparking their passion, thereby launching these learners on a new intellectual pursuit. Together, these aspects will foster learner engagement and facilitate achieving the desired learning goals.

Active teachers facilitate the learning process, and active learning influences positive behavior. In other words, when learners are actively experiencing and constructing learning, they usually stay on task, thus minimizing discipline issues. To influence positive behavior, learning must be meaningful, relevant, and connected. Such learning can become even more relevant through scaffolded instruction that creates interconnectedness between known concepts and new concepts. This, in turn, heightens the possibility of building autonomous and independent lifelong learning (Hagel, 2021).

With regards to assessment, move away from the traditional pen-and-paper evaluations. Instead, include various formats for assessing dynamically, thereby allowing learners to develop their skills in context. This type of dynamic assessment encompasses self and peer assessments of task-based learning such as through projects, portfolios, and student exhibits (e.g., displays at community fairs). When assessing, always consider your institutional curriculum as well as your personal curriculum, which represents your assessment adaptations based on students, classroom context, and available resources. Finally, to further strengthen your assessment efforts, establish positive relationships with your students, thereby creating a collaborative classroom environment where students can learn as partners.

To enable a holistic approach toward classroom management, incorporate SEL elements and mindfulness techniques. This will serve to develop skills that boost learner confidence, allow self-regulation, and optimally manage stress and anxiety. As such, this will allow learners to become resilient and be open to other perspectives. Through these SEL-based elements, learners will be better able to communicate and collaborate (Spencer, 2021). In turn, the elements of mindfulness (being present, being aware, focusing attention) provide relevance in managing behaviors. Mindfulness prepares learners to focus their attention and gives them physical and psychological benefits by lowering the heart rate, improving circulation, reducing physical stress responses, decreasing anxiety, and decreasing irritability and moodiness as well as improving the ability to learn, enhancing memory, strengthening emotional stability, and increasing the ability to manage problems effectively. These benefits are highly connected and will influence positive behavior in the classroom, thereby minimizing the need to implement direct classroom management techniques.

## Pedagogical Applications

To ensure effective classroom management, you need a comprehensive plan. Your classroom management plan should include the following elements: clarity about expectations, recognition of appropriate behavior, actions to reduce negative behaviors, engagement activities, and clear classroom structure.

*Clarity about expectations* entails aligning expectations with what the institution expects. This includes contextual adaptations that vary depending on the classroom context: students, time of day, physical spaces, and resources. These expectations must be explicit and positively described. They must also be modeled, actively supervised, and continuously reinforced.

*Recognition of appropriate behavior* means recognizing behavior with truthful, specific, and contingent praise. In addition, teachers and learners should reach agreement on recognizing appropriate behaviors through tokens, rewards, or other aspects within a gamification system. Tokens and rewards can be redeemed for additional breaks, early release, or a motivating intellectual gift. Upon reaching certain expectations in an instructional gamification activity,

learners can earn badges to showcase, such as digital stickers in social media or physical stickers in a highly visible location (e.g., a bulletin board).

*Actions to reduce negative behaviors* are consequences known in advance by students. Such consequences take different forms such as warnings, loss of certain privileges, or positive-oriented actions. These could be volunteering to do something or delivering a session to peers about integrity, discipline, and positive relationships. The latter allows learners to understand their errors and address them positively rather than being ashamed of their mistakes. Whenever possible, consequences should produce a positive behavior that creates change.

*Engagement activities* are achieved by setting the stage and creating lessons that meet the needs and interests of learners and are designed at their grade level. Such activities are embedded in lessons and focus on solving a problem or creating solutions for something that directly affects learners. This can be achieved through project- and task-based learning as well as through digital media. The latter entices learners' interest, allows them to connect with other contexts and realities, and helps them develop their social emotional skills.

*Clear classroom structure* requires predictable classroom routines and procedures as well as the strategic use of space. Such aspects minimize distractions and allow learners to feel safe and secure. The seating arrangement should allow varied instructional formats, which, in turn, will support collaborative learning. Flexible seating is key to maintain learners engaged and, also, ensure their smooth transition from task to task. These aspects of classroom structure set the stage for teaching and learning.

In this chapter, you learned to consider several aspects for creating your classroom management plan. You learned that, depending on the learning context, you can adapt your management plan. You also learned that this plan is your roadmap for effective instruction and student engagement. However, for this plan to work effectively and for learning to occur successfully, you will need to establish rapport with your learners and continually nurture these relationships.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about classroom management:

- Classroom management is intrinsically linked to learner engagement.
- Research on effective classroom management provides the foundation to make informed decisions and needed adaptations based on your teaching context.
- Using diverse strategies for classroom management does not imply policing your learners.
- Find multiple resources on the web, try implementing them to support your teaching practice, and explore what works best depending on the learners in each specific context.
- Involve your learners in classroom management strategies that serve to increase their accountability and self-regulation.
- Create a space of harmony in your classroom and support fruitful learning for your learners by providing self-regulation strategies, incorporating

mindfulness techniques, and implementing activities to develop skills for social emotional learning.

## Discussing

Based on what you have learned about classroom management, answer these questions:

1. What are key considerations for English teachers in your country with respect to implementing classroom management strategies?
2. Should institutional policies be changed to create awareness of connections between classroom management and learner engagement? Why or why not? If so, how?
3. What are some classroom management practices that (a) you have implemented, (b) you have seen others implement, and (c) you would like to implement in your classroom for greater effectiveness?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned in this chapter, do the following:

1. Select one of the classroom management strategies from this chapter and use it in your classroom. After using this strategy for a while and determining its effectiveness, select another strategy and use it for a while. Then try out other classroom management strategies—but always try just one new strategy at a time.
2. As part of your classroom management strategies, build a support network among learners so that they have a safe place among peers to share and learn with each other.
3. To further connect student interaction with classroom management, share SEL strategies with parents and guide them with fostering SEL outside of the school setting.
4. Create a Community of Practice (Short et al., 2018; Wenger & Snyder, 2000) with colleagues to share what is working in everyone’s classroom with respect to connecting student interaction with classroom management.
5. Engage in professional development through your local English teacher association, such as the affiliate of the TESOL International Association in your region or country (e.g., PARATESOL in Paraguay).



EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about student interaction and classroom management, visit these websites:

- Behavior management practical tips.  
[https://my.chartered.college/impact\\_article/behaviour-management-practical-tips/](https://my.chartered.college/impact_article/behaviour-management-practical-tips/)
- Compassionate communication.  
<https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com>
- Helpful classroom management strategies.  
<https://www.thoughtco.com/helpful-classroom-management-strategies-3194626>
- Mindfulness. <https://www.mindful.org>
- Quick classroom-management tips for novice teachers.  
<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/classroom-management-tips-novice-teachers-rebecca-alber>
- SEL in the secondary classroom (Webinar).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIQRm1ITeY>
- SEL: Dave Spencer on You Tube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6npdSCMuO4>
- World Bank.  
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/18026/discover>

## See Also

Student interaction and classroom management are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners* by S. Montiel

**Chapter 6** *Supporting Learners' Social Emotional Learning* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community* by B. Crosbie and D. Carter

**Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess

**Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 27** *Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT* by F. Esquivel

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# CHAPTER 22

## Strengthening Communication through Classroom Discourse

## Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse

Kent Buckley-Ess

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### Abstract

English learners of all ages and proficiencies can improve their ability to communicate by systematically engaging in classroom discourse. In classroom contexts, discourse refers to how language is used by teachers and students for daily communication and how students share ideas during lesson activities. To help students improve their communication skills, effective teachers create discourse opportunities. They simulate authentic discourse by carefully planning and implementing interactive lessons that require receptive skills (listening, reading) and productive skills (speaking, writing). In this chapter, you will learn about the need for and powerful role of purposefully planned interactive lessons for strengthening communication through classroom discourse. You will learn about establishing lesson objectives based on student interests and engagement, cultural aspects, and physical space. You will also learn about incorporating communicative competencies (e.g., listening actively, asking questions, using nonverbal cues) within classroom discourse for students to further develop their ability to communicate.

*Keywords:* classroom discourse, discourse opportunities, communication skills, communicative competencies, lesson objectives, interactive lessons

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## Introduction

The goal of English programs is for language learners to improve their ability to listen, speak, read, and write. To reach that goal, teachers must plan engaging activities that provide students with opportunities to process and use English starting at their level of proficiency and extending beyond. By developing and implementing interactive lessons, teachers create opportunities for classroom discourse. In the classroom context, discourse refers to the language used by teachers and students to communicate with one another (Cazden, 2001). Classroom discourse can also be students sharing ideas about a given topic by interacting with each other in a conversation. Both types of discourse can serve to strengthen students' abilities for communication thus leading to higher levels of comprehension and speaking.

When planning communicative lessons, arrange student seating to facilitate discourse and include pair and group activities, active listening activities, and non-linguistic communicative components. Provide multiple opportunities for language learners to improve their speaking abilities by incorporating interactive language learning activities thus allowing them to interact frequently with each other in authentic discourse (Omar et al., 2020). Soon, your students will be looking forward to these activities, and you will notice positive impacts from these activities on student engagement and language learning.

## Background

This section examines the role of discourse in two different approaches to language instruction: competence-based and communicative-based. It also examines how classroom discourse can strengthen communication.

In a *competence-based* approach, language instruction focuses on students learning and understanding language components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Teachers spend instructional time explaining and reviewing structures, rules, and the formation of consistent patterns. Students spend time working on patterned phrases, grammar rules, dialogues, and other activities. Little or no attention is given to establishing discourse opportunities or developing communication skills.

In a *communicative-based* approach, language instruction includes aspects beyond those in a competence-based approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). These additional aspects support students for being able to communicate with others in a variety of discourse settings by using both verbal and non-verbal strategies. Because competence-based approaches often did not lead learners to successfully using the target language in real-life discourse, Canale and Swain (1980) coined the term communicative competence. Their theory, together with subsequent iterations by other researchers, underlies communicative-based models for language teaching. A model used widely in Canada (Jeung, 2018) is as follows:

- linguistic competence—creating utterances that are grammatically correct,
- sociolinguistic competence—creating utterances that are socio-linguistically appropriate,
- discourse competence—producing utterances that are coherent and cohesive, and
- strategic competence—solving communicative problems as needed.

In addition to linguistic components, communicative instruction includes activities to develop students' sociolinguistic abilities for interacting with different people in different settings, their discourse abilities for forming comprehensible oral and written communication, and their strategic abilities for using verbal and non-verbal skills when such techniques are needed to solve communication problems. Hence, a communicative-based approach can lead learners to using language in a way that a competence-based approach cannot accomplish (Walsh & Li, 2013).

These communicative competencies are essential to support the purpose of communication such as for persuading, explaining, and narrating. When using a communicative-based approach in your classroom, provide authentic discourse opportunities for students to interact with each other while using the target language. By engaging in different types of classroom discourse, they expand and strengthen their communication skills.

## Major Dimensions

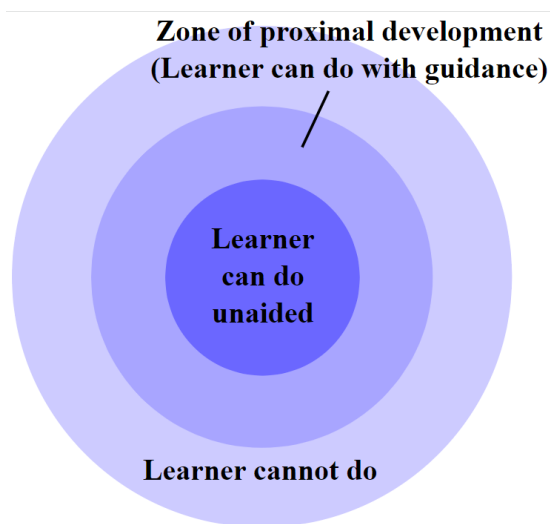
To strengthen your students' communicative skills through discourse-based lessons and to maximize the effectiveness of these lessons, incorporate Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1986) and follow a five-step model (Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017).

### *Zone of Proximal Development*

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) was proposed by Vygotsky (1986) to explain how learners, as they use and are exposed to a target language, develop language abilities and conceptual understandings. ZPD represents the relationship between what learners can do with support and then what they can do independently, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development*



*Note. Blacktc, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zone\\_of\\_proximal\\_development\\_Label-free.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zone_of_proximal_development_Label-free.svg). Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International*

Figure 1 illustrates the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1986) as three concentric circles. The outer circle represents what learners cannot do. The middle circle represents what learners can do with guidance, support, and scaffolding provided by others. As such, this circle comprises the ZPD through which the learners, by building on what they know, can develop new knowledge and skills through scaffolding, active learning, and engagement. The inner circle represents what learners can do unaided after being supported. Together, these three circles show how learners, through ZPD, move from the outer circle to the inner circle.

When designing your communicative lessons, provide discourse opportunities for students to develop concepts and use English to communicate. Start at your students' English proficiency level and, by providing appropriate ZPD scaffolding, guide them to go beyond this level. Support your students "to work at appropriate age and language proficiency levels through their second language" (Collier & Thomas, 2012, p. 158). Design lessons in a socio-culturally supportive environment with ZPD supports such as collaborative peer teaching and other learning opportunities such as connections between instructional content and the students' lives.

### *Five-Step Planning Model*

To help students strengthen their communicative skills through classroom discourse, use a five-step planning model with several components for meaningful, interactive lessons (Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017). Enhance your students' ability to communicate in their new language by designing your lessons with these five steps:

1. **Know Your English Language Learners.** Consider your students' interests, strengths, home language, and English proficiency levels. Focus lessons on your students. Create a system to collect student data (e.g., checklists, individual notecards, online tools) and keep these records updated.
2. **Analyze the Language Demands of the Lesson.** In the course syllabus or teacher guide, identify the lesson's main language objective (e.g., grammatical structure, listening, or vocabulary development). When planning your lessons, keep this objective in mind.
3. **Plan Your Lesson.** Develop communicative activities for reviewing, introducing, and reinforcing the lesson objective. Arrange classroom space to facilitate discourse opportunities for students to interact with each other (e.g., pairs, teams, table groups).
4. **Select and Develop Appropriate Materials.** Develop scaffolds at different language levels for students to participate in communicative activities. Identify lesson aspects that might be challenging (e.g., vocabulary, activity procedures). Find connections with the students' lives. Support student understanding and participation by using visuals and sentence frames. Make plans for modeling language structures and procedural processes to prepare students for each activity.
5. **Teach by Adapting Scaffolds and Materials as Needed.** During each activity, circulate among students and take notes about participation, strengths, and misunderstandings. If needed, modify these activities, or include additional scaffolds to support students with participating. Use this information to inform plans for upcoming lessons. (Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017).



When you follow these five steps, your lessons will have engaging communicative activities and meaningful discourse opportunities needed by students at all ages and language levels. Even students at a beginning language level must learn how to communicate at the level of their language development and make their needs and interests understood (Díaz-Rico, 2012).

## Pedagogical Applications

In this section, the five-step model described above is used for planning a communicative lesson. This purposefully planned interactive lesson includes ZPD scaffolding and offers discourse opportunities so that the English learners in a specific class can strengthen their communication skills. Bulleted examples are provided for each step.

### *1. Know Your English Language Learners*

- 27 students: from 11 to 14 years of age
- English proficiency levels: from high beginner to low intermediate
- Student interests: music, video games, sports, fashion

### *2. Analyze the Language Demands of the Lesson*

- Lesson standard: Introducing irregular comparative and superlative adjectives
- Lesson objective: Reviewing adjectives, comparing objects, and using comparative and superlative adjectives

### *3. Plan and Design Your Lesson*

- Reviewing (setting the scene for students to engage in classroom discourse)
- Show students a familiar object (e.g., pencil, backpack). Students describe the object.
- Write student-generated responses (adjectives, phrases, sentences) on a chart.
- Underline adjectives, and circle nouns (“green pencil”, “This is a large backpack”).
- Have students discuss what they know about adjective and noun relationships.
- Review the purpose and structure of adjective phrases.

Modeling (offering ZPD-type support to prepare all students for engaging in discourse)

- Show three objects of the same item but with different characteristics (e.g., red hat, big hat, long hat).
- Place three adjective cards (“good,” “better,” “best”) on the board.
- While looking at each of these three objects, model your own thinking process for students by doing a Think-Aloud. In this Think-Aloud, express your inner thinking aloud, thereby demonstrating to students how you think about the situation and come up with a rationale for matching each object with a selected adjective card (Victoria State Government, 2018). Your oral Think-Aloud might be as follows:

a. I like the red hat because I like baseball. It is **good**.

b. The very big hat is **better** because it has many colors, and people like it.

- c. I think the long hat is **best** because it keeps me warm.
- Point to each object and summarize as follows:
  - a. This one is **a good** hat.
  - b. This one is **a better** hat.
  - c. This one is **the best** hat.

Demonstrating and Practicing (providing ZPD scaffolds to initiate student discourse)

- Ask students to share what they noticed during your Think-Aloud.
- Ask other students if they agree or disagree. If needed, provide oral and visual scaffolds by pointing to the appropriate card and modeling an oral response:
  - a. This hat is OK. It's a **good** hat.
  - b. I put the big hat here. It has a lot of colors. It's a **better** hat.
  - c. I really like to wear the long hat in winter. It's the **best** hat for me.
- Model and practice appropriate ways for students to agree or disagree with others (e.g., raising hands, thumbs up/thumbs down, nodding head or shaking head).
- Provide additional models and scaffolds for the more advanced students:
  - a. The \_\_\_\_\_ hat is \_\_\_\_\_ than the \_\_\_\_\_ one because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. I agree/disagree with \_\_\_(name)\_\_\_ about the \_\_\_\_\_ hat.  
I think it's better/not better than the \_\_\_\_\_ one because\_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. Tell me why you think \_\_\_\_\_ is better than \_\_\_\_\_.
- Review the above process for using comparative and superlative adjectives to describe objects.

Engaging (creating opportunities with ZPD support to extend student discourse)

- Show another set of three objects (e.g., different markers).
- Use the same adjective cards (“good,” “better,” “best”).
- Place students in pairs.
- Based on the modeling examples provided above, provide scaffolding for student pairs (as needed) and model a discussion and decision-making process.
- Ask a student to help you model discussing and making decisions for the entire class. Together with this student, act out being a student pair and demonstrate how to discuss the three objects and decide which object to match with each adjective.
- Encourage students to follow this discussion and decision-making process when working with their partner.

- Provide a signal for student pairs to start discussing the three objects with the goal of deciding which adjective best describes each object.

Assessing (supporting students to use and improve discourse skills in pairs)

- To support discourse, provide additional visual cards with words, phrases, or sentence frames to support students in giving responses.
- Circulate among the student pairs as they discuss the objects.
- Observe and take notes about how well students understand this discussion process and the content material as well as their language use, communication skills, and any possible confusion.
- Encourage and support participation based on students' language proficiency levels.
- In subsequent rounds, create new student pairs and provide other sets of objects.

Sharing (encouraging students to engage in discourse with the whole class)

- Invite several student pairs to share their classification and thought processes. Ask the other students to show their agreement or disagreement.
- Provide visuals and sentence frames to support student sharing, and model gestures.
- Before ending the lesson, ask students to describe the day's activity as "good," "better," or "best." Model an appropriate response such as the following: Today's class was "better" because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Provide scaffolds as needed.

#### ***4. Select and Develop Appropriate Materials***

- Develop visual and oral scaffolds to support students' understanding of the content material and encourage them to actively use these materials.
- Select several sets of three objects (i.e., same object but different characteristics).
- Create several sets of adjective cards with "good," "better," and "best."
- Prepare charts with sentence frames to scaffold students' responses:

a. This (object) is (good, better, best).

b. I think this (object) is (good, better, best) because \_\_\_\_\_.

c. I agree with (name). This is a/the (good, better, best) (object).

#### ***5. Teach by Using Materials and by Adapting Scaffolds (i.e., ZPD)***

- Listen to the interactions within student pairs. Take written notes, support students' communication skills, and provide scaffolds, as needed.
- Focus on student participation in these communication tasks and their engagement in discourse opportunities. Refrain from correcting student errors.
- Consider other comparative and superlative adjectives (e.g., "bad/worse/worst," "little/less/least,") for further engaging students in discussions, conversations, and other discourse opportunities.

- Based on the notes you took while circulating among groups, identify future teaching points and plan lessons with direct instruction, communicative activities, and extended discourse opportunities.

In this chapter, you learned how classroom discourse can strengthen students' communication skills. You learned that such discourse is built upon well-planned communicative lessons and that, when planning these lessons, you need to consider the content to be taught and materials to be scaffolded. You also learned to consider physical space and sufficient time for students' oral language engagement and your informal assessment. Finally, you learned to include five steps in your interactive lessons to ensure opportunities for classroom discourse so that your students can meet content and language objectives and, in turn, strengthen their communication skills.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Communication is a social, dynamic, and complex component of language instruction based on classroom discourse that you can support by doing the following:

- Establish communication and participation as the goal without focusing on perfection during communicative activities.
- When planning each lesson, include engaging and interactive communicative activities.
- Include students' interests in classroom communicative activities.
- Set up your classroom so that students have easy access for communicating daily with other students and with the teacher.
- Scaffold communicative activities to meet the strengths and needs of students' English proficiency levels.
- Assess students' progress and misunderstandings during communicative activities but provide correction and instruction in future lessons.

## Discussing

Based on this chapter, respond to the following prompts:

1. Identify several topics of potential interest to your future students. Explain how you will use these topics to engage students in communicative activities and classroom discourse.
2. Name and describe several different teaching techniques to engage students (especially those who are beginners or are very shy) in communicative activities and classroom discourse.
3. Explain how the ZPD and scaffolding can support students for participating in communicative activities and developing their classroom discourse skills.
4. List several ways to use one or more activities for assessing students' communicative skills. Explain how these activities can produce data to guide you when reinforcing or re-teaching these skills in future lessons.

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned in this chapter, do the following:

1. Look at previous lesson plans. Design and integrate communicative activities that will strengthen your students' language abilities for engaging in classroom discourse.
2. Design a data collection sheet to use during communicative activities for tracking student participation, interaction, language use, and language confusion. Use data to develop re-teaching points for future lessons.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about discourse and communication, visit these websites:

- Communicative Competence, Learn Alberta (Canada).  
[https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/understanding\\_the\\_acquisition\\_language\\_in\\_stages\\_working\\_towards.html](https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/understanding_the_acquisition_language_in_stages_working_towards.html)
- Definitions. <https://www.supersummary.com/discourse-in-literature-definition-examples/>
- Examples of Discourse. <https://www.thoughtco.com/discourse-language-term-1690464>
- Oral Language Activities, New Zealand Ministry of Education.  
<https://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Planning-for-my-students-needs/Resources-for-planning/ESOL-teaching-strategies/Oral-Language>
- Sample Lesson Plans, Ezoic Premium Publisher.  
<https://games4esl.com/lesson-plans/>
- Teaching Conversation Protocols, Edutopia.  
<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/teaching-your-students-conversation-allen-mendler>
- Think Aloud and Other Metacognitive Strategies, Inclusive Schools Network.  
<https://inclusiveschools.org/metacognitive-strategies/>

## See Also

Aspects related to discourse and communication are addressed in other chapters of this book:

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices* by K. Liu and J. Choi

- Chapter 16** *Incorporating Interjections to Facilitate Conversational Flow* by A. Rodomanchenko
- Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community* by B. Crosbie and D. Carter
- Chapter 21** *Connecting Student Interaction With Classroom Management* by G. Mendoza
- Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning* by H. Lalwani
- Chapter 33** *Current Approaches in English Language Teaching* by N. Dantaz
- Chapter 38** *A Sociocultural Approach to Teaching Grammar* by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin
- Chapter 39** *Strategies to Teach Listening* by E. Nuñez
- Chapter 40** *Strategies to Teach Speaking* by S. Spezzini
- Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

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# CHAPTER 23

## Integrating Technology in Language Classrooms



## Integrating Technology in Language Classrooms

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### Abstract

Technology enriches English classrooms by providing students with engaging, authentic ways to develop their language skills. As English teachers, we can help our students improve their literacy skills and oral language proficiency by incorporating digital tools into our language lessons. These digital tools can empower students to collaborate with classmates, and, together, they co-construct meaning for learning both language and content. However, because digital tools are constantly evolving and new types are being created, we need to know how to select the best digital tools for instructional purposes to help our learners acquire knowledge and, also, develop their language skills. Similarly, we need to know how to design digital assessment tools to track our students' growth in literacy, oral proficiency, and technological proficiency. In this chapter, you will explore reasons for incorporating technology in your language classroom. You will learn how to select the most appropriate digital tools for your students. You will also learn about designing lessons with technology and evaluating results from teacher-made, self-assessment tools.

*Keywords:* instructional technology, language classrooms, English learners, digital tools, language development, virtual teaching strategies

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## Introduction

The students in our English classes have grown up in a digital environment. They are digital natives who—even before entering school—know how to use age-appropriate technology. As teachers of these digital natives, we need to become familiar with evolving technologies and be able to maximize our use of digital tools (e.g., apps and websites). To engage our digital natives with meaningful learning, we need to know how to infuse these digital tools into our content and language lessons. We also need to know how to use the running assessment records that usually accompany these tools. When we regularly infuse digital tools in our instruction, our students will be empowered for creating projects with multimodal media (speech, sound, movement, print) through which they can further develop their receptive skills (listening, speaking) and productive skills (speaking, writing). As a guide to integrating technology in language classrooms, this chapter examines multimodal projects, describes successful digital projects, explains digital assessment records, and explores how digital tools enhance learning experiences for digital natives.

## Background

Students benefit from learning English through multimodalities. In addition to written text, the students' multimodal projects include movement, gestures, speech, and sound. All of these serve to expand language learners' "literacy repertoires and means of expression" (Angay-Crowder et al., 2013, p. 42). Multimodal digital projects have been shown to support English learners with constructing meaning (Choi & Yi, 2015). The integration of these projects into lessons expands opportunities for language acquisition in ways that empower and enrich English learners (Smith et al., 2020). Digital tools with visuals, sound, and text provide English learners with engaging opportunities to scaffold their writing and speaking skills in ways that have been transformative to their sense of identity and to viewing themselves as language users (Cummins et al., 2015; Leu et al., 2004). By creating these digital projects, English learners use various modalities to engage with multiple audiences such as their classmates, teachers, and community (Kim, 2018). Studies have shown that multimodal digital projects help English learners make meaning across subject areas and disciplines (Goulah, 2017; Grapin, 2019). By doing so, English learners can develop their academic and social language skills in ways that expand beyond the traditional print-based texts (Miller, 2007).

## Major Dimensions

To fully engage digital natives, integrate digital tools in your English lessons. After your English learners master the technology skills needed for a specific class project, both by repurposing already known digital tools and by learning new ones, they often continue using these same tools and, thus, further develop their language skills (Grapin, 2019).

### *Select Devices and Digital Tools*

When selecting devices and digital tools, think about your lesson plans and the availability of digital tools. Search the internet and explore the wide array of digital tools. When researching each tool, consider how accessible it is, how easily your students can use this tool, and how it can support each of the four domains of language (listening, speaking, reading, writing). It may take some time to find answers to these questions, but this is a necessary step. After selecting

your digital tools, spend time teaching yourself how to use them. As you practice each tool, think about the language domains your students could develop by using this tool and determine which domain would be a good fit with a specific tool. Also, think about the possible use of each of these digital tools in your current and future lessons.

### ***Incorporate Digital Tools in Your Lessons***

After selecting your devices and digital tools, consider how best to incorporate these devices and tools within your lessons, preferably lessons where language and content are taught together. Think about your objectives for each lesson and decide if you want to focus on oral skills (listening, speaking), literacy skills (reading, writing), or both. Initially use these lessons to build background, enhance vocabulary, and encourage literacy strategies. Project-based learning in literature, history, science, and mathematics provide an excellent context for incorporating technology into lessons at the elementary and secondary school levels (Choi & Yi, 2015; Goulah, 2017; Grapin, 2019). At the elementary school level, students can create their own books and record videos or virtual storyboards with comic strips. At the secondary school level, students can write a book summary, create a project with their own artwork, and record themselves narrating the key concepts from that book.

### ***Differentiate Based on Student Needs***

Consider using digital tools with appropriate scaffolding to differentiate instruction based on students' individual language acquisition needs (Rance-Roney, 2011). For each selected tool, carefully explore your teacher-level web account for that tool and identify the teacher supports available when using this tool. Such supports could be a video tutorial or another ready-made resource to facilitate your use and your students' use of this digital tool. Now equipped with supports, teach students to access and operate this digital tool. As needed, provide additional support. Decide how to differentiate support for students with different needs. For example, students with higher language proficiency usually need less scaffolding, and students with lower language proficiency usually need more scaffolding. Provide scaffolding to these students by pairing them with peers who are more comfortable using English. Scaffold by giving students access to additional resources such as word banks and sentence stems. Finally, scaffold by reducing or expanding the number of options or decisions that students will make when creating their project.

### ***Use Rubrics to Assess Student Learning***

Digital tools are also effective as assessment resources because they provide you with a running record of student progress over time (Choi & Yi, 2015). Before introducing a digital tool to your students, decide how you will assess what your students learned from having used this tool to create their projects. Start by listing the learning expectations that you want students to master. Based on these learning expectations and your lesson objectives, select the most appropriate rubric from among many that are accessible online. Or create your own rubric. These same assessment rubrics can be used by students to evaluate their own learning.

## Pedagogical Applications

When incorporating digital tools in your lessons, create opportunities for students to further develop their receptive and productive language skills. The use of digital tools to develop language skills is demonstrated here through two projects: digital theater and book tasting.

### *Digital Theater*

Digital Theater creates an exciting venue for incorporating digital tools to promote language development. If your school is sufficiently resourced to provide tablets to each student, your students can use these school-provided tablets with free or low-cost apps to create digital puppet shows or plays on an app such as PuppetPals. Students can select from among diverse characters and backgrounds provided by the app, take photos of themselves and convert their photos into characters, or draw characters and animals to incorporate into their story. After students have decided on their characters and backgrounds, they begin to build their story. They plan and outline their story using a comic strip format. This format has bubbles in which students write captions for what their characters will say.

When students are ready to create their digital theater production, they click the record button for their selected digital application such as PuppetPals. After doing this, they provide animation by moving their characters around the screen. The students also add voice narration or speak for the characters. Multiple students can work together to create this digital project with several different characters. In the schools where we teach English as a second language (ESL), our English learners have created digital theater productions of *Animal Farm*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, and *Beowulf*, and they have enacted interviews with historical figures such as Abraham Lincoln and Nelson Mandela. One scene from our students' digital *Animal Farm* production is provided in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Example of a Digital Puppet Show That Summarizes Animal Farm*



*Note. This is one of the backgrounds available in the Puppet Pal app*

Because this digital theater production uses puppets, shy students are often willing to speak even if they are reluctant to do so during other activities. Being the puppet's voice can make an English learner feel empowered because if errors occur, these errors are the puppet's fault (and not the student's).

### ***Book Tasting***

Book Tasting works well to motivate students about reading. The teacher places several books at stations positioned around the room. Students walk to the different book tasting stations. At each station, they taste the books by looking at the pictures and reading a few pages. After all students have chosen their own book, they read their book alone. After finishing their books, they work together in creating virtual book reviews. These book reviews are recorded using a digital device. The students then share their book reviews on various platforms.

To prepare students for doing their virtual book reviews, first explain the elements to be included in this type of book review (title, author, brief description, hook, and rating). After that, show your students how to organize this information and then model how to record it. Consider providing students with a self-assessment rubric that describes what is expected of them when doing their virtual book review. When designing this rubric, consider including criteria such as book elements (title, author, genre, summary), language use (variety of sentence structures), audience engagement (eye contact, gestures), and presentation skills (clear, well-rehearsed, respectful).

After modeling how to record this virtual book review, have your students work in groups to reach a shared understanding of what is expected and how to go about it. After becoming well versed in this process, students record their individual book reviews. In our classes, students have usually used one of these apps: PuppetPals, Book Creator, Canva, VoiceThread, Storybird, Little Bird Tales, and SeeSaw (URLs are provided in the Expanding Further section). These are just a few of the many apps that can be downloaded from educational websites and app stores. However, instead of using an app to record their book review, students can use a standard voice recorder or video recorder.

Through these creative virtual projects, our English learners have participated in numerous opportunities for using English in engaging and meaningful ways. Their recorded book reviews have provided us, their teachers, with a running record to assess all modalities of language. We have also shared our learners' virtual projects with their content teachers, such as for literature and history, to demonstrate these students' content knowledge and growth. We have even featured these book reviews as QR codes posted in the school library close to where these books are displayed. And, finally, we have shared these videos with teachers and their students in neighboring schools as examples for how they can also do their own digital book reviews.

In this chapter on technology, you learned about selecting digital tools, incorporating these digital tools in your language lessons, differentiating for student needs, and using assessment rubrics. You also learned about digital theater and book tasting as examples of student projects. By introducing these digital projects in your language classes, your students will enjoy using digital tools to learn English just like our students have been doing. Be creative and have fun!

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about using technology:

- Multimodal digital projects can help students make meaning across content areas, expand their literacy practices, and acquire English.
- Digital theater projects and virtual book tastings are examples of lessons that include technology and help develop productive and receptive language skills.
- Before starting to incorporate technology, identify available resources.
- Research the availability of digital resources and apps for potentially using them in your lessons.
- After identifying the learning objectives and assessment goals for a lesson, decide how to incorporate a digital tool into this lesson.

## Discussing

Based on your knowledge about technology, develop meaningful answers to these questions:

1. How has technology impacted your learning? What technological resources do you already use? How can you apply these resources to the teaching of English?
2. How can technology be used to create collaborative learning opportunities within the language classroom?
3. What are the benefits of using technology to assess student learning?
4. Describe a technological resource that can be used to simultaneously promote listening, speaking, reading, and writing

## TAKING ACTION

To practice using what you have learned about technology, do the following:

1. Look up several digital resources that you could use in your classroom. Take notes about learning opportunities that each resource could provide.
2. Write a lesson plan featuring one digital tool. Consider the learning objectives and create a rubric to assess learning.

EXPANDING FURTHER

Here are some free online resources for using digital tools and rubrics in your classes:

- Capacity for up to 40 student-created publishable e-books. <https://bookcreator.com/>
- Free infographic design website. Canva.com
- Rubric creator. <https://www.rubriccreator.com>
- Rubrics in K-12. <https://schoolbox.com.au/blog/how-to-use-rubrics-in-k-12-education/>
- Student subaccounts to create digital word walls. [PBWorks.com/education](https://PBWorks.com/education)
- Vocabulary learning to practice in four language domains. [Learningchocolate.com](https://Learningchocolate.com)

## See Also

Technology, literature, and rubrics are also addressed in other chapters of this book:

**Chapter 2** *The Diversity of Global Englishes* by L. Barratt

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 24** *Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms* by Y. Grevtseva and E. Zyrianova

**Chapter 27** *Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT* by F. Esquivel

**Chapter 28** *Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature* by S. Ruffinelli and C. Ortiz

**Chapter 29** *Using Theater to Teach English* by C. Ortiz and M. Vaky

**Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

**Chapter 47** *Authentic Assessment of, for, and as Learning* by G. Díaz Maggioli

**Chapter 49** *E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning* by B. Jiménez

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Photo by Chris Montgomery on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 24

## Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms

# Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms

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## Abstract

Virtual and hybrid classrooms are venues for teaching and learning that became well-established in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, when this pandemic struck in 2020, such classrooms posed intimidating challenges for many teachers. Fortunately, evolving technological advances gradually allowed teachers to access new ways for teaching in virtual and hybrid classrooms. In this chapter, you will learn about differences between virtual classrooms, where all students participate virtually, and hybrid classrooms, where some students participate virtually and others face-to-face. You will learn about digital tools—including apps and websites—and, also, about communicative activities and practical strategies that can be done in virtual venues. You will also learn about the need for continually expanding your skills to teach English in virtual and hybrid classrooms so that you can more effectively meet the learning needs of your current and future students.

*Keywords:* virtual classrooms, hybrid classrooms, digital tools, technological advances, virtual activities and strategies, online teaching and assessing

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## Introduction

By the year 2000, technological advances had created platforms for teaching online courses. However, at that time, relatively few institutions seemed interested in teaching courses fully online because of scepticism related to attention, motivation, interaction, and honesty in virtual venues (Kirtman, 2009). Over the next two decades, many of us gradually incorporated online aspects into our instruction for providing additional support to students to strengthen their knowledge and reinforce their success in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). However, although we offered students increasingly more digital materials and online services, the overall scope of our teaching usually remained face-to-face (F2F).

This changed with the onset of COVID-19. Suddenly we found ourselves teaching in virtual and hybrid classrooms. We discovered that virtual teaching is less complex than hybrid teaching because in hybrid venues we need to address the learning needs of virtual students concurrently with those of F2F students. We realized that both venues (virtual and hybrid) require us to further develop our own technology skills and to help students in developing theirs. We learned that hybrid classes usually require more time than virtual classes for planning lessons, monitoring instructional settings, and interacting with students (which includes supporting their emotional states). We also recognized that hybrid teaching requires more effort regarding classroom management given that two classes (F2F and online) are being managed simultaneously. Based on these experiences and our own research, we now offer insights for helping you better understand virtual and hybrid EFL classrooms and provide recommendations for ensuring quality online instruction.

## Background

In the 1990s, online courses started being used for distance learning. However, based on the individualized nature of mail-in distance learning, online distance learning also tended to focus individually on each student. These initial online courses did not usually provide opportunities for students to establish ongoing interaction about course content with each other nor with anyone else (such as experts in the field). At the beginning of the 21st century, technology began assuming an increasingly greater role in our personal and professional lives. As online platforms and digital applications (apps) were created, newly emerging tools were adapted for instructional purposes. These constantly evolving tools were introduced in courses to vary content delivery and enhance student engagement. Efforts to ensure best practices with digital tools led to instructional design approaches for maximizing learner interaction in virtual venues (Garrison, 2017).

In 2020, COVID-19 initiated a new era for virtual and hybrid instruction (La Torre Castillo, 2021). In response to the pandemic, aggressive measures were mandated for compulsory virtual and hybrid practices. Teachers worldwide found themselves converting former F2F instruction to fully online. Everyone needed to adopt virtual learning venues while considering their institution's curriculum and their students' learning needs. With little or no previous training, teachers selected online tools, services, and apps and then tried to match these with their students' ages, language levels, and interests. As with other teaching fields, EFL teachers and institutions did their best to analyze, improve, and implement best practices for teaching in virtual and hybrid classrooms.

This so-called “emergency online education” (Marinoni et al., 2020, p. 6) was hasty and compelled by circumstances. Yet, it was productive in generating “appropriate infrastructure and technological platforms, solid servers that can sustain the virtual workload, and methodological training of professors and students” (García-Morales et al., 2021, p. 2). It also demonstrated that, regardless of venue (F2F, online, hybrid), effective teaching presupposes well-designed lessons. Hence, when teaching virtually, we must continue to consider critical aspects for effective learning and ensure that our EFL lessons entail the following characteristics (Solovova, 2006):

- Each lesson educates students and develops knowledge and skills.
- Lesson objectives are clear and concrete.
- Each lesson is part of a larger block of lessons.
- Tasks and activities are well-organized and support a lesson’s aim.
- The atmosphere facilitates communication.

In this chapter, we describe virtual and hybrid classrooms based on the digital reality of the early 2020s. While acknowledging that this digital reality will continue to evolve, we also address technological challenges and offer ways to use digital tools in EFL classrooms.

## Major Dimensions

Before planning online lessons, decide how to establish and maintain teacher-student communication in a virtual learning community. Design your online classroom within a learning management system (LMS) that can nurture sense of community, support ongoing feedback, and monitor time management. Also, systematically dedicate your time and effort to update your own digital literacy such as by using a new digital tool (instead of just webcam).

### *Learning Management System*

When classes went virtual during the COVID-19 pandemic, most institutions hosted an LMS to manage communication, information, documents, and student data. These institutions expected teachers to use the LMS for communicating with students, posting instructional materials, delivering lessons, receiving student assignments, and conducting assessments. Though some of these LMSs might have been developed for other purposes, such LMSs were adapted to meet the unique needs of an educational institution. Upon entering the post-pandemic era, most educational institutions continued hosting an LMS (e.g., Google classroom) for us (the teachers) to use for managing all types of classrooms—F2F, virtual, and hybrid.

### *Sense of Community*

Students need to feel a sense of community in all classrooms—F2F, virtual, and hybrid. If students do not feel a sense of community, feelings of isolation can occur. To establish community in your virtual and hybrid classrooms, follow the Community of Inquiry framework (Garrison, 2017). This framework entails social presence (the learners’ sense of belonging by socially engaging in academic endeavors), cognitive presence (the learners’ process and result of learning), and teaching presence (the teacher’s course design, facilitation, and direction of the learning process).

To promote social presence and sense of community in your virtual and hybrid classrooms, incorporate frequent meetings, online communities, group chats, on-demand consultations, and regular news sharing (e.g., Facebook groups and Miro boards). Developing and nurturing students' social presence can vary depending on course design, communication technology, and teacher presence. A strong correlation exists between students' social presence and teacher presence (Shea et al., 2010). Because of this, increase your virtual classroom's collaboration capacity to establish and nurture group cohesion. Cohesiveness is achieved when students identify with a group and, thus, perceive themselves as belonging to a community of inquiry (Garrison, 2017). Help build this sense of community by addressing students with their names, using inclusive pronouns (we/us/our) when both speaking and writing, and asking your students to also do the same when interacting with each other.

### *Ongoing Feedback*

In online environments, we cannot easily interact with our students in a spontaneous manner immediately before or after class, such as for sharing comments, news, or ideas. Reduced spontaneous interaction can make students feel isolated and unsupported; it also reduces our ability to provide ongoing personalized feedback to students between classes. To create opportunities for spontaneous feedback and interaction, regularly enter your virtual classroom 15 minutes before class starts and then stay in this virtual space 15 minutes after your class ends. Ensure frequent feedback and quality online interaction by establishing multiple communication channels via chats, consultations, and other spaces. This way your students can use their preferred means for communicating not just with you but, of even greater importance, with each other. When grading student work, provide personalized feedback by writing or recording detailed comments. Because feedback often takes more time in virtual classes, plan wisely to create a comfortable balance between your teaching time and your personal time.

### *Time Management*

Online teaching requires conscious use of time. That's because we frequently conduct online teaching from our own homes without the usual breaks associated with F2F classes, such as walking down the hallway between class or leaving campus after class ends. This undefined spatial boundary tends to blur the distinction between our instructional time and our personal time. Furthermore, when immersed in online teaching, we easily lose track of time. To better manage our time with online teaching, we need to develop organizational skills. For example, when reaching a stopping point in teaching tasks and before starting personal tasks, consider signalling a transition by doing something physical for 10 minutes such as walking or exercising. Try taking a visual approach to time management by using personal apps such as growing a virtual garden or caring for an imaginary pet. When juggling your online teaching and personal activities, conscientiously take breaks from the screen. For example, turn off your screen each hour for about five minutes (Densberger, 2020). Consider sharing these time management tips with your students.

### *Digital Literacy*

To be successful with online teaching, develop a functional level of digital literacy and systematically dedicate time and effort to keep your digital skills as updated as possible. Instead of always using the same tool (e.g., webcam), learn to use new digital tools among the wide array of constantly emerging products. In this way, you can be efficient and effective at organizing

and managing virtual lessons. The quicker you can solve an unexpected problem, the more productive your lesson will be. Unless your students have already acquired functional skills related to information technology, they will seek help for all types of apparent obstacles in your virtual classroom. Consequently, to prepare for answering students' technology questions, learn the basic functions for each of the platforms and apps that you plan to use in a lesson. Write clear, step-by-step instructions to help students understand tasks and to address their potential needs. Also, provide instructions for students to transition smoothly between tasks. In case a task does not meet your expectations or perhaps even fails miserably, have a contingency plan with backup platforms and apps.

## Pedagogical Applications

When planning and using pedagogical apps, help your students assume responsibility in virtual and hybrid classes as seriously as in their F2F classes. In your online classroom, create an effective learning environment by implementing interactive activities, addressing possible challenges, conducting assessments, and providing feedback.

### *Implement Interactive Virtual Activities*

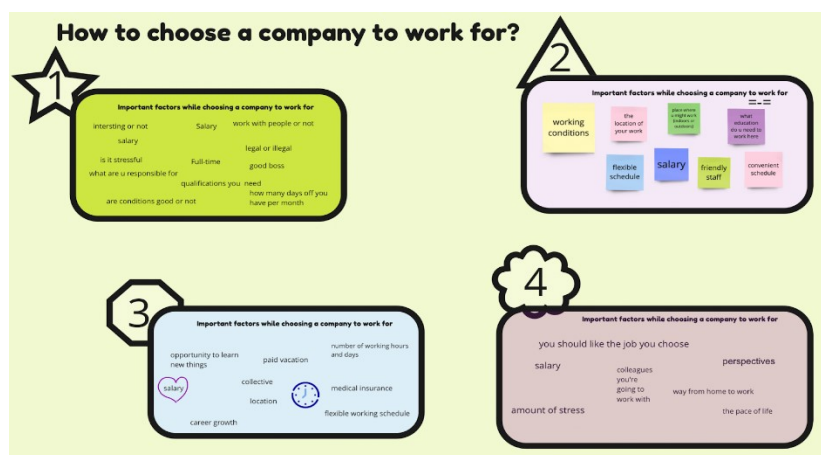
Plan each online lesson with different types of activities, such as individual in-class tasks (e.g., reading, listening, writing) as well as pair and group tasks (e.g., brainstorming, discussing, interviewing). When students are completing well-defined individual tasks and, especially, when participating in organized activities requiring social interaction with classmates, they will be less likely to become distracted by social networks and multimedia sites. To increase interaction among students, divide them into groups for doing activities in virtual breakout rooms. For example, in a class of 12 students, create four groups with three students per group. After sharing group configurations with your students, describe the activity that they will be doing in each group's breakout room. Explain that you will be visiting each of these virtual spaces to monitor interaction and see if help is needed. After providing these explanations, admit students into their respective breakout rooms.

Even if students live at great distances from one another (e.g., different cities, regions, or countries), they can create their presentation projects collaboratively by using interactive online tools such as on Miro, Canva, and Google. Similarly, they can conduct surveys collaboratively by using a tool such as Mentimeter, which is also highly effective at generating online results. Some tools are interactive but do not lead to collaborative projects. For example, Kahoot, Wordwall, Quizlet, and Rebus.club are competitive tools for learning new vocabulary, grammar, and other language forms in an entertaining way but without producing a final product.

Consider monitoring student engagement within each group by having groups display their emerging collaborative work in real time. For example, we usually have our student groups use the Miro app and display their respective projects on a single virtual board as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Collaborative Groupwork in the Miro App.*



*Note.* From authors' personal archive

During the lesson illustrated in Figure 1, the Miro app allowed four student groups to display their work while still in progress. Each group brainstormed companies for seeking employment and typed their ideas into a frame. These frames were positioned far enough apart so that the groups could not copy ideas initially posted by one of the other groups. When we used this app, we were able to see students collaborating and, therefore, knew that all were contributing to their group's collaborative project.

### ***Address Possible Challenges***

When teaching online and hybrid classes, some teachers experience challenges with incomplete assessments, late assignments, and cheating. Teachers can effectively address such challenges without necessarily seeking help from information technology specialists. Of greatest importance is establishing and publishing clear submission deadlines. Consider addressing other possible challenges by

- asking students to turn on their cameras and look at the screen,
- scheduling just enough time for students to do a test by thinking about questions (and not doing internet searches),
- increasing the number of questions with open-ended responses and decreasing those with closed answers, and
- using special platforms (e.g., onlinetestpad or Google) to create timed tests with built-in restrictions that can prevent students from listening more than once to a recording (or from trying to redo a test response).

### ***Conduct Assessments and Provide Feedback***

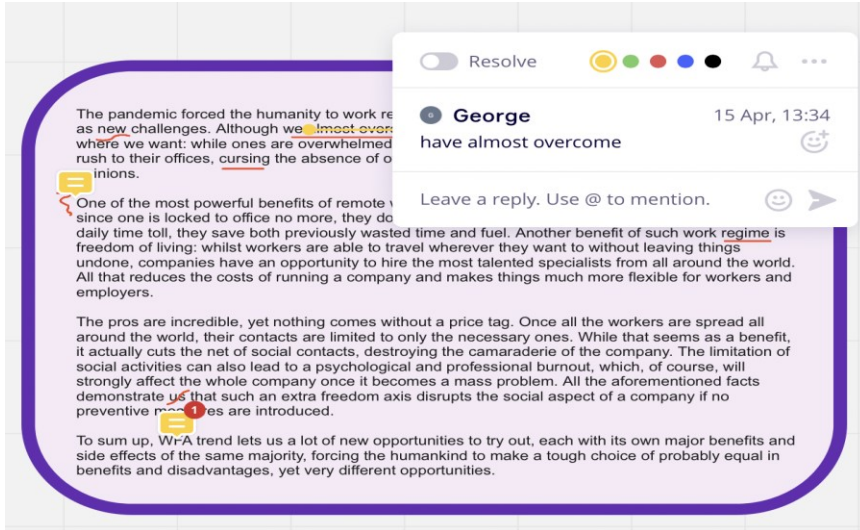
When you are teaching in virtual and hybrid classrooms, be sure to conduct assessments and provide feedback. To assess your students' online work, consider using some of the tools mentioned earlier, such as LMS platforms, Google classrooms, Facebook groups, and Miro boards. First, create a place to provide your feedback to online written assignments and tests.



Next, help students access your feedback. Finally, guide students with revising their work as an integral part of ongoing improvement and help them self-assess their own progress. Different ways for providing feedback to online essays are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3.

**Figure 2**

*Providing Feedback in the Miro App.*



*Note. From authors' personal archive*

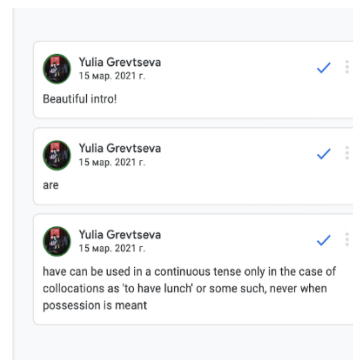
In Figure 2, we used the Miro App for providing feedback to student writing. As feedback, we highlighted errors and wrote comments. We also inserted emojis to signal something well done.

**Figure 3**

*Providing Feedback in Google Docs*

states within a single language, there is still no sense in stifling local tongues as it will only result in an opposite effect.

Increasingly, the number of adherents of multilingualism **is** growing nowadays for the following reasons. First of all, the language influences the way a person comprehends and acts. The case of Serbs and Croats will serve as a prime example. These nations **are having** almost the similar tongue and still they have a strife (for instance, the recent Yugoslavian war) and differences in cultures (customs and traditions). Moreover, making only one language the lingua franca means that others are going to become just irrelevant. This leads to their extinction. A vivid example is the appearance of English in **the USA**, which has replaced all the native tongues on the continent.



*Note. From authors' personal archive*

In Figure 3, we used Google Docs, which is a somewhat different way for providing feedback to students about their online essays. Here we commented about the quality of student work and explained ways for students to improve their writing.

In this chapter, you learned about teaching in virtual and hybrid classrooms. You learned about teacher-student communication and the role of an LMS for nurturing a sense of community, supporting ongoing feedback, and monitoring time management. You also learned about using digital tools and pedagogical apps to implement interactive virtual activities, address possible challenges, conduct assessments, and provide feedback. By continually updating your digital skills and using the most appropriate apps to meet a lesson's learning objectives, you will be able to maximize the learning success of your students in virtual and hybrid classrooms

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts and suggestions about teaching in virtual and hybrid classrooms:

- Help your students adapt to virtual and hybrid formats.
- Manage your time when working online and, also, teach your students to do the same.
- Monitor the amount of time spent on online platforms and be aware of any potential decline in your concentration and your students' concentration.
- Refrain from spending much time trying to understand the online resources mentioned in this chapter. These resources provide instructions on using their respective features and, also, have interfaces that are quite intuitive.
- Constantly solicit feedback from students and analyze their needs.
- If you get stuck, consider asking your students for help. They are often quite knowledgeable about online resources.
- Avoid paying for digital tools because of how all online resources mentioned in this chapter have free options for classroom use.

## Discussing

Based on this chapter about virtual and hybrid classrooms, answer these questions:

1. What contents, strategies, and media are the most common for teaching EFL? How can these be adapted to online teaching?
2. How can you best incorporate digital tools and techniques when teaching EFL in virtual and hybrid classrooms?
3. How should teachers react if students refuse to turn on their cameras during a virtual class and then justify their refusal as not feeling well?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about virtual and hybrid classrooms, do the following:

1. Design a lesson plan (40-45 minutes) for teaching an advanced beginner EFL class with students 15-17 years of age. These students possess basic English and are not novices at English lessons. Because most of them like Star Wars, design an introductory online lesson about cinema. In your lesson plan for virtual teaching, include online platforms, digital tools, and other materials.
2. Select online platforms, digital tools, and other materials for teaching a writing lesson in a virtual EFL classroom with students at a high intermediate or low advanced level. Your students have written an opinion essay. Conduct an anonymous peer assessment activity where writing tasks are seen by you and all students. However, be sure that your students cannot identify whose work they are reading and reviewing. The aim of this activity is identifying common mistakes to be discussed as a group.
3. Think about ways to help yourself and your students adapt to online learning. Generate some tips to share with students to facilitate online work.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about virtual and hybrid classrooms, visit these websites:

- Collaboration superpowers. [https://www.collaborationsuperpowers.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Cameras-on-Full-Article-tips.pdf?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=motivate\\_your\\_team\\_to\\_turn\\_their\\_cameras\\_on&utm\\_term=2022-01-25](https://www.collaborationsuperpowers.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Cameras-on-Full-Article-tips.pdf?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=motivate_your_team_to_turn_their_cameras_on&utm_term=2022-01-25)
- Gamification in multiplayer classrooms. <https://www.coursera.org/lecture/gamification/2-1-gamification-in-context-MUt1B>
- Google classroom app. <https://edu.google.com/workspace-for-education/classroom/>
- Miro.
- [https://go.miro.com/webinars?utm\\_source=product&utm\\_medium=learning\\_center](https://go.miro.com/webinars?utm_source=product&utm_medium=learning_center)
- Online educational games. <https://teambuilding.com/blog/online-classroom-games>
- Tests. <https://onlinetestpad.com>

## See Also

Aspects related to online teaching and classroom management are addressed by the following chapters in this book:

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Acquisition* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 17** *Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output* by C. Cristóful

**Chapter 18** *Teaching English in Different Contexts* by R. Díaz

**Chapter 21** *Connecting Student Interaction With Classroom Management* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 23** *Integrating Technology in Language Classrooms* by H. Hubbard, A. Foss, and C. Strawn

**Chapter 27** *Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT* by O. Esquivel

**Chapter 49** *E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning* by B. Jiménez

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# CHAPTER 25

## Preparing to Teach through Effective Lesson Planning

# Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning

Harshini Lalwani

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## Abstract

A good lesson is like a delicious meal—enjoyable and valuable with the right combination of ingredients, in a relaxed environment among people we like and who make us feel comfortable. Good lessons are usually planned very carefully with specific elements that teachers include to make learning as motivating and relevant as possible for the students. In this chapter, you will learn about several factors that influence decisions when writing a lesson plan within the framework of a syllabus and for a particular group of students. You will learn about practical realities that influence the lesson planning process. You will also learn how to do effective lesson planning in preparation for effective teaching.

*Keywords:* lesson planning, effective teaching, curriculum, syllabus, motivation, relevancy

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## Introduction

If someone asks you about a perfect lesson that you experienced, either as a teacher or student, you will probably think about a lesson that produced powerful learning. Such lessons rarely occur spontaneously. Depending on one's teaching background and the setting, good teachers always have a plan. The plan might be a detailed format required for observation or evaluation, simple notes in a notebook, or a list of activities in the teacher's head. Whichever format you use for lesson planning, be sure to have first developed your plan before entering the classroom.

Well-designed plans offer many benefits. Such plans can

- provide a structure for the learning process to evolve and a framework for working within the institutional curriculum,
- give you an opportunity to evaluate lesson activities to be developed and the order in which these activities are most effective to meet learning goals,
- ensure that the needed lesson materials are available and prepared in advance,
- help you make best use of limited time,
- prepare you to anticipate possible problems during the lesson and handle such problems,
- allow for effective classroom management and interaction,
- position you to consider needs of individual students and how to meet these needs,
- allow you to critically evaluate objectives reached and make future plans,
- supply you with a written teaching record for future reference, and
- give you confidence and, also, guide related professional development activities.

At the beginning of your career, it can be difficult and time-consuming to write detailed lesson plans. However, as you teach more and acquire “tried and tested strategies and activities” (Budden, 2008), lesson planning will become easier and faster.

## Background

The Centre for Teaching Excellence (2022) described a lesson plan as “the teacher’s roadmap of what students need to learn and how it will be done effectively during class time” (para. 1). However, before starting to write a lesson plan, consider the following teaching-related factors and understand how these factors can influence your lesson planning efforts.

### *Learners*

Learners are at the core of the learning process. Therefore, the more you know about your students, the better you can reach them during your lessons. Adjust your lessons based on student age, language level, and educational and cultural backgrounds as well as the different ways your students learn English. Young learners may prefer lessons with dynamic games, but adult learners often prefer more grammar. If you are teaching in a school, you will probably encounter different language levels and learning abilities at the same grade level and in the same classroom. Your lessons need to be fair and equitable for all students (Centre for Teaching Excellence, 2022). So, think of varied ways to communicate with your learners and differentiate the tasks to accommodate their needs. To ensure that your lessons are motivating, consider



individual student interests and group dynamics (e.g., who works well with whom). Gathering this information might seem intimidating at the start of an academic year. However, with time, you will be able to gather and use this knowledge naturally during your planning process.

### *Institutional Curriculum*

Every educational institution has a vision of what students should achieve by the end of their educational journey and how they will get there. Some schools require students to take an international language exam (e.g., TOEFL or IELTS) upon finishing their program. Other schools might emphasize literacy and literature. Yet others might follow a task-based or inquiry-based approach. What you teach and how you teach must align with your institution's vision, philosophy, and syllabus. These, in turn, must be reflected in your lesson plans.

### *Practical Realities*

English is taught and learned in a wide range of contexts, and these differ greatly regarding human resources and teaching materials. Some institutions might have challenges with internet connectivity, making it impossible to access online videos. Other institutions might have complicated processes to make photocopies and to print teaching materials. Conversely, you might be at an institution where each student has a laptop or other type of digital device. Another concern might be sufficient space to move around and do activities (e.g., play games) inside the classroom or in the hallway. When planning your lessons, make practical decisions about your activities to ensure having adequate space. Also, make sure that you have gathered all needed materials far in advance of starting your lesson.

## Major Dimensions

Now that you have basic knowledge about lesson planning, select your main learning objective for a specific lesson. Consider doing this by identifying a core standard from the institutional (or state) curriculum and breaking it down to “create objectives for each individual lesson based on ... (this) curriculum and knowledge of ... students’ capabilities (Drexel University, n.d., para. 10). Based on your course-based curriculum, outline lesson objectives that explain what learners will be able to do and that are achievable within the allotted time. Write your objectives in simple language understandable by everyone involved. These objectives “must be specific, outcome-based, and measurable, and they must describe learner behavior” (Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy Center, n.d., para. 3).

After writing your instructional objectives, make detailed decisions about your lesson. Harmer (2019) narrowed this decision-making process to content, language, skills, activities, and assessment. Following are descriptions for each of these aspects.

### *Content*

Content refers to the topic that you select based on your learners’ cultural background and interest. Textbooks provide a wide variety of topics targeted at specific age groups. However, as the teacher, you are in a privileged position to judge whether the textbook topics will motivate your learners or not. If you find a topic to be inappropriate, choose another topic. However, be careful to pick a topic that matches well with the language function that you are required to teach. For example, if the language function is giving directions, choose a dialogue for your

adult class where a tourist is asking for directions. Or, if this is for a children’s class, choose a story about a treasure hunt. The topic you choose must be well supported by activities. The most interesting topics can be boring if activities are not varied and well-paced. Similarly, a potentially boring topic can be made interesting and dynamic with the right choice of activities.

### ***Language***

Language refers to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. When planning your lesson, decide which language feature(s) to introduce and be practiced by students. This can be words and phrases for a specific purpose such as seeking information or making a request. Combine this vocabulary with a grammar feature such as reported speech or passive voice. To support the targeted vocabulary and grammar features, consider including specific pronunciation features such as intonation or weak forms. What you decide may come from the course syllabus (e.g., next item in lesson progression) or from your classroom assessment of what these learners need (e.g., an identified learning gap).

### ***Skills***

Skills refer to reading, writing, listening, and speaking. If you wish, focus on one specific skill for a given lesson. However, to give students practice in two or more skills, consider taking an integrated skills approach. After identifying the skill(s), choose one or more subskill(s) that are relevant to your activities. For instance, for the speaking skill, are you looking for overall fluency or the correct pronunciation of a particular sound? Your decision about skills is codependent on lesson content and accompanying activities.

### ***Activities***

Activities refer to what you want your students to do in class. After you choose your activities, establish an order that fits your implementation plan. This order must align with student age and language development. For example, at the elementary level, teaching core vocabulary comes before reading a passage. Identify a pace for each activity to keep learners engaged. For instance, young learners respond well to the “stirrers and settlers” pace (Ritter, 2021). Select an interaction pattern (e.g., teacher-led, student-led, pair work, group work) that matches your learning aims and learner needs. Also anticipate time for extended explanations, engaging discussions, and unanticipated occurrences.

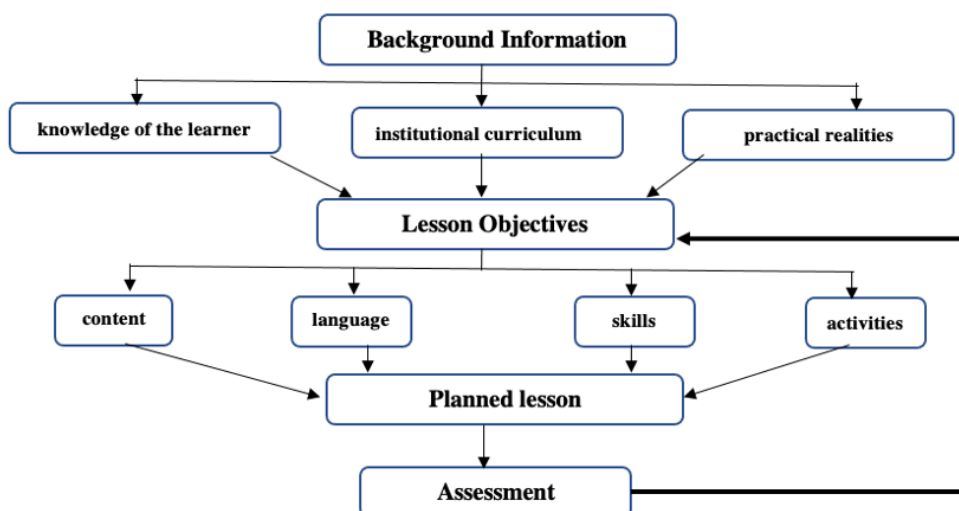
### ***Assessment***

Finally, assessment refers to determining how well students understood the lesson and have learned the content. When deciding how to assess, consider taking different approaches such as at specific stages in the lesson and/or towards the end. Well-selected assessment techniques will demonstrate how well your learners have acquired targeted knowledge and skills. Assessment also provides feedback for planning future lessons.

### ***Preplanning Process***

The above aspects are interrelated with each other during the preparation process of lesson planning. As such, they form part of the planning cycle illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*The Planning Cycle*

*Note. Based on ideas compiled from The Practice of English Language Teaching (5th ed.) by J. Harmer, 2019, Pearson.*

In Figure 1, the planning cycle starts with background information about the learner, institutional curriculum, and practical realities. This cycle then moves to decisions about lesson objectives, which are based on content, language, skills, and activities. The next step is planning the lesson, and the final step is assessment. If needed, the planning cycle returns to objectives and again moves through each of these steps.

## Pedagogical Applications

After making decisions during the planning cycle, put your plan into writing. Generally, institutions where you work will provide a lesson plan format that all teachers must use. This format will contain basic components of a good lesson and provide an organizational structure for preparing and using your lesson plan, describing your decisions (if required), and sharing with your supervisor. To facilitate teacher supervision, institutions usually have all teachers use the same planning format. Formal lesson planning in this type of prescribed format can also support the institution's efforts to provide ongoing teacher development.

Part of a lesson plan format is provided below. Its entire format is provided in the appendix.



- Plan brief assessments at several points in your lesson to determine what has been achieved just in case you run out of time before the final assessment.
- Plan approximate time for each activity. Think about what to do if an activity takes longer than planned or finishes early. For example, if the lesson takes longer than anticipated, omit a later activity. If the lesson flows more quickly than anticipated, include an extra activity.
- Anticipate problems (e.g., equipment, learner interaction, difficult concepts), add contingencies to your plan, and explain how potential problems will be resolved.
- Allow time for learning to take place. Plan post-lesson activities for learners to consolidate information learned.
- After the lesson ends, identify parts that were effective and enjoyable. Also identify activities that did not go as planned and that should be changed for future implementation. Write your reflections on your lesson plan so that you can find them the next time you use this lesson.
- Lastly, remember that a lesson plan is not a rulebook. In other words, it does not need to be followed exactly. If the lesson is not going as planned, put the lesson plan aside and transition to something that has already worked well for you.

In this chapter you learned about preparing to teach by doing effective lesson planning. You learned to consider your learners, institutional curriculum, and practical realities and then to incorporate content, language aspects, skills, activities, and assessment. With a lesson plan template as your guide, you are now ready to start planning effective lessons.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts from this chapter on lesson planning:

- Planning gives you a clear view of how to use class time to maximize learning.
- Before you start to plan, carefully consider your learners' profile, your institutional syllabus, and available resources.
- During planning, consider the topic and targeted language aspects, skills, and activities as well as interaction patterns, timings, and learning assessments.
- Include strategies that are effective and enjoyable for you and your students.
- Your lesson plan can be informal or formal, depending on its purpose. Formal plans must follow a format provided by your institution. Informal plans can be lists or notes.

## Discussing

Based on what you have learned about lesson planning, discuss these questions with your partner or in groups and make notes for future reference:

1. What are the common characteristics and interests of children, teenagers, and adult language learners where you teach? How will this influence your lesson planning?
2. What resources are available at your institution? Make a list of materials, equipment, space, library books, and other resources. Discuss creative ways to use resources in your lessons.

3. How can you assess students when reading, writing, listening, and speaking?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about lesson planning, do the following:

1. Examine a language teaching textbook from your institution or another institution. Choose a reading or listening passage and develop a lesson plan for your current class or a fictitious class at the age and language level suggested in the book.
2. Consider possible problems that could occur when teaching this lesson. Think of insights from your former experiences as a teacher or student. Plan how to solve these problems.
3. Share your lesson plan with a colleague and ask for feedback.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about lesson planning, visit these websites:

- Assessment. <https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/simple-assessment-strategies/>
- British Council. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/assessment-learning>
- Differentiated instruction strategies. <https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/differentiated-instruction-strategies-examples-download/>
- Lesson aims. <https://thebestticher.wordpress.com/2016/11/14/learning-objectives/>
- Lesson plan elements, Department of State for the United States. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BqR7wUje\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BqR7wUje_4)
- Lesson plan guide. <https://premiertefl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Lesson-Planning-Guide.pdf>
- Lesson planning 101: Mapping activities for a clear path to learning. [https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/lesson\\_planning\\_101-pre-recording\\_0.pdf](https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/lesson_planning_101-pre-recording_0.pdf)
- Lesson plans for teaching English. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/planning-lessons-and-courses/articles/lesson-plans>
- Strategies for effective lesson plan writing. [https://crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p2\\_5](https://crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p2_5)

## See Also

Aspects of lesson planning are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners* by S. Montiel

**Chapter 18** *Teaching English in Different Contexts* by R. Díaz

**Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess

**Chapter 35** *Developing Critical Thinking Through Inquiry-Based Learning* by V. Canese

**Chapter 36** *Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners* by I. Giménez and C. Rolón

**Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

**Chapter 46** *Introduction to Language Assessment* by N. Kuhlman

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## APPENDIX

# ch.25

## Sample Lesson Plan Format

<b>Teacher:</b> <b>Place:</b> <b>Number of Ss: Length:</b>	<b>Date:</b> <b>Level:</b> <b>Student's Age:</b>
--	--

<b>Lesson Type:</b> <b>1. Language: Grammar / Lexis / Functions. Specify:</b> <b>2. Skills: Listening / Speaking / Reading / Writing</b> <b>Specify sub-skills:</b> <b>Materials needed:</b>
<b>Objectives of the lesson, with learning outcomes</b> <b>Main:</b> <i>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to</i> <b>Sub-Aims:</b> <i>The students will also have the opportunity to practice...</i>

**Assumptions:** For this lesson, what factors have you considered about your students' knowledge and interests?

**Anticipated Problems:**

Write any problems you think may occur during the lesson (e.g., timing, tasks, student participation, topic, etc.)

**Solutions:**

What will you do in class to solve the problems if they happen?

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Activities / Procedures</b>	<b>Interaction</b>	<b>Time for each activity and Materials used</b>
Write how each activity will help students achieve the main goal <i>e.g., To build vocabulary prior to reading</i>	<b>Task Progression/Task Cycle</b> What will the students do? How will you check that students understand what to do? How will you assess them and assist them during the task? How will you encourage them to share answers and give feedback?	- Group work? - Pair work? - Individual work? - Competition Teams? - Teacher-led?	

*This format has been adapted to meet the purpose of the chapter. This format was created at the Instituto Stael Ruffinelli de Ortiz- English, which is a provider of the Certificate TESOL Teacher Training Course for Trinity College London.*

# Content and Language Integration

**26*****Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning***

Alberto Roca Alvarez

**27*****Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT***

Fernando Esquivel Vera

**28*****Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature***

Stael Ruffinelli de Ortiz, Carolina Ortiz Ruffinelli

**29*****Using Theater to Teach English***

Carolina Ortiz Ruffinelli, Matthew Vaky

**30*****Incorporating Music in the ELT Classroom***

Otoniel Eduardo Carrasquel Zambrano

**31*****Using Translation and Interpretation in ELT***

Silvia Terol



Photo by Unseen Studio on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 26

## Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning

# Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning

Alberto Roca Álvarez

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## Abstract

Across Latin America, many parents invest in English to ensure a successful future for their children. A coveted but relatively expensive option is for parents to enroll their children at private bilingual schools where, from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, content is taught in English. Called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), this bilingual model is becoming a worldwide trend. Because of globalization and an increasing need for English, CLIL is being implemented at many schools where most students have a home language other than English. In Paraguay, for example, CLIL students usually have Spanish as their home language and English as a second or subsequent language. For many of these students, CLIL is positive and leads to high levels of English. However, for other students, CLIL is challenging. In this chapter, you will learn about several benefits and challenges of CLIL. You will also learn recommended practices for counterbalancing these benefits and challenges.

*Keywords:* Content and Language Integrated Learning, bilingual schools, bilingual immersion, globalization, challenges and benefits of CLIL

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## Introduction

From when I enrolled in a language institute to study English (at age 13) and then continued studying English for nine years (until earning my university degree), I wanted to understand everything written in my textbooks, spoken by my teachers, and shared at social events. And, of course, I also wanted to speak and write fluently. However, the English students that I teach seem to have a different perspective. Many of my students seem to view English solely as a means for doing lesson activities. They are eighth graders at a bilingual school that follows the instructional model called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL; Harrop, 2012). It is interesting that these students view learning English so differently than I did at their age.

My students are Spanish speakers who, since pre-kindergarten, have been schooled mainly in English. At their CLIL school, they have been learning some English-medium subjects (e.g., language arts) since kindergarten and other English-medium subjects (e.g., social studies) since the upper elementary grades. In their school, CLIL is implemented by delivering content instruction in English through realia, appropriate English input, interactive techniques, elicitation, and ongoing English output. This CLIL model also serves for conducting assessment and evaluation. Nonetheless, although CLIL students can usually communicate in English about numerous topics, their individual language proficiencies can vary considerably at each grade level (Seikkula-Leino, 2007). Furthermore, although the CLIL model usually facilitates student participation in class, it cannot ensure students' performance, language accuracy, cultural awareness, or motivation to learn (as evidenced by some of my eighth graders).

Within this CLIL model, the subject content and corresponding language skills are taught concurrently. This can lead to numerous benefits such as students' seemingly high level of participation during lessons and their ability to express ideas fluently about a wide range of subjects (Lazaruk, 2007). However, as with other curricular models, CLIL has shortcomings. For example, dedicating more instructional time to content than language may result in some CLIL students performing at low levels of English with noticeable language inaccuracies. In such situations, CLIL students might feel demotivated and might even experience low self-esteem (Goris et al., 2019). To better understand this type of situation, I describe the benefits and challenges of CLIL as an instructional model and explore ways to counterbalance these benefits and challenges in contexts where English is a foreign language.

## Background

The CLIL model emerged in Europe during the 1990s (Marsh, 2012). Its name, CLIL, included the words “content and language integrated” to represent a dual-purpose instructional model through which content subjects are taught and learned in a language other than the student's home language. In CLIL, the subject content (e.g., science) is taught through a target language (e.g., English), and this target language is taught through the content. In these two-way learning classes, students ideally learn the new content simultaneously with the new language. For this to happen, CLIL lessons must incorporate the vocabulary and language structures from the target language needed by students to understand concepts, draw conclusions, and express ideas. As such, CLIL operates as a cross-curricular model designed for students to learn language and content at the same time and, over several years, to reach desired proficiency.

As a cross-curricular model for learning language and content, CLIL has grown steadily in popularity. This model is now being used throughout the Americas, Europe, and other continents to provide content-based instruction while supporting learners with reaching proficiency in a target language (Harrop, 2012). As part of a global trend, CLIL is a preferred model at many private educational institutions in Paraguay and other countries. Parents worldwide spend large sums of money for their children to be schooled in English at a bilingual or multilingual school that uses the CLIL model.

In CLIL, content and language are equally as important with both included in the curriculum and scheduled during the school day. A school's curriculum serves as the means for developing a target language, and the target language serves as a means for teaching and learning that school's subject content (Coyle, 1999). Students are supported in learning content and language together by receiving abundant support such as diagrams, charts, hierarchies, timelines, and other visuals as well as hands-on manipulatives. In CLIL, a reciprocal relationship exists between content and language with each depending on the other, and both supporting each other.

A CLIL curriculum contains four elements (Coyle, 1999): content, communication, cognition, and culture. Often called the 4-Cs, these elements support CLIL lessons in different ways.

- *Content* is for making progress in knowledge and skills and, also, for understanding specific elements of a defined curriculum.
- *Communication* is for using language to learn and, also, for learning to use language.
- *Cognition* is for developing the thinking skills needed to link concept formation (abstract and concrete) together with language and comprehension (i.e., understanding).
- *Culture* is for being exposed to alternative perspectives and shared understandings that lead to a deepened awareness of others and self.

Of utmost importance is recognizing that CLIL is for teaching unknown content, not for reteaching known content, such as content that might have initially been learned in a home language (Coyle, 1999). More specifically, because CLIL students are learning new content through a new language (e.g., English), their classes are not targeted at reviewing either content or language. Instead, during their CLIL lessons, students are learning new content and new language by becoming engaged in activities and lessons. In addition to supporting content and language learning, some CLIL settings support learners by increasing their motivation and empowering them to become more informed as global citizens (Lasagabaster, 2008).

When effectively planned and implemented, CLIL can serve to develop students' knowledge, skills, interests, language proficiency, and accuracy as well as a sense of self and otherness within the classroom. CLIL can also help students at different language levels to experience a "perspective of consciousness" regarding national, international, social, and ethnic processes (Broady, 2004). In fact, students in CLIL classrooms often experience this consciousness at a higher level of effectiveness than do students in traditional classrooms. Hence, through CLIL, students apply new content, produce new language, accomplish learning objectives, and develop global awareness.

## Major Dimensions

After adopting a CLIL model, schools develop a CLIL curriculum and incorporate specific CLIL elements. However, as with other types of instructional models, some CLIL students experience multiple benefits whereas other students experience challenges. Following is an overview of some benefits and challenges associated with CLIL settings.

### *Benefits of CLIL*

Students and educators in CLIL settings can experience numerous benefits. Such benefits often stem from CLIL's promising potential to transform content and language learning into desired outcomes (Coyle, 1999). Here are several benefits often associated with CLIL:

- Communication, cognition, and cultural assimilation are achieved through the CLIL dimensions of knowledge advancement, content understanding, skills (including higher cognitive processing), and assimilation of deepened cultural patterns (Coyle, 1999).
- Content serves to motivate students, contrary to the effect of single topics in traditional language classrooms (Lasagabaster, 2008).
- Content provides a natural-like environment that focuses on meaning, fosters language acquisition, and leads to higher proficiency levels (Lyster, 2007).
- CLIL follows a constructivist approach that reinforces cognitive development and flexibility while viewing language as essential to learning (Coyle 1999; Lyster, 2007).
- CLIL promotes intercultural understanding and, thus, has the potential to address social cohesion (Lasagabaster, 2008).

### *Challenges of CLIL*

Students and educators in CLIL settings can also experience challenges. Such challenges often stem from struggles experienced by some students to attain targeted English proficiency levels. Other challenges might stem from a disconnect between the personal interests of students (especially teenagers) and the CLIL curriculum. Here are several challenges often associated with CLIL:

- Although CLIL usually avoids the plateau effect experienced by many learners in traditional language classrooms, the language learners in a given CLIL setting tend to reach different levels of language accuracy, such as with pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm (Lazaruk, 2007).
- CLIL classrooms might not focus on analyzing learners' semantic and syntactic output, which can hinder learners from improving their accuracy (Lyster, 2007). This often stems from more emphasis being placed on content than language—even though both should be given equal importance (Coyle, 1999).
- If content becomes the major focus in a CLIL setting and insufficient support is offered for language development, low-proficiency language learners might not receive needed language support. Insufficient language support can lead to them being “linguistically truncated albeit functionally effective” (Lyster, p. 21).
- CLIL students might develop a lower self-concept of themselves as English users when compared to students who learned English in other educational settings

(Seikkula-Leino (2007). This was noticed in debate competitions that included participants from CLIL schools and non-CLIL schools.

- Some CLIL settings might not include sufficient intercultural awareness activities (e.g., field trips and virtual encounters) for students to optimally develop their intercultural consciousness.

## Pedagogical Applications

Integrating language, cognition, and context in a CLIL school offers the potential of enhancing students' acquisition of a target language. To further enhance this potential, teachers and their institutions often provide additional support to students (as needed). When teaching in a CLIL setting, maximize benefits and minimize challenges by following these suggestions:

### *Build Relationships With Your Students*

Start the semester by building positive relationships with your CLIL students. Make a conscious effort before, during, and after class to get to know your students, which is the first of six principles for effectively teaching English learners (Short et al., 2022). Create a learner-centered classroom community grounded in social emotional learning. These aspects are important in all settings targeted on learning languages. However, they are of even greater importance in CLIL settings because students are learning content every day in a language that is not their home language.

### *Focus on Developing Receptive and Productive Language Skills*

In each lesson, include learning strategies that focus on developing your students' receptive language skills (listening and reading) and productive language skills (speaking and writing). When learning a new language in a CLIL context, students use receptive skills to hear and read content, and they use productive skills to speak and write about this content. Implement teaching strategies to develop these specific skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in an integrated manner. Strategies for integrating these skills are especially applicable to CLIL classrooms because of how language and content are taught together. Consider implementing these activities based on how they align with Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, going from comprehension up through analysis, and then ending with evaluation and creation.

### *Implement Language Reinforcement Activities*

Implement activities so that your CLIL students can reinforce their language accuracy. Design activities that combine language with content to strengthen language acquisition and facilitate content learning. Such activities can help learners become more confident in their journey with learning a new language. Although this might require implementing the syllabus at a slower pace, this will serve to solidify language acquisition and content learning (Coyle, 1999). To do so, implement activities that build language awareness, use explicit and implicit opportunities, promote thinking skills, explore meaning through translanguaging, strengthen communication through classroom discourse, and connect student interaction with classroom management.

### *Provide Additional Support for Students With Low Language Proficiency*

Provide additional support to CLIL students who are struggling with low language proficiency. Be prepared and willing to adapt instructional materials for students experiencing challenges associated with low English proficiency. Integrate technology and incorporate inclusive



educational practices. Frequently offer feedback on learners' language output and provide additional instructional support—as needed—to meet your students' needs. Also, provide ample opportunities for students to use English through music, theater, authentic literature, and gamification. By receiving such support, CLIL students at all language levels will be better able to improve their language and, thus, experience greater success linguistically and academically.

### *Initiate Cultural Exchanges*

Initiate cultural exchanges for CLIL students by collaborating with administrators, colleagues, and parents. Create opportunities for your students to participate first-hand in cultural exchanges and, thus, become immersed socially and culturally in the target language and culture. Cultural exchanges are an effective means to facilitate learning and increase motivation. Also available are various opportunities for doing virtual exchanges. Cultural exchanges serve to protect CLIL's intercultural ethos from a utilitarian perspective, that of viewing CLIL exclusively as a pathway toward higher language proficiency (Harrop, 2012).

### *Participate in Professional Development*

Participate in professional development opportunities that are focused specifically on teaching in CLIL settings. Such opportunities can be provided by CLIL schools as well as by local, regional, and international teacher organizations. One example is the Paraguayan Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (PARATESOL), which is a country-based affiliate of the TESOL International Association. Accessing professional development is of extreme importance if you have been asked to teach subject content through English but do not have expertise in the assigned subject (e.g., biology) and, thus, are unable to determine what is relevant in this subject. It is only through such training that you will be able to plan and deliver well-designed lessons in this subject and, also, provide follow-up support to your students. Through CLIL-based training, you can develop and deliver appealing CLIL lessons that can inspire and engage your students (Goris et al., 2019).

In this chapter about CLIL, you learned about teaching a new language through new content and, simultaneously, teaching new content through a new language. You learned how the CLIL model must include content, cognition, communication, and culture. You also learned about several benefits and challenges associated with CLIL and how to counterbalance these benefits and challenges.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about CLIL:

- CLIL leads to higher attainment, improves learner motivation, benefits learners of all abilities, and increases intercultural awareness (Coyle, 1999).
- Although CLIL is a popular language model, schools can adjust the way it is implemented to ensure that all students experience effective learning.
- Although CLIL fosters communication in a wide array of subjects, increased focus on language accuracy is often needed (Lazaruk, 2007).
- The sense of self and otherness can be supported by extracurricular activities such as cultural exchanges—both in person and virtually.

## Discussing

Based on what you learned about CLIL, answer these questions:

1. What did you know about CLIL before you read this chapter?
2. In your opinion, what are the main benefits and challenges of CLIL?
3. Do you think you would like to teach in a CLIL setting? Why or why not?
4. Although you are just starting your career as a teacher, what do you feel might be the future of CLIL (in your country and your own life)?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about CLIL, do the following:

1. Choose one of the CLIL benefits listed in this chapter and explain why you agree or disagree with describing this as a benefit.
2. Choose one of the CLIL challenges listed in this chapter and explain why you agree or disagree with describing this as a challenge.
3. Outline some preliminary ideas to consider when designing a CLIL lesson for a specific grade level. Identify some tasks, activities, and delivery techniques for teaching a selected content (e.g., science). Also, consider ways to build relationships with students of this age.
4. For your preliminary outline of a CLIL lesson, explain why you identified the aspects that you included in this outline.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge and application of CLIL, visit these websites:

- CLIL. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/content-and-language-integrated-learning>
- Homepage for the American School of Asuncion, Paraguay. <https://www.asa.edu.py/>
- Sharing classrooms and sharing worlds: CLIL. <https://www.worldclil.com/>
- Teaching the CLIL knowledge test. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sBYb27OeFU-DBmh6RSbeJ4rpUAkDZAh6/view?usp=sharing>

## See Also

Aspects related to CLIL are addressed in the following chapters of this book:

- Chapter 5** *Building Relationships With Language Learners* by S. Montiel
- Chapter 6** *Supporting Learners' Social Emotional Learning* by G. Mendoza
- Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani
- Chapter 12** *Explicit and Implicit Learning in Second Language Acquisition* by C. Fernández
- Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser
- Chapter 14** *Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning* by K. Sandi
- Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices* by K. Liu and J. Choi
- Chapter 19** *Incorporating Inclusive Education Practices in ELT* by R. Mazzoleni
- Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community* by B. Crosbie and D. Carter
- Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess
- Chapter 28** *Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature* by S. Ruffinelli and C. Ortiz
- Chapter 45** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

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# CHAPTER 27

## Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT

# Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT

Fernando Esquivel Vera

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## Abstract

As English teachers, we want to teach as effectively as possible to help our students learn. To meet this goal, we look for innovative ways that motivate our students in using English and, also, for wanting to improve. We specifically look for innovations that match our individual teaching style and our institution's approach to English language teaching. During our search, we may discover game-based learning and a broader concept and technique called gamification. In this chapter, you will learn about gamification models based on a widely accepted learning theory. You will learn about creating and implementing lessons with game-like actions that support language learning and about incorporating these gamified lessons into a semester-long game-like structure (i.e., gamification framework). You will also learn how such actionable gamification designs can enhance other teaching techniques and keep students engaged and motivated while having fun.

*Keywords:* gamification, game-based learning, learner motivation, learning theories, teaching English

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## Introduction

The development of digital teaching tools escalated the learning potential of game-based learning and, by doing so, increased opportunities for gamification. As both a concept and technique, gamification incorporates game-like actions in non-game contexts. When the non-game context is a classroom, gamification positively affects the instructional context by enhancing student motivation, increasing engagement, and improving performance.

The simple definition of gamification is using games to teach language lessons, such as introducing new vocabulary, practicing grammar structures, and developing learners' pronunciation. When we use games in these lessons, we gamify our instruction. However, by itself, a single game is not synonymous with gamification. A comprehensive definition of gamification is teaching gamified lessons across time and within a gaming structure called gamification framework. These terms (game, gamification, gamify, gamified, gaming) have the same root word "game." Hence, regardless of their part of speech (noun, verb, adjective) or function (e.g., past participle, present participle), these words all communicate the same meaning—that of something related to a game.

As teachers, we can select from among several gamification products designed specifically for English language teaching (ELT) contexts. By using appropriate games and strategies, we can gamify many aspects in our classrooms. Such aspects include planning and implementing instruction, managing the classroom, monitoring student behavior, and developing soft skills (e.g., critical thinking). Incredibly, we can also gamify the entire learning experience by weaving a common theme across lessons and activities. For example, by designing all lessons around one theme (e.g., Star Wars), we can create a game narrative (e.g., reaching Mars) that can guide students throughout an entire semester and support them in reaching the course's language learning objectives. This type of actionable gamification design can enhance other ELT techniques and keep students engaged and motivated while also having fun.

## Background

In the 1990s, teachers were starting to learn about emerging technology while game experts were starting to explore digital gamification. During the following decades, many gamification frameworks emerged—some for classrooms and others adaptable for classrooms. When well-designed, such frameworks support gamification as an integrated classroom experience across an entire term, such as for teaching and learning English. Such gamification frameworks also support students with having a positive learning experience (Chou, 2015).

As gamification frameworks evolved, more games and narratives were incorporated, and this, in turn, led to the concept of game narrative (e.g., reaching Mars). In gamification frameworks designed for classroom instruction, game narrative soon became one of the most common gaming structures. In gamification, game narrative is a story interwoven through all lessons that reaches closure at the end of a designated school term (e.g., semester). Game narrative provides a background for the selected gamification framework and serves to motivate students for caring and interacting during the gamified lessons (Esquivel Vera et al., 2021). When infused across gamified lessons, game narrative is enjoyed by all ages and can have several variations. In fact, game narratives can progress over time and even multiply and grow.

## Major Dimensions

If you wish to gamify your ELT classroom, consider the following:

### *Include Game Elements*

To successfully implement game narrative in your ELT class, make sure your gamified lessons contain these four elements—game dynamics, game mechanics, game phases, player types.

- *Game dynamics* support gamified learning through emotions, narratives, relationships, and progressions (Man, 2021).
- *Game mechanics* propel action and engage players through conflict, chance, challenge, competition, cooperation, feedback, winners, and rewards (Man, 2021).
- *Game phases* (discovery, onboarding, scaffolding, endgame) establish flow, which, in turn, leads players to having optimal experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).
- *Player types* (e.g., socializers, explorers) provide conditions for player interaction and a win state, which determines what it means to win the game (Bartle, 1996).

The inclusion of these four elements provides structure to the game and helps it flow more smoothly.

### *Facilitate Motivation*

Learner motivation is the primary goal of gamification in educational settings, including ELT classes. Though typically viewed as either intrinsic or extrinsic, the motivation in gamification contexts can cover a wide spectrum as defined by the Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2020). The SDT spectrum is based on three human needs (Ackerman, 2018):

- *competence*—effectively dealing with their surroundings,
- *relatedness*—having a close relationship with others, and
- *autonomy*—controlling the direction of their lives.

In SDT, motivation is viewed as “factors that facilitate or undermine intrinsic motivation, autonomous extrinsic motivation, and psychological wellness, all issues of direct relevance to educational settings” (Ryan & Deci, 2020, p. 1). This taxonomy specifies four types of extrinsic motivation that start with highly controlled (i.e., external regulation) and, via an internalization process, move towards autonomous and internal (i.e., integrated regulation). This SDT continuum represents a motivation process from externalization to internalization, as shown in Table 1.



Table 1

*SDT Continuum of Extrinsic Motivation: From External to Integrated Regulation*

Type	Extrinsic Motivation Process from Externalization to Internalization
External Regulation	External (controlled): The person is compliant and responds to external rewards and punishment.
Introjected Regulation	Somewhat external: The person begins to demonstrate self-control with some involvement of ego and establishes some internal rewards.
Identified Regulation	Somewhat internal: The person places importance on personal aspects and consciously begins to make value judgements.
Integrated Regulation	Internal (autonomous): The person can see congruencies, demonstrates awareness, and establishes synthesis with self.

*Note. Compiled from “Self-Determination Theory and How it Explains Motivation” by C. E. Ackerman, 2018, in Positive Psychology (para. 17-20). <https://positivepsychology.com/self-determination-theory/>*

Gamification elements and mechanics nurture SDT-based autonomy. As illustrated in Table 1, gamification supports students in leaving the first stage of extrinsic motivation (controlled: external regulation), advancing through its second stage (somewhat external: introjected regulation) and third stage (somewhat internal: identified regulation), and then reaching its fourth stage (internal: integrated regulation). In this fourth and final stage, gamification supports students in building autonomous extrinsic motivation and, thus, become enabled for moving to intrinsic motivation (which is not illustrated in Table 1). Such intrinsic motivation is internal, becomes regulated intrinsically, and produces interest, enjoyment, and inherent satisfaction (Ackerman, 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Although controlled extrinsic motivation has been seen to thwart students’ intrinsic motivation and hinder student progress, autonomous extrinsic motivation can have the opposite effect. Fortunately, gamification is built on the SDT principle of building autonomous extrinsic motivation and then moving to intrinsic motivation. Well-structured gamification frameworks provide implementation guidelines that match the game elements with SDT and, by doing so, enhance student experiences and motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Consequently, through gamification, we can provide autonomy support to our students and help them build their intrinsic motivation.

### ***Provide Autonomy Support***

Autonomy support is how a game structure can assist users with having autonomous control of the direction of a game. Gamification nurtures autonomy support in a classroom and, by doing so, serves to meet students’ psychological needs of competence and relatedness while boosting

their wellness and overall motivation (Deci, 2012). For example, through a game narrative, we support students through autonomy aspects of rationale, choice, exploration, and self-initiation:

- *Rationale* corresponds to teachers sharing goals, objectives, and systems, thereby validating students' efforts. It is supported by game narrative and gamification frameworks where “people are motivated because they believe they are engaged in something bigger than themselves” (Chou, 2015, p. 3).
- *Choice* involves students in decision-making processes (Ryan & Deci, 2020). It is supported by game narrative where students negotiate with the teacher, bargain with other students, and decide on topics and activities.
- *Exploration* brings student exploration into a class (Deci, 2012). It is supported by game narrative through quests and, also, the phases of a gamified class.
- *Self-initiation* endorses student interests (Deci, 2012). It is supported by game narrative via structured progression toward satisfaction and feelings of competence.

Autonomy support is further enhanced by scaffolded learning and leveled instruction where students work toward reachable challenges. Feedback is positive and based primarily on student effort (Ryan & Deci, 2020). When feeling competent at learning language related to their interests, students willingly participate in game narratives and tasks (e.g., presentations), and they experience enjoyment (Esquivel Vera et al., 2021).

### ***Invest Brain Share***

As teachers, we know that the student brain is a precious commodity. Hence, in ELT, one of our gamification goals is for our students (who are users of our gamified lessons) to want to “invest brain share, time, and energy” (Kapp, 2012, p. 11). Based on frameworks designed by experts in both gaming and SDT, gamification uses strategies, techniques, and methods that motivate students with wanting to participate fully. By participating in the various aspects of a gamification framework, students use their brains in multiple ways.

### ***Offer Rewards***

Gamified lessons usually include rewards such as grades, points, badges, and leaderboard spots (e.g., ClassCraft and ClassDojo). In an ELT class, game narrative might entail progression points, completion rewards, or game perks, and students might use bonus points to replace other assignments. Though externally enacted, such rewards can serve as controlled motivation or autonomous extrinsic motivation. If students view grades as fair indicators of proficiency and goal attainment, grades might also serve as autonomous extrinsic motivation.

Teachers often face challenges when using rewards (e.g., grades, points, badges, leaderboard spots). One challenge is identifying and communicating the rationale of successful reward attainment, which includes reminding students of their learning goals. Another challenge is offering students two alternate choices such as doing tasks or losing points. Other challenges relate to rewarding student exploration and encouraging self-initiation. A related dilemma is whether to motivate encouragement with extra points. In other words, could too many point-earning opportunities cause the demise of gamification?

### *Promote Leveling Up*

When ELT classes are gamified, scaffolding promotes leveling up so that all students have a positive experience. Leveling up is a term used in videogames to strengthen players for moving to the next higher level, which is of extreme importance in learning languages. In gamified classes, scaffolding supports solving challenges and completing phases. When allowed to select choices (freedom to choose or freedom to fail), students free themselves of performance anxiety and enter a flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Through this flow state, they cultivate a mindset independent of outcomes, which can lead to improved academic performance.

Depending on how gamification is designed and delivered, its structure and choice can enhance student competencies while, at the same time, allow students the option of refusing to participate (Ryan & Deci, 2020). To ensure the success of your gamification efforts, be adaptable and unbiased toward student opinions. Promote leveling up and help students shape their own game and own class.

### *Ensure a Full Experience*

Gamification is a full experience that can continue infinitely; it is not a finite game that ends by winning or losing (Carse, 2013). It is not simply participating in game-based learning, video games, and simulations. The internet abounds with poorly designed gamification attempts that focus almost entirely on earning rewards (points, badges, leaderboard spots). These games might seem enticing but lack rationale and relatedness, which are human needs identified by SDT. Because users often participate in these virtual games just to earn points, they do not feel connected to anyone or anything. In such cases, controlled extrinsic motivation undermines intrinsic motivation. Fortunately, we can resolve this in our ELT classrooms by using game narratives based on SDT.

## Pedagogical Applications

To prepare for using gamification in your ELT setting, start by gathering recommendations from websites, journal articles, and veteran gamification colleagues. Then incorporate gamification by implementing a game narrative and, also, by selecting games.

### *Implement Game Narrative*

Implement your ELT game narrative by selecting a gaming platform (e.g., WorldAnvil). Then proceed with these gamification phases: discovery, onboarding, scaffolding, and endgame.

- **Discovery Phase.** Be convinced that gamification will appeal to your students and that it will benefit them. Start with just one class at a time. Guide your students in selecting a game narrative that represents their interests and, as such, can optimize their experience and enhance their autonomy. If this is your first experience with game narratives, guide students in thinking about a Pet Store narrative. This narrative can be easily adjusted for different age groups and language levels. For example, young children might focus on animal babies, and adults might focus on business aspects. To support the selected game narrative, identify game elements that can empower your students with dynamic and interactive learning and that can lead them to positive experiences.

- **Onboarding Phase.** Take small steps, focus on optimizing student experiences, and reflect frequently. When using gamification for the first time, start by sharing your own interests and a self-metaphor. For example, my interests are languages, education, coding, games, and business. Consequently, my self-metaphor is language-educator gamification-business-evangelist. This metaphor represents my belief in gamification's core values and mission and my dedication to spreading the word about gamification and to recruiting talents. After you share your interests and self-metaphor, have students share theirs.
- **Scaffolding Phase.** To gamify their selected narrative (Pet Store), students create a business and establish a physical space in the classroom or a virtual space on an online platform (complete with avatar pets). For this imaginary business, students write the mission, values, and objectives and then create a slogan, which is a compelling, long-term target (Collins & Porras, 1994). For this Pet Store game narrative, a slogan could be "Best for Pets." Students then work together to determine the plot, themes, characters (players), roles, and conflict that will guide their class for an entire semester.
- **Endgame Phase.** For gamification's endgame, put everything into practice through a gamification framework based on SDT (Chou, 2015). Adjust the game narrative to fit class demographics and integrate game elements (dynamics and mechanics). In this Pet Store narrative, the players could be owner, manager, clerk, customers (adults and children), groomer, veterinarian, cleaning staff, and neighbors. Consider incorporating a different subplot for each week or learning module. Examples of subplots could be selecting the perfect pet, shopping for accessories, caring for animal babies, feeding, grooming, dealing with illness, and preparing for shows. In each subplot, students learn the vocabulary and grammatical structures required to carry out their player roles. In the next subplot, students can switch player roles. As needed, gamify other activities to maximize your students' learning experiences.

### *Select Games to Support Gamification*

Although game narrative is much broader and deeper than any single game, successful gamification is built on a series of individual games that are repeated over time. Instructional games and board games can offer inspiration for game narratives and, as such, can support gamification efforts. These include popular games such as crosswords, puzzles, tic-tac-toe, roleplay, scavenger hunts, Battleship, and Scattergories. Though such games are easy to incorporate within ELT settings, they are not gamification. To maximize the potential of these games as learning activities, integrate them within a broader gamification framework.

Board games offer wonderful inspiration for game narratives. For example, Monopoly is a very popular board game with good game dynamics. Coup also offers interesting game dynamics and effective narratives. It is not necessary to use the mechanics, dynamics, and narratives of a selected board game. Their plots are often universal and, as such, can easily be adapted to your students' game narrative. For example, with Coup, students cooperate in groups and compete against other groups. They can even take control of the class and impose their own rule, which is what happened in one of my language classes (Esquivel Vera et al., 2021).

In this chapter, you learned about applying the elements and principles of game narratives to create gamification in an ELT class. You also learned that, when applied successfully, gamification can enhance student motivation, increase engagement, and ensure enjoyment.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are key concepts about gamification:

- Gamification applies game elements in non-game contexts to support student learning.
- Game elements include dynamics (narratives, relationships, progressions), phases (onboarding, discovery, scaffolding, endgame), mechanics (points, rewards, chance, challenges), and player types (socializers, explorers).
- Narrative is a story that motivates participants to care and interact.
- SDT theorizes motivation based on psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2020).
- Motivation includes various styles, and it guides engagement in goal-directed behavior.
- Autonomy support engages without undermining intrinsic motivation.

## Discussing

Based on what you have learned about gamification, answer these questions:

1. Do you think participation points help with autonomous motivation? Are such points fairly and unbiasedly given? What about grades? Can you think of something to replace points and grades? Why do you think your alternative would work better?
2. Based on the Pet Store game narrative, what are some games and other gamified activities that you could use for a subplot such as shopping or grooming (or another subplot of your choice)? Why did you select these activities and how do you think you can implement them?

## TAKING ACTION

To apply what you have learned about gamification, do the following:

1. Incorporate diverse game-based learning activities into your classes and reflect on how this experience can inspire you to design a fully gamified class.
2. Use ClassCraft or ClassDojo for behavior management and then reflect on your experience.

EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about gamification, visit these websites:

- ClassCraft. <https://www.classcraft.com>
- ClassDojo. <https://www.classdojo.com>
- Example of a gamification framework (Octalysis). <https://yukaichou.com/gamification-examples/octalysis-complete-gamification-framework/>
- Infographics. <https://userexperienceknowledgebase.com/gamification-part-1-73a7c7afd4d1>
- SDT website. <https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/topics/application-education/>
- User experience. <https://gamification-europe.com/melinda-jacobs-gamification-europe-2018/>
- Videos about gamification and education. <https://www.youtube.com/extracredits>
- Worldanvil for creating game narratives. <https://www.worldanvil.com>

## See Also

Topics related to gamification are addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners* by M. Gandolfo, B. Damiani, and L. Caperochipe

**Chapter 8** *Teaching and Engaging Adolescent Learners* by V. Ariza

**Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning* by M. Zalimben

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community* by B. Crosbie and D. Carter

**Chapter 23** *Integrating Technology in Language Classrooms* by H. Hubbard, A. Foss, and C. Strawn

**Chapter 24** *Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms* by Y. Grevtseva and E. Zyrianova

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Photo by Suad Kamardeen on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 28

## Teaching English to Young Learners through Authentic Literature

# Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature

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DOI: [https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc\\_ch28](https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc_ch28)

## Abstract

Through children's literature, teachers can help young learners connect English with content and, by doing so, increase the learners' comprehension and enhance their language learning. Teachers can introduce learners to the enchanting world of children's literature by using best practices to teach chapter books such as *Freckle Juice* by Judy Blume and *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl. When young readers actively engage with exploring these enticing and compelling books, the text comes alive and makes sense. By involving their own lives within the reading process, readers enjoy the experience and focus more directly on meaning, which is the primary purpose of reading. In this chapter, you will learn to use chapter books to help young readers relate to literature and, by doing so, use English for communicating with others.

*Keywords:* children's literature, chapter books, stages of the reading process, meaning making, reading comprehension, best practices

## How to cite this chapter:

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## Introduction

Authentic literature should be at the core of a school's curriculum for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). For EFL learners aged 9 to 12 years, authentic literature can include chapter books written for native English speakers of that same age. However, for these chapter books to be effective with EFL learners, teachers need to include activities at each stage of the reading process (pre-reading, during-reading, post-reading). Through these activities, students improve interpretation strategies and skills, reach greater comprehension, learn new vocabulary and structures, and make progress at developing their command of the English language.

During our initial experiences teaching EFL, we witnessed many benefits from using authentic literature with young learners. From among various literary genres, we found chapter books to be especially powerful for conveying meaning, catalytic for launching discussions, and instrumental for helping students learn language and content. To share this promising potential of authentic literature, we began promoting the use of chapter books in local language institutes and bilingual schools.

One of our outreach experiences consisted of working with fourth, fifth and sixth grade teachers at a private school in Asuncion and helping them incorporate chapter books in their English language arts classes. At this school, most students have Spanish as a home language and, starting in pre-kindergarten, are schooled mainly in English. By fourth grade, these students usually have an A2-B1 English level (i.e., low intermediate) in the Common European Framework of Reference. With input from the teachers and students at this school, we helped create a literature curriculum with activities for the three stages of the reading process. We now describe activities implemented for each of these stages and provide student work samples for *Freckle Juice* by Judy Blume and *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl.

## Background

Scholars concur that authentic literature exposes language learners to meaningful contexts (Van, 2009). Proponents argue that authentic literature allows children to see and appreciate their world from new perspectives (Short et al., 1995). Such literature fits with the whole language approach to teach reading based on the philosophical understanding that, even for instructional purposes, language should not be simplified (Goodman et al., 1991). Literature written for native speakers is preferable to simplifications that alter materials for language learners (Widdowson, 1978).

Authentic literature includes the genre of chapter books for children ages 9 to 12 years. Chapter books introduce EFL learners to new lexical expressions, grammar structures, and pragmatic uses, and this can enhance language awareness (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014). These books also expose learners to unexpected real language, new sentence formations and functions, other types of language structures, and several ways to connect ideas at varied difficulty levels (Collie & Slater, 1987). By becoming involved in the culture and context of a chapter book, young readers expand their potential and engage emotionally and intellectually. They find pleasure in reading by constructing meaning that relates this book to their own experiences.

## Major Dimensions

To use authentic literature when teaching English learners, take the following into consideration.

### *Integrate Chapter Books in Language Arts Classes*

Integrate chapter books in English Language Arts classes to help EFL learners develop language skills and build understanding in meaningful and creative ways. For learners aged 9 to 12 years, chapter books can guide them in discovering new cultures and values, assuming ownership for the learning process, becoming independent learners, and facing unexpected situations. These books are also instrumental at enhancing deeper understanding of context, fostering learners' communicative skills and accuracy, and transferring language skills to other school subjects.

### *Build Learners' Schema*

Because the culture of EFL learners differs from the culture of authentic literature, build your learners' schema so that they can access textual knowledge. Their comprehension depends on having schema about the text's vocabulary, meaning, context, and culture. Knowledge about "relevant schemes is obviously essential if we are to read any kind of text with comprehension" (Smith, 2012, p. 22). Without relevant schema, EFL learners might become frustrated and discouraged at their inability to follow the story. Therefore, before introducing a literary text, build your learners' schema by explicitly making connections between their prior knowledge about contexts and topics related to the targeted reading and the new vocabulary and concepts.

### *Select Topics That Interest Students and Introduce the Author*

When selecting authentic texts, make sure the topic and complexity fit your students' interests and maturity level. Before having students read a chapter book, familiarize them with the author and help them make connections between their lives and the author's life. Later, while reading, students may discover other connections between themselves and the author (e.g., personality).

### *Make Connections With Other School Subjects*

Have students create fun projects that connect authentic literature with one or more of their other school subjects (e.g., social studies). Through these projects, students make connections between this chapter book and a school subject by exploring the settings, events, characters, subplots, main ideas, and other literary elements. These connections are often instrumental in making students want to learn more about a specific school subject (Routman, 1994). Such projects usually culminate with students displaying what they have learned. Through various art forms, these project displays can provide creative spaces to promote collaboration among students.

### *Guide Students With Reflecting*

Reflecting on the reading process is key to enhance reading comprehension. Guide your students in reflecting on strategies that have led to their success in reading. Students need to see themselves in a friendly environment that promotes the sharing of ideas—agreements as well as disagreements (Copeland, 2005). Reflections by teachers and students can lead to discussions at higher levels of thinking. To become critical thinkers, students must reflect rather than simply

believe what they see, read, or hear. They need to remain curious, ask critical questions, and seek alternative points of view. However, before guiding your students with reflecting, you need to reflect on your own beliefs about the reading process. Your beliefs will impact how you teach the reading of authentic literature and how your students will learn.

**Ask Essential Questions**

To spark interesting discussions, ask essential questions that require students to analyze, evaluate, infer, and predict. This engages them in higher levels of thinking (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013). Essential questions can be classified into the five groups shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Classification of Essential Questions*

Start with	These questions require students to ...
“What if ...”	predict based on gained knowledge (hypothetical question)
“Should ...”	make moral or practical decisions based on knowledge and evidence
“Why ...”	demonstrate understanding of cause-and-effect relationship
“Which one ...”	compare/contrast and make decisions by using gained knowledge
“How ...”	think about evidence acquired through investigation

When asking essential questions like those in Table 1, keep in mind that “(t)eaching the students to use the text as evidence and support for their arguments is critically important. Many students find the text itself to be a form of a safety net during their dialogue” (Copeland, 2005, p. 97). In other words, by holding their book and looking up passages, students are more confident at sharing and talking rather than relying on their memory when not being able to see the text.

Essential questions do not elicit simple or correct answers; rather, they are open ended, universal, and thought provoking.

- *Open-ended questions* evoke reasons rather than opinions or beliefs.
- *Universal questions* are central to greater understanding, address fundamental issues, and synthesize interdisciplinary concepts.
- *Thought-provoking questions* are unique, require problem solving, and generate questions.

These different types of essential questions are intellectually engaging and “encourage thinking on many levels, value students’ background knowledge and experiences and allow readers to go beyond the text in making meaning” (Routman, 1994, pp. 117-118).

## Pedagogical Applications

In this section, we provide examples of student work for each of the three stages in the reading process (pre-, during, post-). These work samples were produced by EFL learners aged 9 to 12 years. Although these samples correspond to activities from *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl and *Freckle Juice* by Judy Blume, consider adjusting these for other chapter books.

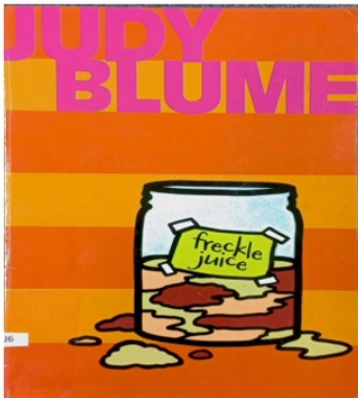
### Pre-Reading

Ask students open-ended questions before they read a chapter book. Effective open-ended questions are often “prediction questions, with readers describing what they think will happen in the story or predicting an answer before they read. Then they confirm, adjust, or disprove their predictions before reading on” (Routman, 1994, p. 117). To further help students make connections, use some of the strategies listed below.

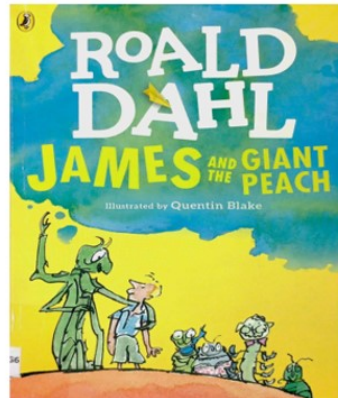
- Students look at a book’s cover and find prediction clues, such as shown below for *Freckle Juice* by Judy Blume and *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Finding Prediction Clues on the Book Covers*



*Freckle Juice by Judy Blume*



*James and the Giant Peach by Roald Dahl*

- Students answer questions about the book cover: What do you see on the cover? What do you think the story is about? Where do you think it takes place? Why do you think so?
- Students do a KWL chart (Figure 2) by writing what they know about the book’s general topic in the first column and what they want to know from the book in the second column. After reading the book, students write what they learned in the third column.

Figure 2

Using KWL Charts

K What we <b>K</b> now	W What we <b>W</b> ant to know	L What we <b>L</b> earned

- Students match key vocabulary with meanings (e.g., whisper, dirty neck, recipe, fifty cents, giggle, poke, can't stand someone) and perhaps draw pictures of these meanings. Students can also do matching for words with opposites (e.g., whisper/shout, dirty/clean).
- Students predict how these words might be connected to each other in the book's story.
- Students predict what might happen based on intriguing sentences (that you selected from the book and wrote on the board). After reading the book, students confirm predictions.

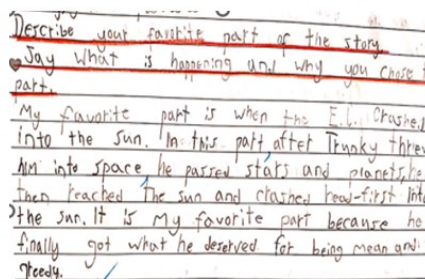
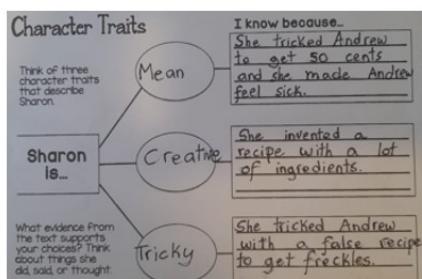
***During-Reading***

Help students enhance their understanding of each chapter by implementing activities.

- Students give opinions (e.g., agree or disagree) about aspects related to the book's topic and about key sentences that they select from the book.
- Students look at their pre-reading predictions and determine how closely their predictions match the book's story.
- Students answer open-ended questions, create their own open-ended questions, and ask their classmates to answer the questions they created.
- Students use evidence from the book to describe their favorite character (Figure 3—first image) and favorite part of the story (Figure 3—second image).

Figure 3

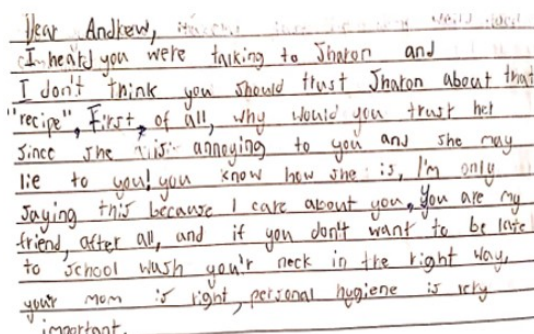
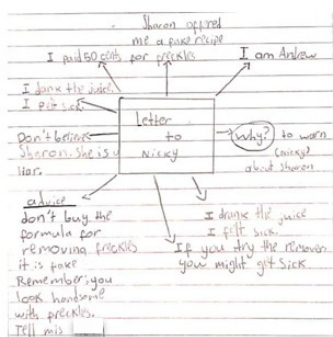
Describing Favorite Character (first image) and Favorite Part (second image)



- Students draw their favorite part of the story and describe it.
- Students tell each other about a chapter, share their favorite part, and explain why.
- Students use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast two characters.
- Students write a friendly letter to one of the characters. In *Freckle Juice*, for example, they can tell Nicky what happened to Sharon and give the secret recipe for freckle juice. Before writing, they brainstorm their ideas (Figure 4—first image). As another option, they can write a note giving advice to one of the characters (Figure 4—second image).

Figure 4

*Brainstorming a Letter (first image) and Writing a Note (second image)*



- Students collaborate with each other when matching sentences with pictures and, also, when sequencing these pictures (Figure 5—first image) and when looking at some images from the book and predicting the next chapter (Figure 5—second image).

Figure 5

*Matching and Sequencing (first image) and Predicting (second image)*



### Post-Reading

After your students finish reading the chapter book, guide them toward reaching a better understanding about the important parts in this book.

- Students respond to open-ended questions by using higher order thinking and a wide range of responses. Possible post-reading questions are as follows (Routman, 1994):



1. How is this author's work unique and different from the works of other authors?
  2. What types of clues did the author include in the story that helped you predict what would happen? Describe these clues.
  3. Did you recognize these clues when you first read them? If so, did you think they were important? Why or why not?
  4. If the story were to take place in a different place and at a different time, what parts of it would need to be changed?
  5. What would be a different way for this story to end? To make the rest of your story fit with your new ending, what else would need to be changed?
- Students answer questions individually (Figure 6).

**Figure 6**

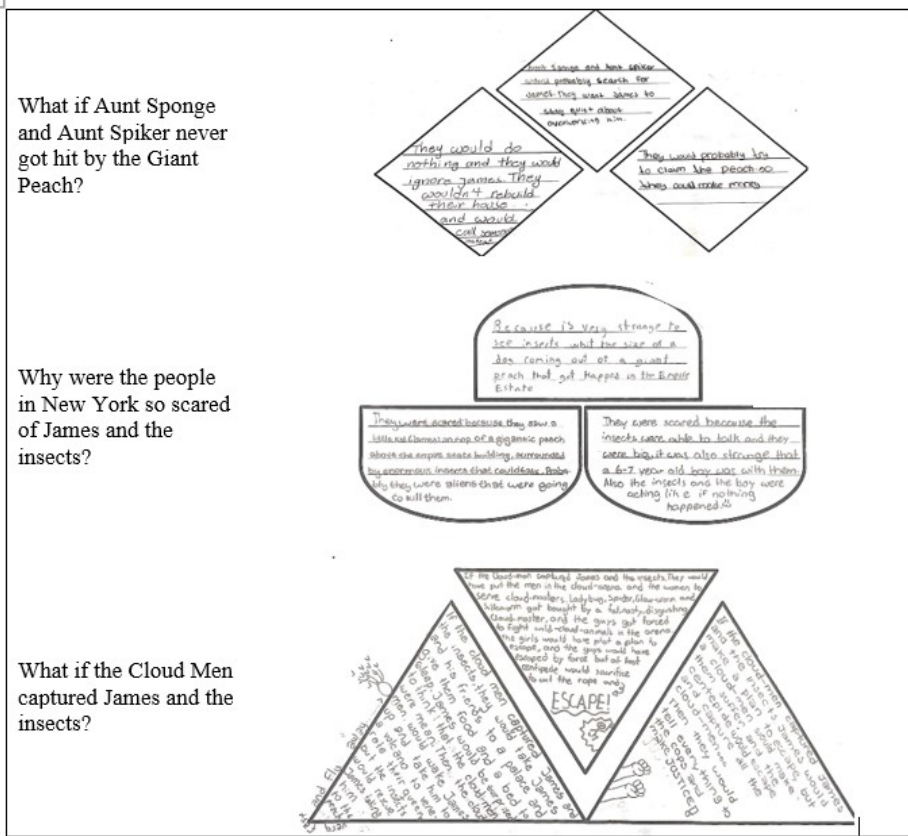
*Responding Individually to Questions*

Should James have really trusted the old man?	<p>*I don't think so, it could have been a scam. I mean, you can't trust a weird old man that offers you some strange beans telling you they're magical after randomly appearing in your backyard.</p>
What clues did the author offer to prepare you to expect this ending?	<p>I think that the clues that the author offered for the ending was in the back of the book when the peach stuck in the sky scraper.</p>
Why did James stay with his aunts even though they were so mean?	<p>Because he knew that if he escaped the police would find him and carry him to aunt sponge and aunt Spiker and the cycle would repeat again.</p>

- Students answer questions in groups of three, with each student filling in their own response box (Figure 7).

**Figure 7**

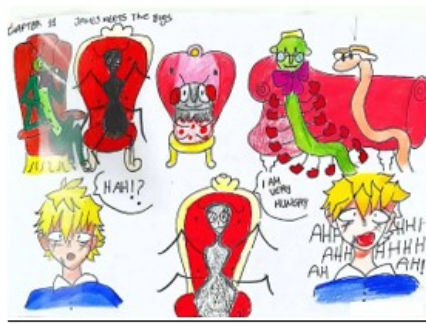
*Responding in Groups*



- Students create comic strips, which, as a medium of expression, are powerful for communicating ideas and emotions (Figure 8).

Figure 8

*Creating Comic Strips to Illustrate Roald Dahl's "James and the Giant Peach"*



- Students participate in a Knowledge Building Circle. Here, they sit in a circle and respond to open-ended questions and probing thoughts provided by the teacher or other students (e.g., I wonder why Andrew wanted freckles). Students encourage each other to become involved and celebrate when all classmates are actively participating. Their discussion might last up to 20 minutes.
- In their Knowledge Building Circles, students listen to each other's comments and join the discussion by following classroom rules (e.g., raising hand and waiting turn) or by simply looking at each other. When acknowledged, they respond politely and share their own ideas usually by selecting and using the most appropriate turn-taking phrase or interjection from their prompt card (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Using Prompt Card in Knowledge Building Circles

Using Polite Phrases for DISCUSSION					
Giving your opinion	Agreeing	Disagreeing	Interrupting	Inviting someone to participate	Checking for Understanding
I think...	I agree.	I don't think so because...	Can I say something?	What do you think?	Do you know what I mean?
In my opinion...	I feel the same way.	I see your point, but ...	Can I interrupt for a moment?	How about you?	Does that make sense?
I feel ...	That's a good point.	I see what you mean, but ...	Can I add something?	What about you?	So you're saying that ...
I believe ...	I couldn't agree more.	I hate to disagree with you, but ...		How do you feel about this?	
It seems to me that ...	I agree with Monica.			Who hasn't commented?	

In this chapter, you explored using children’s literature in EFL classes. You learned several activities for using chapter books with EFL learners aged 9 to 12 years. You also learned that intriguing chapter books make a big difference in how your learners engage with literature, learn new vocabulary and grammar, and build understanding and confidence in meaningful and creative ways.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are key concepts when using authentic literature to teach English:

- Build background knowledge before having students start to read a chapter book.
- Present key vocabulary to enhance reading comprehension.
- Include activities for each reading stage: pre-reading, during-reading, post-reading.
- Use essential questions for leading discussions that can engage students in higher thinking and deeper understanding.
- Allow time for students to elaborate thinking and foster autonomous learning.

## Discussing

Based on your knowledge about using chapter books with EFL learners, answer these questions:

1. What are important considerations before teaching a chapter book?
2. Why is key vocabulary important when teaching chapter books?
3. What are the benefits of using activities with chapter books in all three stages of reading?
4. How can students develop deeper understanding when reading chapter books?
5. Why is it so important for young readers to reflect on what they have read?

## TAKING ACTION

To apply your knowledge about using chapter books to teach English, do the following:

1. Select three of the many chapter books recommended on websites.
2. Read and analyze books to determine suitability for age, language level, and student interest.
3. Choose activities from this chapter to use with students at each of the three reading stages.
4. Generate essential questions to help students understand the selected book and to guide class discussions.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about using authentic literature to teach English, visit these websites:

- Common European Framework of Reference. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>
- Graphic organizers. <https://www.hmhco.com/blog/free-graphic-organizer-templates>
- K-12 reading lists. <https://k-12readinglist.com/reading-lists-for-elementary-school-children/>
- Knowledge building circle. <https://letstalkscience.ca/educational-resources/learning-strategies/knowledge-building-circle>
- Reader response strategies. <https://coe.arizona.edu/resources-professor-kathy-short>

## See Also

Several aspects in this chapter are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners* by M. Gandolfo, B. Damiani, and L. Caperochipe

**Chapter 8** *Teaching and Engaging Adolescent Learners* by V. Ariza-Pinzón

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 12** *Explicit and Implicit Learning in Second Language Acquisition* by C. Fernández

**Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 26** *Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning* by A. Roca

**Chapter 29** *Using Theater to Teach English* by C. Ortiz and M. Vaky

**Chapter 41** *Strategies to Teach Reading* by E. Kryukova and M. Harrison

**Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

**Chapter 48** *International Frameworks to Assess Language Development* by E. Nuñez

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Photo by Erik Mclean on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 29

## Using Theater to Teach English



# Using Theater to Teach English

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## Abstract

Learning a new language is fun and memorable in classrooms where learners interact in real-life communicative situations. When theater is incorporated in their classes, learners of all ages and language levels can have even more fun. In this chapter, you will learn about user-friendly drama techniques, simple games, and drama-based ideas and improvisations. You will learn about using theater scripts and even incorporating a short play in your classroom to enhance the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. You will also learn how to implement these drama activities in your class to build students' vocabulary and enhance their communicative skills.

*Keywords:* theater techniques, drama-based ideas, roleplaying, improvisations, classroom plays

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## Introduction

Drama is any activity that students use to portray themselves or others in situations that are imaginary or re-created from real life. These activities can be physical movements, roleplays, mimed actions, theatrical games, improvised situations, and actual plays. Ample evidence exists showing that drama and theater are beneficial for teaching English to students of all ages, language levels, and preferred learning styles. Drama supports language acquisition and strengthens fluency by increasing students' comfort level, encouraging their physical activity, providing opportunities for them to use vocabulary, and fostering their community-building interactions while also having fun (Giebert, 2014).

Some language teachers may be reluctant or intimidated at implementing such techniques in their classrooms. Lacking experience or training, these teachers might be apprehensive or scared at asking students to go beyond a stereotypical classroom environment by using drama to enhance language acquisition. Based on research related to using theater in language classrooms (Davies, 1990; Holden, 1981; Kovács, 2017; Maley & Duff, 1993), we offer suggestions for how teachers can calm their fears, gain confidence, feel inspired, use creativity, and go beyond their comfort zone to use theater for teaching English.

## Background

As language teachers, we often start a new semester with ice breakers to help us get to know our new students and, also, to relax our students so that they feel comfortable in this class. Besides being fun and setting a positive tone, such ice breakers also set the scene for using drama in our respective classrooms (Kawasaki, 2021). Simple physical movement is a form of drama (e.g., Touch your knee.). Pretending is another form of drama (e.g., Pretend you are eating a delicious sandwich.). Through such actions, our language learners can demonstrate their initial understanding. These actions can also serve for liberating our students' imagination and encouraging their creativity as well as for leading toward deeper comprehension.

When using drama in our English language teaching (ELT) classrooms, we do not expect our language learners to become professional actors. Rather, we incorporate drama techniques to support language learning. When prompted by drama techniques, our students enact responses to questions that start with who, where, what, and why. Who represents the character(s). In class, it is usually the students themselves (e.g., Pretend to be ordering a sandwich.) and can become extended to creative roleplaying (e.g., Pretend you are an angry waiter.). Where represents the setting. In class, it supports using language in a given context (e.g., Pretend you are in a busy coffee shop.). What represents the story. In class, it represents the action enacted by students such as the story or situation (e.g., Pretend you have lost your keys.). Why represents the reason characters are doing something. In class, this can involve profound thought and complex situations (e.g., Why is Romeo hiding in the bushes?) and, as such, is used for discussions (e.g., Why does Big Bad Wolf want to trick Little Red Riding Hood?).

You can infuse drama into your language lessons by progressing from ice breakers to physical movements and from pretending to roleplaying. This, in turn, can lead to organizing and directing short plays.

## Major Dimensions

To incorporate drama in your ELT classroom, take the following aspects into consideration.

### *Working in Pairs or Teams*

In a drama class, students work in pairs or teams to create a scene based on a specific situation or scenario. To work effectively with other members on their team, students need to feel hooked by and engaged with meaningful activities (Lundy, 2004). In a language class, student teams can create a scene based on elements (characters, setting) provided by the teacher (you). They can also enact short roleplays by using task cards with specific situations, by representing dialogues with characters from stories already read in class, or by creating other interactions that use authentic language. While these student teams are planning their scenarios, briefly visit each team and, if asked by students, guide them on using needed elements of the English language.

In your ELT classroom, divide students in pairs or allow them to form their own groups. Provide clear instructions, sufficient information, and needed elements so that students can plan a scenario for acting before an audience (i.e., classmates). Give students time to listen to each other and make decisions as a group (Zalta, 2006). Provide them with tools and props such as visual aids (picture cards with diverse situations and cultural backgrounds) and auditory aids (e.g., music, sound effects, audios). While students work together to create their dialogues, visit each group briefly to show interest but refrain from interfering. If desired, take notes (mentally or written) of students' language errors and use these later for reviewing grammar structures, reteaching vocabulary, or providing pronunciation tips.

### *Doing Roleplays*

Roleplays are highly beneficial to support language development (Holden, 1981). Depending on their level, students use specific expressions in dialogues for certain situations such as looking for someone, asking for directions, ordering at a restaurant, and seeking advice. In these dialogues, they learn to accept or reject information, which, in turn, supports them with using English meaningfully outside of class. These “make believe” situations prepare students for real life scenarios (Zalta, 2006).

### *Incorporating Drama Through Short, Weekly Activities*

Drama can best foster students' English proficiency when combined regularly with other learning strategies. Incorporate drama techniques during short, weekly activities rather than long, sporadic sessions. Consider allowing students to use their mother tongue when interacting with each other to create roleplay dialogues in English. Depending on institutional policies, students at lower English levels might benefit from using their mother tongue to negotiate scenarios but, of course, must use English when acting before an audience. Encourage students with higher English levels to interact and negotiate in English. When using drama in your ELT class, base your students' roleplays on school subjects (e.g., historical events), current concerns (e.g., climate change), or important milestones (e.g., birthday parties).

### *Using Total Physical Response and Puppets*

Total Physical Response (TPR; Asher, 1969) is useful for learners of all ages, but especially for young children. TPR is effective for learning new vocabulary (parts of the body), daily actions (brushing teeth), classroom activities (reading books), and grammatical structures (imperatives). Puppets serve to develop performance and dramatic sense by incorporating craft, movement, sounds, and short expressions in a safe classroom environment. When speaking on behalf of their puppet, learners feel enabled to participate without inhibitions given that potential language errors are the puppet's fault (and not theirs). By speaking their puppet's part, English learners use language and build confidence. Puppets are especially useful for timid students because, when learning lines and using new language forms, they pretend to be someone else, and this protects their own identity and provides a sense of security (Zalta, 2006). Through classroom puppet shows, children repeat chants that they can later incorporate in conversation. Similarly, use puppets to introduce songs, reinforce fluency, and support story telling. Consider having students make their own puppets to nurture their creativity and add a personal touch. Reinforce language during puppet making by having students follow oral and written instructions in English. Involve parents by inviting them to help build theater structures or puppetry sets. Many families willingly contribute materials, time, ideas, props, and other elements to show support for their children's creativity.

### *Practicing Pronunciation and Developing Fluency*

Use drama in your language classrooms for students to practice pronunciation and develop fluency. Such drama tools can include songs, nursery rhymes, tongue twisters, and guessing games. Combine drama techniques with dynamic activities for your students to participate in movements, peer interactions, and emotions. By doing so, they practice pronunciation, develop fluency, improve their speaking, and build socio-emotional skills.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

To better meet your learners' language needs, incorporate drama activities into your classes. Build these activities one-by-one in a progressive manner and adapt them as needed—thereby maximizing their potential in helping students improvise. To facilitate using drama to support language learning in your classroom, consider implementing several of the following user-friendly drama activities.

### *Use Objects*

Have students use objects such as a pencil, hairbrush, spoon, cup, or coin. They use these objects in different settings, such as a classroom, bedroom, kitchen, cafeteria, or store. Depending on students' ages and language levels, they might do extension activities. Suggestions are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1***Using Objects*

<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Students show how to use an object and say one or more words.	Students use an object to create a short dialogue or roleplay	Student groups use one or more objects to create a story.
They are encouraged to use action verbs and related nouns.	They follow instructions, use specific grammar tenses, and speak for a given amount of time (e.g., 30 seconds).	They follow instructions and use specific verb tenses and phrases.
		Each student builds on the previous student's contribution.

**Mime Actions**

Help students enhance language learning by miming actions. Select words and/or phrases from content being taught. Distribute cards with vocabulary, action verbs, or scenario descriptions. Give instructions (targeted tenses or phrases) and adapt as needed. Students use their bodies to mime actions. Their classmates guess what is being mimed. Examples are given in Table 2.

**Table 2***Miming Actions*

<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Students use their bodies to mime actions related to an object or emotion.	Students mime actions of phrases or sentences and do so for indicated verb tenses.	Two students receive a scenario. The first student mimes this action for an audience (classmates). The second student monitors if the audience is correctly guessing the scenario.
Examples		
Present: I like ice cream. I don't like spinach.	Past: Yesterday I ran to the store, and I bought an ice cream.	Yesterday I was running in the park when I saw a bird eating a worm. A little boy ran to catch the bird, but the bird flew away very quickly.
Present Continuous: He is running. She is walking.	Future: Tomorrow I will buy a delicious ice cream and later go to the park	My mother used to make me finish my meal before I could have ice cream for dessert.

***Enact Stories***

Have students enact stories to enhance language learning. Distribute cards with sentences or story characters. Give instructions (targeted tenses or phrases) and adapt as needed. Explanations and examples are outlined in Table 3.

**Table 3***Enacting Stories*

<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Students use bodies, tone of voice, and emotion to enact a sentence from a known story.	From a story already been studied in class, students select their own actions for enacting.	Students write a sentence with character's thoughts and enact it.
Classmates guess the part of the story and characters.	Classmates guess what is being enacted.	Students change character's point of view.  Older students explore original story and debate author's intent.
Examples	Examples	Examples
The big bad wolf says, "Good Morning, Little Girl."	Student changes the story by taking a longer road.	"I hope somebody releases me from this closet."
"Take these cookies to your grandma's house."		"The wolf thinks I am silly. I am going to beat him to Grandma's house."

***Do Roleplaying***

Check for understanding through roleplaying. Based on content being studied in class, give the students a setting (e.g., restaurant, bus stop). For intermediate and advanced learners, also give them characters, emotions, and/or conflict. Roleplaying is also a great way to prepare students for later doing a play. Consider using real-life situations or imaginary scenarios such as in Table 4.

**Table 4***Roleplaying*

<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Students improvise what they want or need.	Students roleplay characters, emotions, and/or emotions.	Students write, create, and develop their own roleplay.
Examples	Examples	Examples
“You want soup and need to go to the store.”	“You are an old man who is grumpy.”	They select setting, circumstances, characters, emotion, and conflict.

***Present a Play***

After students have gained experience with roleplaying, have them present a short play. Consider writing a play specifically for your students, perhaps based on a schoolwide project such as we did for students in Paraguay. Their school project—caring for the environment—served as the theme for a student play that we wrote. This play, *Together We Can Do It*, is in the Appendix.

The characters in this play are animals that live near or in the Paraguay River. We named each character by using the local word for that animal. The main character is TeroTero, which is a type of bird (see picture). The other animal characters are Dorado (golden fish), Guacamayo (blue parrot), Carpincho (large rodent), and Jaguar (enormous cat).

When writing a play for your students to present, consider following the suggestions in Table 5. Also, consider modeling your play after *Together We Can Do It*. Another option is having advanced students write their own play.

**Table 5***Presenting a Play*

<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Explain story line.	Do same as for beginners.	Do the same as for beginners and intermediate.
Introduce names of animals, actions, and expressions.	Then practice expressions. Have students underline important words.	Have students help produce the play (lighting, sounds, costumes, director’s assistant).
Emphasize important words.	Have students practice their lines with each other.	Have students lead discussions in class and with the audience.

Teach chants as chorus production to ensure greater fluency.	Encourage students to suggest own designs and then help create masks and costumes.	Make the play more complex based on students' proficiency (e.g., students create different endings).
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In this chapter, you learned about using theater to teach English. You learned how language learners can benefit from TPR, roleplays, short activities, and story enactments. You learned to incorporate drama techniques into your classes by having learners use objects, mime actions, enact stories, do roleplaying, and present plays. By using these drama techniques, you will be able to “move the art” in you and, also, in your students.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Theater increases fun in the classroom and deepens understanding and learning. Here are several key concepts about how to use theater to teach English:

- Begin simple (e.g., icebreakers) and move towards more complex drama techniques.
- Prepare students for real life situations by using English in meaningful ways.
- Incorporate drama within short weekly activities rather than long sporadic activities.
- Use TPR, especially with younger learners, to introduce drama.
- Use puppets as another way to incorporate drama in language classrooms.
- Bring closure to a unit or the school year by directing a play that your students present.

## Discussing

Based on using theater in English classrooms, answer these questions:

1. Why should English teachers incorporate theater in their classrooms by first taking small steps and later expanding?
2. In what ways do theater techniques encourage peer interaction?
3. Why is it important to give clear instructions? What types of tools (e.g., visual aids, props, language structures) can support students for doing theater techniques and using puppets?
4. How can you make your classroom a safe space so that students are not afraid to make mistakes when talking English? How does theater provide language practice and meaningful communication needed by learners to gain confidence as English users?
5. How does theater provide opportunities for learners to use their body, express emotion, and develop creativity?



## TAKING ACTION

To apply what you have learned about using theater in ELT classes, do the following:

1. Use or adapt the play, *Together We Can Do It*, which is in the Appendix. We created this play about the environment to accompany content being learned by our students.
2. Make whatever changes needed to use this play with your students.
3. Incorporate this play (or another one) in your classroom as a one-day activity or to culminate a long-term unit on ecology.
4. Use sets, props, and costumes.
5. Have students perform this play before a live audience (families or other classes).

## EXPANDING FURTHER

Learn more about using drama and theater to teach English by visiting these websites:

- Bring on the drama. <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-role-play-topics/>
- Drama resource. <https://dramaresource.com/drama-for-language-teaching/>
- Learning language with theater. <https://www.mosalingua.com/en/learning-language-theater/>
- Reader's theater: scripts and plays. <http://www.teachingheart.net/readerstheater.htm>
- Total Physical Response. [www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/total-physical-response-tpr](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/total-physical-response-tpr)
- Using puppets in ELT. <https://oupeltglobalblog.com/2018/06/08/10-ways-use-puppets-elt/>

## See Also

Roleplaying and other theater techniques are also addressed in other chapters of this book:

- Chapter 8** Teaching and Engaging Adolescent Learners by V. Ariza-Pinzón
- Chapter 20** Creating an ELT Classroom Community by B. Crosbie and D. Carter
- Chapter 23** Integrating Technology in Language Classrooms by H. Hubbard, A. Foss, and C. Strawn
- Chapter 27** Implementing Actionable Gamification Design in ELT by F. Esquivel
- Chapter 30** Incorporating Music in the ELT Classroom by O. Carrasquel
- Chapter 36** Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners by I. Giménez and C. Rolón
- Chapter 40** Strategies to Teach Speaking by S. Spezzini
- Chapter 50** Developing Intercultural Competencies by L. Rojas, J. Castañeda, and J. Mosquera

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APPENDIX  
**ch.29**

## Together We Can Do It

Matthew Vaky

**NARRATOR:**

Once upon a time on the Paraguay river there was a TeroTero mother (father) who had three baby birds to feed.

**MOTHER:**

I am a TeroTero. I have three beautiful baby birds. I love them so much. But they are always hungry.

**BABIES:**

Mom, we are hungry.

**MOTHER:**

You see? Well, it is my job to feed them. So, I have to fly to the river to look for worms.

**BABIES:**

Mom, We love worms.

**MOTHER:**

I know my little ones. I am going to get you some.

**BABIES:**

YAY! WE LOVE WORMS!

**NARRATOR:**

And, so, the Mother TeroTero flew to the Paraguay river to look for food.

**MOTHER:**

I hope I can find some worms for my little babies. Oh, no, Look at all this garbage. I wonder why people litter so much.

**NARRATOR:**

And the Mother TeroTero looked and looked and looked. There was so much garbage it took her a long time. Finally, she saw something that looked like a worm.

**MOTHER**

Finally, I can see a worm.

**NARRATOR:**

And she flew down to the worm. But sadly, it wasn't a worm at all. It was a piece of a plastic ring that someone had thrown into the river. And the worst thing in the world happened. The Mother was stuck.

**MOTHER:**

Help me! Help me! I am stuck.

**NARRATOR:**

Lucky for the Mother TeroTero, a little fish, the dorado, heard the Mother TeroTero.

**DORADO**

I will help you Mother TeroTero.

**MOTHER**

How can you help me? You are a fish out of water. (Idiomatic expression)

**DORADO**

I will pull it off you.

**NARRATOR:**

But no matter how hard the little fish pulled, the poor Mother Bird was stuck.

**MOTHER**

It is no use. I will never be free from this garbage.

**DORADO**

Don't give up hope. I will get my friend the Blue Guacamayo to help us.

**NARRATOR**

And the Dorado called his friend the Blue Guacamayo.

**DORADO**

Guacamayo! Please come here. I need your help.

**GUACAMAYO**

Hello, Dorado. How can I help you

**DORADO**

The Mother TeroTero is stuck, and we need to pull her out.

**NARRATOR**

So, the Dorado grabbed the Mother TeroTero, and the Guacamayo grabbed the Dorado, and they....

**DORADO, GUACAMAYO**

PULL! PULL! PULL!

**MOTHER TEROTERO**

It is no use. I will never be free of this garbage.

**GUACAMAYO**

Don't give up hope. I will get my friend the Carpincho to help us.

**NARRATOR**

And the Guacamayo called his friend the Carpincho to help.

**GUACAMAYO**

Carpincho. Please come here. I need your help.

**CARPINCHO**

Hello, Guacamayo. How can I help you?

**GUACAMAYO**

The Mother TeroTero is stuck, and we need to pull her out.

**NARRATOR**

So, the Dorado grabbed the Mother TeroTero, and the Guacamayo grabbed the Dorado, and the Carpincho grabbed the Guacamayo, and they....

**DORADO, GUACAMAYO, CARPINCHO**

PULL! PULL! PULL!

**MOTHER TEROTERO**

It is no use. I will never be free of this garbage.

**CARPINCHO**

Don't give up hope. I will get my friend the Jaguar to help us.

**NARRATOR**

And the Carpincho called his friend the Jaguar to help.

**CARPINCHO**

Jaguar! Please come here. I need your help.

**JAGUAR**

Hello, Carpincho. How can I help you?

**CARPINCHO**

The Mother TeroTero is stuck, and we need to pull her out.

**NARRATOR**

So, the Dorado grabbed the Mother TeroTero, and the Guacamayo grabbed the Dorado, and the Carpincho grabbed the Guacamayo, and the Jaguar grabbed the Carpincho, and they....

**DORADO, GUACAMAYO, CARPINCHO, JAGUAR**

PULL! PULL! PULL!

**MOTHER TEROTERO**

It is no use. I will never be free of this garbage.

**JAGUAR**

Don't give up hope. I will get my friend, the Fisherman's son, to help us.

**NARRATOR**

And the Jaguar called his friend, the Fisherman's son, to help.

**JAGUAR**

Fisherman's Son! Please come here. I need your help.

**FISHERMAN'S SON**

Hello, Jaguar. How can I help you?

**JAGUAR**

The Mother TeroTero is stuck, and we need to pull her out.

**NARRATOR**

So, the Dorado grabbed the Mother TeroTero, and the Guacamayo grabbed the Dorado, and the Carpincho grabbed the Guacamayo, and the Jaguar grabbed the Carpincho, and the

Fisherman's Son grabbed the Jaguar, and they....

**DORADO, GUACAMAYO, CARPINCHO, JAGUAR, FISHERMAN'S SON**

PULL! PULL! PULL!

**NARRATOR**

And do you know what happened? It worked! The Mother TeroTero was free!

**MOTHER TEROTERO**

I am free. Thank you!

**NARRATOR**

But the Dorado and the Guacamayo and the Carpincho and the Jaguar and the Fisherman's Son all saw that the Mother TeroTero was sad.

**DORADO, GUACAMAYO, MBOREVI, JAGUAR, FISHERMAN'S SON**

Why are you sad? You are free.

**MOTHER TEROTERO**

I am sad because there is so much garbage in this beautiful river.

**DORADO, GUACAMAYO, CARPINCHO, JAGUAR, FISHERMAN'S SON**

That is sad.

**MOTHER TEROTERO**

And I am sad because I have no worms to feed my baby birds.

**FISHERMAN's SON**

I have worms. I use them to fish. You can have some for your baby birds.

**MOTHER TEROTERO**

Really?

**FISHERMAN's SON**

Of course. Because, you see, if we all work together, we can solve any problem.

**DORADO, GUACAMAYO, CARPINCHO, JAGUAR**

We worked together to free you.

**FISHERMAN's SON**

And we can work together to clean up the river. If we have a clean river, we will have a better eco system. And if we have a better eco system, we will all live better.

**NARRATOR**

And the Mother TeroTero thanked her friends and flew back to her baby birds.

**BABY BIRDS**

YAY! We love worms.

**MOTHER TEROTERO**

I know. I know.

**NARRATOR**

Working together we can make a better world!

(to the tune of "London Bridges")

We can make a better world, better world, better world.

We can make a better world.

All together!

Put the trash inside the bag, inside the bag, inside the bag,

Put the trash inside the bag.

Please don't litter!

Animals and rivers need your love, need your love, need your love

Animals and rivers need your love,

Please don't litter!

We can make a better world, better world, better world,

We can make a better world,

All together!





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# CHAPTER 30

## Incorporating Music in the ELT Classroom

# Incorporating Music in the ELT Classroom

Otoniel Eduardo Carrasquel Zambrano

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## Abstract

Among the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading writing), speaking is often viewed as one of the most challenging with respect to reaching a high level of proficiency. For example, although you have probably taken numerous English courses across many years, you might still feel challenged when talking in certain situations or about certain topics. You might have even wondered what you could do to improve your fluency and intelligibility as well as other aspects related to speaking. Here is where music can play an important role. Music is a dynamic and engaging tool to help language learners strengthen their speaking abilities, specifically fluency and intelligibility. In this chapter, you will learn about several music-related techniques and strategies that you can use to improve your own speaking proficiency and, also, to help your students improve their speaking.

*Keywords:* English learners, teaching language through music, speaking, fluency, intelligibility

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## Introduction

When learning English, I dreamed of being able to speak fluently and even imagined myself communicating in English as if it were my mother tongue. Motivated to learn English, I eagerly participated in class activities. However, I found the grammar drills and structured sentences to be repetitive, predictable, and void of authentic meaning. I also felt these activities were not helping me achieve my goal, that of speaking fluently. As time passed, I realized that speaking was more than accurately articulating phonemes and correctly pronouncing words. I realized that connecting words into chunks and producing meaningful utterances were vital for being able to speak fluently in a target language. Fortunately, I was able to reach this goal through music.

As an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, I provide my language learners with comprehensible input through interactive and innovative activities. I incorporate music in these activities to create authentic opportunities for learners to listen and speak. In this chapter, I share how you can also incorporate music in your classes and, by doing so, enhance your instruction and make your learners enjoy speaking English. By understanding how music and speaking complement each other and how music can be incorporated in English learning activities, you can help your students to develop their speaking fluency and, also, further develop your own fluency.

## Background

Music and language are human capacities that evolved from proto-musical expression and proto-linguistic speech, respectively. Both emerged and evolved as people developed increasingly complex abilities to communicate (Lerdahl, 2013). Because of how music and language are related to human communication, they share characteristics of syntax making it possible for a potentially infinite number of outputs to be generated from a considerably small number of elements and principles (Merker, 2002). Music and language also share characteristics of phonology for using the sounds and sound combinations of a specific language system (Lerdahl, 2013).

A basic correspondence between music and language is the relationship between a musical note and a spoken syllable. A single note usually corresponds to a single syllable, and this represents a direct correspondence between music and language. In the same way that song melodies are a sequence of sounds and notes that form a rhythmical pattern and tempo, oral language is a sequence of sounds and syllables that form words and sentences (Lerdahl, 2013). Although music and language belong to different cognitive domains, they share several features in their respective sensory-perceptual networks (Moreno et al., 2015). As a means of communication, both music and language utilize acoustic cues (i.e., pitch, timing, timbre) to communicate the meaning of a word, and they rely on systemic sound–symbol representations. Music and language also require their users to develop and use skills such as analytic listening, selective attention, and auditory memory as well as the ability to integrate discrete units of information into coherent and meaningful input (Patel, 2011). Because these features represent a close relationship between music and language, we can consider using music as a tool for helping students learn language and especially for helping them develop oral fluency.

## Major Dimensions

As language teachers, we need to select the most effective use of music for meeting our academic goals. The use of music in our classes should be intentional rather than just a time-filler. For effectively incorporating music into English language teaching (ELT), we first need to identify our students' interests and feelings. After that, we need to find songs for a specific age group, identify the types and purposes of selected songs, and select songs with a motivational purpose.

### *Songs for a Specific Age Group*

Look for songs that satisfy specific characteristics for the age group of students in your class. In other words, choose songs that are suitable to your students' interests and comprehension abilities in terms of content and vocabulary. Avoid songs with words or topics that might be inappropriate for a given age group. Consider the tempo of the selected songs and the number of words being sung per minute. Songs with simple lyrics and regular tempos are the best option in any pedagogical context (Dzanic & Pejic, 2016). Of great importance is selecting songs that encourage dynamic repetition of lyrics, which is repeating the same line(s) on multiple occasions but with certain variations. Such repetition should also include intonation and tempo.

### *Types and Purposes of Selected Songs*

Also important is identifying the types and purposes of the songs being considered. Most songs selected for ELT can be divided into two main groups: authentic songs and children's songs. On the one hand, authentic songs (also called traditional songs) represent the daily life of adults and adolescents whose first language is the language used in the songs. In today's multi-media world, EFL students are already in contact with many of these authentic English songs through the radio, internet, and social media and have probably even downloaded some authentic songs on their respective devices. These songs tend to be well known and carry important cultural content. As such, they are a great tool for helping EFL students learn about the history and sociocultural phenomena of Anglophone countries. On the other hand, children's songs are for young learners, usually first language speakers of a given culture. However, when targeted for young learners and with a didactical purpose, these songs are also called specially composed English teaching songs. They are highly useful for the pedagogical goal for which they were created. For example, the ABC song was created to teach the English alphabet and serves exclusively for that purpose (Karea, 2016). However, even though the ABC song was written for English-speaking children, it is now used widely in EFL settings.

### *Songs With a Motivational Purpose*

Most importantly, songs should have a motivational purpose. Such songs allow students to experience emotions and feelings and, as such, are an important source of motivation when learning a new language. When supported by movements and colorful visual aids, motivational songs provide even more support to students and are especially useful for strengthening their learning process and keeping them motivated (Dzanic & Pejic, 2016). Songs with a motivational purpose are especially important for children and adolescents.

## Pedagogical Applications

Human beings have an oral tract with the anatomical structures needed to produce different types of sounds and intonation features. Based on these structures, we develop and improve our oral language in different ways. For example, we can sing songs, say rhymes, beat-box rhythms, and use our voice in many other ways. Oral language can also be developed by listening to music both when the focus of the pedagogical activity is the music itself and when the music is combined with another task such as painting, moving, playing, or writing. Language learning is enhanced when body movements are integrated with music such as by moving to music, using body percussion, and dancing. Moreover, as a way of varying instruction and making class even more dynamic through music, we can have our students use everyday objects as nontraditional musical instruments. Depending on our students' age and musical interests, we can even add increasingly more difficult rhythms and speed tempos to the musical pieces. Based on these examples, music-related teaching methods can be classified in three main categories: use of rhythmical activities, use of songs, and use of background music (Degrave, 2019).

### *Use of Rhythmical Activities*

Rhythmical activities are often included in language classes through actions implemented intuitively by teachers. These rhythmical activities include clapping hands to emphasize the rhythm of speech, making gestures to illustrate speech intonation, and annotating selected sentences written on the board to indicate the position of stress in a spoken utterance or in a musical score (a song's composition and written notations). Over the years, some of these activities have become more structured, such as through the ELT technique called Jazz Chants in which rhythms of traditional American jazz correspond to rhythms of spoken American English (Graham, 1978). This technique portrays chants as rhythmic representations of natural American English and emphasizes intonation and natural stress. You can represent these rhythmical patterns with your body or with everyday objects to teach syllable separation or even the difference between minimal pairs. Another possibility would be to use drums or a song's rhythmical beat to set a tempo and teach the students to keep that constant tempo when speaking. This often helps students with speaking more slowly and, through this natural-like fluency, become more intelligible.

### *Use of Songs*

Singing songs is a frequent and common way to incorporate music in the ELT classroom. Because songs often contain repetition and redundancy, they can be used to transform the repetition of drills into a fun and enjoyable activity. Implement your own style of karaoke by playing songs and posting their lyrics clearly visible to all students. Use a pointer to follow the lyrics while singing along with your students. Many variations exist for this activity. For example, divide students into groups and have the groups take turns singing different stanzas. Then end this activity by having all groups sing the chorus together.

Singing English songs provides an excellent opportunity for explaining to students that, when pronouncing certain words, we simultaneously articulate two or more sounds at the same time. This occurs because of phonological phenomena such as blending, assimilation, co-articulation, intrusion, and elision. These phenomena, which EFL students learn rather easily when singing, are also vital when speaking—especially for learning to speak fluently. The next step is to focus on listening. For this, write the song's lyrics on a worksheet but leave several blank spaces for missing words and phrases. After distributing this worksheet to your students, play this song again and again until your students, by working collaboratively, complete the blank spaces. After

that, have the students sing this song again. This time they will sing with more meaning and perhaps even with a feeling of ownership from having identified the missing words.

If you know how to play a musical instrument (e.g., guitar or piano), this could be a great asset for incorporating music in your EFL classroom. While playing this instrument, practice a song with your students and adapt it to your students' language level and even to their musical skills. This might be very useful in motivating your students to sing and then later to perform their songs publicly for the school community.

### *Use of Background Music*

When students are doing a non-speaking task, many improve their performance of this task while listening to background music. This can be music without lyrics or even non-linguistic sounds such as the Yguazu waterfalls (Degrave, 2019). In other words, while your students are focused on a non-speaking academic task, consider playing background music to help them work more calmly and perhaps even serve to motivate them for wanting to learn. If this background music is a song, the song could eventually lead students to singing along while working on a non-musical task. Although this could be positive, take care that the background music does not distract students from completing their task. Playing the instrumental version of a well-known song is also a possibility. If students are familiar with a song, they might start singing the song on their own by retrieving the lyrics from their memory. When using music in this way, one of the most positive scenarios would be that students start creating songs or lyrics from an instrumental beat. Here, they would be creating their own speech rather than simply repeating other people's speech (Coulter & Suri, 2020).

In this chapter, you examined different ways to incorporate music in ELT classrooms. You learned about songs for a specific age group, the types and purposes of songs, and songs with a motivational purpose. You also learned about using rhythmical activities, songs, and background music. With these insights, you can start incorporating music in your own English classes.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts for using music to teach English:

- Music and language are closely related.
- The use of music in an ELT classroom should be intentional, not random.
- It is important to carefully choose songs for implementing in your ELT class.
- The more familiar students are with the music you use in class, the more effective it will be.
- Playing background music might help establish class mood and prepare students to learn.

## Discussing

Based on what you have learned about using music in ELT classrooms, answer these questions:

1. What factors or characteristics of music might affect your perception or attitude as being either for or against using music in ELT classrooms?

2. What type of music do you enjoy? What types of music would be useful to teach English?
3. Which music genres do you think would be more suitable to your students?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about using music to teach English, do the following:

1. Compare the reaction of your students to different music genres and styles.
2. Listen to music in English from different cultures and countries. What differences do you hear in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar?
3. Plan and implement a lesson for your students to create a song. Choose a topic and develop the lyrics together. Then record the song and have students practice singing this song.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge and application of using music in ELT, visit these websites:

- How music benefits student learning and language development.  
<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/voices-field/how-does-music-benefit-your-classroom-or-school-community-most>
- Music in the classroom. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/3-ways-use-music-classroom>
- Powerful ways to use music in the classroom.  
<https://www.teachstarter.com/us/blog/powerful-ways-to-use-music-in-the-classroom-us/>
- Students listening to music during class.  
<https://www.wgu.edu/heyteach/article/should-you-let-students-listen-to-music-in-the-classroom1709.html>

## See Also

Using music and rhythm to teach languages is also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 7** *Embracing Young Learners* by M. Gandolfo, B. Damiani, and L. Caperochipe

**Chapter 29** *Using Theater to Teach English* by C. Ortiz and M. Vaky

**Chapter 39** *Strategies to Teach Listening* by E. Nuñez

**Chapter 40** *Strategies to Teach Speaking* by S. Spezzini

**Chapter 44** *Strategies to Teach Pronunciation* by S. Spezzini

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# CHAPTER 31

## Using Translation and Interpretation in ELT

## Using Translation and Interpretation in ELT

Silvia Terol

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### Abstract

A common misconception is that everyone who speaks two languages is also capable of doing translation and interpretation (T&I). Contrary to this widespread myth and regardless of one's mastery of each language, translating and interpreting consist of distinct skills that must be learned, practiced, and mastered before being used professionally. In this chapter, you will learn how to define T&I and how to apply T&I skills to enhance the teaching and learning of English. You will learn how to implement T&I strategies to build vocabulary, strengthen reading and listening comprehension, and develop written and oral communication. You will also reach a clearer understanding of how the professionalization of these skills can pave the road towards formalizing T&I as a totally separate profession.

*Keywords:* translation, interpretation, improving English skills by translating and interpreting

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## Introduction

A longstanding debate is whether all bilinguals (people who speak two or more languages) are translators. Another debate is whether translation and interpretation (T&I) activities should take place in language classrooms. By exploring these debates, we can become better informed about distinguishing bilingual individuals from T&I professionals, dividing T&I situations into context categories, and differentiating the T&I profession from the English language teaching (ELT) profession. When combined, these perspectives offer insights toward professionalizing the T&I career and further developing the T&I industry, especially in countries with an incipient language market.

Translation is the written transfer of meaning from a source language into a target language, and interpretation is the oral transfer of meaning from a source language into a target language. Translating and interpreting can be viewed jointly for the purpose of a conceptual framework. However, for the purpose of applied pedagogy, translating and interpreting should be viewed separately with specific instructional activities targeted to develop the translating skill and other specific instructional activities targeted to develop the interpreting skill. Although instructional T&I activities have routinely been used in programs to prepare T&I professionals, they can also be used in ELT classrooms to help learners enhance their language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). In both settings, T&I activities require the use of a first language (L1) and second language (L2).

## Background

Historically, T&I has been viewed as either natural or professional. Natural T&I is undertaken by bilinguals (or emerging bilinguals), and professional T&I is undertaken by T&I professionals (Harris, 1978). Bilinguals of all ages (including children) naturally transfer daily-life meaning from one language to another—orally and almost unconsciously. By doing this, these bilinguals are undertaking natural T&I. However, simply knowing two languages does not naturally lead to more advanced competencies of translating and interpreting (Kolawole, 2012). This is evidenced by the fact that many bilinguals fail the entrance examinations to T&I preparation programs. In such cases, these bilinguals must improve their bilingual skills before once again trying to pursue their dream of becoming T&I professionals.

Though bilinguals might know two languages, they do not automatically possess competencies for doing T&I in different types of settings. Except for natural settings, bilinguals must be taught how to do T&I in other settings, such as academic and professional. To facilitate building T&I competencies in such settings, T&I has been viewed as a fifth skill alongside reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Campbell, 2002; Naimushin, 2002). When bilinguals are taught T&I as a distinct skill, this tends to strengthen their other language skills.

However, the widespread adoption of communicative teaching approaches in the 1990s led to the students' L1 no longer being used for instructional support in ELT classes. The premise that an L2 is learned better when students think and communicate exclusively in that language resulted in greatly reducing the L1 presence in many language classrooms and, also, in excluding T&I activities (Putrawan, 2019). Nonetheless, as institutions became well versed in communicative teaching, several reconsidered the role and status of T&I in their ELT

classrooms. This has led to some ELT institutions applying communicative activities for the teaching of T&I skills (Nagy, 2015).

## Major Dimensions

Before considering the incorporation of T&I in your ELT classroom, become knowledgeable about the following:

### *Viewing T&I as Three Categories*

T&I activities can be divided in three categories: natural, pedagogic, and professional (Campbell, 2002; Harris, 1978; Nagy, 2015). Aspects related to each category are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1**

#### *Three T&I Categories*

Aspects	Natural T&I	Pedagogic T&I	Professional T&I
Ability	social bilingual	proficient bilingual	highly advanced bilingual
Training	no formal study	course-based study	professional degree or license
Examples	joke, email, menu	workplace-related	conferences, governments
Goal	share main idea	transmit concepts & details	be precise and meet standards

As illustrated in Table 1, the three T&I categories can be described as follows:

- *Natural T&I* is performed almost instinctively by many social bilinguals who have not studied T&I and who are at varying stages of L2 learning (Harris, 1978). Outcomes are viewed as satisfactory when the main idea is shared, such as for jokes, emails, and menus. Bilingual interference is minimally problematic.
- *Pedagogic T&I* is performed by proficient bilinguals who have taken one or two courses for learning to do T&I at their workplaces. Outcomes are satisfactory when concepts and details are transmitted. Bilingual interference can be problematic.
- *Professional T&I* is performed by advanced bilinguals with specialized training whose competencies are demonstrated through T&I assessments or internationally recognized licenses such as to work in conferences or with governments. Outcomes are satisfactory only if international standards are met. Bilingual interference is unacceptable.

### *Using T&I in Informal Situations*

As learners acquire L2, many perform T&I actions—even without formal study (Campbell, 2002). In social settings, they might interpret something said (joke) or translate a common item (menu).

In these informal situations, natural T&I “is not only an integral part of bilingual behavior but is integral to the behavior of language learners and to the process of language acquisition itself” (p. 60). Here, L2 ability corresponds to an ability for doing natural T&I.

### *Using T&I in ELT Classrooms*

When you were studying a new language, you might not have done T&I in your language classes. However, you have probably done T&I in natural contexts such as helping others understand emails, songs, tourist information, and work-based documents. If bilinguals end up doing T&I, why are such activities not included in ELT curricula? Some reasons might be the demographic distribution of English learners and the economic role played by English in the ELT industry with most materials being published in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Campbell, 2002). Regardless of where the materials are published, they are often used worldwide by English learners who represent innumerable languages. Because it is impossible to tailor such materials for multiple languages, these materials are mostly English-only and used in countries where the ELT curriculum focuses on English to the exclusion of T&I activities. However, in regions like Latin America where many countries share the same language, some basic T&I training is often “incorporated into English syllabuses, especially at university level” (Campbell, 2002, p. 63). This represents pedagogic T&I (Petrocchi, 2014).

### *Using T&I in the Workplace*

Because many jobs require T&I skills beyond those in natural T&I contexts, bilinguals need the knowledge and academic training provided in pedagogic T&I courses. The T&I activities in ELT courses provide basic T&I competencies for use at worksites. However, even as recent as 2020, most of the ELT world did not favorably view T&I as a separate language skill. This unfavorable perspective likely emerged from the grammar-translation method for teaching a new language, which prevailed during the first half of the 20th century (Naimushin, 2002). Nonetheless, some translating and interpreting techniques have been included in ELT curriculum “as the fifth skill and applied to the level and specific needs of the students” (p. 47), especially in courses targeted to prepare preservice language teachers. Through such pedagogic T&I training, bilinguals can expand their bilingual proficiency and improve their ability to perform T&I within and beyond natural contexts.

### *Using T&I as a Pedagogical Tool*

By taking a pedagogic perspective, T&I can be viewed as a tool to create learning opportunities through contrastive analysis, vocabulary building, and peer editing as well as reading and listening comprehension. Yet, even when T&I is included as the fifth skill in an ELT syllabus, this does not represent professional T&I. In other words, the instruction of T&I in a language classroom “must be clearly distinguished from training professional translators and interpreters; the objectives and methods of these two types of training are very different” (Naimushin, 2002, p. 47). Another difference between professional T&I and pedagogic T&I is that the training of professional translators and interpreters “starts where foreign language teaching ends” (Nagy, 2015, p. 97).

Of the three T&I categories (natural, pedagogic, professional), pedagogic T&I fits within the overall scope of this book and is the focus of this chapter. Activities and strategies for teaching pedagogic T&I are provided in the next section.

## Pedagogical Applications

In ELT classrooms, pedagogic T&I activities are not used in conjunction with the grammar-translation approach. Rather, activities for pedagogic T&I are used to support communicative and cultural approaches for the teaching and learning of English. For example, when doing T&I activities, students work together collaboratively to find equivalencies and idiomatic expressions to convey messages from the source language into the target language. By doing so, they assume agency for building their own vocabulary. Below, you will see how pedagogic translation activities can help learners develop reading and writing skills and how pedagogic interpretation activities help learners develop listening and speaking skills.

### *Translation: Reading and Writing*

Translation uses two language skills—reading and writing. After a message is read in a source language, it is written in a target language. A possible pathway for effectively preparing a translation could be as follows:

- Become acquainted with the topic by first skimming through the source text.
- Gather materials needed for translation such as glossaries, dictionaries (monolingual or bilingual), and texts in the target language related to the topic in the source text.
- Translate a first draft.
- Read your draft in the target language to make grammatical corrections and fix idiomatic expressions.
- Compare your target text with the source text to identify meaning errors and omissions.
- Proofread your target text.

This translation process can include a feedback step with peer review done in pairs or whole class. Peer review offers many advantages over self-review (Insai & Poonlarp, 2017). The greatest benefit of peer review comes when students view translation as a problem-solving task to be solved by working together collaboratively. During their collaborative work, students use communication and language skills as well as negotiation and social skills. For peer review to be successful, a positive feedback spirit must be present throughout.

When doing translation activities in your ELT classroom, select texts based on student needs and language levels. If possible, use translation activities to complement topics in your current unit of study (rather than using translation as a type of filler). Translation activities also enhance group interaction and ensure that all students understand the intended meaning. Consider doing a class project based on translation. A sample project could be to subtitle a movie into a target language. This subtitling could be done in groups or with the full class (Bolaños García-Escribano, 2017). Before starting a group translation project like this one, encourage your students to explore the open-source subtitling websites listed in this chapter's Expanding Further section.

### *Interpretation: Listening and Speaking*

Interpretation uses the other two language skills—listening and speaking. It consists of the oral transfer of meaning from one language to another language. This oral transfer takes place either consecutively or simultaneously, with the latter done just by T&I professionals. Interpretation requires intense listening to understand not just the words and their meanings but also the body

language, intonation, and cultural connotations. A common approach for teaching pedagogic interpretation is having students take turns interpreting oral discourse. Ideally, start by having students listen to a very short recording in L2 and then interpret it into their L1. When choosing a segment for this introductory interpretation activity, consider your students' language level and the segment's difficulty and length. Avoid choosing something that is too difficult as this might frustrate your students, make them afraid, and block them from trying.

Students can also practice interpretation skills by first preparing short impromptu talks (about one to two minutes in length) and then taking turns giving this impromptu talk and interpreting a peer's talk. Ask students to generate or suggest topics (e.g., wakeup routine, favorite recipe, best pet). After selecting a topic from this list, each student organizes ideas and writes them as short bullet points. Depending on class size and time availability, all students participate as a presenter and, also, as an interpreter.

Divide students into pairs or have them create their own pairs. In each pair, the goal is for each student to serve as both presenter and interpreter. In this way, everyone can experience the challenge of presenting and, also, the challenge of interpreting. If you wish, start by having students in each pair rehearse privately by presenting and interpreting to one other. After the first member of a pair presents, and the second member interprets, these roles are reversed. During this same time, the students in each of the other pairs are also rehearsing privately. In these rehearsals, students gain confidence before having to interpret in front of others. Although rehearsals are not part of real-life interpreting (neither in natural settings nor in professional settings), these interpretation rehearsals play an integral role in pedagogic settings to prepare students for interpreting in real-life situations.

This presentation/interpretation activity proceeds in the following manner. While the presenter talks, the interpreter listens. The interpreter focuses intently on the overall message rather than on individual words. The interpreter does not take notes because when people take notes, their brain is split doing multiple things at once. Consequently, note-taking is not used in pedagogic interpretation activities (such as is done when training professional interpreters). Immediately after the student presenter finishes, the student interpreter interprets with the goal of staying true to the presenter's original message. This is an example of simple consecutive interpretation.

After student pairs have rehearsed privately, each pair presents and interprets in front of the whole class (or within a group of 6 to 8 students). After a student pair has presented and interpreted the first student's short talk, lead a round of feedback regarding the interpretation. Encourage your student reviewers to initially offer positive feedback and then describe ways to improve this interpretation with respect to omissions, meaning shifts, grammar usage, word choice, and stylistic aspects. This review should focus on the main goal of interpretation, that of accurately transmitting the meaning.

This interpretation activity helps students develop their listening and speaking skills as well as their memory skill. After students become used to providing feedback in a positive way and, also, to receiving feedback without feeling personally critiqued, they become more comfortable with sharing their opinions and expressing what they think. Depending on your goals for this activity, you might allow students to give feedback in either L1 or L2.

To further extend this activity, have a regular Interpreting Day, such as to conclude each thematic unit. Because interpreting is easier when presenters use visual aids, base the first interpretation activity on having students demonstrate, such as making origami, preparing a snack, or planting a succulent. Subsequent activities could entail longer talks. After students feel

comfortable with interpreting, they can give speeches to enhance lesson topics. They can write and deliver their own speech or read another person's speech. Possibilities are endless, such as short YouTube videos, Ted-Ed lessons, and famous speeches like Martin Luther King's I Have a Dream. Each speech should last from two to three minutes because it will be difficult for student interpreters to recall longer segments without taking notes.

In this chapter, you learned that being bilingual does not imply an ability to translate or interpret. You learned about three T&I categories: natural, pedagogic, and professional. You also learned how to incorporate pedagogic T&I activities in your ELT classroom.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about T&I:

- Natural T&I is the process by which bilinguals, without formal T&I training, transfer meaning from one language to another language, usually in social settings.
- Pedagogic T&I uses T&I as an instructional tool for improving bilinguals' ability to perform T&I in their personal lives and at their respective worksites.
- Professional T&I is performed by individuals who have completed professional training or passed international language examinations to become licensed translators or interpreters such as for working at conferences and in government settings.

## Discussing

With respect to including T&I in ELT classes, answer these questions:

1. What did you know about T&I when learning another language? Did you use T&I at that time? Was it helpful? Did you experience bilingual interference? What difficulties did you face when translating or interpreting?
2. How has your view of T&I changed from reading this chapter or from using T&I activities in your class? How would you suggest trying to change others' perceptions about T&I?
3. Will the inclusion of T&I activities in language classrooms impact the ELT industry or the professional T&I industry? If so, what are some activities that you could consider including? If not, explain your reasons.

## TAKING ACTION

To practice T&I in your ELT classroom, do the following:

1. Identify T&I activities for your class and outline instructional goals to guide evaluation.
2. Determine T&I skills that can be developed or strengthened with a given T&I activity.



3. Identify appropriate texts (written and oral) based on student needs and language levels.
4. Create a positive atmosphere for students to provide and receive peer feedback on T&I.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about pedagogic T&I, visit these websites:

- Free subtitle editing. <https://www.checksub.com/subtitle/best-online-free-subtitle-editor/>
- Podcast. <https://shows.acast.com/esltalk/episodes/episode-28-translation-and-interpretation-in-the-esl-classro>
- Search “translation and interpretation in ELT” in Google Academic.
- Search for consecutive interpreting. Ted-Ed
- T&I activities in ELT. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/translation-activities-language-classroom>
- T&I in classrooms. <https://oupeltglobalblog.com/2011/10/20/translation-in-language-teaching-and-learning/>

## See Also

Topics related to T&I are addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 2** *The Diversity of Global Englishes* by L. Barratt

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices* by K. Liu and J. Choi

**Chapter 17** *Providing Feedback on Learners’ Language Output* by C. Cristóful

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## Methods and Approaches

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# CHAPTER 32

## Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century

# Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century

Clara Onatra

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## Abstract

Language teaching has evolved over time. When the 20th century began, languages were taught primarily with the Grammar-Translation Method and, to a lesser degree, with the Direct Method. As that century advanced, other methods and approaches emerged. These included the Oral Approach (Situational Language Teaching), Audiolingual Method, Suggestopedia, Silent Way, Total Physical Response, Natural Approach, Community Language Learning, Communicative Approach, and Task-Based Learning. In this chapter, you will explore the history of language teaching and the principles that supported the methods and approaches used in the 20th century. You will learn that some of these methods were popular only briefly and others are still in use. You will also learn how the major trends from the 20th century continue to influence language teaching practices in the 21st century. With such insights, you will be better able to understand the ways that languages are now taught.

*Keywords:* history of language teaching, major ELT trends, teaching methods, approaches for teaching languages, instructional practices

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## Introduction

The 20th century was dominated by an ongoing quest for effective methods to teach languages, a quest that contributed to shaping the way that languages are taught today. As social structures changed and new societal needs emerged, the field of English language teaching (ELT) evolved to meet those needs. Throughout the past century and continuing to the present, our profession has systematically sought to address diverse issues faced by teachers in language classrooms. Pedagogical issues included prioritizing accuracy over fluency (or vice versa), teaching four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), and developing a syllabus and lesson plans based on prevailing learning theories. Related issues have been the importance of grammar and vocabulary, the role of motivation and learning strategies, and the function of resources and technology. This ongoing quest led to new language learning theories, which, in turn, led to new teaching methods. With their respective strategies and techniques, these diverse methods and approaches share a similar goal, that of attempting to teach languages as effectively as possible.

This chapter describes the teaching methods and approaches used in the 20th century. Several of these methods were in widespread use at a given point in time, such as the Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Oral Approach (Situational Language Teaching), and Audiolingual Method. Some methods such as the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Natural Approach, and Total Physical Response offered innovative insights but did not become universally adopted. Other methods such as Task-Based Learning, Community Language Learning, and the Communicative Approach gained popularity toward the end of the 20th century and are still being used. Whether these methods and approaches were once in universal favor or viewed solely as an alternative approach, all contributed to the methodological trends of the 20th century.

## Background

The history of language teaching methods and approaches (and their ongoing transformation) is relevant for teacher education programs. Pre-service teachers need to be aware of how the ELT field has changed over time and how this trajectory fits within our discipline. By knowing issues and questions that were addressed in the past, you will be better prepared to face similar issues and questions when planning and developing your own language courses in the future. After reviewing and evaluating other teaching principles and procedures, compare them with your own knowledge and beliefs.

When you start your teaching career and are in your own classroom, you will begin experiencing the multi-faceted reality of our profession. At first, you might teach by applying principles and techniques proposed by others. However, after gaining experience and knowledge, focus on developing your own way of teaching, one that reflects your beliefs, qualities, ideals, and experiences. Over time and as you gain more confidence, consider using different approaches and methods in innovative and flexible ways. Even after you have been teaching for a while, seek additional training, such as about new methods being adopted by your ELT institution.

## Major Dimensions

By learning about ELT methods and approaches used in the past, you will be better able to understand and adapt new methods to your teaching style. Following are the major ELT methods and approaches used in the 20th century.

### *Grammar-Translation Method*

The Grammar-Translation Method, which was first known in the United States as the Prussian method, predominated between the 1840s and 1940s (Richards & Rogers, 2014). This method consists of teaching grammar rules and then applying them by translating sentences between the native language and target language. The students' native language serves as a reference for learning the target language. The main features of the Grammar-Translation Method are as follows:

- Lessons are conducted in the students' mother tongue.
- Grammar is taught deductively.
- Lessons emphasize reading and writing.
- Vocabulary is taught through lists of isolated words.

### *Direct Method*

The Direct Method emerged at the end of the 19th century in reaction against the Grammar-Translation Method. By questioning the earlier focus on written language, this method focused on learning a second language (L2) similarly to how the first language (L1) is learned (Thornbury, 2000). The main features of the Direct Method are as follows:

- Classes are conducted in the target language.
- Grammar is taught inductively.
- Classes focus on the development of speaking and listening.
- Lessons focus solely on useful everyday language.

### *Oral Approach (Situational Language Teaching)*

The Oral Approach was developed between the 1930s and 1960s (Richards & Rogers, 2014). Based on one of its main features, this approach has also been called Situational Language Teaching. Unlike the Direct Method, the Oral Approach is based on principles and procedures that are more easily adapted to a formal classroom setting. The main features of the Oral Approach are as follows:

- Content is taught orally in the target language before the written form is introduced.
- Vocabulary is selected with the goal of meeting students' language level by incorporating relatively little content.
- Grammar patterns are taught orally by classifying L2 structures into sentence patterns (substitution drills) to help learners acquire rules for organizing L2 sentences.
- New language is presented orally within common situations, and students practice this language situationally while it is being presented.



### *Audiolingual Method*

The Audiolingual Method was developed in the United States during World War II to provide military staff with specialized language training (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). This method consists of achieving conversational proficiency in diverse foreign languages. The main features of the Audiolingual Method are as follows:

- Language learning is viewed as habit formation.
- New content and language are introduced through dialogues that learners memorize.
- Structures are taught through intensive drilling.
- Grammar is to be learned inductively by the learners.
- Speaking and listening (including pronunciation) are of utmost importance.

### *Silent Way*

The Silent Way was developed in the 1950s by Caleb Gattegno, an Egyptian educator and psychologist. This method consists of having students use the language with the teacher's silence as a main teaching strategy (Richards & Rogers, 2014). Teachers provide learners with ample opportunities to talk and encourage them to produce as much language as possible. In this method, the teacher's role is to follow a structured syllabus and monitor learners' efforts. The learner's role is to participate actively in the learning process. The main features of the Silent Way are as follows:

- Learners have autonomy to explore and discover (rather than repeat and remember).
- Physical objects and problem-solving activities are used to facilitate learning.
- Instruction is based on Fidel Sound Charts (based on colors) to teach sounds and Cuisenaire Rods (imported from math teaching) to teach grammar and sentence structures.

### *Suggestopedia*

The Suggestopedia Method was developed in the late 1970's by Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychologist. Based on the premise that students learn faster when using the language, this method consists of making students feel relaxed, motivated, and positive towards the new language (Rustipa, 2011). It emerged to help language learners overcome psychological barriers such as anxiety, fear, boredom, and fatigue. Suggestopedia uses music, visuals, dialogs, and relaxation exercises for making the language practical and enjoyable and for supporting the language learning process. The four stages in Suggestopedia are as follows:

- Presentation: Learners become relaxed and assume a positive mind set by hearing music for a calming influence and by doing physical exercises.
- Active Concert: After the teacher presents new L2 features in a lively way, the learners sing songs, play games, or do roleplays.
- Passive Concert: Live music is played to relax and stimulate the brain so that the learners use less effort when acquiring language.
- Practice: The learners speak in an unpremeditated manner, perform in a natural way, and interact without being corrected.

### *Total Physical Response*

Total Physical Response was developed in the 1970s by James Asher to learn language by doing physical activities (Coşar & Orhan, 2019). This method, which represents behavioral language learning theory, consists of students listening to oral input and responding physically. The imperative mood and physical actions form the basis for this method, and these are led by the teacher. The learning process takes place when learners listen, do activities, and watch classmates doing activities (Richards & Rogers, 2014). The main features of Total Physical Response are as follows:

- Students comprehend oral input, represent their comprehension through movements, and do this without feeling pressure.
- Students listen, recognize simple instructions (stand up, sit down), and perform actions.

### *The Natural Approach*

The Natural Approach was developed in the 1970s by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Based on naturalistic principles of second language acquisition, this method focuses on communication. It provides language exposure in the absence of emotional learning impediments. The main features of the Natural Approach are as follows:

- Students communicate in the new language without using their mother tongue.
- Students focus more on input and comprehension than on practice.
- Grammar is not included as a condition during the process of teaching and learning.

### *Community Language Learning*

Community Language Learning was developed in the 1980s by Charles Curran for infusing psychological aspects while students focus on targeted language skills (Nurhasanah, 2015). The teacher is called counselor and, as such, provides advice and assistance. The student is called client and, as such, has a need to be met. Classroom activities stem from this counselor-client relationship (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Anchored in the affective realm, this approach is based on how students feel. The main features of Community Language Learning are as follows:

- Translation: As needed, students can use their L1.
- Groupwork: Interaction is a key element.
- Recording: Students record their L2 conversations.
- Transcription: Students transcribe conversations for extra practice.
- Analysis: Lessons focus on grammar rules and the use of language structures.
- Reflection: Students reflect on their learning experience and describe their observations.
- Listening: Students listen to teachers and classmates.
- Conversation: Free conversation is often related to feelings about the learning process.

### *Communicative Approach*

The Communicative Approach was introduced in the 1980s and still continues to be widely used (Richards & Rogers, 2014). This approach consists of incorporating linguistic features, social meanings, communicative functions, and cultural settings. Situations where language is used are of utmost importance for identifying and creating the teaching scenarios. In these contexts, class activities are designed for students to communicate by focusing on meaning but without focusing on grammar, similar to the process undertaken by young children when acquiring their L1 (Hymes, 1972). As such, the Communicative Approach provides interactive opportunities in real-life situations through pair work, group work, dialogues, and roleplays (Jabeen, 2014). The main features of the Communicative Approach are as follows:

- Students learn the target language by using it.
- Lesson objectives are based on authentic communication activities.
- Fluency has a pivotal role.
- Learning is a creative construction and, thus, entails a trial-and-error process.

### *Task-Based Learning*

Task-Based Learning was developed during the 1980s and 1990s. This method consists of using tasks as the basis to do lesson planning (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). These tasks are activities that represent real meaningful conversations that foster effective learning (Willis, 1996). When students participate in task-based activities (rather than grammar-based activities), they communicate in scenarios that activate a successful learning process. During Task-Based Learning, students become immersed with comprehensible input activities in contexts where they negotiate meaningful conversations through natural communication. The main features of Task-Based Learning are as follows:

- Lessons are focused on process rather than product.
- Communication and meaning are emphasized through purposeful activities.
- Learners interact by becoming engaged in tasks.
- Tasks are based on real-life situations.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

By examining ELT methods and approaches from the 20th century, we are better able to identify today's emerging issues and provide positive responses. Current and future research findings and other pedagogical trends can lead to refining earlier methods and introducing new ones. These initiatives can come from researchers and administrators as well as from teachers in ELT classrooms. Even when such initiatives are driven by political and social demands, the direction for implementing change can be provided by ELT leaders. Over time and across continents, our language teaching methods have been influenced by research findings and pedagogical trends, by innovations and technological advances, and by government and schooling policies (Ali & Elimam, 2020; Soomro & Almalki, 2017).

Undoubtedly, such aspects will continue influencing ELT. Consequently, regardless of the method used at your institution, always try to do the following:

- Learn about teaching/learning theories and make these theories come alive in your classroom so that students feel motivated to learn.
- Conduct a needs analysis on the first day to identify students' interests.
- Identify a major objective for each lesson and share it with students in a way that they can understand. Assess the objective by collecting evidence of student learning.
- Create and implement interactive activities related to real-life situations centered on students (not on grammar) and transition smoothly from one activity to the next.
- Design meaningful assignments for your students, provide feedback by starting with positive aspects, and suggest ways to improve.
- Listen to your students and solicit their suggestions on how to improve your teaching.

In this chapter, you learned about ELT methods and approaches used in the 20th century. You learned that several were in universal favor at specific points in time, others served as alternative approaches, and some emerged towards the end of that century and are still in use today. You also learned that, whether with limited use or widespread use, these methods and approaches contributed to the methodological trends of the 20th century and, across the decades, have continued to influence our ELT profession.

## KEY CONCEPTS

ELT methods and approaches from the 20th century represent several major trends:

- Grammar-Translation Method focuses on grammar by translating isolated sentences.
- Direct Method uses only the target language for instruction.
- Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching focus on sentence patterns and vocabulary by introducing and practicing different situations.
- Audiolingual Method provides language models that learners repeat and memorize until internalizing rules and using them spontaneously.
- Silent Way has teachers remain quiet while learners explore and use language.
- Suggestopedia has learners experiencing positive cognitive and motivational outcomes.
- Total Physical Response is students understanding oral input and responding physically.
- Natural Approach is based on naturalistic principles of second language acquisition.
- Community Language Learning is a humanistic approach representing a counselor-client relationship based on student feelings.
- Communicative Approach focuses on social meaning of communicative functions rather than linguistic aspects.
- Task-Based Learning has real-life scenarios to activate learning processes rather than grammar-based activities.

## Discussing

Based on this overview of 20th century ELT methods and approaches, answer these questions:

1. Under which methods or approaches did you learn a language or were you trained to teach? How might this influence the method or approach that you would like to use as a teacher?
2. What changes in teaching methodologies have you experienced? What do you think caused these changes to take place?
3. If you were to defend just one teaching method, which would it be and why?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you learned about ELT trends in the 20th century, do the following:

1. Observe a language class, identify the teaching method or approach, and describe whether it is effective and why.
2. Based on teaching methods used in the 20th century, select the most ideal one for you to use and explain why.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about 20th century methods and approaches, visit these websites:

- Approaches and methods in language teaching.  
<https://sckool.org/approaches-and-methods-in-language-teaching.html>
- Major trends in 20th century language teaching.  
<https://www.timetoast.com/timelines/major-trends-in-twentieth-century-language-teaching>

## See Also

Insights to ELT methods in the 20th century are also provided by other chapters in this book:

- Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning* by H. Lalwani  
**Chapter 26** *Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning* by A. Roca  
**Chapter 33** *Current Approaches in English Language Teaching* by N. Dantaz  
**Chapter 34** *Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching* by G. Díaz Maggioli

**Chapter 36** *Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners* by I. Giménez and C. Rolón  
**Chapter 38** *A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar* by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin

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Photo by Josh Applegate on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 33

## Current Approaches in English Language Teaching



# Current Approaches in English Language Teaching

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## Abstract

In the history of English language teaching (ELT), the 20th century was prolific in the emergence of new teaching methodologies. This ELT era began with a communicative revolution, which, in turn, led to a crisis regarding the concept of method. This crisis opened the way to a post-method landscape, which generated several ELT approaches used in the 21st century. In this chapter, you will learn how this communicative revolution led to the development of Communicative Language Teaching and how this then continued as the main methodological paradigm in ELT. You will learn about three approaches within this paradigm: Task-Based Learning, Presentation-Practice-Production, and Integrated Skills Instruction. You will also learn how to apply these approaches in your classroom.

*Keywords:* English language teaching approaches, communicative language teaching, presentation-practice-production, task-based learning, integrated skills instruction

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## Introduction

One of your most challenging decisions as a teacher will be to select from among several teaching methodologies. This decision-making process is difficult for both inexperienced and experienced teachers because of the inherent challenge in trying to articulate your practice with a theoretical rationale. This chapter will guide you in meeting this challenge by describing latest approaches in English language teaching (ELT) and explaining when and how such approaches can best be used.

## Background

The second half of the 20th century witnessed a paradigm shift in the teaching of foreign languages. This shift started when Chomsky's (1965) theory of Linguistic Competence was challenged by Hymes' (1971) focus on Communicative Competence. It continued with Wilkins' (1976) Notional Syllabus, which launched the ELT field in a search for functional-oriented instruction. Informed by findings from the emerging field of sociolinguistics, this search led to new ideas about ELT methodology. Littlewood's (1981) seminal Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) contributed to what later became known as the Post Method Era. Rooted in an interactionist theory of language and a socio-constructivist view of language learning, CLT focuses on teaching languages meaningfully, functionally, and authentically. The underlying premise of CLT is that language should be taught for real-life use.

## Major Dimensions

Since its onset in the 1980s, CLT has undergone many adjustments. Originally, CLT was the most communicative approach for teaching a foreign language. It focused on reaching fluency in developing a new language similarly to how native speakers develop their first language. This perspective became known as the strong form of CLT. As postulated by Brumfit (1979),

Fluency as a basis . . . may be closer to the apparent learner syllabus of the natural learner in total immersion situation, in that the naïve learner operates more on an oral basis of fluent and inaccurate language than a careful building up . . . of accurate items according to a descriptive model. (p. 188)

This strong form of CLT starts with communication, focuses on language use, and prioritizes fluency over accuracy. The weak form of CLT is “more or less standard practice . . . (and) stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching” (Howatt, 1984, p. 279). An early model of weak CLT originated with Littlewood (1981), who posited pre-communicative activities where the teacher “isolates specific elements of knowledge or skill which compose communicative ability and provides the learner with opportunities to practice them separately” (Nunan, 1987, p. 85). If a teacher “accepts a ‘weak’ interpretation of communicative language teaching, then one must accept the value of grammatical explanation, error correction, and drill. However, learners also need the opportunity to engage in communicative interaction” (p. 141).

This shift from strong forms of CLT to weak forms of CLT addressed the need to prepare students in their new language at high levels of both fluency and accuracy. Strong forms of CLT

brought new lesson activities that, while increasing natural language use in classrooms, also limited teachers' ability to help students with accuracy. Weak forms of CLT enabled teachers to continue fostering fluency by teaching language functionally while still teaching different language structures. Because of having inspired several other approaches under this same paradigm, the weak forms of CLT have predominated in ELT classrooms worldwide during the early 21st century.

## Pedagogical Applications

This section provides descriptions, examples, and applications of three CLT approaches.

### *Task-Based Learning*

Task-Based Learning (TBL) “constitutes a strong version of CLT” (Ellis, 2003, p. 30). An even stronger manifestation of TBL is Task-Based Language Teaching, which started as The Communicational Teaching Project (Prabhu, 1987). Over time, TBL evolved until generally incorporating Willis's (1996) three-part framework, which includes the following parts:

- *pre-task*, which activates students' schemata and scaffolds them with needed language to implement the task and avoid using L1 during this task;
- *task cycle*, which is divided into planning, doing, and reporting; and
- *language focus*, which includes analysis and practice.

TBL is highly communicative and focuses on tasks to help students learn. Each task must have three characteristics:

- communicative activity,
- unpredictable results, and
- unexpected linguistic features.

In other words, a task is a communicative activity with an unpredictable outcome that is not linguistically oriented. This third aspect (linguistic) is questioned by Ellis (2003), who classified a task as either

- unfocused (matching the above definition of non-linguistic orientation) or
- focused (orienting activities around linguistic forms predicted by teachers as being needed for doing that task).

For example, when comparing two places, students at an intermediate level might use a comparative (or superlative) structure: Buenos Aires is bigger than Asunción. However, lower-level learners might convey the same meaning with a coordinating conjunction and negative verb: Buenos Aires is big, but Asunción isn't.

TBL is not about providing accuracy-driven instruction but rather about developing fluency. When students work on meaning rather than form, they are doing a task that is linguistically unfocused. For example, if they are discussing parental roles in raising children, they might compare, explain, exemplify, agree, disagree, and so on. Because numerous functions interplay when undertaking this task, the language is unpredictable and, therefore, linguistically unfocused. To better understand tasks, Willis (1996) provided the following classification:

- listing–brainstorm words or ideas
- ordering and sorting–classify, sequence, or categorize items
- comparing–find differences or similarities
- solving problems–identify solutions or ideas
- sharing personal information–talk about selves, likes/dislikes, experiences, family
- creating–write, draw, and build to be showcased later

### ***Presentation-Practice-Production***

The 1990s saw the resurgence of an ELT approach from the 1960s, but with a new name. Resurfacing as Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP), this approach is “based on the grammatical and functional view of language” (Baker & Westrup, 2002, p. 23) and, as such, is classified as a weak form of CLT. With its grammatical and functional roots, PPP is effective for teaching a language system (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) from a communicative view of language learning. Whereas proponents for the strong forms of CLT favor TBL, proponents for the weak forms of CLT understand that PPP teaches language more quickly and effectively while still providing opportunities for students to use language freely and communicatively. With TBL, students go through pre-task and whole task stages (planning, doing, reporting) before reaching the language focus stage. In PPP, students do a warm-up and are then introduced to the new language form. This straightforward PPP process introduces new forms to students while their attention is still high (i.e., before they get tired).

Defined as a weak form of CLT, PPP has three stages: presentation, practice, and production. In the first stage (presentation), the teacher teaches the new language (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation). Although such teaching can be overt or covert, new forms are inductively presented and, if possible, through self-discovery. After students understand the meaning, use, and form of the new language to be learned, they are ready for practice.

The second stage (practice) can be divided into controlled practice and semi-controlled practice. Here, learners do classroom activities with linguistic goals and predictable outcomes. Because such activities do not entail free communication, they cannot be classified as tasks per the TBL definition. Controlled practice is when students are guided such as when completing a sentence by using the targeted tense of a verb in parentheses. Semi-controlled practice gives more freedom of production but still guides students regarding targeted language forms such as finishing an incomplete sentence. As a teacher, you can do controlled practice, semi-controlled practice, or both. This choice depends on the complexity of language forms and on time availability. Such practice is fundamental in providing scaffolded opportunities for students to use language and reach an understanding of the new language form. After completing this practice stage, students are ready for free production.

In the third stage (production), learners complete a communicative activity with an unpredictable outcome and with a specific linguistic goal. This usually corresponds to a focused task (Ellis, 2003). Here, students embark on free practice by using the language just studied and any other forms needed for authentic communication.

Although some educators have criticized this revitalized approach called PPP, its renewed popularity has led to reformulations such as Engage-Study-Activate (ESA; Harmer, 2015). The three ESA stages have different names than the three PPP stages but represent similar actions. In the Engage stage, the teacher presents new language. In the Study stage, students practice the new language through controlled or semi-controlled practice. In the Activate stage, students freely produce the new language. When using this ESA approach, teachers are encouraged to

vary the ordering of these three stages to better meet context and learner needs (which, in turn, might resemble TBL). When faced with choosing either PPP or ESA, consider this perspective: “PPP can be extremely useful in a focus-on-forms lesson, especially at lower levels, but is significantly less relevant in a skills lesson, where focus-on-form may occur as a result of something the students hear or read” (Harmer, 2015, p. 68).

### *Integrated Skills Instruction*

The 20th century’s communicative revolution identified shortcomings with the teaching of isolated skills given that all skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) become integrated under natural communicative conditions. When you speak, someone listens. When you read, you might also write or perhaps speak and listen. When you write, you will also be reading your own work. With conscious planning, these skills can be combined into one lesson. Hence, gone are the days with language lessons focused on just a single isolated skill. When based on Integrated Skills Instruction, lessons integrate several skills, allowing students to practice language under more natural conditions.

To effectively teach skills through this integrated approach, teachers use strategies already proven for each skill. This chapter offers notions about which approaches might work well with which skills. For example, when helping students with speaking, consider a TBL approach. When helping students with writing, take a product approach by providing a sample or take a process approach by providing a task with five stages (brainstorming, planning, editing, revising, publishing). When helping students with receptive skills (reading, listening), follow a traditional before/while/after reading sequenced approach (see below). These notions can guide you with implementing Integrated Skills Instruction.

Isolated-skills lessons and integrated-skills lessons both follow sequenced activities but differ in activities needed to use specific skills. In isolated-skills lessons, all activities use one skill (e.g., reading). In integrated-skills lessons, an activity using one skill (e.g., reading) leads to the next activity, which uses another skill (e.g., listening). For example, in a lesson for beginning students about houses, you might have a text about houses in Paraguay and an audio about houses around the world. By using both, you can integrate two skills (reading, listening). When students read a text, this corresponds to the “while” of a reading sequence. When they reflect on what they read, this corresponds to the “after” of a reading sequence. Here, by responding to the teacher’s elicitation questions, students reflect on how Paraguayan houses might differ from houses worldwide and, also, predict whether such houses might have a garage and how it is used. In this after-reading activity, students use information from the text about Paraguayan houses, build their content and linguistic knowledge, predict about houses worldwide, and prepare for the next activity and skill. The reading and elicitation activity triggers students’ interest and their schemata for the next activity, which is listening to an audio about houses worldwide. Hence, the “after” of the first activity (reflecting after having read about Paraguayan houses) serves as the “before” for the next activity (listening to an audio about houses worldwide).

This example shows how both receptive skills (reading and listening) can be integrated in the same lesson. A similar procedure is followed when one skill is receptive (reading or listening) and the other skill is productive (speaking or writing). Like above, students start by reading. While doing so, they think about other aspects related to a house (furniture, rooms, garage) and perhaps brainstorm a list. However, instead of listening to an audio (as in the previous example), they talk with each other, compare ideas, and, if applicable, share their brainstormed lists. By talking with each other, students confirm and expand on what they had read in the text. Once again, this “after” of the first activity serves as the “before” for the next activity. Here, the next

activity is the lesson's main task, that of students individually designing the house of their dreams. With this task-based approach, an integrated-skills lesson can resemble TBL. After students finish designing their dream house, they share their projects with group members. This lesson ends with groups sharing dream houses with the whole class, and the teacher guiding students in identifying similarities and differences.

In this chapter, you learned how the communicative revolution led to CLT. You learned about three ELT approaches (TBL, PPP, Integrated Skills Instruction) commonly used in the early 21st century. You also received suggestions for applying these approaches in your ELT classroom.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about major ELT approaches used in the early 21st century:

- CLT is grounded in an interactionist view of language and a socio-constructivist view of learning.
- CLT has strong and weak forms with differing degrees of fluency and accuracy.
- TBL is a communicative ELT approach that is highly effective.
- PPP is recommended for effectively teaching the language system.
- Integrated Skills Instruction responds to how language takes place in the real world and, as such, is an effective approach to teach all four skills under the CLT paradigm.

## Discussing

Develop meaningful answers to these questions about ELT approaches:

1. Which challenges do you think CLT might have? Why?
2. Why do you think students might resort to using L1 when faced with a task?
3. What motivational challenges could exist with PPP? Why?
4. For the successful integration of skills, how important is it to elicit responses from students?

## TAKING ACTION

Practice what you have learned about ELT approaches:

1. Examine a current ELT textbook. Review its sections about skills, grammar, and vocabulary. Identify which approach the book favors for the teaching of skills, language, and communication.
2. Think about a 45-minute lesson that you would like to teach. Plan this lesson for integrating all four skills. Base your response on the first example in the chapter section named Integrated Skills Instruction, which integrated listening

and reading. How would you also integrate speaking and writing into this same lesson?

EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about major ELT approaches, watch the following videos:

- Communicative Language Teaching: 40 years on.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf4lfEbxF4s&t=1739s>
- Communicative Language Teaching: Jeremy Harmer and Scott Thornbury.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoUx036IN9Q&t=1494s>
- What's the latest teaching method? Scott Thornbury.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nue8AN9XsuY>

See Also

Insights to teaching methods are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

- Chapter 3** *The Diversity of English Classes* by R. Díaz
- Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning* by H. Lalwani
- Chapter 26** *Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Instruction* by A. Roca
- Chapter 32** *Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century* by C. Onatra and S. Palencia
- Chapter 34** *Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching* by G. Díaz Maggioli
- Chapter 36** *Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners* by I. Giménez and C. Rolón
- Chapter 37** *Engage-Study-Activate With Adult Learners* by C. Rolón and I. Giménez
- Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

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# CHAPTER 34

## Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching

# Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching

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## Abstract

This chapter explores what can be distinguished as “alternative” approaches to English language teaching. It starts by clarifying what is meant by “alternative” in terms of how language, learning, and teaching are understood. Next, it presents a view of language as social semiotic to sustain the emphases made by these alternative approaches, namely that language learning is a process of negotiation of meaning during which language emerges through interaction among interested parties. In terms of learning, these approaches emphasize the fact that, to learn a language, learners need to be motivated for and engaged in using the language actively. Lastly, from the point of view of teaching, these approaches view the teacher as a mediator of learning activity, in line with a sociocultural view of learning. In this chapter, you will learn about two alternative approaches within this sociocultural perspective.

*Keywords:* alternative teaching approaches, Dogme, Text-Based Teaching, teacher as mediator, negotiation of meaning, social semiotic, learner motivation, learner interaction

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## Introduction

An inherent challenge exists when writing a chapter with “alternative” in its title. For some readers, this word might invoke the expectation of innovative issues. However, I am using a different meaning of the word “alternative.” Here, I define alternative approaches not just as something new or different but also as something else. This something else could be a replacement, complement, or back-up to current ways of teaching. When viewing alternative approaches to English language teaching (ELT), we examine possible configurations of teaching/learning activities that can replace or substitute current practices for the purpose of better serving language learners. I do not use “methods” to identify these configurations, as I consider this term as going against the ideas in this chapter, for reasons to be made evident further on. However, first we should explore why these alternative approaches make sense in ELT and are thus becoming increasingly more popular.

## Background

To understand why this chapter classifies two approaches as alternative, we need to briefly survey second language acquisition (SLA) theories during the 20th century. At that time, SLA research took a cognitive orientation and focused on the innate ability of humans to develop language as a capacity of the mind. With the incorporation of other perspectives (Larsen-Freeman, 2011, 2018; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Meddings & Thornbury, 2009), we now realize that language learning/acquisition is a complex process that cannot be described by referring solely to processes in a person’s mind. Rather, all humans are part of a social system that shapes participants and is also shaped by them. Hence, deterministic ideas (e.g., A natural order exists for language acquisition.) were supplemented by a realization that the social process of language learning/acquisition can best be explained through a complexity lens.

Larsen-Freeman (2011) explained how “complexity theory seeks to explain complex, dynamic, open, adaptive, self-organizing, non-linear systems . . . [and] sees complex behavior as arising from interactions among many components” (p. 52). She justified this by viewing the learners’ language resources as “always dynamic ensembles, expanding and contracting with time, place, and circumstance” (p. 58). She saw second language development not as a sequential process determined by innate endowments but as a complex, dynamic process where the personal and social are always in interplay. In this context, language is not a pre-determined object that one appropriates, but a psychological and social tool that one uses to gain progressively higher levels of participation in social activity (Díaz Maggioli, 2023).

## Major Dimensions

With this shift to complexity and SLA’s sociocultural aspects (Johnson & Golombek, 2016), related theories of language and teaching emerged. These led to the alternative approaches discussed in this chapter, which are from the fields of Applied Linguistics and Language Pedagogy.

### *Contributions From Applied Linguistics*

Our views of language as an object of teaching and learning determine how we teach. For example, if we view language as a “system of systems,” we will teach by explicitly describing

constituent elements of each system so that students can effectively combine these elements. However, if we view language as a “system for communication,” we will teach communicative functions so that students can effectively perform these functions. During most of its history, Communicative Language Teaching has oscillated between these views. Halliday (1978) further influenced such views by explaining language as social semiotic. He claimed that “language arises in the life of the individual through an ongoing exchange of meaning with significant others” (p. 1). The key word in Halliday’s definition is arises, which derives from a systemic-functional model of language. This view is summarized as follows:

- Language is a resource for making meaning.
- The resource of language consists of a set of interrelated systems.
- Language users draw from this resource every time they use language.
- Language users create texts to make meaning.
- Texts are shaped by the social context in which they are used.
- The social context is shaped by people using language. (Feez, 2002, p. 6)

In this view, language has three layers that occur simultaneously. The first layer is meaning or discourse semantics that entails three main functions of language:

- ideational– representing the world and our experiences,
- interpersonal– building relationships and negotiating meanings, and
- textual– organizing the meanings through oral or written texts.

The second layer deals with lexicogrammar, which gives our language “its creative power and its complexity” (Feez, 2002, p. 7). Lastly, the third layer is expression, which consists of phonology or orthography.

This view of language implies that the object of teaching is not the language itself but rather the emerging results of language use. Each time we use language, we create an oral or written text being “any stretch of language which is held together cohesively through meaning” (Feez, 2002, p. 4). When language is viewed as text, teachers and students can

- concentrate on the functions of these communication acts,
- engage in areas of mutual interest, and
- negotiate meanings with each other and with society.

### ***Contributions From Language Pedagogy***

During the 20th century, the field of language pedagogy relied heavily on the notion of “method.” However, by the onset of the 21st century, this notion had outlived its purpose. Kumaravadivelu (2006) explained that it makes no sense to keep using the term “method” when many teachers, even those who say they follow a particular method, do not apply the principles or practices of just one specific method. Likewise, teachers who claim not to follow any method actually end up using a carefully crafted sequence of idiosyncratic activities that may belong to various methods. Hence, Kumaravadivelu advocated for pedagogical decision-making based on three parameters:

- Particularity—knowing students and context. Who are my students? What are their goals? Which is my teaching context?
- Practicality—building practical, situated theory. Will this approach work in my context?
- Possibility—being methodologically brave and looking for alternatives. How can I best teach them?

These three parameters seem congruent with a view of SLA as a dynamic and complex process. In this view, language is seen as a resource for engaging in communication rather than as content for being conveyed. These ideas indicate that we should teach language embedded within the wider social, cultural, and political context where students live and learn. Hence, it makes sense to view language as a functional, meaning-making tool arising from the learners' context. In this view, language learning becomes the product of a collaborative process between teachers and learners where these learners learn the language while also learning about the language and through the language.

## Pedagogical Applications

Based on the above ideas, we explore two alternative approaches: Dogme ELT (Thornbury, 2017) and Text-Based Teaching (Feez, 1998).

### *Dogme*

Dogme can be defined as “a teaching movement set up by a group of language teachers who challenge what they consider to be an over-reliance on materials and technical wizardry in current language teaching” (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 6). Dogme lessons are grounded in the here-and-now. This requires a teacher to constantly focus on learners and teach content that is of greatest relevance to them. To meet this goal, Dogme is characterized by several principles:

- Learning is a social and dialogic process, where knowledge is co-constructed rather than transmitted or imported from teacher/coursebook to learner.
- Learning can be mediated through talk, especially talk that is shaped and supported (i.e., scaffolded) by the teacher.
- Materials-mediated teaching is a “scenic” route to learning, but the direct route is located in the interactivity between teacher and learners, and between the learners themselves.
- The content most likely to engage learners and to trigger learning processes is that which is already there (i.e., supplied by the “people in the room”).
- Rather than being acquired, language (including grammar) emerges; it is an organic process that occurs given the right conditions.
- The teacher's primary function is to optimize language learning affordances, for example, by directing attention to features of the emergent language.
- Providing space for the learner's voice means accepting that the learner's beliefs, knowledge, experiences, concerns, and desires are valid content in the language classroom. (Thornbury, 2017, p. 81)

When designing Dogme-based lessons, teachers focus on the learners and what they bring to the teaching-learning encounter. To meet this goal, Díaz Maggioli and Painter-Farrell (2016) outlined steps of a possible Dogme lesson:

1. The teacher (T) starts the lesson by interacting with students (Ss). T can choose to talk about a relevant topic, ask a question, show an object, or allow an ongoing discussion/topic to continue among students.
2. If Ss have something interesting to share, T encourages them to ask questions and converse. If Ss do not elaborate, T provides further input (photos, story, etc.). Ss brainstorm notes, prepare something to say, and exchange ideas in pairs/groups.
3. T checks errors to correct and opportunities to extend language expression. T posts language on board and discusses corrections with Ss.
4. T responds to Ss' questions about language focus/topic.
5. T presents a task to give Ss the opportunity to actively use the language that has emerged. T/Ss may negotiate how to do the task. Ss do task, and T helps as needed.
6. Ss or T may choose to repeat stage (4) and the task loop (5) with another task or repeat the same task with a different focus.
7. T introduces oral or written text on the topic and uses it to draw Ss' attention to how the language they learned is used in the text.
8. T ends lesson by engaging Ss in reflecting on what has happened and what was learned.
9. T and Ss discuss next steps. T invites Ss to bring ideas, objects, photos, and so on for the next lesson. (p. 361)

### ***Text-Based Teaching***

Text-based Teaching (also called genre pedagogy) is an approach to language learning that incorporates ideas and principles presented earlier in this chapter. These ideas and principles are infused within an instructional framework called The Teaching and Learning Cycle (Feez, 2002). Teachers introduce their learners to authentic oral and written texts of different genres (instead of using leveled textbooks). By using these authentic texts, teachers and learners engage in a cycle with different processes for co-constructing and negotiating meaning. The five stages of this cycle have been represented as follows:

- Building the context
- Modeling and deconstructing the text
- Joint construction of the text
- Independent construction of the text
- Linking related texts (Mumba & Mkandawire, 2019, p. 132)

When following this cycle, teachers focus their text-based lessons on an oral or written text and engage students in the cyclical co-construction of meaning. Again, Díaz Maggioli and Painter-Farrell (2016) offered an example of how to put this alternative approach into action by outlining a possible lesson plan:

1. Pre-class preparation: T chooses a text (written or oral) that represents a genre students need to be familiar with.
2. T opens lesson by focusing on the topic of the text and asking students what they know about it. In doing so, T establishes the purposes of the text, identifies people involved in the interaction, and explains why they are communicating in this way (either orally or in writing).
3. T involves students in activities aimed at deconstructing the text. Ss work in pairs/groups analyzing the text structure and focusing on characteristics of the genre.
4. If necessary, T presents and practices new language that Ss will need in order to fully understand the text and be able to express themselves in this genre.

5. T provides similar texts in the same genre and about the same topic (e.g., a magazine article and newspaper clipping on the same piece of news) and involves students in tasks aimed at manipulating the genre features.
6. T engages Ss in collaboratively writing a new text. T invites suggestions from students and writes the co-constructed text on the board, using students' ideas and input.
7. Ss compare their co-constructed text with the sample text introduced in (3) and see similarities and differences in these texts. T scaffolds this by providing language support as needed and by posing questions that direct Ss to key genre features.
8. Ss independently create their own texts within the genre using the information provided so far. They share their text with peers and self-assess their expression. T shares a rubric detailing the text features for Ss to self- and peer-assess.
9. T introduces a new text for students to compare to their own. T asks Ss to either rewrite or retell their texts by changing one feature. For homework, Ss find and bring to class similar texts.
10. Ss hand in their text to the T who responds by using the same rubric that Ss received in (8) to grade it. (p. 352)

This chapter has described two alternative approaches to ELT: Dogme and Text-Based Teaching. Both approaches capture the complex, chaotic, and dynamic nature of language development as social semiotic. As such, both capitalize on language learners and their knowledge, skills, and dispositions as the starting point for teaching and learning.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Alternative approaches to ELT emphasize the following principles:

- Language learning is a social process.
- Language emerges from interaction.
- Learners need exposure to input of authentic language in use. They also need motivation and opportunities to use that input.
- The most valuable resource is the students and their needs, motivations, and efforts to learn the language.
- The teacher's most important job is to organize for learning to happen.
- Teaching is the process of progressively releasing responsibility for communication from the teacher to the students.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about alternative approaches to ELT, answer these questions:

1. When you were a language learner, what methods/approaches did your teachers use?
2. If you are already teaching, do you see any potential for using these two alternative approaches in your local context?
3. What would you find easy (and difficult) about implementing these approaches?
4. What might be some advantages of implementing these approaches in your context?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice using what you have learned in this chapter, do the following:

1. Form a reading club with peers. Meet regularly to read and discuss articles, blog posts, videos, or other media about these alternative approaches.
2. Take a lesson plan that you have already taught and modify it so that it adheres to the principles and procedures of one of the approaches described in this chapter. Show it to a colleague, cooperating teacher, or methods teacher and ask for their feedback.
3. Get together with colleagues who teach in a similar context. Plan a lesson implementing one of the approaches in this chapter. Teach the lesson, and then meet again with colleagues to discuss your impressions.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge of alternative ELT approaches, visit the following websites:

- A blog on Dogme's history and main characteristics.  
<https://www.whatiselt.com/single-post/2018/10/09/what-is-dogme-elt>
- Scott Thornbury's personal webpage with resources on Dogme.  
<http://www.scottthornbury.com/>
- Teaching unplugged. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/knowning-subject/articles/teaching-unplugged>
- Text-based language teaching that can engage students.  
<https://blog.sanako.com/can-a-text-based-language-teaching-approach-engage-your-students>

## See Also

Various ELT methods and approaches have been addressed in other chapters of this book:

**Chapter 12** *Explicit and Implicit Learning in Second Language Acquisition* by C. Fernández

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 28** *Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature* by S. Ruffinelli and C. Ortiz

**Chapter 32** *Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century* by C. Onatra and S. Palencia

**Chapter 33** *Current Approaches in English Language Teaching* by N. Dantaz

**Chapter 36** *Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners* by I. Giménez and C. Rolón

**Chapter 38** *A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar* by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin



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Photo by bruce mars on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 35

## Developing Critical Thinking Through Inquiry-Based Learning

# Developing Critical Thinking Through Inquiry-Based Learning

Valentina Canese

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## Abstract

Critical thinking occupies an important role in the teaching and learning of languages. Traditionally, language teaching was focused more on having students learn to use communication skills than on having students learn to think critically. However, because language is a fundamental instrument of thought within a given culture, teachers and researchers began seeing the need to teach students how to think critically in a target language and, also, to think critically about this language. In this chapter, you will learn about inquiry as a tool for helping students develop critical thinking skills while in their classroom setting. You will also learn strategies for incorporating inquiry into your lessons to help your students think critically about the language they are learning and, by doing so, to learn this language more effectively.

*Keywords:* critical thinking, inquiry-based learning, knowledge, skills, dispositions, language teaching

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## Introduction

Our world's evolving reality is characterized by constant change and rapid advances in technology. This reality has accelerated ongoing discussions about developing a new learning model for the 21st century (Scott, 2015), a model that also serves to enhance the learning of languages and the development of critical thinking. These ongoing discussions have centered on four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together (Delors, 1996). These pillars of learning are essential tenets for reshaping education and developing well-rounded individuals capable of understanding the world, participating in the global economy, reaching their fullest potential, and fostering peace and harmony.

These four pillars are supported by skills in critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—major elements in the Framework for 21st Century Learning (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2019). Among such skills, critical thinking has been prioritized by employers as the most important for the workforce. With critical thinking being “fundamental to twenty-first century learning” (Scott, 2015, p. 4), teachers need help to ensure that their students can think critically, which, in turn, will better prepare them for the workforce. Yet, despite the industries wanting “more critical thinking,” universities—though espousing the value of critical thinking—often do not adequately prepare students with such skills (Davies & Barnett, 2015).

Languages are fundamental tools of thinking and, as such, of critical thinking. The need to include critical thinking in language classrooms was identified as the field of language teaching began shifting away from traditional approaches that focused mainly on communicative skills. This shift allowed for the development of critical thinking to assume a more prominent role in our language classrooms. Yet, as English teachers, we need to reflect and inquire not only on our teaching practices but, also, on how our practices are situated within a socio-political context (Pennycook, 2004). By doing so, we can better guide our students with inquiry-based learning, which, in turn, will support the development of their critical thinking skills. This chapter presents an overview of how to foster critical thinking through inquiry-based learning.

## Background

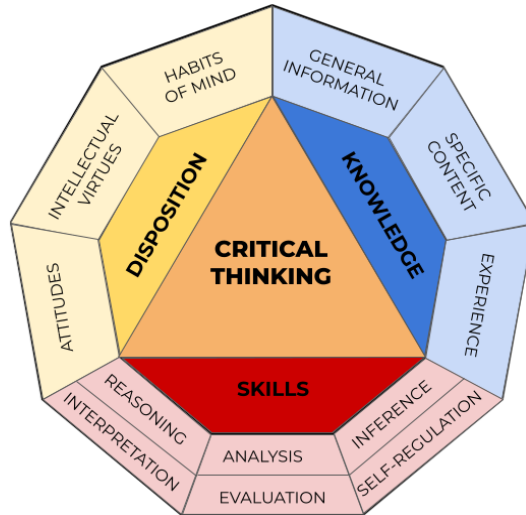
As the 20th century entered its final decade, critical thinking was seen as “the process of purposeful, self-regulatory judgment,” and, also, as the reasoning that occurs when considering “evidence, context, conceptualizations, methods, and criteria” (Facione, 1990, p. 3). This process included disposition and attitude as well as cognitive concepts such as argumentation and reflective judging. The quest to define critical thinking evolved over the next three decades and gave rise to differing perspectives.

### *Perspectives of Critical Thinking*

Different perspectives of critical thinking were proposed by Davies and Barnett (2015) and by Thomas and Lock (2015). To help you better understand differences and similarities in these perspectives, I have displayed aspects from each perspective on a single graphic. This combined graphic is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Critical Thinking Dimensions.*



*Note.* Compiled from *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Thinking in Higher Education* by M. Davies & R. Barnett (Eds.), 2015, Palgrave Macmillan; and from "Teaching Critical Thinking: An Operational Framework" by K. Thomas & B. Lok, 2015, in M. Davies & R. Barnett (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of critical thinking in higher education* (pp. 93-105). Palgrave Macmillan.  
<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9781137378057>

In Figure 1, critical thinking is positioned in the center of a triangle where its three sides represent three dimensions: skills, knowledge, dispositions. Each dimension includes the qualities that appear in the outer ring as well as other qualities such as those listed here:

- *Skills*—reasoning, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, and self-regulation as well as thinking reflectively, solving problems, and thinking metacognitively to formulate questions, generate ideas, cooperate with solutions, avoid fallacies, and manage biases
- *Knowledge*—general information, specific content, and experience as well as being able to assess and apply knowledge to different situations
- *Disposition*—attitudes, intellectual virtues, and habits of mind as well as displaying consistent motivation and being inquisitive, open minded, judicious, and truth-seeking

These dimensions of critical thinking can overlap each other. For example, "dispositions plus skills" includes attitudes and habits needed to develop the analytic abilities of critical thinking. Similarly, these dimensions can be combined with other attributes of critical thinking, such as judgment (Davies & Barnett, 2015). Here, "skills and judgment" include the cognitive abilities of critical thinking that involve interpretation, analysis, inference, explanation, evaluation, metacognition, and self-regulation.

### *Core Critical Thinking Skills*

Among a wide array of critical thinking skills, Facione (1990) identified and defined the following as core critical thinking skills:

- *Interpretation*—"to comprehend and express the meaning or significance of a wide variety of experiences, situations, data, events, judgments, conventions, beliefs, rules, procedures, or criteria" (p. 13)
- *Analysis*—"to identify intended and actual inferential relationships among statements, questions, concepts, descriptions, or other forms of representation for expressing belief, judgment, experiences, reasons, information, or opinions" (p. 14)
- *Evaluation*—"to assess credibility of statements or other representations which are accounts or descriptions of a person's perception, experience, situation, judgment, belief, or opinion; and to assess logical strength of the actual or intended inferential relationships among statements, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation" (p. 15)
- *Inference*—"to identify and secure elements needed to draw reasonable conclusions; to form conjectures and hypotheses; to consider relevant information; and to deduce the consequences flowing from data, statements, principles, evidence, judgments, beliefs, opinions, concepts, descriptions, questions, or other forms of representation" (p. 16)
- *Explanation*—"to state the results of one's reasoning; to justify that reasoning in terms of evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological and contextual considerations upon which one's results were based; and to present one's reasoning in the form of cogent arguments" (p. 18)
- *Self-Regulation*—"self-consciously to monitor one's cognitive activities, the elements used in those activities, and the results deduced, particularly by applying skills in analysis and evaluation to one's own inferential judgments with a view toward questioning, confirming, validating, or correcting one's reasoning or one's results" (p. 19)

These core critical thinking skills are grounded in the concept of criticality, which involves thinking as well as being and acting (Davies & Barnett, 2015). From this perspective, critical thinking can be learned and practiced. In fact, a willingness to inquire and think critically may be considered a cardinal virtue of critical thinking. To guide your language learners with thinking critically, consider incorporating several inquiry-based strategies in your classroom such as debating, questioning, journaling, argument mapping, proposition testing, metacognitive evaluation, problem-based learning, and inquiry-based learning.

## Major Dimensions

The development of critical thinking can be supported by the revised Bloom's taxonomy and, also, by the implementation of inquiry-based learning in the classroom.

### *Revised Bloom's Taxonomy for Critical Thinking*

In the mid-20th century, categories of thinking were hierarchically placed within what came to be known as Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). Several decades later, this taxonomy was revised with the goal of more dynamically describing its classifications (Anderson et al., 2001). Verbs and gerunds were used to label categories and subcategories (rather than the nouns of the

original taxonomy). These “action words” describe the cognitive processes that are used by thinkers when working with knowledge.

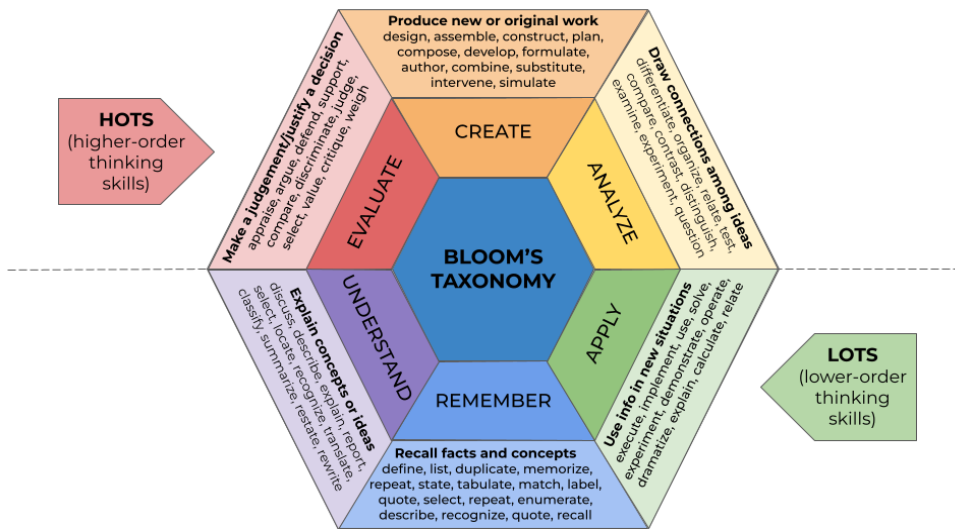
To help you better understand the relationship between these cognitive processes (i.e., thinking skills) and the categories in Bloom’s Taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001; Bloom, 1956) and, also, to offset the hierarchical relationship implied by this taxonomy’s pyramid, I have developed a hexagon. The six-sided shape of this hexagon implies the interconnectedness of these six categories and, also, their never-ending all-encompassing relationship. This hexagon also serves to align these categories with the following thinking skills:

- *lower-order thinking skills* (LOTS): remembering, understanding, and applying; and,
- *higher-order thinking skills* (HOTS): analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

Figure 2 provides my hexagonal representation of Bloom’s revised taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001) and illustrates how the categories from this taxonomy align with LOTS and HOTS.

Figure 2

*Revised Bloom’s Taxonomy Aligned With Action Verbs and Thinking Skills*



*Note.* Compiled from *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* by Anderson et al., 2001, Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

Figure 2 displays the cognitive processes of understanding, remembering, applying, analyzing, creating, and evaluating, which come from the revised Bloom’s taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001). These processes represent cognition, which is based on four types of knowledge:

- factual knowledge—terminology, specific details, elements



- *conceptual knowledge*—classifications, categories, principles, generalizations, theories, models, structures
- *procedural knowledge*—subject-specific skills and algorithms, subject-specific techniques and methods, criteria for determining when to use appropriate procedures
- *metacognitive knowledge*—strategic knowledge, knowledge about cognitive tasks, including appropriate contextual and conditional knowledge, and self-knowledge

The revised Bloom’s Taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001) includes a simplified list of action verbs that can be used by teachers and learners to do critical thinking when planning and executing their inquiry projects. This revised taxonomy also provides the following guidelines:

- setting objectives for students to comprehend the purpose of the educational exchange;
- organizing objectives to clarify the intended goals, which benefits both you and your students; and
- using objectives to help with effectively planning and delivering instruction, designing valid assessment tasks and strategies, and ensuring alignment between instruction and assessment.

### *Inquiry-Based Learning for Critical Thinking*

Inquiry-based learning is an educational approach that fosters critical thinking where “students follow methods and practices similar to those of professional scientists in order to construct knowledge” (Pedaste et al., 2015, p. 48). This practice promotes learning by actively engaging students in solving real-world problems through activities known to be effective for language teaching. Such real-world problems foster the development of critical thinking by actively involving language learners as problem solvers in inquiry-based situations that mirror challenges they might face outside of the classroom. When English learners participate in such inquiry-based activities, this can have a significant impact on increasing their language development and their critical thinking ability (Ghaemi & Mirsaeed, 2017).

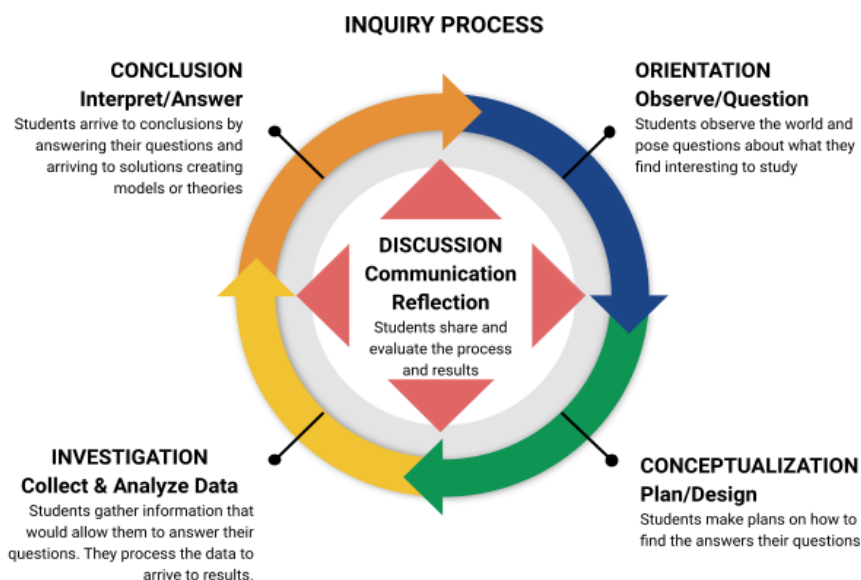
Inquiry-based learning promotes a problem-solving mindset, which, in turn, encourages students to approach problems and challenges by focusing on finding solutions. It requires students to analyze information, evaluate different perspectives, and generate creative ideas. By doing so, this problem-solving mindset creates a rich environment for students to actively engage in critical thinking. This environment supports inquiry-based learning among students by

- fostering their active engagement,
- developing their questioning skills,
- promoting their evaluation of information, and
- fostering their reflection.

In this process of inquiry-based learning, Pedaste et al. (2015) identified five phases: orientation, conceptualization, investigation, conclusion, and discussion. To help you understand inquiry-based learning, I designed the simplified graphic shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

*Phases in the Inquiry Process*



*Note.* Compiled from “Phases of Inquiry-Based Learning: Definitions and the Inquiry Cycle” by Pedaste et al., 2015, *Educational Research Review*, 14, 47-61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2015.02.003>

In Figure 3, the inquiry process shows how all five phases include sub-phases:

- Orientation—initiating inquiry-based learning process
- Conceptualization—questioning and then generating a hypothesis
- Investigation—exploring, experimenting, and then leading to data interpretation
- Conclusion—interpreting and answering
- Discussion—reflecting, communicating, processing results, and sharing

The final phase—discussion—connects to each of the earlier phases. In other words, discussion is potentially present at any time during this entire process. When discussion occurs during the inquiry-based learning process, it is called discussion-in-action. However, when discussion occurs after the completion of inquiry-based learning (e.g., by looking back), it is called discussion-on-action.

Based on this inquiry process, a participatory action research study was conducted in Paraguay. This study surveyed university faculty who teach in undergraduate degree programs that prepare pre-service teachers of English and other languages (Canese, 2020). It focused “on the need to emphasize the development of critical thinking skills in the teaching of foreign language in higher education in order to train professionals and teachers capable of developing these skills in their students” (p. 51). Findings revealed that these university instructors evaluated their own critical thinking skills in a mostly positive way. However, their self-perceptions did not always

relate to their practices for promoting critical thinking among students. As a follow-up, activities to promote critical thinking skills were planned and implemented.

## Pedagogical Applications

To foster critical thinking in your students, consider using the inquiry-based learning model in Figure 3 (Pedaste et al., 2015). This five-phase model can guide you with planning and implementing inquiry-based activities. Sample activities for each phase are provided here.

### *Orientation Phase*

Provide guidelines to students on how to start their inquiry-based learning activity. Students observe the world and pose questions about what they find interesting or wish to learn more about. The following activities support the orientation phase.

- Question walls promote an inquisitive mindset by giving students an inviting space in the classroom to ask questions. Here, they write questions about any topic, not just topics being studied in class.
- K-W-L charts activate students' prior knowledge through a known activity. Here, students write down what they already know about a topic, what they wonder about it before doing the project, and then what they learned after finishing the project.

### *Conceptualization Phase*

Help students make plans on how to find answers to questions posed or for problems that need to be resolved. The following activities support the conceptualization phase.

- Graphic organizers help students make sense of what they already know and what they need to do for finding answers to their questions. Graphic organizers can be used throughout the process but are especially useful in this phase.
- Collaborative productivity applications (e.g., Google Drive, One Drive) are used by students to share plans for a project. Students often plan such projects by using digital tools such as Docs, Calendar, and Jamboard.

### *Investigation Phase*

Guide students in gathering information to answer their questions. Later, they process and analyze data to arrive at results, which may or may not answer their questions. The following activities support the investigation phase.

- Structured note-taking strategies are used by students to take notes during data collection. One strategy involves writing three main ideas, two key words, and one question or connection. Another strategy is a T-chart for recording observations on one side and comments on the other.
- Online Forms help students quickly collect data in an engaging way that is related to their questions about the inquiry topic. These forms offer the advantage of generating a data sheet to help with analysis.

***Conclusion Phase***

Support students with interpreting their results in search of answers to their questions and solutions to their problems. Based on their findings, students create models or theories. The following activities support the conclusion phase.

- Storytelling and narratives can be used throughout the process. However, these strategies are especially useful in this phase for students to interpret data and make sense of solutions provided through earlier phases.
- Presentation applications with templates and tools are exceptionally helpful. These tools serve as a model for students on how to make sense of their results and, also, how to share their results in the future.

***Discussion Phase***

Encourage students to discuss throughout this inquiry process but especially during this final phase. Discussion involves teachers and students not only engaging but also sharing and evaluating process and results. The following activities support the discussion phase.

- Questioning strategies foster inquiry for students. By responding to these questions, students critically examine the process and the results of their inquiry project.
- Online sharing platforms provide a space for students to share. When using these platforms, students reflect on their process and results.

In this chapter, you learned about inquiry as a teaching tool to help language learners develop critical thinking skills. You learned strategies to design inquiry-based lessons for reflecting on problems and finding solutions to help learners think critically about the target language and, also, learn this language more effectively. By doing so, you can provide your learners with an inquiry-based learning community in which they work together to become lifelong learners.

**KEY CONCEPTS**

Here are some key concepts about developing critical thinking through inquiry-based learning:

- Critical thinking is the process of purposeful, self-regulatory judgment. This process involves reasoning based on evidence, context, conceptualizations, methods, and criteria.
- Critical thinking supports learning in the 21st century, which must respond to the reality of constant change accelerated by rapid technological advancements.
- Critical thinking facilitates language learning. Because language is a fundamental instrument of thought, language learners need to know how to think critically in and about the language.
- Critical thinking includes aspects that can be classified as cognitive (e.g., argumentation, reflective judging) as well as disposition and attitude.
- Inquiry-based learning provides a rich environment for students to actively engage in critical thinking by fostering active engagement, developing questioning skills, promoting information evaluation, and fostering reflection.
- This inquiry-based learning process involves five phases: orientation, conceptualization, investigation, conclusion, and discussion.

- A useful framework for inquiry-based learning is Bloom’s revised taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001), which includes lower-order thinking skills (remembering, understanding, applying) and higher-order thinking skills (analyzing, evaluating, creating).

## Discussing

With respect to critical thinking and inquiry-based learning, answer these questions:

1. Given the accelerating development of technology in all aspects of life, what skills do you think are most important for learners to acquire through education?
2. Considering the critical thinking frameworks and models presented in this chapter, how do you think they can be applied to planning and delivering lessons that are highly engaging?
3. What aspects of inquiry-based learning do you think can help learners the most with the development of critical thinking skills?
4. How can you apply inquiry-based learning in a language classroom considering the students’ ages and their different levels of language proficiency?

## TAKING ACTION

Based on what you know about critical thinking and inquiry-based learning, do the following:

1. Take a lesson plan or textbook unit and identify how critical thinking can be incorporated into the different learning moments or activities.
2. Take any topic of your interest and plan an inquiry-based learning lesson contemplating the incorporation of critical thinking in each of the steps.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand on critical thinking and inquiry-based learning, visit these websites:

- Bloom's Taxonomy. <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>
- Can students inquire in a foreign language? <https://inquiryblog.wordpress.com/2011/12/07/can-students-inquire-in-a-foreign-language/>
- Critical thinking skills and inquiry. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/critical-thinking-inquiry/>
- Education reimagined: Partnership for learning. <https://education-reimagined.org/resources/partnership-for-21st-century-learning/>
- Inquiry and the research process. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/inquiry-and-research-process>
- Inquiry-based English classrooms. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/inquiry-based-learning-english-classrooms/>
- Phases of inquiry-based learning. <https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/4-phases-inquiry-based-learning-guide-teachers/>
- Power and promise of 21st century learning. <https://www.battelleforkids.org/about-us>
- Questions to guide inquiry-based learning. <https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/6-questions-students-can-use-guide-inquiry-based-learning/>
- Workshop on inquiry-based learning. <https://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/inquiry/index.html>

## See Also

Aspects related to critical thinking and inquiry-based learning are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 14** *Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning* by K. Sandi

**Chapter 34** *Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching* by G. Díaz Maggioli

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# CHAPTER 36

## Task-Based Approach with Adult Learners

# Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners

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## Abstract

For adults to learn second languages (L2) more effectively, the classroom environment needs to reflect real world interactions. By participating in such interactions, adult learners are better able to remember new language forms given that “interaction is the basis of L2 learning” (Brown & Lee, 2015). If adults feel that what they are being asked to learn is not useful, their motivation decreases. A task-based approach to teaching offers a solution for this dilemma by focusing on the need for communication that arises from the learners themselves. A task-based approach replicates life-like interactions and provides communication opportunities. These opportunities guide adult learners into noticing what is missing to complete a given task. By consciously filling this gap, they create their own system of understanding and then proceed to the next communication challenge. In this chapter, you will learn about implementing task-based instruction with adult learners. You will also learn several strategies to use when teaching your own classes.

*Keywords:* task-based teaching, task-based learning, adult language learners, teaching adults, language interaction, learning opportunities

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## Introduction

Adult learners often have high expectations of what they want to learn in their English classes and how they want to go about learning. Whether or not adults express their expectations, they often base their learning goals on what motivates them for wanting to learn a second language (L2). Gardner (2005) studied motivation variables among adult learners and identified instrumentality (learning a language for practical reasons) as playing an important role in language motivation and achievement. In other words, adult learners expect to clearly see usefulness and practicality in what they are learning. If not, they might perceive class as a waste of their time, which can negatively affect the learning process and, in turn, hinder their progress with learning a new language.

A feasible solution for motivating adult learners in the language classroom is the task-based learning-teaching (TBLT) approach. Having originally emerged as an option in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), TBLT became a stand-alone approach that focuses on providing students with a goal to be achieved (Moore, 2018). Though its definitions can vary, task is generally defined as “learning by doing” (p. 2). Put simply: “CLT addresses the question why? TBLT answers the question how?” (Nunan, 2014, p. 458). This chapter explores the major dimensions of TBLT and examines practical applications that you can use when teaching adult learners.

## Background

TBLT originated in the late 1970s as a strong approach within CLT, which was a movement that sought alternatives to traditional teacher-centered approaches. As a strong CLT approach, TBLT is implemented with syllabi that are structured around tasks and task completion and with instruction based on cognitive processes and sociocultural theory (Moore, 2018). Cognitive processes occur during student participation in classroom interactions that resemble authentic, real-world situations. Teachers make decisions for their classes by choosing, planning, adapting, and implementing interactive tasks. Sociocultural theory draws on Vygotsky’s views (1978) with interaction at the core of successful task implementation. When interacting with peers, students co-construct their knowledge, which, in turn, creates learning. This happens when students interact in scenarios to enable language acquisition. These scenarios can be created by the teacher or co-created collaboratively by the teacher and students.

## Major Dimensions

To prepare for implementing TBLT in your English classes for adult learners, first become knowledgeable about the following:

### *Classification and Definition of Tasks*

Tasks are differentiated from other types of classroom activities and are further classified as pedagogical tasks and target tasks (Brown & Lee, 2015). Pedagogical tasks provide students with real-life simulations to practice language in preparation for using this same language during real-life encounters. Pedagogical tasks help students be ready for the moment they need to perform target tasks, which are the real communicative actions facing them outside of class. For example, students can roleplay “going shopping” in class where one student is a store clerk and the other

a customer. By practicing this pedagogical task in the classroom, students will be ready to perform the target task when they go shopping in real life and need to interact with a store clerk. The ultimate objective of a pedagogical task is to push students to meet a communicative need and, by doing so, produce learning. To prepare for implementing TBLT, identify useful and practical ways to replicate authentic real-world tasks in your own classroom.

Attempts at defining tasks have often included the following components (Willis 1996):

- Meaning is key.
- Learners fill a gap in communication.
- Activities resemble authentic real-world scenarios and are thus meaningful.
- Learners use the language they have at that moment.
- Learners are taught, as needed, forms and structures required to complete a task.

When developing tasks, teachers consider several characteristics (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). These task characteristics and corresponding examples are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Task Characteristics*

Characteristics	Explanations
A focus on meaning (not form) is central to all types of tasks.	Learners need to focus on encoding and decoding the messages.
Each task should have a gap that needs to be filled.	Communication gaps can be to seek information, express an opinion, or do something similar.
Learners will need to use linguistic and nonlinguistic resources available when they are performing the task.	Learners do not receive instructions on linguistic forms before performing a task but are encouraged to use teacher input as an example.
Each task should have a goal to reach and, also, clear objectives to achieve.	Achieving the set goal is crucial, regardless of whether the task is perfectly performed.

*Note.* Compiled from *Exploring Language Pedagogy Through Second Language Acquisition Research* by R. Ellis & N. Shintani, 2014, Routledge.

Consider the task characteristics and explanations in Task 1 before planning and implementing a task. These characteristics were not meant to limit the definition of a task but rather provide an easy way to differentiate a task from other types of classroom activities. In addition to making this differentiation, be sure to plan tasks very carefully so that your learners can benefit from these activities as learning opportunities.

### *Aims and Scope of Syllabus Within the Curriculum*

The first step when organizing tasks is to establish the aims and scope of a given syllabus within an L2 curriculum (Ellis et al., 2019). Here, consider what students can do at specific proficiency levels and then use this as a guide for writing the objectives. Different kinds of tasks will require different levels of language. For instance, beginners might not be able to debate about a controversial topic for persuading an audience while more advanced learners should be able to do so. In other words, the scope and objectives must be aligned with what learners need and are cognitively able to perform.

### *Procedures for Selecting Tasks*

The second step is to determine procedures for selecting the tasks (Ellis et al., 2019). However, before doing this, select topics that are aligned with the aims and scope of your curriculum and, also, that interest your learners and motivate them for actively engaging. A useful way to select topics is by doing a needs analysis. A teacher's intuition is not always sufficient to determine the most relevant topics in learners' lives; learners also need to have a voice. An effective way to gather ideas is by having students analyze real-life situations. After that, determine the conditions for completing a task and, also, the level of language needed for completing it.

### *Sequence and Organization of Tasks*

The third and final step is to sequence and organize tasks (Ellis et al., 2019). After selecting the topics, put them in logical order. Consider doing this by identifying the complexity of demands required to complete each task and then ordering the tasks from easy to difficult. Also try to organize these tasks around a unifying thread that is interwoven throughout the syllabus. To better identify this thread, analyze how frequently such tasks occur outside the classroom.

After selecting and organizing the tasks, determine whether your learners have the language needed to complete a targeted task. Because students have varying abilities, your students will probably perform the same task with varying degrees of success. However, this should not be a limitation regarding what you ask of your students. Instead, when assessing student performance, use different assessment techniques to ensure that each learner is making progress compared to where that specific learner started rather than compared to what other students might be able to do.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

After understanding these concepts and steps, put TBLT into practice by doing the following:

### *Have Students Roleplay as an Information Gap Activity*

Many of us have probably already used information gap activities. Now, convert this type of activity into a pedagogical task by addressing a goal that meets a real-life need (Brown & Lee, 2015). Start this task by dividing students into pairs and assigning a different role to each member in that pair. A useful task scenario could be Student A as the school librarian and Student B as a new student. Here, the objective is for the new student to interact with the school librarian and then register to borrow books. Through this relatively simple activity of asking and answering questions, Students A and B work together to accomplish a real-life task. We

recommend this type of task for beginner to pre-intermediate proficiency levels. It can be adapted to any scenario that requires requesting and providing information such as having a doctor’s appointment (doctor-patient), going shopping (salesclerk-customer), registering at a hotel (receptionist-guest), and asking for directions (tourist-resident).

***Have Students Solve Problems and Negotiate Solutions***

Students at more advanced proficiency levels can work together to solve problems and negotiate solutions. Classic activities involve reading several scenarios and then discussing possible responses to questions such as the following:

- Who would you save from a sinking boat?
- Who should receive the donated heart?
- Which hotel is the most suitable for each person?

In pairs or groups, students practice their skills at expressing opinions, taking turns, making decisions, solving problems, and negotiating solutions. Each of these activities is effective at having learners complete a given task.

***Have Students Do Tasks During All Three Phases of the TBLT***

To ensure that your students are successful at doing tasks as recommended by the TBLT approach, first focus on creating and nurturing a positive setting in your classroom. Then, follow the options, descriptions, and recommendations during each of the three phases (pre-phase, within phase, post-phase) of the TBLT (Ellis et al., 2019), as outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Summary of Tasks and Recommendations for TBLT (pre-phase, within phase, post-phase).*

Phases, Options, Descriptions	Recommendations for Doing TBLT
<b>PRE-PHASE</b>	
<b>Pre-Task Planning</b>	
Learners have time for planning the content and the language needed to perform subsequent tasks.	Customize the length of planning according to learner and task characteristics (with 1–3 minutes of planning as usually being ideal).
	Encourage students to take notes, work with language materials, and plan by using L1, L2 or both.
	Decide whether or not to have students do planning.
<b>Pre-Task Focus on Form</b>	
Pre-task modeling provides a model for learners to follow when performing the task.	Reduce the amount of pre-task grammar instruction because this could affect the learners’ fluency and complexity of their L2 production.
	Take care regarding what you model for learners because your modeling will significantly influence your learners’ L2 performance.

Content knowledge is provided about the topic.	Avoid providing too much background knowledge because it can reduce opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning when performing the task.
<b>Other Options</b>	
Teachers provide scaffolding by performing similar tasks together with these and other learners.	Help your learners understand the procedure for doing this task.
Vocabulary preparation helps students be ready for the task.	Teach vocabulary to prepare learners for performing the task but avoid insisting that they use prescribed words.
<b>WITHIN PHASE</b>	
<b>Within Task Focus on Form</b>	
Provide feedback to learners on the errors that arose as they were performing the task.	Use different types of feedback. Start with one or more prompts. Recast these prompts if there is no need for self-correction.
Integrate focus with form.	If needed, briefly interrupt a task to address and clarify linguistic forms. Try using within-task planning for students at beginning language levels.
<b>Other Options</b>	
No time constraints are imposed on students when performing the task.	Provide access for learners to linguistic input by using word cues.
Access to support is provided.	Limit non-linguistic (e.g., pictures and signals).
A surprise element is incorporated.	Introduce new elements for learners at advanced levels to increase their motivation and production.
<b>POST-PHASE</b>	
<b>Task Repetition</b>	
Learners are asked to redo their performance of a given task.	Provide feedback between task repetitions. Focus on repeating the task or performing a different version.
Teachers provide post-task feedback.	Provide feedback on initial performance. Then, ask learners to perform a related task.
<b>Explicit Focus on Form</b>	
A model is provided.	Have learners listen to a recording of their task. Have learners perform activities to process input and focus on linguistic forms to process meaning.
Other options are provided.	Have learners fill in missing grammatical features (e.g., plural) in texts that have purposeful gaps.

**Reflection**

Reflective accounts are offered.

Have learners reflect on several aspects based on how they performed the task.

Transcription is provided.

Ask learners to transcribe their performance of task.

Proceed to integrate transcription and other options for post-task activities related to teacher feedback.

*Note.* Compiled from *Task-based Language Teaching: Theory and Practice* by R. Ellis et al., 2019 (pp. 211-229), Cambridge.

In this chapter, you learned about TBLT as a task-based approach for teaching English to adult language learners. You learned to classify, define, select, sequence, and organize tasks. You also learned some pedagogical applications for implementing TBLT in your own English classes.

**KEY CONCEPTS**

Here are some key concepts about TBLT:

- Tasks and activities are not the same thing. A task may include several activities.
- Tasks should focus on meaning and, as such, should reflect real-world scenarios.
- Tasks should aim at filling a gap in learners' knowledge.
- Selecting and sequencing tasks is of utmost importance to ensure that learning occurs.
- When implementing a task, guide students with achieving the desired learning goal by having them do activities that progress from the pre-phase (before) to the within phase (during) and then to the post-phase (after).

**Discussing**

Based on your new knowledge about TBLT, answer these questions:

1. What tasks can you use in class to keep adult learners engaged?
2. How would you address learners' anxiety while performing a task?
3. How could focusing on grammar (or providing models) hinder or benefit a learner with completing a task?

**TAKING ACTION**

To practice using what you have learned about TBLT, do the following:

1. Elaborate a lesson plan with its main objective being for students to complete a specific task.



2. Implement a sample task-based lesson to measure how confident you feel with this approach.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge and application of TBLT, visit these websites:

- Bridge Universe. <https://bridge.edu/tefl/blog/what-is-task-based-learning/>
- British Council. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/unit-9-task-based-learning>
- Cambridge Live Experience. <https://youtu.be/jsBTQgE8uhw>
- Net Languages. <https://www.netlanguages.com/blog/index.php/2017/06/02/what-is-task-based-language-learning/>
- OnTESOL. <https://ontesol.com/task-based-learning/>

## See Also

Other aspects related to task-based learning are addressed in several chapters of this book:

**Chapter 3** *The Diversity of English Classes* by R. Díaz

**Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning* by M. Zalimben

**Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 32** *Major ELT Trends in the 20th Century* by C. Onatra and S. Palencia

**Chapter 33** *Current Approaches in English Language Teaching* by N. Dantaz

**Chapter 34** *Alternative Approaches to English Language Teaching* by G. Díaz Maggioli

**Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

**Chapter 47** *Authentic Assessment of, for, and as Learning* by G. Díaz Maggioli

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# CHAPTER 37

## Engage-Study-Activate with Adult Learners

# Engage-Study-Activate With Adult Learners

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## Abstract

When adults enroll in an English class, they usually do so with a high level of motivation. Yet despite their positive intentions, adult students can sometimes seem bored or disinterested. In such cases, we might try to keep adult learners interested in a specific lesson by replacing its repetitive parts with other activities. However, such on-the-spot adjustments do not usually produce desired results. Instead, we can proactively meet the needs of our adult learners by using the Engage-Study-Activate (ESA) framework to design our lessons. With its inherent structure to create different types of lessons, ESA can help adult students keep focused on learning and, by doing so, helps us meet our lesson objectives. In this chapter, you will learn about the different stages in ESA and explore how these stages can be realigned to better meet your learners' needs. You will also learn how to effectively implement ESA when teaching adult learners.

*Keywords:* engage-study-activate, adult language learners, learners' needs, motivation

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## Introduction

Effective planning and preparing are of utmost importance in creating productive learning opportunities for students learning English as an additional language. One way you can plan and prepare meaningful English lessons for your students, especially if they are adults, is by using the Engage-Study-Activate (ESA) framework (Harmer, 2007). Each letter in the acronym (ESA) represents a different stage in this framework. These three stages can be easily re-arranged based on what you consider to be most important for a specific lesson. By re-arranging these stages, you can also maintain your students' interest and, thus, reinforce their learning. These three ESA stages are as follows:

- **Engage**—In the engage stage, prepare students through music, discussions, or short video clips for learning the targeted topic and language structures. The engage stage usually occurs before teaching new information.
- **Study**—In the study stage, present new information through different techniques for students to learn English.
- **Activate**—In the activate stage, guide students in using new skills and knowledge through dialogues and other activities.

This chapter will help you use this ESA framework when designing and delivering English lessons for adult learners. By learning to implement these three ESA stages, you can better meet your teaching objectives and your students' academic needs (Harmer, 2007). Your ESA lessons can also serve in keeping most students eager to learn and motivated to learn more.

## Background

Although our chapter focuses primarily on supporting adults in learning a second language, we find it useful to examine how children might learn second languages differently from adults (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). When in positive supportive environments, young children can usually acquire a new language by using it without conscious effort (Krashen, 1981). However, adult learners have life experiences, career expectations, and a fully developed first language as well as a need for independence and an expectation of structured lessons (Knowles et al., 2015). Consequently, these aspects lead to most adults learning English consciously rather than acquiring it such as Krashen (1981) hypothesized with young children. Krashen also hypothesized that the affective filter needs to be lowered for making learners receptive to learning language and, also, that language learners of all ages need comprehensible input, which is providing language just beyond what they already know.

For students to learn English, instruction needs to be approached efficiently and effectively, and it also needs to focus on the learning needs for a targeted age group (e.g., children or adults). Based on Krashen's (1981) learning/acquisition theory, we might try to support our students in progressing from learning English consciously to acquiring English unconsciously. However, for this to occur, students need to experience Krashen's Natural Approach. In other words, they would need a predictable pattern of acquisition that occurs consistently over time (similar to acquiring the first language). Though it is highly unusual for adults to be afforded this type of learning environment across many years, we should nonetheless design well-structured lessons with topics that interest our adult learners, thus allowing them to engage as fully as possible in the learning process (Knowles et al., 2015).

To design lessons that are relevant and suitable for diverse learners at varying English levels, we need to consider their multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999). For Gardner, intelligence is “a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture” (pp. 33-34). If instructional methods and settings are appropriately matched with student needs and interests, students are better able to utilize their respective intelligences for understanding new information. Because everyone has a different combination of multiple intelligences, no two individuals share the same intelligence profile (Gardner, 2011). For instance, what is easy for one student to understand might be difficult for another to understand. Similarly, an activity that is interesting and engaging for one student might be boring and unattractive for another. Thus, to ensure that all students are effectively engaged, we need to recognize differences (including disabilities) among our students and plan accordingly. To address the learning needs of all students, we need to include varied strategies in each lesson. Above all, we need to ensure that all students feel safe and that all feel included in the lesson.

Presentation-Practice-Production was originally introduced to the English language teaching field in the 1960s. Following a resurgence in the 1990s, Presentation-Practice-Production became a preferred approach studied in teacher preparation programs such as the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, also known as CELTA (Anderson, 2017). At first glance, the three Presentation-Practice-Production stages might resemble the three ESA stages (Harmer, 2015). However, ESA differs because it encourages teachers to re-sequence these three stages for meeting the learning goals established for a given lesson, with each stage needing to occur at least once. In other words, ESA offers adaptability regarding the order in which these three stages occur in a lesson and, also, the number of times each stage occurs.

## Major Dimensions

To prepare for teaching ESA lessons, design your lesson plans around clear goals, prepare varied activities, and gather needed material. Also anticipate potential challenges that might occur when implementing these lessons. Be sure to start each lesson by greeting students, reviewing previous content, and going over assigned homework. Routinely explain the purpose and importance of each lesson in a way that attracts your students’ attention. When designing your ESA lessons, always take the following aspects into consideration.

### *Increasing Student Participation*

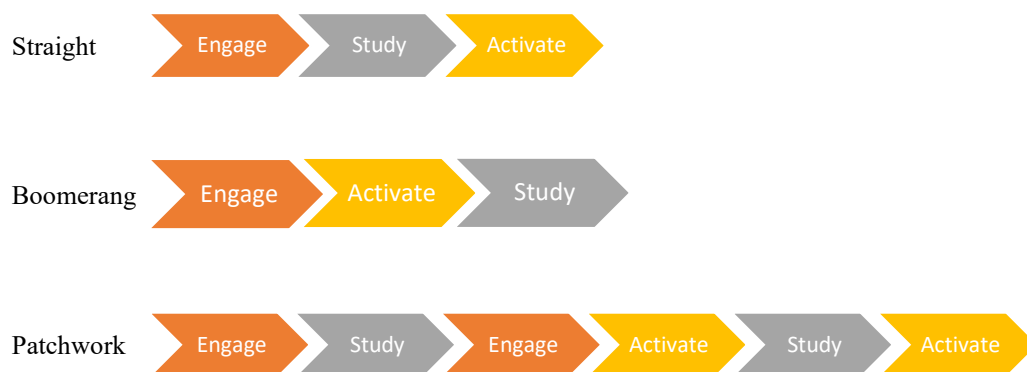
The purpose of ESA (engage-study-activate) is to improve students’ language skills by increasing their participation in language-based activities. To meet that goal, plan activities that compel students to think and use the new language. During the engage stage, teachers encourage students to ask questions and invite unplanned interaction. During the study stage, teachers ensure that the planned content is as accurate, unique, and straightforward as possible. They also focus on the best use of words and sentences for each lesson. During the activate stage, teachers use activities that allow students to practice independently with peers. Such activities can be evaluated by teachers to measure students’ ability by having them demonstrate what they have learned during the lesson.

### Sequencing the ESA Stages

The three ESA stages (engage-study-activate) can be implemented in different sequences (Harmer, 2015). The most common sequences are the straight procedure, the boomerang procedure, and the patchwork procedure, which are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*ESA's Straight Procedure, Boomerang Procedure, and Patchwork Procedure*



*Note.* Compiled from *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) by J. Harmer, 2015 (p. 67), Pearson.

The three procedures illustrated in Figure 1 are as follows:

- The *straight procedure* follows the ESA path described earlier in the chapter. This ESA path starts with the engage stage, continues with the study stage, and ends with the activate stage.
- The *boomerang procedure* follows an EAS path that consists of engage-activate-study. Here, teachers implement the activate stage earlier to identify gaps in student skills and knowledge and, by doing so, can adjust the study stage and thus achieve better outcomes. After this study stage, teachers may choose to again activate knowledge to determine whether the identified gaps were filled.
- The *patchwork procedure* follows an ESEASA path with the goal of providing flexibility to the learning process. After engaging students and activating to determine gaps, teachers can introduce the study stage to explain and practice new content. During any point in this patchwork procedure, teachers might determine that students need additional instruction and, therefore, repeat the study stage. Similarly, if teachers feel that students have lost focus or are bored, they can immediately introduce a new engage stage to regain student interest.



## Pedagogical Applications

The three words in ESA (engage-study-activate) guide us with knowing which activities are suitable for each stage of a lesson (Harmer, 2015). When designing and delivering an ESA lesson, select activities such as those suggested below for each of its three stages and then incorporate these stages into your lesson plan.

### *Activities for the Engage Stage*

The engage stage is for students to feel connected with the lesson and, thus, be ready to focus on learning. During this stage, aim to gain students' attention by exhibiting visuals, telling tales, having class debates, miming, and acting, as well as by asking questions for learners to reflect on the topic and speak English. Relate the lesson to students' reality so that they can immediately identify this lesson as being useful for them. For instance, adults might find it interesting to talk about free time activities or useful expressions for daily conversations.

### *Activities for the Study Stage*

The study stage is for the teacher to implement activities to assist students in understanding the relevant points of the lesson. Because this stage strongly emphasizes language development, choose activities that support language development based on texts, conversations, gap-filling exercises, crossword puzzles, word searches, and matching games. At this stage and only if needed, correct student errors when implementing new language features. Also in the study stage, enhance the learning process by introducing online activities that promote interaction, especially the digital tools that are part of our students' daily lives.

### *Activities for the Activate Stage*

The activate stage consists of activities that serve to involve students with speaking English as openly and communicatively as possible. This can consist of pair and group conversations, roleplays, narrative creations, projects (e.g., posters, commercials), simulations, debates, and writing activities. Ensure collaboration within each pair or group by assigning situations that necessitate using the targeted vocabulary and structures. Towards the end of the lesson, activate student knowledge for assessing the effectiveness of this lesson.

### *ESA Lesson Plan With Three Stages*

The following example of an ESA lesson plan illustrates how to combine all three ESA stages into a single lesson. This specific lesson is structured on ESA's straight procedure, which is the sequence of stages for first engaging, then studying, and finally activating.

- Level: beginner
- Time: 50 minutes
- Topic: free time activities
- Language focus: vocabulary for free time activities (includes adverbs of frequency)
- Three Stages

#### **Engage Stage (10 minutes)**

1. Greet your students with a smile and ask them how they are.
2. Show images about free time activities and ask students: What are these activities? The students name what they know. Model the words and ask students to repeat.

**Study Stage (25 minutes)**

3. Have your students listen to a conversation about free time activities. Play the audio once. Ask students to identify activities they recognize.
4. Give your students a chart (Figure 2) with free time activities. Students take turns reading the list. Make sure they understand the words and the activity.

**Figure 2**

*Free Time Activities.*

Listen to the recorded conversation and then check the best option for each activity.					
How often do you...	never	sometimes	often	usually	always
visit your friends?					
listen to music?					
go to the movies?					
use your devices?					
play soccer?					
go to the park?					
read a book?					
Other (describe):					

5. Explain the adverbs in Figure 2: never, sometimes, often, usually, always. Show how to use these adverbs to answer the question: How often do you \_\_\_\_?
6. Have students again listen to the audio. This time students identify how often the people in a conversation do each of those activities. Afterwards, each student compares their responses on the chart with those on their classmates’ charts.
7. Share the conversation script so that students can check their own work.

**Activate Stage (15 minutes)**

8. Have your students roleplay a conversation between a TikToker and someone on the street. The TikToker is interviewing people on the street and wants to know what people do in their free time and how often they do it. Students switch roles. After a designated amount of time, each student finds a new partner. Walk around listening to the language being produced by your students.
9. After the activity ends, ask your students about their favorite answer(s).

ESA’s flexibility in designing lessons is very helpful in situations such as the following. Let’s say that, during the activate stage, you identified a need to redo the study stage. In other words, you realized that your students need to review where to place frequency adverbs within a sentence. If enough time is available, start a new study stage by providing additional explanations and

having students practice the new language. After that, guide your students with entering a new activate stage in which they use content in real-life situations.

In this chapter, you learned about Harmer's (2007) ESA framework for keeping your students focused on learning. You also learned that ESA encourages teachers to adjust the sequencing of its three stages (engage-study-activate) to better meet lesson objectives. When teaching your own English classes, consider structuring your lessons on ESA to facilitate meeting your learning objectives while also meeting your students' needs.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about ESA to remember:

- Adults need a reason to learn a new language. Therefore, topics should match their interests and needs. Adults also need a structure to help them understand and learn.
- Teachers use ESA to meet the learning needs of students who learn differently. Teachers take advantage of these differences to make the class attractive and effective for all students.
- Each of the three ESA stages indicates what is to be done. In the engage stage, students are engaged and ready to learn. In the study stage, students learn and practice new content. In the activate stage, students activate new knowledge by using it in useful, real-life situations.
- After identifying gaps in student knowledge, teachers can implement ESA's boomerang and patchwork lessons, which introduce stages in different orders with the goal of filling gaps.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about ESA, answer these questions:

1. Is ESA more effective than Presentation-Practice-Production? Why or why not? Explain.
2. Would you consider using ESA in your own class? Why or why not?
3. Think of a topic that you would like to teach. In which order would you sequence the three ESA stages and why? What activity or activities would you include in each stage and why?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice using what you have learned about ESA, do the following:

1. Remember a language lesson that you enjoyed as a student. Think about how that lesson was organized, what your teacher did, and what you (as a learner) did. Based on what you now know about ESA, analyze this language lesson.

See if you can match distinct aspects from that lesson with the three ESA stages.

2. Create a lesson plan based on these three ESA stages.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge and application of ESA, visit these websites:

- English teacher guide. <https://englishteacherguide.com/the-engage-study-activate-esa-method-of-teaching/>
- ESA lesson planning. <https://esl-lesson-plans.ontesol.com/tesol-speaking-and-vocabulary-lesson-plan-using-esa-format/>
- International training in TEFL and TESOL. <https://youtu.be/sLoKPyDCR3s>
- Online professional development for teachers. <https://www.pearson.com/english/resources/esap-online-teaching-methodology.html>

## See Also

Aspects related to ESA are addressed in several chapters of this book:

**Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning* by M. Zalimben

**Chapter 21** *Connecting Student Interaction With Classroom Management* by G. Mendoza

**Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 33** *Current Approaches in English Language Teaching* by N. Dantaz

**Chapter 36** *Task-Based Approach With Adult Learners* by I. Giménez and C. Rolón

**Chapter 47** *Authentic Assessment of, for, and as Learning* by G. Díaz Maggioli

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Photo by Amador Loureiro on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 38

## A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar

## A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar

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### Abstract

The word “grammar” frightens many people, probably because of unpleasant experiences with grammar lessons that were a set of rules to be memorized. In this chapter, you will learn about a broader and more useful way to think about grammar, and you will learn several options for teaching grammar. Based on your own preferences, you can then adapt your teaching and, thus, better meet the needs of your students. If English is not your first language, you have a big advantage when teaching grammar because of how you learned English as an additional language, as your students are doing. This means that, based on your own experiences, you can anticipate the challenges that might arise because of grammatical differences between English and your students’ native language. Consequently, you are well prepared to explain grammatical differences to your students and, thus, provide them with useful strategies for learning English grammar.

*Keywords:* grammar, socio-cultural teaching approach, English learners, language variation

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## Introduction

Learning a second language differs from learning a first language. Every language is comprised of a unique and complex linguistic system that includes essential components such as the sounds (phonology) of the language, the formation of words (morphology) and the sentence structure (syntax). The second language learner approaches the new language with a linguistic system already in place. You can see this natural effect in the learner's unfamiliar accent, whereby learners process the new phonology through their existing system. You have also known second language speakers who continue to use transfers from their first language grammar that don't quite work in the second language (although typically they can make themselves understood for a specific communication goal). When trying to communicate in a second language, speakers may transfer words partially or entirely from their first language or organize words from the new language in a confusing and unclear manner. Vocabulary and sentence structure are important, but grammar also includes meaning (semantics) and appropriate use of language (pragmatics). Speakers use all these grammatical components simultaneously to create a coherent message. Adolescent and adult second language learners are more cognitively mature and capable of reflecting on language than young children. Therefore, skillful grammar teaching can be effective at helping older learners build an additional linguistic system by showing and clarifying the significant differences between the native language and the target language. It can also help the learner to identify their learning preferences and develop related strategies to enhance learning their second language.

## Background

Humans have been curious about linguistic systems, or grammars, for thousands of years. The first evidence comes from 4,000 years ago when a scribe in Babylon prepared tables of verb forms in two languages. The Greeks further developed grammatical analysis, and by the Middle Ages, the evolving school curriculum included grammar (of Latin) as one of its three pillars. Until the 20th century, the classic deductive grammar-translation approach remained a standard method of teaching and learning a foreign language. Meanwhile, outside of school, people learned languages through interaction with others, relatively unconsciously, without any explicit understanding of grammar. In the 20th century, language teaching began integrating both modes of language learning (direct instruction and informal communication) through communicative approaches (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In the 21st century, grammar instruction moved from prescriptive rules to descriptive approaches that are more accessible and practical (DeCapua, 2008).

All languages are composed of a range of different varieties that emerge because of geography, contact with other languages, social stratification, and levels of formality in interaction. A link between language variety and one's sense of identity can be particularly important, and individuals have different degrees of facility in shifting varieties or styles. The particular grammar identified with an officially named language (like English or Spanish) is a political question determined by power within the society. It is then perpetuated through the educational system and language ideology.

With grammar viewed as a socio-cultural phenomenon (Crystal, 2010), reflect on your role as an English teacher and your responsibility to your students. Clearly, you want your students to learn a variety of standardized formal English so they will be judged favorably by educated



English speakers (Lippi-Green et al., 2022). Consider other socio-cultural aspects by answering these questions:

- Which formalized variety will you choose?
- What range of spoken styles, from very casual to formal, do you want to help your students develop?
- What other varieties should you expose them to?
- Will you take a linguist's perspective and teach your students to value all varieties for each variety's own linguistic integrity, while at the same time making them aware of the social judgments that may exist among native English speakers about those different varieties?

By now having considered these socio-cultural aspects, think about how you would like to teach grammar to your students.

## Major Dimensions

To plan effective grammar lessons that are appropriate for your students, first ask yourself these methods-based questions. Use your responses as a guide in planning your lessons.

- What is the context of your teaching? Are there institutional constraints (e.g., a set curriculum, preferred methodology, limited access to technology, class size)?
- What are your students' goals in learning English? Are you preparing students for further education in an English-speaking country? A position in international business? Travel in English-speaking countries or places where English is a lingua franca?
- What varieties of English will your students need to listen, speak, read, and write? Should you focus on formalized Inner Circle English varieties (Kachru, 1992)? If your students plan to study or work in an English-speaking environment, will they need to know the social and regional varieties for that area?
- What are your options for an appropriate sequence of grammatical concepts in relation to the entire curriculum?
- Reflecting on what you have learned about options for grammar teaching, what are your preferred techniques (explicit and deductive versus implicit and inductive)? Which grammar patterns need an explicit explanation instead of an implicit approach where students analyze discourse to discover the patterns on their own? When is it appropriate to integrate both?
- How will you provide sufficient practice in speaking and writing so that English grammatical patterns become habitual for your students? How can you use free online resources to supplement your classroom interaction with students?
- What resources can you consult when you have questions about teaching topics: comprehensive English grammar, comparative grammars, examples of effective grammar teaching activities, and academic research on sociolinguistics?
- How can you take advantage of the connection between grammar and pragmatics to provide greater insight into English?

After thinking about the above questions, plan lessons where students can explore the grammar-pragmatics connections in situations such as these: language used to indicate gender, forms used

as second person pronouns (singular and plural), and usage patterns and prescriptive judgments associated with multiple negation in English. Teaching suggestions are provided in the next section.

## Pedagogical Applications

To guide students with exploring connections between grammar and pragmatics, design your teaching around major changes in English grammar. Consider implementing strategies that engage students in discovering the grammar-pragmatic connections related to such changes. Here are three examples:

### *Possessive Adjectives and Cultural Sensitivity to Gender Issues*

Consider this sentence in our chapter's Introduction: "It can also help the learner to identify their learning preferences." Here the possessive adjective "their" refers to a singular antecedent, "the learner." In response to this apparent grammatical error, a conservative prescriptivist (someone who insists on following grammar rules) would immediately take a red pen and replace the possessive adjective "their" with "his/her." In this particular sentence, we chose to use the adjective "their" with a singular antecedent because English does not have a gender-neutral third person singular possessive pronoun other than "its" (which is unacceptable when referring to a person). In this way, English is like Spanish and many other languages (but not Chinese).

In casual spoken English, the gap of not having a gender-neutral third person singular pronoun is filled when people use "their" to refer to singular antecedents. As can be expected, the grammar police (also known as prescriptivists) have tried to eliminate the singular use of "their" from edited standardized English. However, these prescriptivists could not counteract a societal movement that affected grammar when some people began using "they" and "their" to identify their own individual self. Because this sensitive relation between language and gender issues has been growing, the singular use of formerly plural pronouns (they, their, them) is starting to appear in writing.

To avoid condemnation by the grammar police, many style guides previously suggested pluralizing the noun antecedent which would have produced a change in our Introduction with the following sentence: "It can also help the learners to identify their learning preferences." However, in 2019, when the widely used APA style guide (7th ed.) adopted "they/their" as singular third person pronouns, the singular use of "their" transitioned from being acceptable for oral usage to also being acceptable for written usage.

*Strategy:* When planning an English grammar lesson, consider employing grammar changes as teaching opportunities such as the following:

- gender patterns in standardized English grammar,
- similarities and differences of English and Spanish pronouns (and you could even use it to remind students that English does not have gender for nouns in the same way that Spanish does),
- differences between casual spoken English and formal written English,
- relations between language and culture (social issues of gender, in this case), and
- possible language change in progress that involves actual grammatical patterns (not just vocabulary).

***English Auxiliary Verb “do” and Potential Issues for Spanish Speakers***

For this grammatical point, show students that English once had a verb pattern more like Spanish (Baugh & Cable, 2013; Crystal, 2019). Here are some examples from Shakespeare’s time (Early Modern English): “Slept the man well last night?” and “The king knows not.” Both examples now require an “auxiliary do” with the main verb. Ask students to provide Spanish translations (which would require them to see that one is past tense, and the other is present tense): ¿El hombre durmió bien anoche? and “El rey no sabe.” Explain (per our theme of constant change in the grammar of a language) that English changed and began to require an auxiliary verb in negative and interrogative sentences.

*Strategy:* First, see if your students know how to say those sentences in contemporary English. If not, provide the modern English versions (“Did the man sleep well last night?” and “The king doesn’t know”) and have them analyze what has happened. Then, have students compare the modern English sentences to Spanish, and ask what they think might be challenging. In the interrogative sentence, they may anticipate forgetting to begin the question with a form of “do.” In the negative sentence, they may anticipate forgetting both to include a form of “do” before the negative and, also, to conjugate and contract “do” and “not” into “doesn’t.” Finally, design exercises and activities for students to practice modern English verb patterns until these patterns sound normal.

***Multiple Negation***

English grammar requires one element for negation (“I didn’t see anything”), and Spanish grammar requires two (or more) elements for negation (“No vi nada”). Again, you can point out that English once accepted multiple negation (found in the work of famous writers in earlier centuries), but that the grammar has changed. This change occurred because of the power of prescriptive grammar. The 17th century writers of English grammar books decided that language should work like mathematics. Although grammar is definitely not like mathematics, these grammarians decreed that two negatives cancel each other out. Today, English speakers have to say, “I didn’t see anything” (with one negative) or in a stilted way “I saw nothing.” In other words, standardized English grammar forbids a direct transfer from the Spanish pattern: “I didn’t see nothing.” If you say this among educated English speakers, you will be judged as speaking a social or regional variety. Because multiple negation is alive and well in many regional dialects and casual styles of speaking English, listen closely to the native speakers of English with whom you interact and then consider adapting how you speak.

*Strategy:* Explain to your students that even though it may feel completely natural to use a double negative pattern in English, this will not be viewed favorably in all contexts. Have students generate a list of various speaking situations and contexts in English and determine whether the double negative would be acceptable or not. Then, have students discuss the kinds of exercises that could help them automatically use a single negative in English.

***Second Person Pronouns***

Second person pronouns can be windows into many dimensions of grammar. As with other aspects of English grammar, second person pronoun usage has changed. English changed from a former system, where we used to have the singular form “thou” (like Spanish “tú”), to the present system, where “thou” has been replaced by “you” (like Spanish “usted”). This led to modern English not having a separate second person plural pronoun (like “ustedes” in Spanish). Linguists are not clear exactly why this happened, but now we must live with it. Speakers have come up with workarounds to fill this second person plural gap, but these alternatives have

never been accepted into standardized grammar. For example, in the United States, Southerners often say “y’all” (contraction of “you” and “all”). Speakers of other regional varieties might say “youse” (which sounds like “you” followed by a plural suffix “-s”) or “you-uns” (which sounds like “you” followed by the plural word “ones”). Meanwhile, across the United States, “you guys” is becoming more widespread for addressing second person plural, especially in informal settings.

*Strategy:* Have your students create a chart of subject pronouns for their country’s language(s). Ask them to discuss how these pronouns are used. For example, when addressing a single person in Spanish, ask them to explain why they would choose “tú” or “usted.” Or, if you are in Paraguay or another Southern Cone country (or perhaps in Nicaragua), when do you use the singular “vos” instead of either “tú” or “usted”? Students may be aware of differences among varieties of Spanish or patterns of subject pronouns for a local language such as Guaraní, which you could also discuss, if appropriate. Then, have students draw the same chart for English and see how quickly they notice that the second person pronouns are not only the same for singular and plural, but that the singular (“you are”) uses the plural verb form! The logical singular form would be “you is,” but it has been removed from standardized usage and might elicit a negative reaction from other people. As you discuss this with students, lead them to questioning how English speakers can convey the kind of formality associated with the formal pronoun of other languages (e.g., “usted”). This provides an opening into the relation between grammar and pragmatics, which is the range of ways (grammatical and otherwise) available to a speaker to show formality and respect.

In this chapter, you learned about taking a socio-cultural approach to teaching grammar. You learned about considering several socio-cultural aspects before planning grammar lessons and about making students aware of historical changes in English grammar. You also learned that today’s social and regional varieties often have different grammar usages.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts to remember from this chapter:

- Grammar, as the system of a language, has often been restricted to morphology (how words are formed) and syntax (how words are sequenced to form sentences). Instead, grammar should be viewed as a socio-cultural phenomenon, especially for pedagogical purposes (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).
- Grammar needs to be understood as inextricably linked to pragmatics (language usage).
- A second language learner has both a first-language linguistic system and greater cognitive engagement than a child learning a first language.
- A bi- or multi-lingual teacher is well-prepared to anticipate challenges faced by language learners and to offer strategies for success in mastering the new language.
- The sequence of grammatical topics needs to fit within the whole curriculum and be based on the goals of the learners.
- A range of approaches can be used to teach grammar, drawing on both the unconscious and conscious awareness of the learner and their learning preferences.

- For the new system to become habitual and functional, students need more than just being taught grammatical terminology and rules; they need opportunities for appropriate practice.
- Learners should be exposed to different varieties of English, with distinctive grammatical patterns, along with the social values attached to those varieties.
- Attitudes of English speakers toward grammatical correctness are important for learners to understand.

## Discussing

Reflect on the following questions:

1. What aspects of learning English grammar were most challenging for you?
2. How did your knowledge of your first language help you in learning English? How will you apply these insights to teaching English?
3. What prejudices do you have about varied grammatical forms in your native language? Do you know the origins of those attitudes? Are you aware of typical prejudices of English speakers?
4. Are you aware of social values (positive and negative) attached to varieties of Spanish? To varieties of English? Give examples.

## TAKING ACTION

To apply what you have learned in this chapter, do the following:

1. Investigate how grammar is taught on free online language learning sources (e.g., Duolingo or Busuu) or grammar sites (e.g., GrammarBytes or ThoughtCo.). Consider how you might use these technological resources to supplement your classroom teaching (e.g., to create language habits in your students).
2. Look for discourse in English (e.g., YouTube) that represents a range of styles in English, from informal casual discourse to formal public discourse (e.g., TED Talks or college lectures). Transcribe and analyze the grammar, with a view to using these discourse examples as part of your teaching of grammar.

EXPANDING FURTHER

These resources provide useful grammar explanations, research findings, and teaching activities:

- English Club grammar. <https://www.englishclub.com/grammar>
- GrammarBytes. <http://www.chompchomp.com/>
- Purdue Online Writing (OWL at Purdue). [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)
- TESOL resource center, TESOL International Association. [www.TESOL.org](http://www.TESOL.org)
- ThoughtCo./English grammar. <https://www.thoughtco.com/esl-grammar-4133089>

See Also

Insights to teaching grammar are also provided in the following chapters of this book:

**Chapter 2** *The Diversities of Global Englishes* by L. Barratt

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 12** *Explicit and Implicit Learning in Second Language Acquisition* by C. Fernández

**Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess

**Chapter 42** *Strategies to Teach Writing* by M. Harrison

**Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

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# Teaching Strategies

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# CHAPTER 39

## Strategies to Teach Listening

## Strategies to Teach Listening

Elena Núñez Delgado

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### Abstract

The skill of listening is challenging to teach, especially for teachers who were not taught how to teach listening to second language (L2) learners. Similarly, listening is also challenging for L2 learners to learn. You probably faced this same challenge when you were learning a new language. You might have wanted strategies that would “open your ears” and allow you to listen and understand. In this chapter, you will learn about theories related to L2 listening and, also, practices and strategies to teach listening to L2 learners who are at different language levels. You will learn to identify the most challenging aspects of listening, organize the listening part of a lesson in cycles and stages, incorporate different listening processes (e.g., top-down and bottom-up), and guide learners to expand their listening ability by doing extensive listening. You will also learn about using leveled listening soundbites from authentic sources such as podcasts, videos, and music.

*Keywords:* listening comprehension, L2 listening instruction, top-down and bottom-up processes, intensive listening, extensive listening

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## Introduction

Learners of a second or subsequent language (L2) often view speaking as the most difficult skill to learn from among the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). However, L2 teachers often view listening as the most difficult skill to teach. This is especially true of teachers who did not learn how to teach L2 listening during their teacher preparation programs. Because of not being trained to teach listening, such teachers tend to exclude explicit listening strategies from their language lessons. Hence, with less class time dedicated to listening than to the other language skills, listening has often been called “the forgotten skill” (Walker, 2014, p. 167).

Listening is very difficult for most L2 learners because of challenges related to comprehending a listening passage (Scrivener, 2011). Speakers might use words unfamiliar to the learners and talk so quickly that L2 learners are unable to follow. L2 learners might also experience challenges at distinguishing where words start and stop, recognizing which parts of the listening passage are most important, and determining what attitudes are being expressed by the speaker. Moreover, L2 learners are often unable to identify specific details, much less capture a general sense of the message (i.e., gist).

The four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) operate together in the brain and interconnect during language use (Sousa, 2022). Because of how these skills are interconnected, you can focus on more than one skill during a single lesson. However, before planning and implementing listening activities, whether in a lesson that is focused exclusively on listening or in a lesson that connects listening with other skills, you need to know how to teach listening. This chapter, which focuses on teaching L2 listening, can help you plan and implement your listening activities. This chapter describes theories and practices to teach listening to L2 learners at different language levels and explains how to implement strategies to help learners more effectively acquire the skill of listening. This chapter also explores how to consider the challenges of L2 learners for more effectively selecting instructional materials and planning activities to support listening comprehension.

## Background

The teaching of listening was not a major component in early approaches to language teaching. Before the 1950s, language teaching focused mainly on reading and writing. During the 1950s and 1960s, language teachers asked students to repeat phrases without considering if learners understood what they were saying (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). However, in the 1970s, the Total Physical Response approach emphasized the importance of listening and required that language learners comprehend oral prompts before responding with physical actions (Asher, 1982). During that same decade, Krashen revolutionized second language teaching and learning by positing comprehensible input and the silent period (Brown & Lee, 2015). This established a basis for the Natural Approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), which focused on having students understand oral interactions in their language learning context, thus, further emphasizing the role of listening.

In the 1980s, “significant developments in terms of listening to L2” were introduced through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which “emphasized authenticity of materials, contexts, and responses” (Wilson, 2008, pp. 18-19). CLT was widely adopted in the 1990s and continues to be a prevailing method in the 21st century. Yet, just because an institution uses

CLT, this does not mean that these L2 classes include as many activities for listening as they do for speaking, reading, and writing. To include listening activities, teachers first need to know how to effectively plan listening lessons and select materials that support the development of listening comprehension. Only then can quality listening instruction be provided.

## Major Dimensions

To effectively integrate explicit listening instruction in your ELT classroom, build your knowledge about the following:

### *Top-Down Listening and Bottom-Up Listening*

Speech-processing theorists have identified a top-down process and a bottom-up process that are used by L2 learners to develop their listening comprehension skills (Brown & Lee, 2015). To help your learners improve listening comprehension, implement activities for them to practice both processes: top-down listening and bottom-up listening.

Top-down listening is when “students first attempt to understand the overall, general meaning of what they are listening to” (Harmer, 2015, p. 337). Teaching strategies include “activation of schemata, with deriving meaning, with global understanding, and with the interpretation of a text” (Douglas & Lee, 2015, p. 333). Use prediction to activate schemata, build students’ background knowledge, anticipate the lesson’s language event, and pre-teach vocabulary for the activity (Harmer, 2015). To further improve learners’ listening skills, use different listening tasks with the same or related topic.

Bottom-up listening is a continuum that “proceeds from sounds to words to grammatical relationships to lexical meanings, and so on, to a final message” (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 333). Because bottom-up listening is complementary to top-down listening, both processes need to be included in each lesson sequence. Less proficient learners usually need more practice with bottom-up strategies until they feel more confident in their language skills, especially because sound recognition and connected speech are challenging tasks for learners at lower L2 levels (Harmer, 2015). Have these L2 learners participate in different types of bottom-up strategies such as listening selectively for grammatical endings, discriminating among final intonation patterns, and doing dictation and dictogloss.

### *Different Ways to Teach Listening*

One way to teach L2 listening is the task-recording-feedback cycle (Scrivener, 2011). This cycle has three steps—task, recording, feedback—for implementing activities and lessons with the goal of developing learners’ receptive language skills (listening and reading). The teacher sets a task, and learners complete this task. When implementing the three steps of this listening cycle, introduce increasingly more complex tasks until a given task is overly difficult, thus signaling cycle completion. This three-step cycle is effective because listening passages are re-played as often as needed. If additional listening is needed to ensure learner comprehension, repeat the steps, and add related tasks. This cycle is outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Task-Recording-Feedback Cycle to Teach L2 Listening*

Cycle	Teachers will . . .	Students will . . .
<b>Task</b>	provide lead-in activity do pre-task work (optional) set a clear task	view pictures and listen to brief introduction briefly discuss topic do vocabulary or prediction activity
<b>Recording</b>	play and replay recording monitor learner reactions gauge ability to perform replay (if needed)	focus on identifying gist of the recording listen for a second time and identify information needed for assigned task
<b>Feedback</b>	ask questions based on task avoid questions that do not relate to the listening task provide more background information (if needed) repeat the recording stage (if needed)	respond to questions do listening activities while also doing speaking, reading, and/or writing activities review and expand what is being learned

*Note.* Compiled from *Learning Teaching: The Essential Guide to English Language Teaching* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) by J. Scrivener, 2011, Macmillan Publishers.

Another way to teach L2 listening skills is by using pre-while-post stages (Wilson, 2008). These three stages are pre (before listening), while (during listening), and post (after listening). These pre-while-post stages are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Pre-While-Post Stages to Teach L2 Listening*

Stage	Students will . . .	Guiding Questions for Students to . . .
<b>Pre</b>	prepare for listening with the goal of successfully completing the listening activity	activate schemata: What do I know? seek reasons: Why listen? predict: What can I expect to hear?
<b>While</b>	listen and do short activities	monitor: Are my expectations met? monitor: Am I succeeding at this task?
<b>Post</b>	expand listening comprehension, clarify doubts, and make connections	give self-feedback: Did I fulfill the task? give response: How can I respond?

*Note.* Compiled from *How to Teach Listening* by J. J. Wilson, 2008, Pearson Education.

In the pre-listening stage, implement activities to prepare L2 learners for successful listening. Here, students learn new vocabulary and recall existing vocabulary needed for the listening task. They make predictions, generate interest, and activate schemata about the topic.

In the while-listening stage, implement short activities that students do while listening. Before starting each listening activity, give students a specific purpose, such as listening for gist or listening for specific details. Depending on several factors (e.g., difficulty, length, pedagogical focus, potential boredom), replay the recording a second or third time (Wilson, 2008). To help students listen and comprehend long recordings, consider pausing at intervals—as needed.

In the post-listening stage, implement activities for students to conclude the listening task. Students compare their answers, check the accuracy of their predictions, clarify doubts, and identify possible connections among grammatical structures, vocabulary items, and sentence elements (Wilson, 2008). Students can also reflect on which listening aspects were difficult to understand and why. In this stage, determine if students should respond orally or in writing.

### ***Intensive Listening and Extensive Listening***

Intensive listening refers to the listening activities, mainly teacher directed, implemented in L2 classes to develop learners' listening comprehension skills. Because learners in the same class often develop their listening skills at different rates, classroom-based listening activities usually do not align directly with the evolving listening skills for any specific learner (Harmer, 2015). Nonetheless, focus on implementing well-structured listening activities to prepare your students to be good listeners outside the classroom.

Extensive listening is independent listening that students do outside of class. As such, extensive listening entails little or no teacher intervention. Moreover, extensive listening is usually done for pleasure, selected by the student, and at the student's own pace.

### ***Technology Support***

Technology helps students process aural input more effectively (Reed & Liu, 2020). The internet can be a valuable resource to find appropriate listening materials. Many websites offer computer-aided pronunciation activities to help L2 learners identify individual sounds and suprasegmental features of English and, more importantly, help them develop their listening and speaking skills. To help learners benefit from technology-based listening activities, first explain troublesome phonological differences between English and their L1. Furthermore, help your learners navigate the world of global Englishes by having them listen to internet selections spoken by native English speakers from diverse English varieties who represent a wide diversity of accents. Also have your learners listen to selections spoken by non-native speakers of English from several different countries.

## Pedagogical Applications

For incorporating explicit listening activities in your classroom, do the following:

### *Identify Effective Listening Materials*

Effective L2 listening materials can entail commercial listening materials targeted for L2 learners or authentic materials targeted for L1 speakers. Commercial L2 materials are usually labeled with levels based on international language frameworks, thus identifying competencies needed for successful listening. Authentic materials can be soundbites from recordings on internet initially for a wider audience (i.e., L1 users). If these authentic materials provide captioning, decide whether to allow students to view the captions and, if so, when to show these captions— such as before, during, or after the initial listening experience. When selecting passages for your listening lessons, be sure to ask yourself questions like those in Table 3 (Wilson, 2008).

**Table 3**

*Questions to Guide Teachers With Identifying Good Listening Material.*

Aspects	Guiding Questions to Identify Listening Material
Interest	Are my students interested in this content?
Culture	Do my students have a background to understand this cultural context?
Speech act	Does the recording represent daily actions or abstract concepts?
Density	Does the recorded speech move quickly? Does it have silent spaces for listeners to relax?
Level	Are vocabulary and grammar at (or just above) my students' level?
Length	Is this recording long enough, or is it too long?
Sound quality	Is this recording clear? Does it have minimal background noise?
Speed	Are the speakers talking too quickly for my students to understand?
Participants	How many people are talking? Do multiple voices hinder listening?
Accent	Are the speakers using known and comprehensible accents?

*Note.* Compiled from *How to Teach Listening* by J. J. Wilson, 2008, Pearson Education.

### *Implement Activities for Intensive Listening*

Several intensive listening activities can be implemented in both the task-recording-feedback cycle and the pre-while-post stages. Adjust these listening activities, as needed, for learners at different L2 levels. An effective way to do this is incorporating the listening activities while learners listen to a song. When selecting a song, be intentional that it supports your instructional



goal, meets your learners’ ages and interests, and serves to motivate your learners. When using a song to build listening comprehension, follow the steps in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Building Listening Comprehension by Using a Song During the Pre-While-Post Stages*

***Building Listening Comprehension by Using a Song During the Pre-While-Post Stages***

Stage	Student Activities for Learning to Listen
<b>Pre</b>	Brainstorming various types of songs Describing favorite songs and explaining why these are favorites Predicting words or expressions found in certain types of songs (e.g., love songs)
<b>While</b>	Listening and identifying mood in this specific song (e.g., happy, sad) Listening again and arranging strips of verses from song in the correct order Listening while looking at script and self-correcting how verses were arranged Reading a summary of this song with errors and correcting these errors
<b>Post</b>	Describing their favorite and least favorite parts in this song Reviewing the song for a specific audience Creating another verse for this song Identifying verb forms Listing new words and writing definitions Identifying word collocations

*Note.* Compiled from “A Framework for Planning a Listening Skills Lesson” by N. Peachey, n.d., British Council. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/framework-planning-listening-skills-lesson>

Rather than using a song, consider choosing spoken segments from the internet on topics that interest your learners or choose leveled soundbites from sources such as podcasts (Houston, 2016). Depending on your learners, such topics might be sports, movies, politics, or current events. Based on your learners’ language level, determine length and difficulty of the listening segment. After selecting a listening segment, follow the pre-while-post stages in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Building Listening Comprehension by Using Spoken Segments from the Internet*

Stage	Student Activities for Learning to Listen
<b>Pre</b>	Receiving a small amount of information (e.g., title, topic) and predicting Previewing coursebook or handout to build background information
<b>While</b>	Listening for gist (e.g., What was this segment about?) Listening for detail (e.g., How much did it cost?)

	Making inferences (e.g., Where do you think they will they go?)
<b>Post</b>	<p>Discussing challenges about the listening segment (e.g., What was difficult or confusing about this segment?)</p> <p>Doing a speaking activity about a similar topic but in a different setting</p> <p>Personalizing by giving opinions (agree or disagree) and reasons</p>

*Note.* Compiled from “The Three Stages of a Listening Activity” by H. Houston, 2016, *EFL Magazine*. <https://eflmagazine.com/the-three-stages-of-a-listening-activity>

**Support Extensive Listening**

Language learners can greatly improve their listening proficiency by doing extensive listening on their own. Motivate your L2 learners to do extensive listening by first describing it and explaining its benefits. Then, jointly with your learners, reach an agreement as to the targeted source and topic of their extensive listening (Harmer, 2015). Have students track their extensive listening activities by completing a log where they “list the topic, assess the level of difficulty, and summarize the contents of what they have listened to” (pp. 339-340). To help learners comprehend their extensive listening selections, suggest that they listen first with captions and then without captions. Among their choices might be free online resources such as songs, YouTube videos, podcasts, and TEDtalks. When targeted for native speakers, these unlevelled resources are called authentic material. Also available are resources targeted for language learners and designed specifically to develop L2 listening.

In this chapter, you learned about the challenges of teaching L2 listening and how to help learners develop listening comprehension skills. You learned about top-down and bottom-up listening activities. You also learned how to implement listening activities within the task-recording-feedback cycles and the pre-while-post stages.

**KEY CONCEPTS**

Here are some key concepts about listening strategies:

- Teach listening comprehension explicitly. Do not expect that your learners will develop good listening skills without explicit instruction. Build schema and share purposes for listening.
- Implement listening comprehension lessons by integrating the listening skill with other skills (speaking, reading, writing).
- Consider speech-processing theory and provide opportunities for students to practice top-down and bottom-up comprehension.
- Organize lessons using the task-recording-feedback cycle or the pre-while-post stages for students to gain practice with developing their listening comprehension skills.
- When planning and organizing activities for pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening, make sure that these activities are appropriate to student needs and language levels.

## Discussing

Based on strategies to teach listening, develop meaningful answers to these questions:

1. Think about your own experience. What made listening difficult for you when learning English or another language? Which type of processing do you think was involved: top-down processing or bottom-up processing? Why?
2. How is classroom listening similar and/or different from real-life listening?
3. Can listening lessons be interactive? If so, how?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice strategies to teach listening, do the following:

1. From this website <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening> or from your textbook, select a listening lesson for a targeted language level. Analyze how the lesson is organized. Does it follow the task-recording-feedback cycle or the pre-while-post stages? Identify listening activities in this lesson as being bottom-up or top-down and, also, as being either intensive or extensive.
2. Plan an intensive listening lesson using the task-recording-feedback cycle or the pre-while-post stages. Use graded listening material or an authentic listening piece and include activities for both top-down and bottom-up processing.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about listening strategies, visit these websites:

- Computer-aided pronunciation teaching recommended by Reed and Liu (2020). [www.englishaccentcoach.com](http://www.englishaccentcoach.com), [www.posetest.com](http://www.posetest.com), and [www.es-youglissh.com](http://www.es-youglissh.com)
- Listening and notetaking for ESOL students. <https://lib.pstcc.edu/esl/listening>
- Listening lessons from the British Council. <https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening>
- Listening skills for young learners. [https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/57\\_3\\_44-48.pdf](https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/57_3_44-48.pdf)
- Search “listening” on the website for the TESOL International Association: [https://www.tesol.org/search/?search\\_field=listening](https://www.tesol.org/search/?search_field=listening)
- Understanding fast speech with online videos and quizzes. [https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/etf\\_59\\_1\\_pg28-30\\_0.pdf](https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/etf_59_1_pg28-30_0.pdf)

## See Also

Aspects related to listening are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

- Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla
- Chapter 16** *Incorporating Interjections to Facilitate Conversational Flow* by A. Rodomanchenko
- Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess
- Chapter 30** *Incorporating Music in the ELT Classroom* by O. Carrasquel
- Chapter 40** *Strategies to Teach Speaking* by S. Spezzini
- Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller
- Chapter 44** *Strategies to Teach Pronunciation* by S. Spezzini
- Chapter 48** *International Frameworks to Assess Language Development* by E. Nuñez

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# CHAPTER 40

## Strategies to Teach Speaking

## Strategies to Teach Speaking

Susan Spezzini

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### Abstract

Language learners learn to speak a new language by speaking this language in authentic interactions, especially with peers. Such authentic interactions can be facilitated by frequent opportunities in class for learners to speak with each other. We can create such opportunities by implementing pair and group activities like the Interactive Peer-to-Peer Oral Techniques (IPOTs). In paired IPOT activities, half of the learners are speaking with a partner while their partner is actively listening. Then, within each pair, partners reverse the roles of speaker and listener. Hence, at any given time, all learners are either speaking or listening. In this chapter, you will explore how the use of IPOTs can maximize opportunities for English learners to speak. You will learn how, by participating regularly in IPOTs, learners of all ages and language levels can improve their speaking skills. You will also learn how to implement five different IPOTs as strategies to teach speaking.

*Keywords:* speaking skills, opportunities to talk, Interactive Peer-to-Peer Oral Techniques, peer interaction, oral strategies, English learners

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## Introduction

Speaking is the act of communicating orally with others who are listening and interacting. Children learn to speak their first language (L1) naturally over several years by interacting with family members and other people in their immediate environment. Learners of a second language (L2) also learn to speak an L2 by interacting with others over several years. However, during this L2 learning process, many learners feel inhibited about speaking the new language. Nonetheless, to learn to speak this language, L2 learners must speak it.

To develop their L2 speaking skills, learners must speak this new language many times each day in meaningful interactions (Brown & Lee, 2015). For this to happen, L2 learners must be willing to speak in class activities without feeling overly inhibited or anxious. As teachers, we can guide learners in wanting to speak by creating supportive, welcoming environments where they feel comfortable and can build confidence as L2 users (Echevarria et al., 2023). Such emotionally safe places serve to reduce learners' inhibitions about speaking and decrease their anxiety. This, in turn, lowers their affective filter—thereby minimizing an invisible barrier to speaking. In these welcoming environments, most L2 learners become empowered to take the risks associated with using new sounds, words, and sentences. Thus, by participating in authentic oral interactions, L2 learners can gradually build their speaking skills and make progress toward becoming effective L2 speakers.

Classroom interactions are considered authentic when learners engage with each other in interesting conversations about compelling topics (Hill & Miller, 2013). In these authentic interactions, learners use new language structures to share personal interests (e.g., pets, hobbies), explore content areas (e.g., artwork, ecology), analyze current events (e.g., destructive storms), and offer opinions (e.g., favorite movies). These authentic interactions are best achieved through engaging interactive techniques, which, in turn, serve as strategies to teach speaking.

## Background

Early approaches to English language teaching (ELT) did not prioritize speaking. Before the 1950s, ELT approaches focused mainly on reading and writing. In such approaches, students might have read sentences aloud, perhaps once or twice during a class period. This approach to using oral language did not lead to the development of speaking skills.

During the 1950s and 1960s, language learners repeated phrases but often without understanding the meaning of what they were saying (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In the 1970s, new theories and methods began to focus on oral interaction. In the 1980s, the communicative language teaching approach emphasized the role of speaking to establish meaningful communication. With this approach, L2 learners participated in speaking activities for social, everyday communication but still had limited opportunities to use oral language for other purposes.

In the 1990s, researchers began examining the importance of speaking skills for academic and professional interactions (Franks et al., 2018). Because opportunities for oral communication were usually limited to social interactions in local contexts (e.g., classrooms or country-based settings), L2 learners often experienced difficulties understanding and using spoken English during academic interactions in other contexts (Jordan, 1997). For example, when pursuing a



university degree in another county, L2 users were especially concerned about their ability to manage speaking tasks that required academic English rather than social English. As international students, they were challenged at using academic vocabulary and structures. Similarly, numerous studies in the early 21st century examined the teaching and learning of oral English in worldwide settings, especially for international communication (Wang et al., 2022).

To increase opportunities for L2 learners to engage in meaningful oral interactions, teachers need to know how to teach speaking, which includes knowing how to implement numerous speaking strategies (Bleistein et al., 2020; Folse, 2006; Vorholt, 2018). Guided by this goal, I have always tried to help teachers (pre-service and in-service) with implementing oral interactive techniques in their classrooms. However, when I began working in a different context and observed interns teaching at diverse K-12 grade levels, I was surprised that these interns were providing few opportunities (if any at all) for their learners to interact orally with each other. During post-observation conferences, I asked interns why their lessons did not include ample speaking opportunities such as we had discussed during the internship seminars. My interns' responses were often as follows:

- I did that (oral interaction) yesterday.
- Tomorrow is when I plan on having students talk.
- I teach high school, and the examples in our seminar were mainly for elementary school.
- I have so much content to cover that there's no time for students to talk to each other.
- I have an unruly class, and oral activities will get them even more off task.
- My principal likes quiet classrooms.

Initially, I initially viewed such responses as related to just this specific group of interns. For my next group of interns, I placed more emphasis on explaining oral interactive techniques during the internship seminars and prominently displayed oral techniques in the lesson plan template. With these adjustments, I anticipated that future interns would meet my expectations regarding the use of oral techniques. After observing subsequent groups of interns and continuing to notice limited oral interaction in their classrooms, I made additional adjustments.

One of my adjustments in preparing interns to use oral techniques was coining the phrase Interactive Peer-to-Peer Oral Technique (IPOT; Spezzini, 2009). This IPOT acronym resembled another term, iPod, a digital device that had just come onto the market. The similarity between IPOT and iPod seemed to make my IPOT acronym (and its concept) easier for interns to remember. As I gained experience with preparing interns to use IPOTs, my future intern groups became more cognizant about the importance of prioritizing speaking interactions (Seay et al., 2013). They incorporated IPOTs in their daily lessons and, by doing so, created opportunities for their learners to talk.

## Major Dimensions

For decades, ELT researchers and educators have shared nuggets of wisdom such as “If students aren't talking, they aren't learning” (Seay et al., 2013, p. 121). Yet, teacher talk continues to overshadow student talk in many language classrooms (Brown & Lee, 2015). For students to improve their L2 speaking skills, the interaction between and among students in the target language must be meaningful and authentic (Echevarria et al., 2023). IPOTs “provide a vehicle

for that interaction” (Seay et al., 2013, p. 128). Students enjoy opportunities to speak with their peers even when doing so in the target language. This also leads to receiving feedback from peers, which can be more meaningful for learners than feedback from a teacher. Finally, as students gain confidence for using an L2 to engage in authentic interactions inside the classroom, they build confidence for using this L2 to engage in conversations outside the classroom.

IPOTs and other such techniques foster oral interaction among learners who are at similar language levels and, also, with others at different language levels. To support such interactions, the teacher prepares to implement an IPOT by forming pairs or groups with students at varying language levels. Within each pair, the more proficient language user starts by assuming the primary role of speaking, and the less proficient language user assumes the role of listening and giving short responses. Upon completing this first interaction, these students reverse roles with the less proficient peer using the spoken phrases already modeled by the more proficient peer.

Classroom teachers can use IPOTs to support L2 learners across the curriculum and at any grade level. IPOTs help students develop their speaking skills during content lessons of all subjects. For example, consider using IPOTs during a series of science lessons about metamorphosis. Before starting this IPOT, introduce your class to the vocabulary and language structures needed for learning about metamorphosis. Start by explaining targeted language structures (e.g., How do caterpillars become butterflies?), demonstrating sentences (e.g., The caterpillar forms a chrysalis), and pronouncing new vocabulary (e.g., metamorphosis, butterfly, caterpillar, chrysalis). As part of this introduction, have students practice pronouncing new words and phrases by repeating chorally, which is when all students say these words at the same time. Adapt a hand gesture (like a conductor’s gesture) for signaling to students for all to repeat chorally. Consider having students chorally say new words several times, depending on the targeted words and their respective pronunciation issues.

After introducing new vocabulary and structures, implement an IPOT with students participating in authentic-like conversations about the content (e.g., metamorphosis) by engaging in pairs or small groups. When participating in this IPOT, all students in the classroom are simultaneously engaged in oral interactions with a partner—half the class is talking, and the other half is listening. After students know how a certain IPOT functions and, also, by knowing the name for this IPOT (e.g., Hot Onion), they are usually able to do this same IPOT for learning other content in subsequent lessons, but with little or no teacher intervention. In other words, when students know an IPOT, you simply need to give them the name of the IPOT and a quick review of what they need to do. In this way, IPOTs are student-centered, and your role as the teacher is mainly to provide guidance and oversight.

IPOTs are informative, interactive, and engaging. They provide L2 learners with comprehensible input and, by doing so, enhance language and content learning. IPOTs are like many other oral techniques and their adaptations that have been around for decades, often with various names. Yet, based on my experience, the unique IPOT term resonates with teachers, thus helping them remember to incorporate interactive student talk throughout their lessons. In addition to using IPOTs based on existing oral techniques, consider creating several of your own IPOTs. To do so, think about everyday life interactions that have compelling content and repeated structures. For example, when participating in an ice breaker at a partnership training event, I experienced this activity as an engaging way to repeat meaningfully grammatical structures. The next day, I used this ice breaker as an IPOT in my ELT classroom.

Because IPOTs promote student interaction, they are excellent strategies to teach speaking. From among dozens of existing and potential IPOTs, I am sharing my favorite five IPOTs in this chapter. These IPOTs are Turn-and-Tell (for verbalizing newly acquired knowledge through periodic partner summaries), Hot Onion (for reviewing content information), Parallel Lines (for sharing discipline-specific information with classmates), Roaming Reporters (for acting as reporters to collect information), and Gap-Filling Tango (for completing information gaps).

## Pedagogical Applications

IPOTs are oral activities for students to speak with each other in pairs or groups. An example of a pair IPOT is Turn-and-Tell, and an example of a group IPOT is Hot Onion. Instructions on how to implement these two IPOTs are provided below. Instructions for three additional IPOTs are provided in the Appendix.

### *Turn-and-Tell*

The Turn-and-Tell IPOT (Spezzini, 2009) is an easy-to-implement speaking opportunity for ELT classrooms with learners of any age and language level. The goal is for learners to use targeted words, structures, and content when speaking to a peer in the safe environment of pair interaction where no one else can hear. The informality of Turn-and-Tell and its intimate one-on-one format (with students usually sitting in their own seats) can serve to minimize stress. This private setting can also reduce inhibitions about speaking that often occur when L2 learners are asked to speak within a group and, even more so, in a class setting.

For effectively implementing Turn-and-Tell, display the needed words on the board and, depending on the language goal, provide sentence starters. Begin by modeling what you want students to do. Then, have each student turn to a classmate (usually seated side by side) and form a pair (e.g., Student A and Student B). In each pair, Student A asks a question of Student B. The goal is for half the class to be speaking simultaneously while the other half is listening attentively to their partner and then responding. After Student A asks a question and Student B answers, these roles are reversed with Student B asking a question and Student A answering.

Turn-and-Tell can be used for a wide range of topics—both social and academic. Table 1 provides examples of Turn-and-Tell for students at lower levels of English.

**Table 1**

*Turn-and-Tell: Examples of Interactions at Lower Levels of English.*

Possible Topics	Student A	Student B
new vocabulary	What does beautiful mean?	pretty
preferences	What is your favorite pet?	a dog
activities	What did you do this weekend?	play soccer
mathematics	What is 3 times 5?	15

This Turn-and-Tell IPOT works exceptionally well during content lessons in any subject (e.g., mathematics, science, social studies). Table 2 provides examples of Turn-and-Tell in classes with students who have reached a communicative level of English.

**Table 2**

*Turn-and-Tell: Examples of Interactions During Content Lessons*

Possible Topics	Student A	Student B
science	What does metamorphosis mean? Can you give some examples?	(explains)
social studies	Which of these current events is of greatest interest to you? Why?	(relates)
history	Who was your favorite person in this historical era? Why?	(analyzes)
literature	What do you think is going to happen after the short story ends? Why?	(infers)

During content lessons such as those in Table 2, use this Turn-and-Tell IPOT about every 10 minutes and, by doing so, provide students with several opportunities to speak even if just responding with a single word or short phrase. With Turn-and-Tell, all students are engaged simultaneously by speaking to a partner or listening intently to their partner.

Turn-and-Tell can also be used in many other ways. Following are three examples:

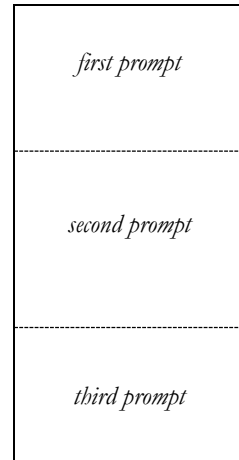
- Favorites.** Have students write three numbers (a one-digit number, a two-digit number, and a four-digit number) that are important to them. Student A asks Student B, “Why did you choose these numbers?” After answering, Student B asks the same question of Student A. Instead of numbers, students can write their favorite item(s) from a category such as colors, animals, songs, or movies. By first thinking about the chosen category and writing one or more words (e.g., yellow), students feel more empowered to speak than when directly asked answer a question (e.g., What is your favorite color?).
- Imaginary Photos.** Have students quickly sketch three geometric shapes (e.g., circle, triangle, square) on a tablet or piece of paper but without drawing anything inside the shapes. Based on my experience, when students start to draw images (e.g., people, things, events), many do not want to stop drawing and start talking. Therefore, in this activity, students should not draw anything except for three shapes. Each geometric shape represents an imaginary photo. These imaginary photos can be from past events, present events, or imagined future events (depending on whether your lesson objective is for students to practice using verbs in the past tense, present tense, or future tense). Student A says to Student B, “Please tell me about your photos.” Student B responds and then uses the same prompt to elicit information from Student A.

- Puppets.** Have students use something that can serve as a puppet. For example, students can pull a sock over their hand or simply make their hand look like a mouth. They can also use a wooden clothespin—with or without a face drawn on it. They can even hold up a pen and move it like a puppet. Student A’s puppet and Student B’s puppet interact with each other by asking and answering Turn-and-Tell prompts such as those mentioned above. When giving their puppet the responsibility to speak, which implies attributing any potential L2 errors to this puppet, many students feel less inhibited about speaking. Hence, through this activity, they can begin to build their confidence as users of English.

**Hot Onion**

The Hot Onion IPOT (Seay et al., 2013) is an excellent opportunity for students to talk while also checking for understanding of newly learned vocabulary and concepts. A hot onion usually consists of nine strips of paper, with a different prompt or question on each strip. It usually works best if each strip is one third of a sheet of standard printer paper such as A4 size or letter size (8½ x 11 inches).

To make a hot onion, write three prompts on one full sheet of paper (A4 size or letter size). Write the first prompt centered across the top of the paper, the second prompt across the middle, and the third prompt across the bottom—as shown in the model to the right. Also shown are dotted lines indicating where to cut this paper into three strips. After writing three prompts on this first sheet, write three additional prompts on each of two other sheets of paper. With three prompts on each of three sheets, you will have nine strips, each with a different prompt.



Rather than writing these prompts by hand, type the prompts using 36 font and then save this as a three-page file on your computer. That way, you can easily reprint these prompts the following year when using this same activity to review the same content, but with a different class.

After preparing these nine strips, crumple them together to create a hot onion. First crumple one strip into a tiny wad of paper, as illustrated by the first image in Figure 1. Then tightly press a second strip around this wad. Continue by surrounding these first two crumpled strips by another strip as shown by the second image in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Creating a Hot Onion: From One Crumpled Strip to Nine Crumpled Strips*



Continue pressing additional strips around this growing wad—strip by strip. The third image in Figure 1 shows the result of crumpling six strips together—one at a time. The fourth image shows what happens after pressing together all nine strips. Each strip adds another outer layer like the layers of an onion. Because of these layers, I call this an onion rather than a potato (such as in a hot potato activity).

The picture to the right has four hot onions. As often occurs, each of these has a unique look. Although these hot onions look different on the outside, they are the same on the inside. Each has the same nine strips, with one prompt per strip. These four hot onions are for a class of 24 students, with one hot onion for each of four circles (with six students per circle).



After having prepared your hot onion(s), have students form circles with six students in each circle. The students stand in their respective circle at about an arm's length from each other, looking towards the center of the circle. Start by tossing a hot onion to one student in each circle. After catching the hot onion, this student unwraps the onion's outer layer, shows the strip to the other students in this circle, reads the prompt aloud, and attempts to respond to the prompt. Because the student reading this prompt is in a type of hot spot (i.e., needing to respond), the word "hot" is part of this IPOT's name.

The Hot Onion IPOT works best when the student holding the hot onion and reading a prompt is helped, as needed, by other students in the circle. Such collaborative support avoids long pauses, such as when waiting indefinitely for a student in the hot spot to respond. Although short thinking pauses have an important role in this Hot Onion activity, long pauses can be counterproductive for student engagement. After receiving help (if needed), this student responds to the prompt, and then tosses the hot onion to a student on the other side of the circle. This continues until students have unwrapped all layers (one at a time), shared the prompts aloud, and responded (often collaboratively) to all prompts in the hot onion.

Among the many IPOTs that I have used to provide my L2 learners with speaking opportunities, the Hot Onion is usually everyone's favorite. In fact, students often refer to it as a game because of their intrigue when unwrapping each strip and the fun associated with tossing the hot onion to each other. However, for me, the Hot Onion IPOT is a learning activity that provides an inviting opportunity for students to speak. It also allows me to determine whether additional instruction is needed about the topics on the strips in the hot onion.

In this chapter, you explored how students learn to speak new languages by speaking with peers. You learned about using IPOTs in your lessons to create opportunities for L2 learners to speak with each other. As such, you learned that IPOTS are effective strategies to teach speaking.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are key concepts about strategies to teach speaking:

- Language learners need multiple speaking opportunities in ELT classrooms.
- By speaking during these opportunities, learners develop the skill of speaking.
- IPOTs is a catchy term for oral interactive techniques in pairs and groups.
- IPOTs are used in content lessons to provide opportunities for students to speak about what they are learning.
- Always use the same name for a given IPOT so that students recognize it when used in subsequent lessons.
- If an IPOT does not work well on the first attempt, adjust your instructions, and try again.

## Discussing

Regarding strategies to teach speaking, answer these questions:

1. Why is it important to provide as many opportunities as possible for language learners to use oral English in ELT classrooms?
2. During an IPOT, half of your students are speaking simultaneously while the other half are listening. How do these interactions help your students improve their speaking skills given that you, the teacher, are not correcting their language output?
3. Why should students know the name of an IPOT that you plan to use regularly?

## TAKING ACTION

Apply what you have learned about strategies to teach speaking:

1. Practice modeling an IPOT at home before modeling it for your students.
2. Introduce just one IPOT at a time in any given class. Be creative at adjusting it as needed. After students have mastered one IPOT, introduce another one in a subsequent lesson.
3. Demonstrate an IPOT at a faculty meeting (grade level or department).
4. Read online articles about oral interactive techniques and attend related sessions at professional conferences.

EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about strategies to teach speaking, visit these websites:

- Colorin-Colorado. <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/6-strategies-help-ells-succeed-peer-learning-and-collaboration>
- Games for L2 speaking. <https://www.edutopia.org/discussion/12-fun-speaking-games-language-learners>
- Information gap activities. <https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/teachers-corner-speaking-information-gap-activities>
- Language activities for communicative classrooms: Trinity College London. [https://cbseacademic.nic.in/web\\_material/ASL/2013/23.%20Teaching%20Activities%20for%20the%20Communicative%20Classroom.pdf](https://cbseacademic.nic.in/web_material/ASL/2013/23.%20Teaching%20Activities%20for%20the%20Communicative%20Classroom.pdf)
- Lowering the affective filter. <https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/blog/lowering-affective-filter-facilitates-language-acq/>
- Speaking activities. <https://www.teachingexpertise.com/classroom-ideas/esl-speaking-activity/>
- Student engagement. [https://www.kaganonline.com/free\\_articles/research\\_and\\_rationale/330/The-Essential-5-A-Starting-Point-for-Kagan-Cooperative-Learning](https://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/research_and_rationale/330/The-Essential-5-A-Starting-Point-for-Kagan-Cooperative-Learning)

## See Also

Aspects related to speaking are also addressed in the following chapters of this book:

**Chapter 13** *Designing Learner-Centered Classrooms to Promote Active Learning* by H. Kaiser

**Chapter 16** *Incorporating Interjections to Facilitate Conversational Flow* by A. Rodomanchenko

**Chapter 17** *Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output* by C. Cristóful

**Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess

**Chapter 29** *Using Theater to Teach English* by C. Ortiz and M. Vaky

**Chapter 39** *Strategies to Teach Listening* by E. Nuñez

**Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

**Chapter 44** *Strategies to Teach Pronunciation* by S. Spezzini



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## About the Author

**Susan Spezzini** earned a bachelor's degree in linguistics (University of California San Diego, USA), a master's in language teaching (University of California Berkeley), and doctorate in ESL curriculum (University of Alabama). Susan started her career in Paraguay—working initially with Peace Corps and then at the Higher Institute of Languages (National University of Asuncion) and other ELT entities. She also served in leadership roles of the TESOL International Association's affiliate in Paraguay (known as PARATESOL). Susan is professor and program director of ESL teacher education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. As a Fulbright Scholar, she returned to Paraguay to help create this book.

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# APPENDIX

## ch.40

### Strategies to Teach Speaking

This appendix provides three additional IPOTs as examples of providing opportunities for language learners to speak in pairs and, by doing so, develop their speaking skills.

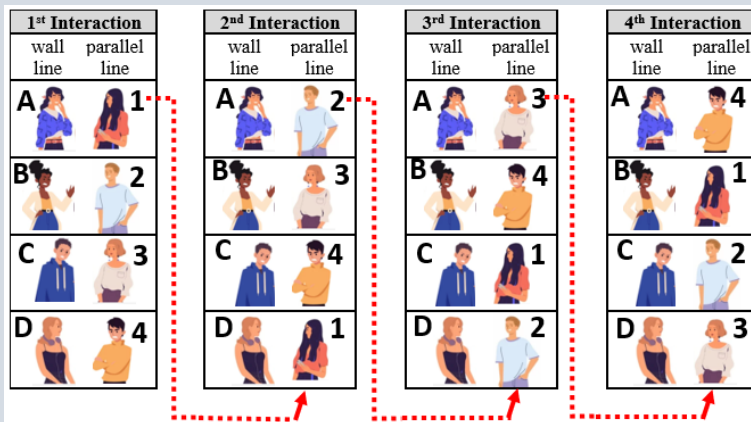
#### Parallel Lines

The Parallel Lines IPOT (Spezzini, 2009) is an optimal way for systematically establishing new interaction pairs, each with a different partner. Start this IPOT while students are still seated at their desks. Distribute a 5” by 8” card (or a half sheet of paper) to each student. Give students about 30 seconds to write questions or prompts on this talking card to use when interacting with different partners.

Ask half the students stand in a line with their backs against a wall, preferably at one arm’s length from one another. This is called the wall line. Then, ask the other students to form pairs by standing at a conversational distance from someone in the wall line (with both students in each pair facing each other). By doing so, they create a parallel line. Together, the wall line and the parallel line serve as the parallel lines for this IPOT. In Figure 2, the first column (entitled 1st Interaction) illustrates the wall line with four students and the parallel line with another four students. This example is for a class of eight students. The other three columns show different pairing iterations among these same eight students. Together, these four columns illustrate how each student participates in four interactions. For example, in each of these interactions, Student B forms part of a new pair and talks with a different partner: B-2, B-3, B-4, and B-1.

Figure 2

*Parallel Lines with Eight Students: Each Student Interacts with Four Different Partners.*



As shown in Figure 2, the first column (1st Interaction) shows students A, B, C, and D standing in the wall line and students 1, 2, 3, and 4 standing in the parallel line. This creates four student pairs: A-1, B-2, C-3, and D-4. After these pairs are formed, each student in the wall line uses their talking card to ask questions of the partner in the parallel line, and their partner responds. Then, the partners in each pair reverse their roles while remaining in the same physical location. The partner in the parallel line now uses a talking card to ask questions, and the partner in the wall line responds.

The goal of the Parallel Lines IPOT is for all student pairs to be interacting at the same time. In the first column, all eight students are speaking or listening simultaneously. In other words, four students are speaking with their respective partner while each of their partners is attentively listening. Although the simultaneous speaking of multiple pairs can create noisy classrooms (especially in larger classes), this IPOT is effective at maximizing opportunities for students to speak and, by doing so, contributes towards developing the students' speaking skills.

After determining that your students have had enough time to interact (Figure 2), have the student at the top of the parallel line (e.g., Student-1 in the 1st Interaction) walk to the end of that same line. This transition walk is represented by the red dotted arrow in Figure 2 that leads to the end of the second column (entitled 2nd Interaction), in which the same eight students interact. To ensure meaningful interactions and smooth transitions, follow these suggestions:

- Allow enough time for each interaction to meet the communication goal. However, take care about not giving too much time or else some students might become bored, which, in turn could lead to off-task behaviors.
- As you model how the students in the parallel line transition to new positions, make sure that the students in the wall line stay in their respective positions throughout this IPOT.
- To help students better understand how to form the next set of student pairs, walk alongside Student-1 and model how a student transitions from the top of the parallel line to the end of that same line. To model the pathway for this transition, walk together with Student-1 as both of you go from the top of the parallel line (first column: 1st Interaction) to the end of that line. Although this is illustrated as Figure 2's second column (called 2nd Interaction), it is still the same set of parallel lines as in the first column and, also, the same eight students.
- When walking alongside Student-1 from the top of the line to its end, go behind the parallel line or go down the middle between the wall line and the parallel line. The latter option simultaneously serves to interrupt the conversations taking place in each pair, thus, signaling to students in the parallel line to move up one spot. This transition walk is even more effective if the student walking to the end of the line (in this case, Student 1) says "Please, move" to each student in the parallel line and, also, provides a hand motion for that student to move.
- While Student-1 is walking to the end of the parallel line, the other students in that same line move up one position as is shown in the second column (2nd interaction).

After all students in the parallel line have moved (per instructions given by Student-1), students will be in the new pairs shown in Figure 2's second column (2nd Interaction): A-2, B-3, C-4, and D-1. Once again, these are the same parallel lines as in the first column but now with new pairs.

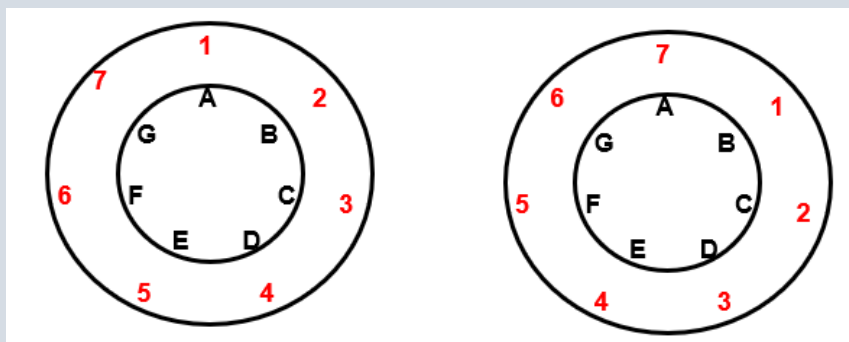
After these new pairs have had just enough time—but not too much—for asking questions and responding, ask the student at the top of the new parallel line (Student-2 in 2nd Interaction) to walk to the end of that line, as represented by the red dotted arrow in Figure 2 that leads to the end of the third column (entitled 3rd Interaction). Once again, it works best if Student-2 walks between the wall line and parallel line, telling students in the parallel line to move. If needed, guide students in forming student pairs for the 3rd Interaction (A-3, B-4, C-1, D-2). Repeat the above to re-establish the parallel line for the 4th Interaction (A-4, B-1, C-2, D-3). After students understand the transition flow, they can do this Parallel Lines IPOT with little or no guidance when implemented in future lessons.

Larger classes will have longer parallel lines with a correspondingly greater number of student pairs. For these longer lines, continue having students in the parallel line move to new positions until you feel that all students have had enough opportunities to practice speaking about the lesson content and using the target vocabulary and structures. For large classes, it is not necessary to continue this Parallel Line IPOT until exhausting all pairing configurations. Depending on the age group, excessive paired speaking might lead to some students becoming bored and initiating disruptive behavior. Moreover, depending on space and other factors, the Parallel Lines IPOT can be implemented in different ways:

- If the classroom does not have enough open wall space for half the class to form a line, this Parallel Lines IPOT can be implemented outside the classroom along a corridor wall.
- Another approach is to replace these parallel lines with concentric circles. Here, students in the inside circle stay in their original positions, and students in the outside circle walk to new positions moving in a clockwise fashion. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*Concentric Circles: First Two Stages of 14 Students Interacting in Seven Pairs*



The Parallel Lines IPOT and this Concentric Circles IPOT can also be implemented with the following adjustments:

- Young children (e.g., ages 4-5 years) can sit cross-legged on the floor in lines or circles.

- Older learners, especially if their interaction exchange is substantially longer, can sit on chairs that are placed in parallel lines or concentric circles.
- After students understand how to create parallel lines (or concentric circles), divide them into two groups with one group forming two parallel lines along the wall and the other group forming two parallel lines down the middle aisle. Similarly, one group could form two concentric circles in the front of the classroom, and the other could form two concentric circles in the back of the classroom.

### ***Roaming Reporters***

The Roaming Reporters IPOT (Seay et al, 2013) lends itself to several different applications. In this IPOT, students act as reporters interviewing each other. Students write several questions on a card or graphic organizer about a topic of interest corresponding to their age and language level. While the students are preparing their questions, move around the classroom to check on the vocabulary and grammar in their questions so that your students implement this IPOT by asking questions that are grammatically accurate. Another option is to gather the questions that students prepare in class, correct any errors in these questions, and then return the questions to students the next day for using in this Roaming Reporters IPOT.

Students take their written questions with them as they roam around the room. They stop by a classmate, read their question, and then record the classmate's verbal answers on their question sheet. This activity becomes even more authentic when students do this as a survey for later sharing with the whole class and/or as a pre-writing activity. After one classmate asks questions and the other answers, they reverse their roles so that each student has an opportunity to ask and answer questions. After this first exchange, each student finds another partner, and, together, this new pair repeats the activity. Students can determine when their exchange has ended and move on to find another partner. You can also ring a bell or use another signal to indicate a time for changing partners. Usually, it is best to end this activity after students have had six or seven interactions. In this Roaming Reporter IPOT, all students are simultaneously engaged with half speaking to their respective partner and the other half listening attentively. Once again, with so many students talking simultaneously, this IPOT tends to be quite loud.

### ***Gap-Filling Tango***

The Gap-Filling Tango IPOT (Spezzini, 2009) provides an opportunity for students to develop all four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This Gap-Filling Tango can be classified as an information gap activity. In this IPOT, all students are always engaged. While half of the students are speaking and reading, the other half are listening and writing.

Based on your lesson content, prepare two scripts—with Script A for Partner A and Script B for Partner B. Each script has the same eight sentences that are appropriate for the learners' age and language level. In Script A, odd-numbered sentences do not have any gaps (i.e., no words are missing), and even-numbered sentences have gaps (i.e., some words are missing). In Script B, odd-numbered sentences have gaps (i.e., some words are missing), and even-numbered sentences do not have any gaps (i.e., no words are missing). When preparing these scripts, create gaps by removing words that your learners already know well. In other words, any new and potentially difficult words should be visible on both scripts. Here are examples of Script A and Script B that I used when demonstrating this IPOT to teachers in a professional development session.

**Example of Script A for Partner A (used during professional development session)**

1. Today's goal is to show why teachers need to be aware of
2. the \_\_\_\_\_ faced by English learners,
3. to describe how communication breakdowns can occur,
4. and to highlight \_\_\_\_\_ to help.
5. Although teachers have many strategies for teaching,
6. they often need to know more \_\_\_\_\_.
7. What they don't know can lead to frustration.
8. Support for speaking will also help \_\_\_\_\_.

**Example of Script B for Partner B (used during professional development session)**

1. Today's goal is \_\_\_\_\_ teachers need to be aware of
2. the speaking challenges faced by English learners,
3. to describe how communication breakdowns \_\_\_\_\_,
4. and to highlight what can be done to help.
5. Although teachers have many \_\_\_\_\_,
6. they often need to know more about how to teach speaking.
7. What they don't know can lead \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Support for speaking will also help develop other skills.

Divide students into pairs or ask students to form their own pairs. Each student pair consists of Partner A and Partner B. These partners place their chairs in a side-by-side manner, facing opposite directions as shown in this picture. When seated, these partners are shoulder-to-shoulder but looking in opposite directions. By sitting in this way, Partner A and Partner B are close enough to talk comfortably with each other and ask questions. They can even look at each other. However, they cannot see what their partner is holding.



Within each pair, give Script A to Partner A and Script B to Partner B. Start by having one of the student pairs demonstrate Sentence #1 and Sentence #2 by speaking in loud voices so that the whole class can hear. This student pair demonstrates with Partner A reading aloud Script A's Sentence #1 (which does not have gaps) to Partner B who listens and silently reads Script B's Sentence #1 (which has gaps). Upon hearing the missing words being read, Partner B writes these words in the gaps on Script B. If needed, Partner B asks Partner A to reread Sentence #1 (as often as needed). Explain to students that they do not need to worry about correctly spelling the missing words. After completing the gaps for Sentence #1, Partner B reads aloud Script B's Sentence #2 (which does not have gaps) to Partner A who listens and silently reads Script A's Sentence #2 (which has gaps). Upon hearing the missing words being read, Partner A writes these words in the gaps on Script A. If needed, Partner A asks Partner B to reread sentence #2 (as often as needed).

After Sentences #1 and #2 have been demonstrated, check for understanding by asking the students who observed the demonstration to explain the procedure for doing this IPOT. When it appears that everyone understands how to implement the Gap-Filling IPOT, have all pairs start with Sentence #1. Without receiving a signal from the teacher to proceed to the next sentence, each pair, upon finishing the first sentence, moves to the second sentence and then

repeats this process, sentence by sentence. After Partners A and B have finished filling the gaps in all sentences on their respective scripts, they turn their chairs facing the same direction, compare what they wrote with their partner's script, correctly complete the gaps on each of their scripts, and then talk about this experience.

When participating in the Gap-Filling Tango IPOT, students are using all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) while practicing vocabulary, content, and structures. For more advanced students, the scripts can be created by the students themselves. By working in pairs, students can simulate situations that would naturally occur in their area of interest, thus resulting in a more authentic language task.





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# CHAPTER 41

## Strategies to Teach Reading

## Strategies to Teach Reading

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### Abstract

The process of reading might seem rather straightforward and easy, but it requires a complex interaction of skills and knowledge. Reading processes might be similar across languages, but these processes might also vary. This means that we, as English teachers, need to consider several different aspects when designing our reading curriculum and assessment. Such aspects are based on our learners' background and goals, the texts to be read, and different ways to assess reading. In this chapter, you will learn about aspects to consider when designing a reading lesson. You will also learn strategies to teach reading to students who are learning English as an additional language.

*Keywords:* reading instruction, reading processes, reading curriculum, reading assessment, teaching how to read

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## Introduction

Literacy practices are “common patterns in using reading and writing in a particular situation” (Barton, 2007, p. 36). These situations are always social; we read what someone has written, and then we write something that someone (maybe even ourselves) will read. Reading, like writing, is a key literacy practice of all written languages. Fortunately, first language (L1) and second language (L2) reading processes are similar (Grabe, 2017; Grabe & Stoller, 2020). This means that scholars and theorists can draw from L1 reading research in fields such as neuropsychology and psycholinguistics to inform best practices in the teaching of L2 reading.

Although processes in L1 reading might be similar to those in L2 reading, differences can exist between an L1 and an L2 that cause unique complexities for L2 readers. Such differences can be related to each language’s respective phonology, morphology, orthography, and writing system as well as sociocultural aspects and other language-related features. Although research on L1 reading pedagogy can provide useful insights for L2 reading pedagogy, we need to use critical awareness when working with L2 readers. We should always consider how the reading processes of L2 readers are unique compared with the reading processes of L1 readers even if both groups of students are reading the same text in the same language.

## Background

Research on the reading process continues to shed new light on what happens when we read, especially now that much extensive reading is done digitally (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). Early beliefs about the reading process relied on a linear, mechanical conceptualization with a focus on the text usually known as bottom-up processing. With time, scholars began to see the influence of the reader on reading comprehension. When reading pedagogy began focusing on the reader’s purposes, prior knowledge, and motivations, this pedagogy shifted to top-down processing. Researchers then discovered that the reading process is so complicated that it requires readers to simultaneously use bottom-up and top-down processing in an interactive or integrated way (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). In other words, when reading, we decode and draw upon our knowledge of words and other fundamentals (graphology, phonology, morphology, grammar, etc.) while subconsciously making inferences, keeping information in our short-term memory, and connecting the text with our motivations and our own experiences.

In other words, when reading, we use bottom-up processes to apply decoding skills and top-down processes to apply knowledge (Hedge, 2000). Many processes must occur simultaneously for skills and knowledge to be used when reading. Such knowledge includes

- organizing sentences in that language (syntactic knowledge),
- combining words and parts of words to make meaning (morphological knowledge),
- connecting to the world (general world knowledge),
- examining social and cultural aspects (sociocultural knowledge),
- knowing about the text (topic knowledge), and
- identifying the text’s audience, purpose, format, and author (genre knowledge).

## Major Dimensions

Although reading processes are similar for L1 and L2 readers, we need to be aware of some unique differences when comparing what L1 and L2 readers do when reading. Grabe and Stoller (2020) explained six differences in linguistic knowledge and processing when comparing L1 and L2 readers. These differences are as follows:

### *Lexical, Grammatical, and Discourse Knowledge*

L1 and L2 readers do not share the same lexical, grammatical, and discourse knowledge about the same language because it is an L1 for some readers and an L2 for others. L1 readers typically learned to read this language (their L1) after they had acquired the oral aspects of that language and internalized how it operates. However, L2 readers often learn to read this language (their L2) simultaneously while learning its oral aspects. In other words, L2 readers learn how this L2 works while learning to read. Consequently, when teaching L2 readers, we need to remember that they are learning about this new language while also learning to read it and write it. Thus, from the beginning, we need to build on the learners' growing discourse knowledge (grammar, syntax, vocabulary, text organization).

### *Metalinguistic and Metacognitive Awareness*

L2 readers often have more metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness of an L2 than they do of their L1. If we compare our own experiences when learning our L1 and an L2, we probably will not recall details of how we acquired our L1 because of having done so subconsciously. However, we can probably recall details of how we learned an L2 because of having done so consciously. Because of this, we may even be more aware of how an L2 operates linguistically than our L1. Hence, as practitioners, we need to provide reflective activities and discussions for helping L2 readers develop metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness of their L2 reading processes.

### *Language Differences Between an L1 and an L2*

Given each language's unique linguistic structure, an individual's L1 is inherently different from any L2. Of importance is the extent of these differences. For example, English and Spanish use similar orthography and share several historically based cognates. In contrast, English and Chinese are significantly different in these and other ways. To help our English learners develop reading skills in English, we need to be keenly aware of the differences between their L1 and English (as an L2).

### *Learners' Knowledge About an L2*

Some L2 learners have more knowledge about an L2 than their peers. Learners with more lexical, grammatical, and discourse knowledge about how this L2 operates tend to experience less difficulty in learning to read that language. Conversely, learners with less knowledge of how this L2 operates tend to experience greater difficulty in learning to read that language. This is called the Language Threshold Hypothesis (Clarke, 1980; Grabe & Stoller, 2020). Because the ideal linguistic threshold to learn L2 reading differs among L2 learners, we need to find out about our learners and their existing L2 knowledge before asking them to read. This means that we first need to teach basic knowledge about the targeted L2 to our L2 readers, especially

knowledge that relates directly to the text being read, before asking our students to read that text.

### ***Transfer of Reading Processes***

The transfer of some reading processes from the learners' L1 to an L2 can both aid and hinder. When reading an L2 passage, early L2 readers often rely on their L1 reading abilities and L1 knowledge as well as on world knowledge to aid them with comprehension. However, such L1 knowledge can also hinder or delay this process by interfering with both decoding and making inferences. Hence, as practitioners, we need to be watchful for when L2 readers' reliance on their L1 is reduced. This will signal an appropriate time to provide additional instruction for further developing their L2 reading abilities.

### ***Crosslinguistic Interaction***

Crosslinguistic interaction is inevitable. L2 readers will always rely to some extent on their knowledge of L1 reading. The readers' knowledge of their L1 and an emerging L2 will interact in interesting ways that are different for each individual reader. The learners' use of their L1 is an important tool in learning an L2 (Grabe & Stoller, 2020). Hence, we can support our learners with L2 reading by having them work collaboratively with other language learners when doing the same linguistic tasks.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

When planning and implementing an L2 reading curriculum, keep in mind that L1 reading and L2 reading are processes with similar aspects and unique differences (as determined by features in those languages). Hence, after first getting to know your L2 learners, select appropriate reading texts, provide explicit instruction of reading strategies, and conduct reading assessments.

### ***Know Your L2 Learners***

Before you begin curriculum planning, ask the following questions about your language learners:

- What age and/or school level are your learners?
- What languages do they use outside of the English classroom?
- What is their L1 reading level?
- What L2 reading fluency are you targeting in your reading lessons?
- Why do your learners want to read in an L2?
- What kinds of texts do your learners want to read in the L2 (or need to read)?

To answer these questions, collect data by doing a needs assessment (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). When assessing learners' needs, also learn about their interests. This information will help you to foster learners' motivation by selecting texts that are of interest to them.

### ***Select Appropriate Reading Texts***

After you know your learners' interests and motivations, work with your learners in selecting texts that align with their ages and L2 reading levels. In addition to textbooks designed to teach L2 reading, provide your L2 learners with real-world texts (e.g., menus, biographies, service

contracts, webpages). When choosing reading texts for your L2 readers, consider the following (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018):

- Text length. Choose shorter texts for intensive reading and longer texts for extensive reading.
- Vocabulary. Is the vocabulary content-specific? Academic? General? What proportion of the vocabulary will be familiar to your learners?
- Syntax. Look closely at the sentence length and complexity. Analyze the readability of the text and match it to your readers' fluency.
- Text structure. Look for cohesive devices like transitions and key words, logical ordering of ideas as well as extra characteristics that may aid in comprehension, such as vocabulary glosses, visuals such as photos or diagrams, and hyperlinks (for digital texts).
- Topics. Ensure that the topic of the selected text is familiar to the learners.

If students are interested and/or have background knowledge about a given topic, they are more likely to work harder when trying to comprehend a text (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). In this case, instead of using the above elements (length, vocabulary, syntax, structure) to analyze the appropriateness of a text, consider pre-teaching some of these elements for students to practice while reading a topic of high interest.

### ***Provide Explicit Instruction of Reading Strategies***

Students need explicit instruction of reading strategies for utilizing interactive top-down and bottom-up processes when learning to read in an L2 (Grabe, 2017; Grabe & Stoller, 2020; Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018; Oxford & Amerstorfer, 2018). When selecting reading strategies to teach your L2 learners, consider their unique needs while also addressing the different types of skills and knowledge required for reading the targeted text. These reading strategies can be cognitive (word analysis, inference, summarizing), metacognitive (self-monitoring and self-correction), and social-affective (working collaboratively with peers and instructors) (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). Several of these L2 reading strategies can be aligned according to the three stages of the reading process: before reading, during reading, and after reading.

*Before-reading strategies* take place before readers start to read. Such strategies prepare them for the reading task. To plan your before-reading strategies, consider what you know about your L2 readers and, also, about the text. Also consider how to bridge the gap between their knowledge of the strategies needed and what strategies are needed for successfully reading the text. Here are some strategies and activities to prepare L2 readers for a reading task:

- Activate readers' knowledge and interest in the topic and pre-teach any content-specific knowledge and vocabulary.
- Ask your L2 readers to write some questions about the text and make predictions about what they might learn from reading it.
- Have these readers survey the text for structural elements such as title, sections, headings, and information about the author(s).

*During-reading strategies* take place when readers are reading the text. Research has illustrated the importance of how readers interact with a text while they are in the process of reading, rather than what they do immediately before reading or just after reading (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2018). These during-reading strategies often need to be explicitly taught, as many L2 readers do not intuitively think about doing them. Here are some strategies to do while reading:

- Have your L2 readers do a first reading of the text. During this first reading, they skim the text quickly to get a sense of its main idea.
- Ask your L2 readers to follow their first reading with a close reading of the text. At this point, have them answer the questions that they had asked as a before-reading strategy or some questions that you provide. These readers can also take notes in the margins or on paper (organized by paragraph or by section). They can even highlight interesting points or unfamiliar vocabulary.

*After-reading strategies* take place after the L2 readers have read a text several times (and hopefully after they have completed before-reading and during-reading activities.). The goals of after-reading strategies include evaluating and extending the readers' learning. As such, some of these activities might help informally assess learners' needs and comprehension. At this point in the reading process, have L2 readers do several after-reading strategies and activities:

- Ask your L2 readers to summarize the text, either in writing or aloud in small groups.
- Have your L2 readers consider these aspects: Who is the author? What is the author's purpose? What is the structure of the text? Who is the intended audience of the text?
- Guide your L2 readers in reflecting about the text, either by writing individually or by speaking in small groups. When reflecting, they incorporate their reactions, experiences, feelings, and/or critiques about this text into their own evaluation of the text.

### ***Conduct Reading Assessments***

Because reading assessment is as complicated as the reading process, take care when designing and conducting reading assessments. Assessments specifically for L2 reading can contain many components. Hence, when designing your reading assessments, do the following:

- Consider how the needs and interests of your L2 readers align with your targeted standards, goals, and learning outcomes.
- Select strategies for formative and summative assessment.
- Decide whether to assess how L2 readers do controlled responses (e.g., multiple-choice questions and cloze activities) or constructed responses (e.g., summaries, extended responses, logs, journals) or both.

In this chapter, you learned about bottom-up and top-down processes involved with reading. You learned about differences in linguistic knowledge and reading processes between L1 and L2 readers. You also learned that an L2 reading curriculum should address L2 learners' needs regarding text selection, provide explicit instruction of reading strategies, and include assessment.

## **KEY CONCEPTS**

Here are some key concepts about strategies to teach L2 reading:

- Reading involves many complicated processes, whether reading in an L1 or an L2.
- Bottom-up processes of reading require learners to recognize letters, words, and sound-spelling relationships while top-down processing focuses on how readers construct knowledge from a text. Interactive models of reading involve both bottom-up and top-down reading strategies.

- L1 readers and L2 readers share similar reading processes but with some unique differences.
- Learners should have some input on text selection. Texts should be selected based on the learners' interests and language levels. Activities should be designed to facilitate their reading process.
- The instruction of explicit reading strategies is critical. Before-reading, during-reading, and after-reading strategies should be modeled and taught.
- Reading assessment can take many forms depending on curriculum, outcomes, goals, and learners.

## Discussing

Based on the above reading strategies, develop meaningful answers:

1. Think of your own experiences with learning how to read in your L1 and compare them to learning to read in an L2. How were those experiences similar? How were they different?
2. When teaching L2 readers, how can you assess their reading needs and preferences?
3. In what ways can you involve your L2 readers in text selection?
4. What reading strategies do you use before, during, and after reading. How might you teach those strategies to L2 readers?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned, think about several of your L2 readers and do the following:

1. Draft a needs assessment to first gather information from your L2 readers and then to plan your reading curriculum.
2. Work in a small group, choose three texts, and analyze the appropriateness of these texts for your L2 readers.
3. By using these texts, develop strategies for your L2 readers to use before, during, and after reading and, also, design formative and summative assessments.



## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about strategies to teach L2 reading, visit these websites:

- Lesson plans. <http://englishisapieceofcake.com/how-to-teach-esl.html>
- Phonics. <https://www.phonics.com/>
- Sight words. <https://sightwords.com/>
- Strategic. <https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2018/01/08/reading-skills-strategic-reading/>
- Theories. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/theories-reading>
- Videos. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/teaching-reading-writing>

## See Also

Reading strategies and related aspects are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community* by B. Crosbie and D. Carter

**Chapter 28** *Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature* by S. Ruffinelli and C. Ortiz

**Chapter 42** *Strategies to Teach Writing* by M. Harrison

**Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

**Chapter 45** *Strategies to Teach Vocabulary* by G. Dean-Fastnacht

**Chapter 46** *Introduction to Language Assessment* by N. Kuhlman

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# CHAPTER 42

## Strategies to Teach Writing

## Strategies to Teach Writing

Melinda S. Harrison

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### Abstract

Every day we complete writing tasks; some are easy, and some are difficult. As such, the teaching of writing can be challenging. Writing pedagogy used to focus on students' form and product, such as grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. However, in the late 20th century, the focus on writing in a second or other language began to include an emphasis on process; genre awareness; purposes and modes of writing; and needs of the audience. An effective writing teacher will incorporate these aspects into the curriculum while understanding how to scaffold learning, create authentic and collaborative writing tasks for students, and respond appropriately to students' writing. In this chapter, you will learn basic knowledge of these aspects for the teaching of writing as well as strategies to guide students to be effective writers in English.

*Keywords:* teaching strategies, writing pedagogy, writing process, L2 writing, English learners, genre awareness

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## Introduction

Writing in any language is difficult, but especially in a second or additional language (L2). Regardless of the language, writing requires authors to think about communicative factors such as the writing purpose, the targeted reader, the best mode (with words or with signs), and the best format that will work for the specific communication situation.

As I write this chapter, I am relying on knowledge of what I do both as a writer and as a teacher who teaches writing to students who are non-native English users. What are my writing strategies? Initially, I have to think about the communication situation. What genre (type of text) do I plan to write? At the moment, I am writing a textbook chapter. So, I need to think about my readers. Most will be pre-service teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL). My purpose is to share my knowledge with pre-service teachers about how to teach writing in English. The best mode is probably linguistic (with words), but I may decide to show an idea with a visual graphic, such as a model or picture. As with most textbooks, the format is chosen by the editors, and so I will follow that format when writing this chapter.

An effective writer considers the communication situation before and as they write. In this chapter, I will share more information on these considerations.

## Background

Writing is “the most important technology in the history of the human species, except how to make fire,” (Powell, 2009, p. 11). Undoubtedly, you have completed many writing tasks today. Perhaps you wrote lists of assignments you need to complete, chores that need to be done, or items to buy at the store. Maybe you wrote a WhatsApp to your best friend or sent an email to your professor. Among these writing tasks, each has a communication situation which includes an author (you), a reader (either yourself or someone else), a purpose, a format, and a mode.

Although writing in a first language (L1) can be challenging, writing in an L2 can be daunting. Most of us learn to write in our L1 early in life. However, writing in an L2 requires that we know the basics of another language, such as the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. Second language writing researchers study how learning to write in an L2 is unique to learning to write in one’s L1 (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Teaching learners to write in an L2 requires us to teach some L1 writing strategies while adapting our teaching to the uniqueness of the L2. As you become more experienced EFL writing instructors, you can identify hurdles for your students based on their L1, their prior knowledge of writing in their L1, their academic development in their L1 and L2, and their potential purpose or need for writing in the L2.

## Major Dimensions

Before you plan lessons to teach writing in English, consider the learning context, which consists of your learners and the planned learning outcomes. To understand the learning context, conduct a needs assessment to determine what your learners already know and what they need to learn (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Here are some questions to get started, but you can surely add more:

- What age/school level are the learners?

- What languages do the learners use?
- Where do the learners use their languages? At school, at home, at work, or elsewhere?
- How much academic literacy do the learners have in their languages, including English?
- For what purposes will they need to write in English? For school, work, travel, or another purpose?

Of course, you will also want to get to know your students' interests. Reid (2011), a U.S. writing scholar, says that writers should "Write about what you know about, are curious about, are passionate about (or what you can find a way to be curious about or interested in)" (p. 4). Undoubtedly, we have more fun when we write about something that interests us than about something that does not. The same is true for our students. You should help your learners find authentic writing tasks and purposes that interest them and show them tools to make the writing process less mysterious or complicated. If you can do that, your students will enjoy more success with their writing in English and in their L1.

When you get to know your students, you learn about what prior knowledge they bring to the learning situation. But what do they need to learn? The answer to this question will depend on the learning context. If you are teaching in a typical school context, perhaps your students need to practice writing in English for school purposes. Or maybe your learners want to know how to write in English to work remotely or in a country where English is one of the primary languages. How your students plan to use the language is an important factor.

Another factor to consider is the type of writing task(s) your students will need to practice in English. As explained earlier, every writing task has a communication situation that includes an author, a reader, a purpose, and a format. Types of writing tasks are called genres, and there are more communication genres than could ever be counted, with more being developed all the time (Caplan & Johns, 2019). Writing to your friend using WhatsApp is a genre. The research paper you wrote in secondary school is also a genre. Additionally, the genres within a given category can vary from one another. For example, a research paper for one teacher might be very different from a research paper for another teacher. This is why writers need to have genre awareness (Caplan & Johns, 2019). Once you, the teacher, identify the learning outcomes and the genres that your students need to practice, you can plan how to bridge the gap between what they know and what they need to know.

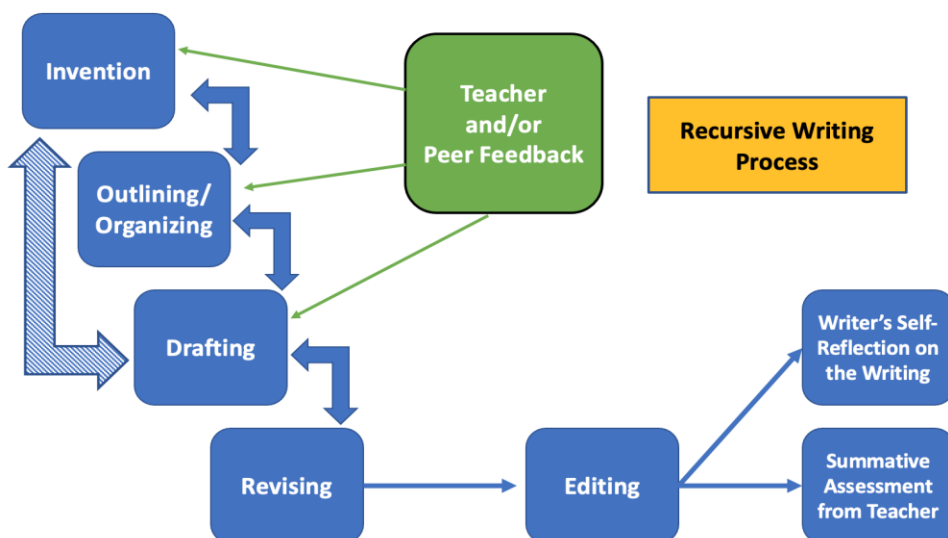
## Pedagogical Applications

Second language writing requires a learner to have some mastery of language components such as vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. These ELT topics are covered elsewhere in this book. Here, we will discuss writing processes and assessment, which are central concepts for the teaching of second language writing.

### *Process: How Do We Write What We Need to Write?*

After you and your students have agreed upon the genre they will write and the communication situation (reader, purpose, mode, format), it is time to start the writing process. Writing is a recursive process, which means that writers might need to return to prior steps while composing. To help you understand these steps, I have illustrated this recursive process in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Recursive Writing Process.*

The first step in the writing process is invention, which involves activities such as brainstorming, drawing concept maps, freewriting, and discussing the topic with the teacher or with classmates. Invention is perhaps the most important step, as this is where writers generate their ideas. During the invention stage, writers should think about their communication situation: What is their purpose with the writing? What does their reader need to know? Do the writers need to include background information, examples, or supporting details from personal experience, from their textbooks, or from other sources? Writers may find they need more content to include in their writing. If so, have them return to this invention step later in the writing (see Figure 1).

After student-writers have some ideas, they should proceed to outlining. In this step, consider reminding your students about genre awareness. Guide them in thinking about how their writing task should best be organized for their communication situation (purpose, reader, mode, format). Show students some examples of the genre they are writing and ask them to analyze the format of the writing. The analysis of these examples could include identifying the structure of the introduction, background information, general statements, main point of the writing (often called a thesis), details, examples, and conclusion. Keep in mind that a writing outline can take many different forms. Such outlines can be formal with Roman numerals and letters, or they can be bullet points. Students can also choose to draw a picture (or create a graphic) showing the organization of what they plan to write such as the graphic (Figure 1) that I created to help you understand the writing process.

The next step in the process is drafting, during which writers organize their ideas from the invention stage into the structure or format they selected during the outlining stage. Notice in Figure 1 that the drafting stage comes after the invention and outlining stages. However, writers can always return to those earlier stages, if they need to brainstorm more information, do more

research, or adjust their outline. Circling back to prior stages is not only appropriate but, also, highly recommended.

One crucial element of the writing process is feedback. Writers need feedback from the teacher and their peers throughout the writing process, not just at the end (Ferris, 2015). Although feedback can focus on many elements, intentionally focus your feedback to match a given stage in the writing process. During early drafting stages, feedback should focus on ideas and organization. For example, if writers are in the invention stage, feedback from the teacher and peers should focus on ideas. If writers are in the outlining stage, feedback should focus on organization. It is not helpful for feedback to focus on minor concerns like grammar and punctuation early in the process unless syntax errors are interfering with intelligibility (Ferris, 2011). Focus your feedback on content and organization, including the use of transitional elements, up until the end of the drafting process, which is the appropriate time to begin addressing grammar and punctuation.

Model for your students how to provide written feedback. As with all activities that students will be doing, first model the desired task (i.e., giving written feedback) and then have students give written feedback to each other while collaboratively working on a sample writing project. If a teacher does not provide direction and a model in how to provide written feedback, students often revert to marking their peers' grammar and punctuation rather than providing constructive feedback on content and organization. After students provide peer feedback, consider giving your feedback in writing conferences with pairs or groups of students, or individually with one student. During a longer writing unit, it is reasonable for you, as the writing teacher, to have more than one writing conference with a given student.

The revising stage is often confused with the editing stage. Note in Figure 1 that the revising stage comes before and is separate from the editing stage. Revising means that the writer is making content or organizational changes to the draft. Editing, on the other hand, is correcting sentence-level concerns like grammar and punctuation. Feedback at the editing stage might involve mini lessons with individual students during one-on-one conferences. However, if many students are making the same grammar or punctuation errors, such feedback might be with the entire class.

### ***Assessment***

Most writing teachers find the assessment of writing as the most difficult part in teaching how to write. As with most elements of curriculum design, have your students start their writing project with the end in mind. Identify the outcomes that you want your students to accomplish with this writing task. Divide these outcomes into smaller criteria and use these criteria for designing a rubric to score the writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). If possible, design a rubric specifically for each writing task. Share this rubric with students before they start the writing process. This rubric will later serve as a basis for your summative assessment of each student's writing.

After completing the recursive writing process, your student-writers are ready for the summative assessment. However, before your students actually submit their product, again share the rubric, explain how their writing will be assessed, and invite them to self-assess their own writing (Ferris, 2015). Because most students like receiving personalized teacher feedback on their writing, consider writing a short paragraph at the bottom of each student's rubric describing the strengths of their writing as well as some opportunities for improvement. Afterwards, ask



students to reflect on their writing process. This can be a separate assignment in which students reflect on successes and challenges as well as potential applications to their next writing project.

This chapter presented the basics on how to teach L2 writing. Language learning is a process that occurs with time and practice. Give your students real writing tasks, teach them genre awareness, guide them through the writing process, and support them along the way.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about strategies to teach writing:

- Get to know your students, which includes knowing about their prior education, their knowledge about writing, their L1, and their need or desire to write in English.
- L2 writers of English have unique challenges in comparison with students who are writing in their L1.
- Writers should analyze the communication situation of the task: audience/reader, purpose, format, and mode (linguistic or visual).
- The writing process has a beginning and an end, with steps along the way. Nonetheless, the writing process is recursive rather than linear.
- Writing feedback and assessment should be intentional and focused on the objectives for the specific stage of a writing task.

## Discussing

Based on your knowledge about strategies to teach writing, answer these questions:

1. What do you need to know about your learners, and how might you learn that information?
2. Brainstorm some ways to help your students be aware of the features of various genres.
3. Think about the challenges you have had with writing, both in your L1 and in English. Based on your own experience, what can you share about the writing process with your students that might help them and reassure them?
4. Construct a rubric for your next writing assignment, based on its task and outcomes.

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about strategies to teach writing, do the following:

1. For each writing task that you do in your L1 or in English, reflect on the communication situation and the process steps. By acquiring a self-awareness of your own writing, you will be able to better relate with your students and their experiences with writing.

2. Begin creating files with ideas for real writing tasks that might fit with your current or future teaching context. These can be ideas that you develop for this purpose or that you happen to find.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about strategies to teach writing, visit these websites:

- 5-minute writing conferences. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/5-minute-writing-conferences>
- Constructing rubrics. <https://www.thoughtco.com/esl-essay-writing-rubric-1212374>
- Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) ESL teacher resources. [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/english\\_as\\_a\\_second\\_language/esl\\_instructors\\_tutors/esl\\_teacher\\_resources/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/english_as_a_second_language/esl_instructors_tutors/esl_teacher_resources/index.html)
- Writing spaces: Readings on writing. <https://writingspaces.org/>

## See Also

Related strategies on the teaching of writing are offered in the following chapters of this book:

**Chapter 2** *The Diversity of Global Englishes* by L. Barratt

**Chapter 17** *Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output* by C. Cristóful

**Chapter 24** *Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms* by Y. Grevtseva and E. Zyrianova

**Chapter 28** *Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature* by S. Ruffinelli and C. Ortiz

**Chapter 31** *Using Translation and Interpretation in ELT* by S. Terol

**Chapter 38** *A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar* by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin

**Chapter 41** *Strategies to Teach Reading* by E. Kryukova and M. Harrison

**Chapter 43** *Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills* by L. Fuller

**Chapter 46** *Introduction to Language Assessment* by N. Kuhlman

**Chapter 49** *E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning* by B. Jiménez

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# CHAPTER 43

## Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills

## Strategies to Teach Integrated Skills

Lynn P. Fuller

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### Abstract

One approach to language teaching has been the teaching of skills in isolation, which has often been done in separate classes—each with its own focus (e.g., grammar, reading, writing, speaking, listening). When the goal of language teaching shifted from discrete language skills to language functions, this perspective shifted from isolated skills to integrated skills (Derbel & Al-Mohammadi, 2015; Tajzad & Ostovar-Namaghi, 2014). When multiple language skills are integrated in a single activity or lesson, students are challenged with learning the information and using it through interaction with other students (Hinkel, 2006). By interacting with new material, students are better prepared to reach language goals. In this chapter, you will learn about classroom lessons based on real-life situations through which students develop practical experiences with using their new language. You will also learn several strategies to teach integrated skills that will lead students towards authentic language use.

*Keywords:* integrated skill instruction, language skills, language functions, learner interaction, English teaching strategies

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## Introduction

We use language to communicate and interact with others. To do this in a new language, learners must participate in lessons designed to practice multiple skills in a single lesson. Traditionally, there are four main language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These four skills can work together in broader categories such as oral skills (speaking and listening) and written skills (reading and writing) or as productive skills (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (listening and reading). To support students' proficiency in all four of these skills, teachers need to understand how these skills are interrelated. Speaking and listening are obviously connected with each other as are reading and writing. However, students also need the ability to read a text, discuss the text (by speaking and listening), and finally write about what they have read and understood. This progression of skills is often incorporated within scaffolded learning tasks that provide multiple ways of interacting with new vocabulary and grammatical structures. By examining your instruction from an integrated skills perspective, you can better prepare your students to use English authentically by developing all four of these language skills.

## Background

Historically, language would often be taught in isolated lessons focused on a specific language skill. Examples are Coleman's Reading Approach (1920s), the Grammar Translation Method, and the Audiolingual or Oral Situational Approaches (Celce-Murcia, 2014). Over time, language teachers and theorists began to realize that no single approach was universally effective in achieving fluency and that a targeted skill approach could perhaps hinder growth. Moreover, because the teaching of isolated skills does not model authentic language, it also does not effectively lead to authentic language production. Fortunately, by integrating skills in the classroom, we can provide practice opportunities for language learners to help them develop fluency (Derbel & Al-Mohammadi, 2015; Tajzad & Ostovar-Namaghi, 2014). Through ongoing practice, learners can build their language and become stronger users of that language.

When building their language proficiency, learners usually do not experience equal development in each of their language skills (Hinkel, 2017). Learners might develop one skill more quickly than another because of prior exposure or language transfer issues. For example, students whose other languages do not use a Romanized alphabet may struggle with writing because of their unfamiliarity with the orthography. Similarly, timid students are often reluctant to speak, and students with low literacy in a home language might have issues with reading. By recognizing these learning situations, teachers can provide additional support for student learning. When teachers choose teaching strategies that integrate language skills in authentic language use, students may have more success in developing fluency and can thus make better progress towards meeting their language goals.

During lessons with an integrated skills approach, learners can participate in repeated practice without the pressure of perfecting each skill simultaneously. For example, after reading a text, students discuss it with classmates. This discussion allows each student to negotiate meaning and check their understanding. Without the pressure of correctly answering questions on their own, students dedicate their time to achieving deeper understanding of the meaning based on the language being learned rather than an individual grammar structure (Tajzad & Ostovar-Namaghi, 2014). By reaching an overall understanding of the language, students can recognize additional occurrences of structures in repeated exposures and thus improve their use of the target language.

## Major Dimensions

Prepare your class for learning before integrating two or more language skills within the same lesson. Because your students might be exposed to language forms above their proficiency level, scaffold lessons to ensure their success. For example, help your students by pre-teaching vocabulary and grammar (Hinkel, 2017). Even though students might have receptive vocabulary, they need scaffolded support to be able to use that vocabulary in a productive manner during an integrated skills lesson. Additionally, based on lesson content, students might need background knowledge to prepare them for understanding new content (Derbel & Al-Mohammadi, 2015; Echevarría et al., 2017). This is especially important in contexts of English as a foreign language, where the lesson content might be drawn from Anglophone topics and environments that could be unfamiliar to the students.

When participating in an integrated skills lesson, students can use language introduced through one skill (e.g., reading) when practicing another skill (e.g., speaking). For example, students might notice a new word or grammar structure during a reading task that they can reproduce when writing. Additionally, they may hear correct pronunciation during a listening task that they can reproduce when speaking. Such modeling can benefit students when teachers incorporate it in lessons with integrated skills (Derbel & Al-Mohammadi, 2015).

In the curriculum planning stage, consider which teaching approach is usually associated with integrated skills and how this can be applied to the students' learning context. On the one hand, Oxford (2001) recommended taking either a content-based approach or a task-based approach. A content-based approach uses academic information like mathematics, science, or history while simultaneously teaching language skills. A task-based approach engages students in producing a product, completing a task, or doing a performance. On the other hand, Hinkel (2006) suggested using an information-based model when taking an integrated skills approach. Here, students are engaged in learning and can participate in meaningful communication.

Determining the needs and goals of your students is also very important. Design and provide instruction that is aligned with student needs. Your instructional focus, selected content, and targeted product should align with your students' language learning goals (Hinkel, 2018). When integrating language skills, identify the types of situations in which students want to use English. For example, two situations of language use for adult learners might be academics and work. After determining the situation, develop lessons that model the authentic language needed in that situation. Such information-based models can benefit your classroom by providing a real-life structure for your students to learn.

## Pedagogical Applications

Teaching language from an integrated skills approach requires conscious planning to maintain a balance among all four language skills. While many integrated strategies exist that could benefit your classroom, the greatest effects on integration come from the curriculum that is chosen and the choices that are made in lesson preparation. As you look at the objectives to be covered, think about authentic applications of this information. Because some objectives might have a wide range of authentic applications, choose the applications that promise to be the most relevant to your classroom. Plan activities for classroom practice that expose your students to information in multiple ways, thus allowing them to use different language domains. Through

such planning, provide your students with multiple opportunities for using all four language skills.

As an integral part of planning, decide how to best introduce new content to your students. Initial exposure to a new topic should include relevant information to help students understand the topic. Helping your students build background information provides them with an opportunity to develop knowledge on a subject and increases their language use. Help your students build background knowledge by asking them to connect new ideas with information they already know. Have them watch a video, preview important vocabulary, participate in a group activity, or read a text. These activities will prepare your students for learning new content and for using English to receive and produce language about that content.

Whenever possible, plan skills-integrated lessons that help students apply their new language skills to real-life situations. Three examples are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Planning the Use of Real-Life Applications.*

Objective	Real-Life Application	Classroom Practice (Lessons with Integrated Skills)
Explain ideas and opinions	Support your point of view in conversation	<b>Read</b> a passage about environmental issues concerning clean water. <b>Discuss</b> this passage with a partner. Collaboratively <b>compose</b> a poster that encourages others to take your point of view.
Answer wh-questions that express likes and dislikes	Answer questions during career counseling	<b>Watch</b> a video about choosing a career. <b>Discuss</b> in a group what personal characteristics could impact whether a position is a good fit. <b>Write</b> a list of questions that could be asked in a career counseling session. <b>Interview</b> a partner.
Identify cause/effect comparisons	Write a lab report in science	<b>Watch</b> a video of an experiment or do an experiment in the classroom. In groups, have students <b>identify</b> the question asked (hypothesis), products, reactants, and the reason that the reaction occurred. Individually, <b>write</b> a paragraph that explains the experiment using comparison vocabulary (e.g., if/then, as a result, therefore, consequently).

During all three lessons in Table 1, students become introduced to the new content by reading or listening, which are receptive skills. After that, students clarify their understanding by speaking with classmates (i.e., discuss, identify), which is a productive skill but occurs jointly with listening. In the last part of each lesson, students participate in a writing task (i.e., compose, write), which is also a productive skill. In other words, these lessons started with receptive skills and ended with productive skills.





A slightly different approach to sequencing language skills is the routine of talk-read-talk-write (Motley, 2016), which can be very beneficial for students struggling with one or more language skills. The order of these skills can be modified to meet student needs. For example, if students struggle with speaking, they can first read and then discuss. If students are beginning learners, shorten the reading passages and increase the talk breaks. In this way, students can discuss shorter parts, one at a time, to gain greater comprehension as they go along. As students are exposed to new vocabulary and grammar, they build an understanding of the content. Consider ending the integrated skills sequence with writing such as was shown in Table 1.

Several other strategies are also effective at combining two or more language skills. For example, have students enact real-life scenarios in groups by using their listening and speaking skills. Here, students must listen carefully to be able to answer their classmates' questions. Another example is a strategy for understanding information on a chart or poster. Have students work in pairs with one student asking a question while the other finds the information, reads it, and then responds orally. Students reverse roles for asking and answering the next question and all subsequent questions. After that, each pair summarizes the material orally and then in writing.

Advertising materials and public service announcements serve well as the basis for this type of integrated skills approach as is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Summer Road Trip Reminders Scenario*

<h2 style="color: red; text-align: center;">Summer Road Trip Safety Reminders</h2>  <p><b>Before you back out of your drive, make sure your home and car are ready.</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Home Prep</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lock all doors and windows</li> <li>● Keep lights on set timers</li> <li>● Stop mail and newspaper deliveries</li> <li>● Arrange for lawn care</li> </ul> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Vehicle Prep</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check pressure in all tires</li> <li>● Have a pro check A/C in vehicle</li> <li>● Replace worn windshield wipers</li> <li>● Have a pro inspect your brakes</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;"></p>	<p><b>Home Prep</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lock all doors and windows</li> <li>● Keep lights on set timers</li> <li>● Stop mail and newspaper deliveries</li> <li>● Arrange for lawn care</li> </ul>	<p><b>Vehicle Prep</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check pressure in all tires</li> <li>● Have a pro check A/C in vehicle</li> <li>● Replace worn windshield wipers</li> <li>● Have a pro inspect your brakes</li> </ul>	<p>Directions:</p> <p><b>Student A</b> reads the infographic and becomes familiar with the information. Student A needs to be prepared to answer questions about the infographic.</p> <p><b>Student B</b> reads the questions. Student B needs to be prepared to ask questions based on the information they hear.</p> <p>(EXAMPLE)</p> <p>Student B: What do I need to have ready before I leave for my trip?</p> <p>Student A: You need to have your home and car ready.</p>
<p><b>Home Prep</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lock all doors and windows</li> <li>● Keep lights on set timers</li> <li>● Stop mail and newspaper deliveries</li> <li>● Arrange for lawn care</li> </ul>	<p><b>Vehicle Prep</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check pressure in all tires</li> <li>● Have a pro check A/C in vehicle</li> <li>● Replace worn windshield wipers</li> <li>● Have a pro inspect your brakes</li> </ul>		

<p>Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do I need to have ready before I leave for my trip?</li> <li>2. How can I prepare my car?</li> <li>3. Can I do these things, or do I need to pay someone?</li> </ol>	<p>Student B: How can I prepare my car?</p> <p>Student A: You need to check the pressure in the tires, check the A/C in the car, replace your windshield wipers, and have a pro inspect your brakes.</p> <p>Student B: Can I do these things, or do I need to pay someone?</p> <p>Student A: You need to pay to check the A/C and the brakes, but you can check the tires and windshield wipers.</p>
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*Note.* Image of the "Summer Road Trip Infographic" by State Farm is licensed under CC BY 2.0: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/?ref=openverse>

In this chapter, you have learned about the basics on why and how to teach integrated skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in your English classes. You have read several examples about how to incorporate all four skills in a single lesson. You have also learned about the importance of doing conscious planning for successfully designing integrated skills lessons and, also, of situating these integrated skills lessons within real-life situations.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about teaching integrated skills:

- The four main language skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These can be divided into oral skills (listening, speaking) and written skills (reading, writing) or into productive skills (speaking, writing) and receptive skills (listening, reading).
- By integrating these four skills within the same lesson, teachers can provide more practice for each of the skills.
- When using integrated skills, it is important to consider the targeted objectives for that lesson, the goals of the students, and the structure of the course.
- The expectations for each of these skills should be adjusted to match the language level of each student or group of students.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about teaching integrated skills, answer these questions:

1. How can integrated skills enhance student language production?
2. What are important things to consider when incorporating integrated skills into a lesson plan?
3. What is the role of building background for students when learning and using a new language, especially through an integrated skills approach?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice using your new knowledge about teaching integrated skills, do the following:

1. Spend 10 minutes watching a group of people interacting. This can be in class, at a café, or on the street. What do you notice about how they use the four language skills?
2. Talk to people who are currently taking an English class. What are some reasons people learn English? What types of language skills do they need to reach their goal?

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge and application of integrated skills, visit these websites:

- Building background knowledge.  
<https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/background-knowledge-and-ells-what-teachers-need-know>
- Creating a language rich classroom. <https://tankhuynh.com/29-trtw/>
- Viewing an integrated skills lesson.  
<https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2018/08/09/integrated-skills-activity-based-inventions/>

## See Also

Other suggestions on teaching one or more language skills are provided in these chapters:

- Chapter 20** *Creating an ELT Classroom Community* by B. Crosbie and D. Carter  
**Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess

- Chapter 26** *Counterbalancing Content and Language Integrated Learning* by A. Roca  
**Chapter 28** *Teaching English to Young Learners Through Authentic Literature* by S. Ruffinelli and C. Ortiz  
**Chapter 36** *Task-Based Approach with Adult Learners* by I. Giménez and C. Rolón  
**Chapter 39** *Strategies to Teach Listening* by E. Núñez  
**Chapter 40** *Strategies to Teach Speaking* by S. Spezzini  
**Chapter 41** *Strategies to Teaching Reading* by E. Kryukova and M. Harrison  
**Chapter 42** *Strategies to Teach Writing* by M. Harrison

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Photo by Edho Pratama on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 44

## Strategies to Teach Pronunciation

# Strategies to Teach Pronunciation

Susan Spezzini

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## Abstract

Language learners initially hear sounds of a second language (L2) through the filter of their first language. Because of this, they tend to say L2 sounds like they hear them rather than how such sounds are said by proficient L2 speakers. You can probably recall your own challenges at trying to pronounce L2 words. Thinking that you had repeated an L2 word as modeled by a proficient speaker, you were frustrated with the well-intentioned response, “No, not like that.” After repeating several times, you were still unable to say this word just like it had been modeled. You might have wondered why saying this word was so challenging. In this chapter, you will find answers to many of your questions about pronunciation, including intonation. You will learn about common challenges regarding English sounds and intonation. You will also learn several pronunciation teaching strategies to help English learners overcome pronunciation challenges.

*Keywords:* pronunciation teaching strategies, intelligibility, L1 filter, interference, intonation, phonemes, segmental features, suprasegmental features

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## Introduction

English language teachers often receive little preparation for teaching pronunciation (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Consequently, such teachers are often ineffective at helping language learners with English sounds and intonation. Saying “Repeat after me” and modeling a word’s correct pronunciation usually does not help. However, by using pronunciation teaching strategies, you can help learners improve their pronunciation and speak more intelligibly.

Language learners need pronunciation support because their first language (L1) interferes with how they perceive and produce words and intonation in a second language (L2). For example, learners perceive L2 sounds based on how related sounds are produced in their own language (Swan & Smith, 2001). For example, even when proficient English speakers say “sheet” as clearly as possible, Spanish-speaking English learners might still hear and say “shit,” which can cause miscommunication. Differences in pitch and intonation can also cause miscommunication. For example, when asking a question (e.g., “How are you?”), English speakers use English intonation, which has a high pitch. However, when Spanish-speaking English learners ask this same question (“How are you?”), they often use their Spanish intonation, which has a lower pitch (Coe, 2001). This lower pitch can be perceived by English listeners as a sign of boredom or even rudeness, which was not the English learners’ intention (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). When English learners use their L1 intonation to speak English, this can negatively affect their intelligibility and interfere with their intended message.

## Background

Intelligibility is defined as speech produced by L2 speakers being understood by L1/L2 listeners (Munro & Derwing, 2020). Studies have shown that the intelligibility of English learners is usually more related to how these learners use English stress, rhythm, pitch, and intonation (suprasegmental features) than to how they produce individual sounds (segmental features), which are the vowels and consonants (Levis & Grant, 2003). As teachers, we can help English learners increase their intelligibility by using strategies to teach pronunciation. Rather than trying to eliminate accents, we use these strategies to help learners produce intelligible speech.

When we implement pronunciation teaching strategies, our L2 learners usually begin to speak more intelligibly. Their improved pronunciation contradicts commonly held beliefs about pronunciation (Grant, 2014). Several of these disproven beliefs (i.e., misconceptions) are as follows:

- Adult learners are unable to improve their pronunciation. = myth
- Young learners do not need help with pronunciation. = myth
- Learners are offended and their identity affected if pronunciation is corrected. = myth
- Only native speakers are capable of teaching pronunciation to L2 learners. = myth

For L2 learners to speak more intelligibly, they need help from teachers who know how to implement pronunciation teaching strategies. To meet your learners’ needs, consider using recommended pronunciation strategies even if pronunciation is not a separate course in your institution’s curriculum or a recurring element across courses (Levis & Grant, 2003).



## Major Dimensions

Each language has its own unique phonology that consists of

- segmental features or segmentals (vowel and consonant sounds), and
- suprasegmental features or suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm, pitch, intonation).

This phonology is hardwired in the brain of native speakers when they are very young. The hardwiring of L1 phonology acts like a filter prompting language learners to use their L1 phonology when hearing and saying L2 words (Swan & Smith, 2001). Consequently, when learners speak an L2, their L1 filter causes interference, and this, in turn, can lead to miscommunication. One example of L1 interference is when English learners from Spanish and other L1s pronounce “beach” using an L1 vowel instead of an English vowel. This sound mismatch might cause English listeners to hear “bitch,” which was not the intention of these English learners who were trying to say “beach.” Another example of interference is when English learners say “Yes, I like it here” using low pitch from their L1 intonation instead of high pitch from English intonation. This intonation mismatch might make English listeners feel uncomfortable and perhaps even offended, which was not the intention of these English learners (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). To better understand L1 interference, let’s first examine phonemes and then the suprasegmentals and segmentals.

### *Phonemes*

Phonemes are segmentals (sounds) that differentiate meaning between otherwise identical words (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). For example, the English words “meat” (food derived from animals) and “mitt” (glove used in baseball) have different meanings but are pronounced identically except for one sound, which happens to be the vowel. In “meat” and “mitt,” the pronunciation of each word’s vowel signals a different meaning for that word. Because of this, both vowels are distinct phonemes. “Meat” is pronounced with an /iy/ phoneme, and “mitt” with an /i/ phoneme. In phonology and linguistics, we write phonemes between slanted bars: /iy/ and /i/.

With almost identical pronunciation but different meanings, “meat” and “mitt” are what we call a minimal pair. Native speakers do not confuse words in a minimal pair. However, L2 learners confuse such words because their brain perceives the L2 sounds through their L1 filter. This confusion stems from L1 interference (Swan & Smith, 2001). English learners tend to hear “meat” and “mitt” as having the same vowel, usually one of their L1 vowels such as the Spanish /i/ in *mí*. Though similar, Spanish /i/ is different from both English /iy/ and /i/ (Coe, 2001).

Phonemes can also be suprasegmentals (e.g., stress and pitch) that differentiate meaning between otherwise identical words (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). For example, the English words “desert” (arid region) and “dessert” (sweet food after dinner) have different meanings but are pronounced almost the same. Here, stress is the biggest difference, with “desert” stressed on the first syllable and “dessert” stressed on the second syllable. Similarly, pitch is the main difference between “Really?” (confused and seeking a response) and “Really!” (stern and ending an oral exchange). Here, “Really?” has a rising pitch, and “Really!” has a falling pitch.

*Suprasegmental Features: Stress, Rhythm, Pitch, and Intonation*

All languages have suprasegmental features, and each language variety has its own unique suprasegmental system. Suprasegmentals enhance communication through prosody, which is varying one’s voice to create rhythm and intonation. In English, the suprasegmentals are of utmost importance because their prosody supports intelligibility (Levis & Grant, 2003). The English suprasegmentals are stress, rhythm, pitch, and intonation.

Stress—prominence of a syllable. In English, stressed syllables are longer, louder, and higher in pitch than unstressed syllables (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). English has three types of stress, which are usually called major stress (strong), minor stress (medial), and no stress (unstressed). Other languages have different types of stress patterns. For example, in Spanish, a syllable can be either stressed or not stressed.

Word stress. Each syllable in an English word has some type of stress—major, minor, or none. All three types of stress occur in the word “photograph.” This is shown in Figure 1 (Spezzini, 2021).

**Figure 1**

*Stress in an English Word*

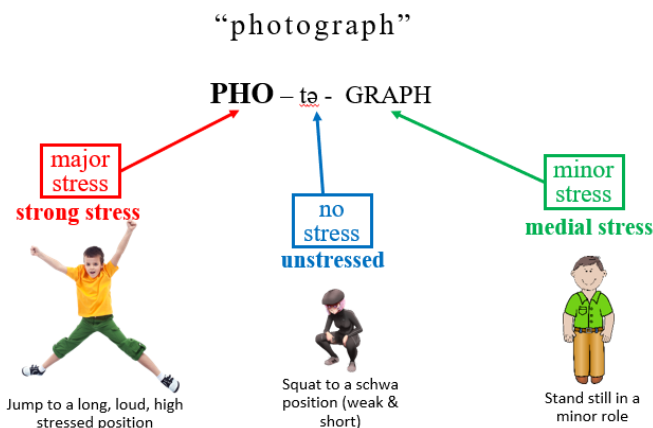


Figure 1 illustrates how each stress in the word “photograph” can be enacted by L2 learners (Spezzini, 2021). In the first syllable (pho-), jumping represents strong stress as long, loud, and high (major stress). In the second syllable (-to-), squatting represents unstressed as weak and almost disappearing (no stress). In the third syllable (-graph), standing represents medial stress as a minor role (minor stress).

Another challenge regarding word stress is how, depending on a word’s suffix, the major stress can switch to another syllable. For example, “photograph” has major stress on its first syllable (as shown by bold underlining). However, “photography” has major stress on its second syllable, and “photographic” has major stress on its third syllable. The shifting of stress within the same

word does not usually occur in other languages. Help English learners perceive and produce word stress by first having them act out stress using the jump-squat-stand strategy (Spezzini, 2021)

- *Sentence stress.* In English, each utterance (i.e., spoken word, phrase, sentence) has one syllable that is stressed more strongly than other syllables in that utterance. This is called sentence stress. English sentence stress falls on an utterance’s final content word, such as a noun or verb. However, for emphasis or contrast, English speakers can move this strong sentence stress to an earlier element in that same utterance.

regular sentence stress: Tom ran to the store in the rain.

emphatic stress: Tom ran to the store in the rain.

contrast stress: Tom ran to the store in the rain. (i.e., not someone else)

This shifting of sentence stress for emphasis or contrast does not usually occur in other languages. Help your English learners perceive and produce sentence stress as well as emphatic and contrast stress by using strategies for emphasizing content words and, also, de-emphasizing other words (Gilbert, 2012).

- *Rhythm*—pattern of stresses across an utterance. On the one hand, English has stress-timed rhythm and so do several other languages. On the other hand, numerous languages (including Spanish) have syllable-timed rhythm (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992).
  - *Stress-timed rhythm.* The stress-timed rhythm of English is characterized by irregular alternating patterns of strong stress, medial stress, and no stress. Strong stress is so important in English that it determines meter in poetry and chants. Each strong stress indicates phrasing (or intervals) between thought groups. A thought group can consist of a single word that conveys meaning by itself (e.g., “Cats”) or several words that, when together, convey meaning (e.g., “Some big cats”). English speakers signal each thought group by placing strong stress on its focus word and pausing briefly after its final word. Here, focus word refers to the word—usually a noun or verb—that carries the main meaning of that thought group (Gilbert, 2012). The strong stress on a focus word represents the nucleus (peak or center) of its thought group, and each thought group has one strong stress. The number of thought groups (i.e., strong stresses) in an English utterance determines how long it takes to say that utterance. For example, both of the following sentences are said in the same length of time:

<u>Cats</u>	<u>chase</u>	<u>mice</u>
Some big <u>cats</u>	have been <u>chasing</u>	small <u>mice</u>

The first sentence has three words (total of three syllables), and the second sentence has nine words (total of nine syllables). In the first sentence, each word constitutes its own thought group. Each of these thought groups has one strong stress (which is the syllable marked with bold underlining). In the second sentence, these nine words are grouped into three thought groups. Each of these thought groups has one strong stress (which is the syllable marked with bold underlining). If a thought group has two or more syllables (e.g., “have been chasing”), one

syllable (**chas-**) is stressed and the other syllables (“have been ...-ing”) are very short and do not carry stress.

Because intelligibility in English is based on accurately stressing a thought group, teach your English learners how to identify thought groups and how to strongly stress the most important syllable in each thought group (Gilbert, 2012). One strategy is clapping for each strong stress at equal intervals while saying “**Cats - chase - mice**” and then saying “Some big **cats** - have been **chasing** - small **mice**.”

- *Syllable-timed rhythm.* The syllable-timed rhythm of many other languages is characterized by a regular alternation between stressed and unstressed syllables. In Spanish and other syllable-timed languages, the meter in poetry is determined by the number of syllables. English learners from syllable-timed L1s are challenged with perceiving and producing stress-timed rhythm in English. Help them perceive and produce English stress-timed rhythm by using strategies such as Jazz Chants (Graham, 2002).
- *Pitch*—relative highness or lowness of a speaker’s voice relative to how that person normally speaks. Pitch provides musical quality to speech (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). In English, pitch accompanies each utterance, ranging from a single word (Oh!) to several thought groups in one sentence (Some big cats – have been chasing – small mice). English speakers use different pitch levels to convey different meanings even with the same utterance such as “Oh?”, “Oh!”, and “Oh.” English pitch levels and their corresponding meanings are illustrated by the word “thanks” in Figure 2.

Figure 2

English Pitch

Pitch Levels in English

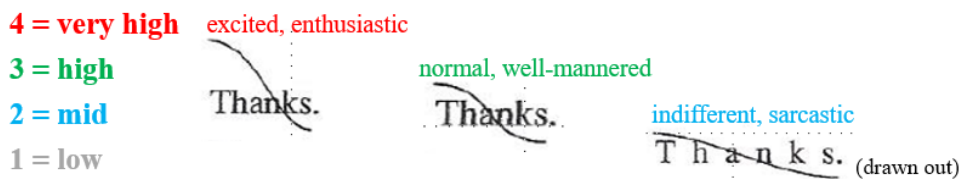


Figure 2 shows the pitch levels commonly used by speakers of North American English. On the one hand, these speakers use high pitch (Level 3) to convey expected, positive attitudes and very high pitch (Level 4) to convey excitement and enthusiasm. On the other hand, they use low pitch (Level 1) and mid pitch (Level 2) to convey negative attitudes such as indifference and sarcasm.

- *Intonation*—pattern of high and low pitches across an utterance. Each pattern of pitches represents a different intonation contour. North American English has a wide variety of intonation contours (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Two of the most common intonation contours in North American English are shown in Figure 3.

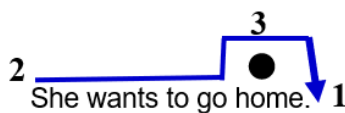
Figure 3

Two Examples of Intonation Contours in an English Utterance

**Statements**

Pitches: 2 3 1

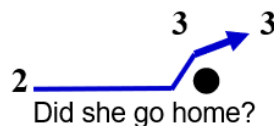
*She wants to go home.*  
Falling of final pitch ↓



**Yes/No Questions**

Pitches: 2 3 3

*Did she go home?*  
Rising of final pitch ↑



The top half of Figure 3 shows how statements in North American English start with mid pitch (Level 2), rise to high pitch (Level 3) at the peak of the sentence stress, and then drop to low pitch (Level 1) at the end. The bottom half of Figure 3 shows how yes/no questions in North American English start with mid pitch (Level 2), rise to high pitch (Level 3) at the peak of the sentence stress, and then continue with high pitch (Level 3).

Because each language has its own suprasegmental system, English learners from different L1s have different challenges learning to use English suprasegmentals. To better understand such challenges, let’s look at some major differences between English suprasegmentals and Spanish suprasegmentals as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparing English Suprasegmentals with Spanish Suprasegmentals

Feature	Definition	English	Spanish
Stress	syllable prominence	strong, medial, none	stressed, not stressed
Rhythm	timing of patterns	stress-timed (irregular patterns)	syllable-timed (regular)
Pitch	height of voice	1-low, 2-mid, 3-high, 4-very high	1-low, 2-mid, 3-high
Intonation	contour of pitches	commonly 2-3-1 for statements	commonly 1-2-1

Table 1 compares four suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm, pitch, intonation) between English and Spanish. These (and other) suprasegmental differences can cause miscommunication such as when English learners use Spanish suprasegmentals to speak English. For example, in everyday conversation, English speakers use strong stress and higher

pitch, and Spanish speakers use less stress and lower pitch. Because of this difference, if Spanish speakers use polite Spanish intonation (i.e., reduced stress and low pitch) when speaking English, they “may sound unenthusiastic or bored to English ears” (Coe, 2001, p. 96), which was not their intention. This suprasegmental difference is often greater between English and other languages, thus causing English learners who subconsciously use their L1 suprasegmentals when speaking English to be “frequently misinterpreted as rude, abrupt, or uninterested” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 248) and even “annoying or difficult to understand” (p. 249).

### ***Segmental Features: Vowels and Consonants***

All languages have segmental features, which are the vowel sounds and consonant sounds. Each language variety has a unique vowel system and a unique consonant system. The English vowel system is described in this section, and selected consonants are described in the Appendix.

Worldwide, different varieties of the English language have different vowels, and these vowels can vary greatly. In North American English, many varieties have distinct vowel phonemes in these 14 words: beat, bit, bait, bet, bat, pot, bought, but, boat, book, boot, boy, buy, bough (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992). English also has another vowel, /ə/, that occurs in unstressed syllables. For example, /ə/ is the vowel in the second syllable of “habit,” “rabbit,” and “abbot.” In these three words, the bold underlining shows each word’s first syllable as being stressed, and the italics show its second syllable as being unstressed (i.e., pronounced with the vowel /ə/). Together, these 14 distinct vowels plus the vowel /ə/ represent the 15 vowels commonly found in North American English.

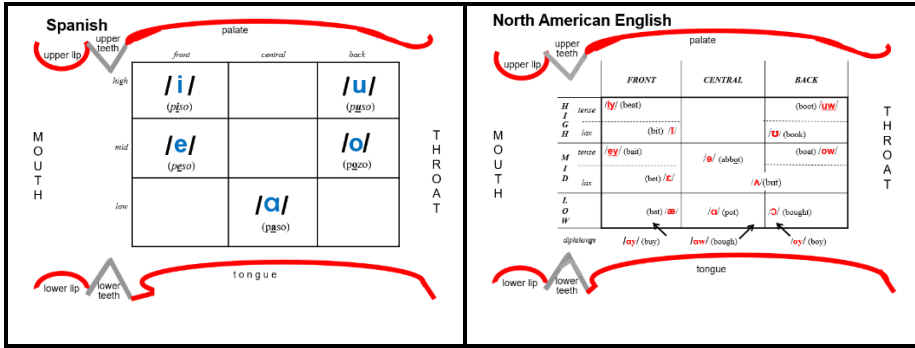
In contrast to North American English which has 15 vowels, “many of the world’s languages (e.g., Spanish and Japanese) have only five vowels” (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992, p. 95). Another contrast is how these English vowels vary greatly among the many varieties of English (within North America and throughout the world) while the Spanish vowels do not vary among the many varieties of Spanish worldwide. With their brains hardwired for five vowels, Spanish speakers are challenged at hearing and saying 15 English vowels.

English learners from Spanish and many other L1s are challenged by the English vowel system. Therefore, be sure to always include vowels when teaching pronunciation. This is especially important because vowels interact directly with English suprasegmentals and, thus, can help support overall intelligibility. As explained earlier, it is the suprasegmentals that contribute the most toward the intelligibility of L2 English speakers (Munro & Derwing, 2020).

The Spanish five-vowel system and the North American English 15-vowel system are shown in Figure 4. Tongue positions for articulating Spanish vowels are on the left, and those for articulating North American English vowels are on the right.

Figure 4

Spanish Vowels (left drawing) and North American English Vowels (right drawing)



In Figure 4, both drawings represent the space between the top of a mouth (upper lip, upper teeth, palate) and its bottom (lower lip, lower teeth, tongue) and, also, between the front of the mouth and the throat. Each drawing contains a 3x3 grid showing where vowels are articulated based on the position of the tongue: vertically (high-mid-low) and horizontally (front-central-back). On both grids, each vowel phoneme appears between slanted bars (e.g., /iy/), and a word containing that vowel appears between parentheses (e.g., (beat)). In the English grid, tense and lax differentiate between two English vowels articulated in the same general position, which occurs in four positions on this 3x3 grid: high front, mid front, high back, mid back.

To compare the articulation between Spanish and English vowels, the tongue positions from both languages are super-imposed on a single grid in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Comparing Tongue Positions of Spanish Vowels (encircled) and English Vowels

		FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK
H I G H	tense	<b>/iy/</b> (beat)		(boot) / <b>uw/</b>
		<b>/i/</b> (piso)		<b>/u/</b> (puso)
	lax	(bit) / <b>I/</b>		/ <b>ʊ/</b> (book)
M I D	tense	<b>/ey/</b> (bait)		(boat) / <b>ow/</b>
		<b>/e/</b> (peso)	/ <b>ə/</b> (abbot)	<b>/o/</b> (pozo)
	lax	(bet) / <b>ɛ/</b>		/ <b>ʌ/</b> (but)
L O W			<b>/a/</b> (paso)	
		(bat) / <b>æ/</b>	/ <b>ɑ/</b> (pot)	/ <b>ɔ/</b> (bought)

Based on Figure 5, we can predict challenges experienced by Spanish speakers learning English:

- **High front.** Spanish has one phoneme: /i/ in *piso*. English has two phonemes: /iy/ in “beat” and /ɪ/ in “bit.” Because of L1 interference, Spanish speakers cannot initially distinguish “beat” and “bit.” Instead, they perceive both English words as identical. As L2 learners, they might use their Spanish vowel /i/ to hear and say English “beat” and “bit.” Similar challenges occur in the mid front position (/ey/ in “bait” and /ɛ/ in “bet”) and the high back position (/uw/ in “boot” and /ʊ/ in “book”). For our English learners, this “distinction between tense and lax vowel pairs almost always creates problems” (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992, p. 96).
- **Low.** Spanish has one phoneme: /a/ in *paso*. English has phonemes /æ/ in “bat,” /ɑ/ in “pot,” and /ɔ/ in “bought” as well as /ʌ/ in “but” (which is located just above the low central and back vowels). Because of L1 interference, Spanish speakers cannot initially distinguish “cat,” “cot,” “caught,” and “cut.” Instead, they perceive these four English words as identical. As L2 learners, they might use their Spanish vowel /a/ to hear and say these four English words: “cat,” “cot,” “caught,” and “cut.”
- **Mid center.** English has the vowel /ə/, called schwa. In English, vowels in unstressed syllables are reduced to schwa such as the vowel in the second syllable of “habit” and “abbot.” Here, italics indicate the syllable with the unstressed vowel, schwa /ə/. Like many languages, Spanish does not have a schwa. Because of L1 interference, Spanish speakers need help noticing that, when unstressed, English vowels become schwa.

## Pedagogical Applications

To prepare for teaching L2 pronunciation, do the following:

- Compare English with learners’ L1 to predict typical errors (Swan & Smith, 2001).
- Learn about English segmentals and suprasegmentals that are challenging for English learners from the L1s represented in your class (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992).
- Identify teaching priorities to meet the most urgent needs of your learners for speaking with greater intelligibility (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).
- Find pronunciation teaching strategies in print and online sources (e.g., YouTube).
- Align these strategies with the five phases in a “framework for teaching pronunciation communicatively” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 45), as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Framework for Teaching Pronunciation Communicatively.*

Week	Framework Phases	Strategies for Teacher (T) and Students (Ss)
1	Description and Analysis	T: explains illustrations, examples, and comparisons
2	Listening Discrimination	Ss: listen for sounds in isolation and context



3	Controlled Practice	Ss: orally read minimal pairs (words, phrases, dialogues)
4	Guided Practice	Ss: use targeted sounds in games, cued dialogs, and structured activities
5	Communicative Practice	Ss: roleplay, create utterances, and build fluency by focusing on sounds together with content

*Note.* Compiled from *Teaching Pronunciation: A Course Book and Reference Guide* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) by M. Celce-Murcia et al. (p. 45), 2010, Cambridge University Press.

To implement the framework in Table 2, follow these suggestions (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010):

- Focus on one or two segmentals or suprasegmentals that are difficult for your learners.
- Teach several lessons over time (e.g., 15 minutes twice weekly for several weeks).
- Provide encouraging feedback as often as possible.
- Proceed gradually from analysis (consciousness-raising) to listening discrimination and, then, from controlled output to automated production—by using strategies provided here.

Although this framework looks linear, the learning of L2 pronunciation is cyclical. In other words, your learners might need to revisit earlier phases and repeat strategies. Because of this, the time needed for each phase will vary. Whenever possible, weave this framework into your regular classes (Levis & Grant, 2003). For each pronunciation challenge, implement several different strategies to help learners who, in any given class, have diverse ways of learning.

In Table 2, each framework phase requires specific types of strategies to support L2 learners in moving from that phase to the next phase. Modeled below are strategies to help learners perceive and produce English /iy/ and /ɪ/, a distinction that is challenging for learners from most L1s (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992). To demonstrate how this challenge stems from L1 interference, English vowels /iy/ and /ɪ/ are compared with a similar (yet different) Spanish vowel /i/.

To help your learners overcome their pronunciation challenges, follow the five framework phases in Table 2 (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Within this framework, implement strategies that can best support teaching the vowels, consonants, and suprasegmentals that you are targeting.

### ***Phase 1. Description and Analysis of Targeted Sounds (examples for /iy/ and /ɪ/)***

This first phase focuses on “oral and written illustrations of how the feature is produced and when it occurs within spoken discourse” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 45). To teach the pronunciation of /iy/ and /ɪ/, as well as other sounds, implement the following strategies:

- Ask learners about experiences saying “beach” and “sheet.” Though embarrassed, they might share uncomfortable anecdotes of when they have been perceived as saying “bitch” and “shit.” Reassure them that almost all English learners have this same problem and that you can help them prevent similar situations in the future.

- Explain to your learners that you will use “seat” and “sit” to help them say a distinct English vowel in each of these words. Act out “seat” (place) and “sit” (action). Have your learners act out these words.
- Some learners might argue that “seat” and “sit” are pronounced the same. In fact, many English learners are convinced that “seat” and “sit” are identical words. Encourage these learners to participate in your activities with an open mind as you try to prove that these words have distinct vowels and, thus, are pronounced differently.
- Provide an analogy by pretending to take a picture: “Smile! Say Cheese!” Learners say “cheese” producing a smile. Demonstrate how “Smile! Say Seat!” should have a similar result. Learners say “seat” producing a smile. Explain that saying “sit” does not produce a smile.
- Show your learners the vowel grid. Describe /iy/ and /I/ as high front vowels but with different features:

/iy/ in “seat” = smiley face, tense muscles, long duration, gliding tongue

/I/ in “sit” = sad face, lax muscles, very short duration, static tongue

- Project the 3x3 grid (Figure 5) on a screen or draw a 3x3 grid on the board. Stand next to this grid. Simulate a tongue by slipping a red sock over your hand and forearm. Act out the /iy/ articulation by gliding your simulated tongue across the high front box on the board, from this box’s bottom right to its top left. Repeat for /I/ but keep your simulated tongue in the bottom right corner of this high front box. In other words, when articulating /I/, the tongue does not move across the high front area and, hence, is described as static. Learners simulate a tongue with their hand and forearm. Then, they act out the different articulations of /iy/ and /I/.
- While still projecting Figure 5 on the board, compare English /iy/ “seat” and /I/ “sit” with learners’ L1 vowel /i/ such as in Spanish *sí*.
  - With your simulated tongue, demonstrate Spanish /i/ as being in the middle of the high front box, situated halfway between English vowels /iy/ and /I/.
  - Describe Spanish /i/ as a high front vowel with some features resembling English /iy/ and other features resembling English /I/:  
/i/ in *sí* (Spanish) = tense muscles, short duration, static tongue, staccato
- Explain to learners that their Spanish ears are keeping them from hearing English sounds. Because their sense of hearing does not yet work for English, invite learners to use their other senses—touch and sight—for feeling and seeing differences between /iy/ and /I/.
- Say “seat” /iy/ and “sit” /I/ while learners watch your face. As you say “seat” and “sit,” learners look for differences in your mouth, cheeks, and jaw. Ask them to share what they notice. For example, when you say “seat” /iy/, your mouth produces a smile, your cheek muscles tighten, and your jaw drops slightly. This does not occur when you say “sit” /I/.
- Have learners say “seat” /iy/ and “sit” /I/. When saying each word, they look in a mirror (or on their phone as if taking a selfie) and try making the differences they saw in your mouth, cheeks, and jaw. After setting the mirror aside, the learners again say “seat” /iy/ and “sit” /I/, but this time they prolong the vowel while doing the following actions with their hands:

1. Learners place their hands on their cheeks and feel tense muscles when saying “seat” /iy/ (smiley face) and lax muscles when saying “sit” /ɪ/ (sad face).
  2. Learners place the top of their open hand under their chin (as if their hand is propping up their chin) and feel their jaw dropping when saying “seat” /iy/ because of the tongue’s gliding motion. Their jaw drops less when saying “sit” /ɪ/ because the tongue is relatively static when pronouncing this vowel.
  3. Learners stretch a rubber band or Slinky (or use their hands) to show length when saying “seat” /iy/, and do not stretch to show shortness of “sit” /ɪ/.
- Guide learners with saying these two English vowels by starting with a Spanish vowel. Learners first say Spanish sí /i/ and then learn to say English “seat” /iy/ differently from “sit” /ɪ/:
    - Learners say Spanish sí by using, of course, their Spanish vowel /i/. Now, have them prolong this Spanish /i/ vowel into an exaggerated smile until approximating the English /iy/ in “seat.” Congratulate them!
    - Learners again say Spanish sí by using their Spanish vowel /i/. Now, have them relax their mouth muscles, make a sad face, and shorten this Spanish /i/ vowel until approximating the English /ɪ/ in “sit.” Congratulate them!
  - Ask learners to demonstrate their understanding about the differences in /iy/ and /ɪ/ by drawing their own representations of these two English sounds.

***Phase 2. Listening Discrimination Activities (examples for /iy/ and /ɪ/)***

The second phase consists of “focused listening practice with feedback on learners’ ability to correctly discriminate the feature” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 45). To teach the pronunciation of /iy/ and /ɪ/, as well as other sounds, implement the following strategies:

- Use listening discrimination activities to diagnose whether learners perceive targeted sound contrasts and, also, to help them notice differences (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).
- Say one word per line. Learners should not see any words. They point to the corresponding object or picture.
  1. sheep    ship
  2. cheek    chick
  3. meat    mitt
- Read one sentence from each line. Learners do not see words. They do what they hear.
  1. Pretend you are sleeping.    Pretend you are slipping.
  2. Draw a heel.    Draw a hill.
- Say one word per line. Learners see two words per line and circle what they hear.
  1. beat    bit
  2. feet    fit
  3. reach    rich

**Phase 3. Controlled Practice (examples for /iy/ and /ɪ/)**

The third phase includes “oral reading of minimal-pair sentences, short dialogues, etc., with special attention paid to the highlighted feature in order to raise learner consciousness” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). To teach the pronunciation of /iy/ and /ɪ/, as well as other sounds, implement these strategies.

Minimal pairs. Create a T-chart with minimal pairs, such as the one in Table 3 for /iy/ and /ɪ/. Because your learners do not yet distinguish the targeted sounds, label the columns with descriptors (e.g., smiling, not smiling) rather than with letters or fonts.

**Table 3**

*T-chart with Minimal Pairs*

	Smiling	Not Smiling
1	seat	sit
2	beat	bit
3	meat	mitt
4	eat	it

In Table 3, the T-chart consists of minimal pairs that end in the same consonant to help learners focus on perceiving the vowel distinction. Use this T-chart to implement the following strategies:

- Columns
  - Left column (smiling)
    - T says “seat, beat, meat, eat.” Ss listen to these four words.
    - T says “seat.” Chorally Ss say “seat.” Repeat with “beat,” “meat,” “eat.”
  - Right column (not smiling)
    - T says “sit, bit, mitt, it.” Ss listen to these four words.
    - T says “sit.” Chorally Ss say “sit.” Repeat with “bit,” “mitt,” “it.”
- Rows (1, 2, 3, 4)
  - Row 1: T says “seat” and “sit.” Ss listen carefully to vowel distinction.
  - T says “seat-sit.” Ss chorally say “seat-sit.”
  - Row 2: Repeat steps from Row 1 but now for “beat-bit.”
  - Row 3: Repeat steps from Row 1 but now for “meat-mitt.”
  - Row 4: Repeat steps from Row 1 but now for “eat-it.”
  - Ask for a volunteer to read Row 1, another to read Row 2, and so on.
- Activities
  - Ss write numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) vertically on a piece of paper.
  - Row 1: T says, “number 1,” and then says either “seat” or “sit.”

Ss make smiley face if hearing “seat” or sad face if hearing “sit,” or they write left or right (to designate the column).

- Rows 2, 3, 4: Repeat the previous step for each row, one row at a time.
- Invite learners to pretend to be the teacher and read one word per row.

**Subject categories.** Learners work in pairs and find words with the targeted sounds for subject categories like those in Table 4 (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

**Table 4**

*Subject Categories*

Category	/iy/ with a smile	/ɪ/ without a smile
<b>Food</b>	meat, cheese, tea, peach, cream	fish, milk, chicken, pickles
<b>Body</b>	cheek, teeth, feet, heel, knee	chin, hip, lip, shin, wrist
<b>People</b>	Jean, Pete, Steve, Leena, Tina	Jim, Nick, Rick, Lyn, Chris, Bill, Tim

**Phase 4. Guided Practice** (examples for /iy/ and /ɪ/)

This fourth phase includes “structured communication exercises, such as information-gap activities or cued dialogues, that enable the learner to monitor for the specified feature” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 45). In this phase, learners are more aware of the targeted sound distinction and, thus, can participate in different types of games based on these sounds.

**Sound-based games.** Have learners participate in engaging games based on /iy/ and /ɪ/.

- **Treasure Hunt** animals, classroom items, clothing, hobbies, cities (like in Table 4). Ask students to find an item with the targeted sound (e.g., Find something that is **green**.) Per your instructions, students point to something in a book or walk around to find the item.
- **Charades:** sleep, eat, feel, leave, scream, leap, reach; slip, hit, fill, live, drink, sit, kick, dig. On the board, write verbs with the targeted vowels. Students take turns acting out one of these verbs. Other students need to guess what they are doing.
- **Bingo:** Each Bingo board contains 12 minimal pairs, with both words from each pair (e.g., seat, sit). Hence, in total, there are 24 words with the targeted sounds (/iy/ and /ɪ/) on this Bingo board. After playing Bingo as a full class, learners work in small groups taking turns calling out the words. When calling out the words, they become aware that they need to pronounce vowels clearly for words to be understood by their classmates.

**Simon Says game.** Do the Simon Says game by using verbs with /iy/ and /I/ (like those listed above in Charades). The game starts with all students standing. The caller says “Simon says” followed by a command (e.g., Simon says “eat”). Students act out the verb. However, if the caller does not start with “Simon says,” students must not respond. If they do, they have lost and must sit down. The last person standing is the winner. Here are examples of both possibilities.

- T says: “Simon says, ‘Eat a peach.’” Ss act out the action of eating a peach.
- T says: “Drink milk.” Because this command did not start with “Simon says,” students should not respond. If they act out this action (drinking milk), they must sit down.

Learners take turns being the caller. By doing this, they become aware of the need to clearly pronounce the vowels in these words so that their instructions can be understood. You can also play this Simon Says game by having learners touch colors, classroom objects, and items from other word categories—always selecting words that have the targeted sounds, /iy/ and /I/.

#### ***Phase 5. Communicative Practice*** (examples for /iy/ and /I/)

This fifth phase provides “less structured fluency-building activities (e.g., roleplay, problem solving) that require the learner to attend to both form and content of utterances” (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 45). To provide communicative practice, use pronunciation strategies within lessons focused on speaking (Levis & Grant, 2003) and, also, in content-based lessons. The following roleplay illustrates how, by participating in an authentic scene (going to the doctor), learners become aware of the need to distinguish both vowels within a minimal pair.

**Roleplay.** Pretend to be a physician. Wear a white lab coat with a stethoscope around your neck. Learners pretend to be your patients. One at a time, they come to you as their doctor and say, “I’m sick.” If they pronounce “seek,” offer a flashlight and give instructions to seek something. If they pronounce “sick,” use the stethoscope and examine their stomach or back. This activity often serves as an “ah-hah” moment. Learners suddenly realize that they must pronounce vowels accurately to convey their intended meaning [acknowledgement to Karen Snyder].

After learners make progress with distinguishing “seat” /iy/ and “sit” /I/, invite them to resolve a similar pronunciation challenge with “bait” /ey/ and “bet” /ε/. By reflecting on how they learned to hear and say /iy/ and /I/, learners explore how to go about hearing and saying /ey/ and /ε/. After that, have learners do the same with the /uw/ and /u/ distinction (e.g., “Luke” and “look”).

#### ***Other Types of Strategies***

Use this framework for teaching pronunciation communicatively to help English learners perceive and produce all vowel distinctions and, also, the consonants and suprasegmentals. For teaching other sounds and features, adapt the strategies explained above for teaching /iy/ and /I/. When adapting these strategies, be sure to incorporate sound-specific strategies such as those provided in the Appendix for teaching the /b/ and /v/ distinction and the /s/ and /z/ distinction. Targeted strategies for teaching other consonants and, also, the suprasegmentals are

accessible through links in the Expanding Further section. Also consider using strategies from print and online sources such as *Color Vowel Chart* (Taylor & Thompson, 2018), *Jazz Chants* (Graham, 2002), *Clear Speech* (Gilbert, 2012), and *Haptic-Integrated Instruction* (Acton et al., 2013).

In this chapter, you learned about common pronunciation challenges facing learners with respect to English segmentals (sounds) and suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm, pitch, intonation). You discovered that L2 learners hear new languages through an L1 filter. You learned that, although learners are initially unable to hear L2 segmentals and suprasegmentals, they can distinguish challenging sounds by using two of their other senses—sight (watching mouths to see smile) and touch (touching cheeks to feel tenseness)—as well as movement (stretching to show length). You also learned to apply strategies in a framework for teaching pronunciation communicatively.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are key concepts about strategies for teaching pronunciation:

- Intelligible L2 pronunciation means that L2 learners are easily understood when speaking.
- The segmentals are sounds (vowels and consonants). The suprasegmentals are features (stress, rhythm, pitch, intonation) that provide prosody, especially within thought groups.
- By improving their use of English suprasegmentals, English learners can improve their overall intelligibility.
- Language learners hear L2 segmentals and suprasegmentals through an L1 filter in their brains. They can only say what they hear. If they are unable to distinguish L2 sounds and intonation, they cannot produce them.
- Teachers can help L2 learners improve their pronunciation of L2 segmentals and suprasegmentals by first identifying the errors that affect learners' intelligibility and then by using pronunciation teaching strategies to address those errors.

## Discussing

With respect to strategies for teaching pronunciation, answer these questions:

1. Why should pronunciation teaching be focused on producing intelligible speech rather than eliminating foreign accents?
2. Do you feel it is easier to help students improve their pronunciation of English segmental features (vowels and consonants) or suprasegmental features (stress, rhythm, pitch, intonation)? Why?
3. When you were learning another language, what pronunciation strategies were used by your teacher and/or by you? Were such strategies helpful?
4. How does the framework for teaching pronunciation communicatively (Table 2) fit with language teaching methods and strategies that you have used or might be using?

## TAKING ACTION

Apply your knowledge about teaching pronunciation:

1. Visit classrooms where pronunciation is taught and interview these teachers.
2. Learn about a student's L1 on Wikipedia. Compare the student's L1 segmentals and suprasegmentals with English segmentals and suprasegmentals.
3. Respond to a learner's pronunciation error as a teachable moment by using pronunciation teaching strategies.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about teaching pronunciation, visit these websites:

- Color Vowel™ Chart. <https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/color-vowel-chart>
- English club: Learn pronunciation. <https://www.englishclub.com/pronunciation/>
- International Phonetic Association (IPA). <https://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/>
- Jazz Chants. [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLauwxQ-VGyUvLFP5Ckk\\_ajLSmH0fluibj](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLauwxQ-VGyUvLFP5Ckk_ajLSmH0fluibj); and [https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/teaching\\_with\\_jazz\\_chants\\_0.pdf](https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/teaching_with_jazz_chants_0.pdf)
- Keyboard for typing IPA fonts. <https://ipa.typeit.org/>
- Phone app. <https://www.need2say.com/>
- Prosody pyramid. <https://www.tesol.org/resource-center/teaching-pronunciation-using-the-prosody-pyramid/>
- Search “pronunciation” on TESOL website: [https://www.tesol.org/search/?search\\_field=pronunciation](https://www.tesol.org/search/?search_field=pronunciation)
- Sounds of English. <https://www.soundsofenglish.org/>
- Sounds of speech. <http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/english/english.html>
- Special issue on pronunciation teaching. <http://www.catesoljournal.org/volume-30-1/>
- Speech, pronunciation, and listening interest section: TESOL International Association. <https://www.tesol.org/connect/communities-of-practice>
- Wikipedia. Search L1 (e.g., Swahili language) and then scroll to phonology.
- YouTube. Search English sound (pronouncing “th”) or strategy (teaching intonation)



## See Also

Aspects related to pronunciation are also addressed in the following chapters of this book:

- Chapter 2** *The Diversity of Global Englishes* by L. Barratt
- Chapter 17** *Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output* by C. Cristóful
- Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach through Effective Lesson Planning* by H. Lalwani
- Chapter 29** *Using Theater to Teach English* by C. Ortiz and M. Vaky
- Chapter 30** *Incorporating Music in the ELT Classroom* by O. Carrasquel
- Chapter 39** *Strategies to Teach Listening* by E. Nuñez
- Chapter 40** *Strategies to Teach Speaking* by S. Spezzini

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## About the Author

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## Strategies for Teaching the Pronunciation of Two Pairs of English Consonants

To help English learners hear and say challenging consonants, use the framework for teaching pronunciation communicatively, shown earlier in Table 2 (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). During Phase 1 of this framework, use teaching strategies specifically for the targeted sound(s) such as the many strategies provided in print and online sources. Some of these strategies are explained here for teaching English /b/ and /v/ and, also, for teaching English /s/ and /z/.

### Challenge: /b/ and /v/ as Distinct Phonemes

English has a /b/ phoneme and a /v/ phoneme. Spanish has a /b/ phoneme (Coe, 2001). Because Spanish speakers' brains are hardwired for the /b/ phoneme, they do not hear English /b/ and /v/ as distinct phonemes (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992). Moreover, although the Spanish /b/ has positional variations with features resembling English /b/ and /v/, Spanish does not have a /v/ phoneme. In other words, "although the letter "v" is used in Spanish spelling, the sound /v/ does not exist" (p. 149). Hence, because of L1 interference, Spanish speakers perceive English "berry" and "very" as being identical.

#### *Shape of Letters Associated with Articulation of Lips*

Initially, Spanish speakers cannot hear any difference between English phonemes /b/ and /v/. Hence, we need to help them use their sense of sight to see the important differences.

- Pronounce English /b/ and then /v/. Have learners watch your mouth to see what might be different in how you articulate these sounds. Ask learners to share what they notice:
  - /b/ is pronounced with the lower lip touching the upper lip (i.e., both lips touch).
  - /v/ is pronounced with the lower lip touching the upper teeth. /v/ also produces noise when air passes between the lower lip and upper teeth.
- Model the pronunciation of /b/. Learners pronounce /b/ while looking in a mirror (or their phone as if taking a selfie). They see their lower lip touch their upper lip. Congratulate them.
- Model the pronunciation of /v/. Learners pronounce /v/ while looking in a mirror (or their phone). They see their lower lip touch their upper teeth. Congratulate them.

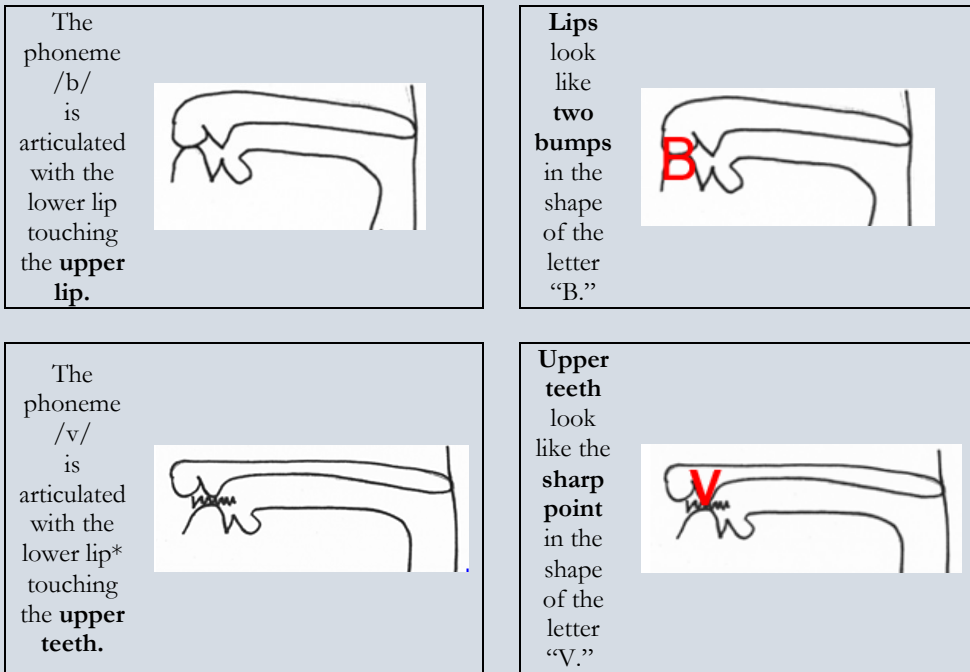
To teach this articulation difference between /b/ and /v/, use English spelling to guide L2 learners in pronouncing each of these sounds based on the shape of its corresponding letter.

- Draw a large B on the board. Ask learners to think about how this shape might look like something in their mouth. Ask probing questions until someone notices that the two bumps in “B” could look like two lips.
- Draw a large V on the board. Ask learners to think about how this shape might look like something in their mouth. Ask probing questions until someone notices that the downward point in “V” could look like the upper teeth pointing downwards.

In Figure 6, the articulations of /b/ and /v/ are compared with the shapes of letters “B” and “V.”

**Figure 6**

*Articulation of Phonemes /b/ and /v/ Resembling the Shapes of Letters “B” and “V”*



*Note.* Squiggly line shows air passing noisily between lower lip and upper teeth when pronouncing the phoneme /v/.

In the upper row of Figure 6, the left drawing shows the articulation of /b/, and the right drawing shows how the shape of the letter “B” can be superimposed on top of this articulation.

In the lower row of Figure 6, the left drawing shows the articulation of /v/, and the right drawing shows how the shape of the letter “V” can be superimposed on top of this articulation.

Help learners realize that the shapes of letters “B” and “V” in English words resemble the articulation of English phonemes /b/ and /v/. When Spanish-speaking English learners become aware of the sound-symbol correspondence represented by the shape of these two letters (“B” and “V”), they begin to realize how these shapes can help them differentiate when pronouncing English phonemes /b/ and /v/. In other words, two bumps in “B” mean two lips for /b/, and the point in “V” means upper teeth for /v/. By using their sight to see the shapes of these letters, learners are reminded how to pronounce /b/ distinctly from /v/. When learning to perceive and produce /b/ and /v/ as distinct phonemes, learners can begin to speak English more intelligibly.

Upon completing Phase 1 of this framework to teach the pronunciation of phonemes /b/ and /v/, proceed from Phase 2 to Phase 5 (Table 2) similarly to how these phases were implemented for /iy/ and /ɪ/. Use several of those same strategies but now with words containing /b/ and /v/. Be sure to include words that have /b/ and /v/ in the following syllable positions:

- start of syllable: berry, very
- middle of syllable: clubs, leaves
- end of syllable: club, leave

### ***Syllable Structure***

Syllable structure adds to the challenge experienced by Spanish-speaking English learners when trying to hear and say /b/ and /v/. This challenge is due to each language having its own system of syllable structures. In other words, Spanish and English have different syllable structures.

Syllable structure determines how a language arranges sounds into syllables. Languages with syllables consisting of one consonant (C) and one vowel (V) are called CV languages (Swan & Smith, 2001). Spanish and many other languages have mostly CV syllables plus perhaps other syllables such as CVC and CCVC. Because of sociolinguistic aspects, some Spanish speakers might not articulate final Spanish consonants. Instead, they may drop the /b/ in *club* and the final /d/ in *verdad*. Yet, even if Spanish speakers do not articulate final Spanish consonants, they do not experience difficulties with conveying their intended meaning to Spanish listeners. In other words, dropping final consonants in Spanish does not affect intelligibility. However, dropping final consonants in English does affect intelligibility. In other words, if English learners do not articulate final English consonants, they experience difficulty in conveying their intended meaning to English listeners.

English has a complex syllable structure, ranging from short syllables (V and CV) to very long syllables (CCCVCCC and CVCCC). Many of these syllables contain *consonant clusters*, which is when two or more consonants are pronounced consecutively in the same syllable. Consonant clusters and final consonants pose great challenges for Spanish speakers because their brains are hardwired for mainly CV syllables. When learning English, Spanish speakers cannot initially perceive most of the final English consonants. Because of L1 interference, these

English learners might hear and say /liy/ for both “leave” and “leaves” (without any final consonants), thus not distinguishing third person singular. This apparent grammatical error stems from a phonological challenge and, hence, needs to be addressed through pronunciation strategies.

Note: The strategy of comparing the shapes of letters with the articulation of the corresponding sounds can also be used to help English learners who experience challenges with distinguishing English /l/ and /r/. This challenge faces learners from certain Asian languages. Upon being aware that the shape of the letter “l” represents the tongue in a vertical position and that the shape of the letter “r” represents the tongue in a curled position, these English learners gain awareness that can lead to enhanced perception and production.

### Challenge: /s/ and /z/ as Distinct Phonemes

English has an /s/ phoneme and a /z/ phoneme. Spanish has an /s/ phoneme (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992). This difference in English and Spanish phonemes is complicated by spelling.

- **English.** The phoneme /s/ is usually represented by letters “s” and “c.” The phoneme /z/ is usually represented by letters “s” and “z.” This means that the English letter “s” represents two English phonemes: /s/ and /z/. Learners are challenged when seeing the letter “s” because, depending on the word, this letter represents either /s/ or /z/.
- **Spanish.** The phoneme /s/ is represented by letters “s,” “z,” and “c.” (Note: Spanish speakers from Spain have another phoneme associated with letters “z” and “c.”)

The brain of Spanish speakers is hardwired with the /s/ phoneme. As L2 learners, they cannot hear or say English /s/ and /z/ as distinct phonemes. Because of L1 interference, they perceive “sue” and “zoo” as being the same word. Moreover, because of their Spanish spelling, they are convinced that both English letters, “s” and “z,” always represent the same phoneme, /s/.

#### *Voiceless and Voiced*

With voiceless sounds, the vocal cords do not vibrate. With voiced sounds, the vocal cords vibrate. Called voicing, this vibration occurs in the larynx, which is also known as Adam’s apple (i.e., the bump on the front of many people’s throats, often visible on a man’s throat). Voicing distinguishes the /s/ phoneme (voiceless) from the /z/ phoneme (voiced).

Spanish-speaking English learners and learners from many other languages have the /s/ phoneme in their L1 but not the /z/ phoneme. Because of L1 interference, their ears do not hear the voicing distinction between English /s/ and /z/. Consequently, these learners are challenged at using the sense of hearing to distinguish “sue” /s/ from “zoo” /z/. However, they can distinguish voicing between /s/ from /z/ by using the sense of touch and, also, by learning to do focused listening. By first using touch, these learners can then advance to perceiving and producing /s/ and /z/ as distinct phonemes. Teach English learners to distinguish /s/ and /z/ by using these strategies:

- Model these sounds by saying s-s-s and then z-z-z. Learners listen carefully and share what they notice. Some might say that z-z-z is noisier than s-s-s. Congratulate them!
- Provide analogies. The quiet s-s-s is like a snake that is hissing. The noisy z-z-z is like a bee that is buzzing. This analogy of two noises in the environment will help L2 learners when trying to distinguish two English sounds: /s/ and /z/.
- Focus your learners' attention on the noisiness of z-z-z. Say a prolonged z-z-z. Then learners say a prolonged z-z-z while doing these steps.
  1. Learners press two fingers firmly next to their throat, right under their chin.
  2. Learners press palms of both hands across the top of their head.
  3. Learners plug both ears with their index fingers.
  4. Learners place three flattened fingers across their vocal cords.

In Step 1, learners use their sense of touch to feel vibrations in their throat when saying z-z-z. In Steps 2 and 3, they feel reverberations inside their head. Provide these different ways to perceive voicing vibrations because of how your learners might have many diverse ways of learning. If your learners are successful at feeling vibrations in Steps 1-3, consider skipping Step 4 given that many people (especially young children) have difficulty finding their vocal cords.

Next, focus your learners' attention on the quietness of s-s-s.

- Say a prolonged s-s-s. Learners say a prolonged s-s-s while repeating steps 1-4 above.
- While pronouncing s-s-s and doing these steps, learners will not feel any vibrations.
- Learners talk about differences such as vibration from z-z-z and no vibration from s-s-s. Some learners might share their belief that both noises (z-z-z and s-s-s) are different but that the two English sounds (/s/ and /z/) are the same just like in Spanish. Invite them to participate objectively while you try to prove that /s/ and /z/ are different sounds.

When teaching the pronunciation of /s/ and /z/, follow the recommendations for Phase 1 in the framework (Table 2). Then, proceed from Phase 2 to Phase 5 as explained earlier for /iy/ and /i/. Use many of the same strategies but by using words with /s/ and /z/.

### ***Syllable Structure***

Syllable structure adds to the challenge experienced by Spanish speakers when trying to hear and say /s/ and /z/. As explained earlier, Spanish has a preferred CV syllable structure, and English has a complex syllable structure which includes a wide range of syllables, including CVCCCC and CCCVCC. Because of L1 interference, learners might not hear /s/ and /z/ in

consonant clusters or at the end of syllables. So, be sure to implement teaching strategies with words containing /s/ and /z/ in various syllable positions.

- **/s/ in different syllable positions**
  - start of syllable
    - single consonant (\*): sue, sip, see, same, city, center
    - consonant cluster: stop, smoke, snow, school, street, spring
  - middle of syllable: past, passed, first, ask
  - end of syllable
    - single consonant (\*\*): bus, pass, piece, price
    - consonant cluster: cats, apps, laughs, kicks,
  
- **/z/ in different syllable positions**
  - start of syllable: zip, zoom,
  - middle of syllable: buzzed, fused
  - end of syllable
    - single consonant: buzz, jazz, prize, fuse, does, was, is
    - consonant cluster: clubs, dogs, lives, hands, worlds

Among these syllable positions with the English /s/, only the one marked with one asterisk (start of syllable) also occurs regularly in Spanish. In the syllable position marked with two asterisks, many Spanish speakers do not pronounce the final /s/ at the end of Spanish syllables. In Spanish, the /s/ does not occur in any other syllable positions. Moreover, because /z/ is not a phoneme in Spanish, it is not spoken in any Spanish syllables.

Because of L1 interference regarding syllable structures, Spanish speakers might hear and say the one-syllable English word “school” /skuwl/ (CCVC) as two syllables /es-kuwl/ (VC-CVC). They unconsciously insert the vowel /e/ before /s/ to create a second syllable, thus trying to make this English word fit within their Spanish syllable structure. Most Spanish-speaking English learners need strategies for producing “school” as one syllable. Have them say a prolonged s-s and immediately say the rest of the syllable. Similarly, these L2 learners might hear and say /kɪ/ for “kick,” “kicks,” and “kicked” (i.e., without any final consonants), thus not distinguishing infinitive, present, and past. These apparent grammatical errors stem from a phonological challenge, which needs to be addressed through pronunciation strategies.

### ***Suffix “s” with Three Pronunciations***

In English, the challenge with /s/ and /z/ is exacerbated because the “s” suffix is pronounced in three different ways: /s/, /z/, /əz/. An even greater complication is how this suffix has five meanings: plural, possessive, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present, “is” contraction, and “has” contraction. Given the importance of this grammatical suffix, focus on helping your L2 learners with the “s” suffix. Explain that, regardless of spelling, the “s” suffix is pronounced in three different ways and that its pronunciation is determined by the final sound of the word to



which the suffix is attached. Examples of the three different pronunciations of the “s” suffix are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Suffix “s” Pronounced in Three Different Ways*

Word with the Suffix “s”	Sound of Suffix	After Words Ending in ...
cats <sub>s</sub> , cakes <sub>s</sub> , apps <sub>s</sub> , baths <sub>s</sub> , laughs <sub>s</sub>	s	voiceless consonants
dogs <sub>s</sub> , clubs <sub>s</sub> , adds <sub>s</sub> , bathes <sub>s</sub> , leaves <sub>s</sub> , bees <sub>s</sub>	z	voiced consonants, vowels
horses <sub>s</sub> , buzzes <sub>s</sub> , fishes <sub>s</sub> , watches <sub>s</sub> , judges <sub>s</sub>	əz	-s, -z, -sh, -ch, -dge



## Strategies to Teach Vocabulary

Gwyneth Dean-Fastnacht

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### Abstract

Knowing and understanding vocabulary is key to communication. The more words that students know, the better they can understand both spoken and written text. As English teachers, we recognize the delicate balance between direct vocabulary instruction and the natural language learning that occurs during meaning-making activities. Given the importance of vocabulary in overall comprehension and academic success, the task of teaching vocabulary can be daunting and elusive. Through the explicit and intentional teaching of vocabulary, teachers can support English learners with building word knowledge while studying new content. In this chapter, you will learn several vocabulary teaching strategies so that you can better support English learners with building their vocabulary and thus improving their communication skills.

*Keywords:* vocabulary strategies, teaching vocabulary, English learners, making meaning, comprehension, building word knowledge, connotations

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## Introduction

Words are used to convey emotions, share ideas, learn information, and ask questions. To communicate such meanings, English learners (ELs) face the crucial task of learning and using new words and building their vocabulary (August et al., 2005). The more vocabulary that ELs know, the easier they can make connections, communicate, and learn. Yet, the lexical knowledge needed by ELs is so vast that teachers have a daunting task in helping them build vocabulary as efficiently as possible. The key is knowing how to teach vocabulary. This chapter provides strategies for teaching vocabulary to ELs so that they can build their lexical repertoire, be able to learn more efficiently and effectively and, most importantly, be able to communicate.

## Background

Human communication is a complex, nuanced system in which participants produce and receive language. The meanings of words used in communication are not isolated but rather impacted by participants and their situational context (Freeman & Freeman, 2014). A speaker's word choice is influenced by the field (subject matter), tenor (relationship between participants), and mode (spoken versus written; formal versus informal). Subtle meaning differences are filtered by participants' identities and by the purpose for their specific communication act.

Vocabulary knowledge represents the building blocks of communication. Houses are built by bricks that are pieced together with mortar to form walls, and this completes the building for its intended use. Communication is built by words that are pieced together with lexical rules to form grammar structures, and this completes the communication act for its intended meaning. Hence, the more words and word forms that our ELs know, the greater their ability to convey meaning clearly—in different ways and for different purposes.

To support ELs in learning vocabulary, teachers need to know about English words and their functions. Knowing a word is much more complex than knowing its literal meaning. Knowing a word means knowing its connotations, grammatical variations, and connections to other words such as synonyms (angry/mad) and antonyms (sad/happy). Knowing a word means knowing its sounds and letter combinations. Knowing a word also means knowing word parts such as prefixes (un-happy) and suffixes (happi-ness), as well as how these word parts combine to create technical words in specific disciplines, such as “cardiogram” in science and “demographic” in social studies. Each word part impacts the overall meaning in subtle ways (Avery, 2018).

## Major Dimensions

As English teachers, we know that when our ELs have a robust vocabulary, this supports their understanding of new and difficult texts, reinforces their reading comprehension, and develops their ability to communicate. Hence, by building a strong, vivid vocabulary, ELs can improve their literacy development and enhance their communication skills (August et al., 2005). After increasing your own understanding about vocabulary issues and related challenges facing ELs, help your ELs effectively build their vocabulary by providing them with language learning experiences to engage with new words in meaningful ways such as those explained here.

### ***Vocabulary Tiers***

Vocabulary tiers are a mechanism for grouping words based on frequency and importance. As such, vocabulary tiers are crucial for ELs in building vocabulary and developing academic language. Through this tiered focus on vocabulary, you can support your ELs with language acquisition and promote a strong literacy foundation across grade levels and content areas (Calderon & Soto, 2017). To help ELs build their communication skills, design your vocabulary instruction based on these three tiers:

- Tier One consists of basic nouns, verbs, and adjectives such as book, girl, sad, run, dog, and orange. These Tier One words represent about 8,000 word-families that are usually learned through social interaction.
- Tier Two consists of words across a variety of content domains. These words are general academic terms such as measure, table, believe, explain, and complex. They are usually of high frequency and facilitate learning across content areas. However, Tier Two words with different meanings across disciplines (e.g., table) can be challenging for ELs.
- Tier Three consists of low-frequency words that belong to a single content area and are often used for just one topic. For example, “iambic pentameter” belongs to literature, “economics” to social studies, and “integer” to mathematics. Other examples of Tier Three words are numerator, circumference, and asphalt.

### ***Content Words and Function Words***

Content words and function words are important aspects to consider when helping students build vocabulary (Freeman & Freeman, 2014). Content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) carry the main meaning of a phrase. Function words (pronouns, prepositions, determiners, intensifiers, connectors) create grammatical structures that unite sentence elements in patterns. For example, this sentence has content words in bold and function words in italics: *The English teacher, who had twenty-five years of experience, retired last week from our school and became a university professor.* The content words (English, teacher, had, twenty-five, years, experience, retired, last, week, school, became, university, professor) provide the meaning. The function words (the, who, of, from our, a, and) provide patterns for deciphering the intended message.

### ***Prefixes and Suffixes***

Prefixes and suffixes help ELs learn English words that consist of two or more parts. By knowing how words are formed, ELs increase their ability to understand unknown words, which, in turn, enhances their self-perception related to vocabulary building (Graves & Avery, 1997). About 50% of English words have Greek or Latin roots that also exist in Spanish and other languages. By knowing word forms shared between English and their first language, ELs are better able to increase morphological knowledge, become empowered at unlocking new vocabulary, and interact more easily with challenging texts. For example, if ELs know that bio- means “life,” they might see a relationship in biology, biosphere, biography, and biome. Such word knowledge also helps ELs use vivid vocabulary when speaking and writing (Freeman & Freeman, 2014).

### *Cognates*

Cognates are words in two languages that have a shared origin and similar meanings. Examples of English-Spanish cognates are calendar-calendario, calculate-calcular, interesting-interesante. With over 30% of English words related to Spanish words, cognate awareness enables Spanish-speaking ELs be more efficient at learning English vocabulary. ELs from other first languages can also use cognates to build English vocabulary and improve text comprehension (Cardenas-Hagan, 2020). Nonetheless, ELs are often challenged by false cognates, which are words with a shared origin but with different meanings. For example, the English word “embarrassed” means avergonzada in Spanish, and the Spanish word embarazada means “pregnant” in English.

### *Multiple-Meaning Words*

Multiple-meaning words have different meanings when used in different contexts. For example, “table” is a multiple-meaning word because it has a different meaning in each of these contexts.

- Is dinner on the “table”? (a piece of furniture)
- Let’s “table” this discussion for a future meeting. (defer consideration of topic)
- Read the “table” in the book and find the country with the highest population. (graph, chart)

Of these three contexts with distinct meanings for “table,” one is common usage and two are school subjects—social studies and mathematics. Although ELs probably know the common meaning of “table,” they may not know its meaning in school-related disciplines. To decrease ELs’ frustration with multiple-meaning words and increase their confidence, pre-teach new meanings of words like “table” before having ELs read discipline-specific texts that include “table” with a new meaning. By doing so, you can prevent confusion stemming from this word’s multiple meanings. When teaching multiple-meaning words in different content areas, focus on words initially assumed by learners as having just one meaning (Calderon & Soto, 2017).

Multiple-meaning words from Tier One are relatively easy. For example, both meanings of “bat” are common objects: “In baseball, we use a bat to hit the ball” and “Bats are nocturnal animals and fly at night.” Use pictures and other visuals to help ELs learn multiple meanings of “bat.” However, most multiple-meaning words are in Tier Two and Tier Three and, as such, have subtle meaning variations based on the content area. For example, a “solution” in mathematics may refer to solving a problem. However, a “solution” in science may refer to a liquid mixture. The word “rate” is more difficult because both meanings are abstract: “That movie is rated high,” and “At this rate, we will never finish.” For this type of multiple-meaning words, guide ELs in using context clues to learn the distinct meanings of a given word.

### *Homophones*

Homophones are words that sound alike but have different meanings and spellings (Freeman & Freeman, 2014). Examples of homophone sets are “it’s-its,” “to-too-two,” “they’re-there-their.” To minimize ELs’ confusion with homophones, use these teaching tips:

- Teach homophones in sets and use pictures to introduce words and meanings.

- Teach the color “blue” and verb “blew” in the same lesson to help learners differentiate.
- Teach homophones by playing games like tic-tac-toe, concentration, and charades. Here, students will repeatedly use target words and enact their meanings. By doing this, they remember better because of playing with words rather than worrying about mistakes.

### *Nominalizations*

Nominalization is the process of a verb or adjective becoming a noun such as the relationship between “prepare” and “preparation.” Nominalizations are typically found in academic language. Make ELs aware of this nominalization process to help them learn the meaning of related words. For example, after ELs learn the meaning of “perform,” which forms part of the longer word “performance,” they will have a basis for defining this longer word. By recognizing nominalizations, ELs strengthen their ability to decipher the meaning of related words.

### *Shades of Meaning*

Shades of meaning are subtle differences and nuances in words that have similar meanings. As such, shades of meaning offer a useful way to expand a student’s vocabulary. These subtle meaning differences often exist among apparent synonyms such as happy, pleased, cheerful, ecstatic, and exuberant. By understanding and recognizing shades of meaning, ELs can increase their understanding of English words and expand their vocabulary-building skills. By doing so, they are able to develop word family relationships, better comprehend intended messages when listening, and express themselves more succinctly when speaking and writing (Graves, 2016). In your lessons, consider incorporating pictures, roleplaying, and other interactive techniques to help ELs learn the shades of meaning within word families.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

Through well-planned lessons, teachers can meet the needs of diverse learners and ensure high-quality learning (Cardenas-Hagan, 2020). Choose instructional strategies that are adaptable to all ages, student needs, content areas, and language proficiency levels (Marzano et al., 2001).

Select age-appropriate activities for building knowledge and developing vocabulary skills. Young learners are innately curious and love learning the names of things in their world. Songs, hands-on activities, and visuals are effective for introducing and teaching vocabulary to young learners. Teens love their music, television shows, and social media. They become engaged when learning words that help them express themselves and their developing independence. Adult learners often rely on others (e.g., teachers) to help them learn common words and phrases to improve their social communication skills (Siegel, 2021) and, also, to communicate in specific professional contexts.

The learners’ language levels usually guide vocabulary instruction (Cardenas-Hagan, 2020). Beginner-level ELs learn common vocabulary in short phrases and sentences. Intermediate-level ELs learn content vocabulary and connectors (e.g., although, since) to link ideas and relationships. Advanced-level ELs learn academic vocabulary to use in complex sentences for a variety of purposes.

Vocabulary learning opportunities are more effective when planned according to the following design principles for vocabulary instruction (Cardenas-Hagan, 2020):

### ***Design Principle 1***

Plan vocabulary instruction with several sequenced lessons that integrate content and language. Strategically intertwine what students already know about content and language with what they are expected to learn (Echevarria et al., 2017). When ELs see this connection between the “known” and “unknown,” they are better able to recognize and learn targeted concepts, vocabulary, and language forms. To further support this connection between “known” and “unknown,” focus classroom conversations on your learners’ shared knowledge created during recent class activities such as a read-aloud or field trip.

### ***Design Principle 2***

Create multiple opportunities for using new vocabulary across several days. Implement various instructional activities to integrate connections between concepts and student experiences. For example, when planning a social studies unit on water scarcity, have students read a non-fiction text about farmers facing water shortages (Cardenas-Hagan, 2020). During a class discussion, guide students with using new vocabulary: advantage, disadvantage, problem, solution, and effectiveness. Have students identify cognates shared by English and their first language. Then have students illustrate these cognates by making visuals and placing them on a word wall. Finally, encourage students to work with partners to research this water-scarcity problem and identify solutions. Design content activities as a vehicle for ELs to use new vocabulary frequently and thus master target concepts.

### ***Design Principle 3***

Provide intentional opportunities for students to integrate new vocabulary with interactions and then continue with activities for them to learn both content and language. When planning, identify tasks and prepare questions to elicit higher order thinking responses (Hill & Flynn, 2008). Include questions that gradually become more challenging. Such questions start with basic comprehension (who, when, where, what) and end with higher order thinking (why, how, what if). Foster higher order thinking about new content by using prompts that ask students to compare-contrast, give opinion with evidence, and describe with details. Such prompts are opportunities for ELs to use vocabulary in increasingly more complex ways. Facilitate frequent academic interactions like these to develop content and vocabulary.

In this chapter, you explored major dimensions for teaching vocabulary to ELs. You learned about visuals, hands-on activities, language-rich classrooms, and cooperative learning. You also learned to apply your new knowledge about vocabulary instruction for the implementation of highly effective strategies to help ELs build their vocabulary.

## **KEY CONCEPTS**

Here are several points to remember for helping ELs build vocabulary:

- People communicate ideas through language and choose words to convey desired meanings.
- Teachers need to know about vocabulary and effective ways to teach vocabulary for positively influencing student success.



- Knowing words means knowing their sounds and letter combinations, their morphological and grammatical features, and their relationship to the context.
- Vocabulary learning is supported by frequent meaningful interactions about learners' backgrounds, interests, and shared experiences.
- When planning vocabulary lessons,
  - select target vocabulary,
  - address the three instructional design principles,
  - incorporate different strategies throughout, and
  - choose activities and techniques to create engaging experiences and multiple opportunities for students to understand, practice, and use new vocabulary.

## Discussing

From what you have learned about vocabulary, answer these questions:

1. When learning a new language, what helped you learn vocabulary? Which strategies or activities used by teachers helped you learn vocabulary? Which did not?
2. Why is vocabulary acquisition essential for ELs?
3. Which instructional principles, strategies, and activities have been shown to be effective for vocabulary development?
4. How did this chapter confirm your previous teaching knowledge? Which ideas have stretched your thinking or have added to your techniques for teaching vocabulary?

## TAKING ACTION

By using what you have learned about teaching vocabulary, do the following:

1. Explore and build knowledge for each vocabulary aspect described in this chapter.
2. Identify vocabulary strategies and activities used during lessons in which you were a student or a teacher. Which aspects from this chapter were addressed? How could these lessons be improved to support vocabulary development?
3. As you design your next lesson, consider including a new vocabulary strategy or activity. Reflect on how that activity can support students with learning new vocabulary.
4. As you incorporate new vocabulary strategies, follow the process of try, reflect, and refine.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about teaching vocabulary, visit these websites:

- Cognates to help Spanish-speaking ELs build English vocabulary.  
<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/using-cognates-develop-comprehension#:~:text=Cognates%20are%20words%20in%20two,a%20related%20word%20in%20Spanish.>
- Interaction with vocabulary-building activities.  
<https://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/English-Language-Learners/go-to-strategies.pdf>

## See Also

Vocabulary strategies have also been addressed by the following chapters in this book:

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 14** *Promoting Thinking Skills to Enhance Language Learning* by K. Sandi

**Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices* by K. Liu and J. Choi

**Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess

**Chapter 38** *A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar* by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin

**Chapter 41** *Strategies to Teach Reading* by E. Kryukova and M. Harrison

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# Assessment

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# CHAPTER 46

## Introduction to Language Assessment

## Introduction to Language Assessment

Natalie A. Kuhlman

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### Abstract

You assess things every day. Each time you ask a question, you are actually assessing (collecting information). As a teacher you assess language to see if your students are learning and if you are teaching well. You use large scale standardized assessments for moving students from Level 1 to Level 2 and for comparing students, say from Paraguay, with students in other countries. These tests, however, don't necessarily help you, the classroom teacher, to know if your students have learned and can use what you are teaching. In this chapter, you will learn about assessment and how assessment fits into your curriculum. You will also learn to know where you are going (e.g., objectives, goals, standards) in order to know when you get there (assessment, evaluation).

*Keywords:* language assessment, curriculum, objectives, goals, standards, evaluation

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## Introduction

As a teacher, you need to be able to determine the progress of your students as they learn English. As part of your instructional design, you need to know about your students' formative growth (short term) and summative growth (long term). You also need to know the difference between traditional assessments (e.g., multiple-choice) and more authentic performance-based assessments (e.g., writing samples, projects, communicative activities). Together with instruction, these assessment concepts form the foundation of classroom teaching

## Background

Language assessment has been around for a very long time. The Chinese assessed Mandarin as early as the 1500s. Such assessments were based on Confucian texts and were meant to exclude people from learning Mandarin, not to include them (O'Sullivan, 2012). On the other hand, the first Cambridge Proficiency exam for English was offered in 1913 to include British colonists who wished to enter the British educational system. These purposes have continued throughout history. Many of these early tests were based on prescriptive approaches, such as the number of grammar errors made, rather than whether a person could write a cohesive paper or discuss a topic in the language.

Since the late 20th century, assessment has moved from objective (right or wrong answers on a single test) to a more progressive, performance-based model. This model may include several different items to show how students are progressing, and these items are often combined into a portfolio. Rather than each item being graded individually, the whole collection may be reviewed as pieces of the puzzle and as the completed puzzle.

## Major Dimensions

### *Purposes of Assessment*

The main purpose of assessment is to determine how much your students have learned at one point in time or over time. Another purpose of assessment is to inform your teaching. However, what does it mean to have learned English or to be proficient?

Proficiency is how much language is needed for whatever purposes you need to know it. You can be proficient in oral language (listening/speaking) or written language (reading/writing) or in social language or academic language. You can have competence with integrating all four skills. Because languages serve many purposes, multiple varieties have evolved such as geographic, ethnic, national, academic, career, and sports. However, no single assessment can inform about language for all of these contexts. Consequently, to determine your students' progress toward language proficiency, consider using multiple forms of assessment.

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2022), which is used around the world, provides a descriptive way to determine proficiency. It is divided into three levels: Proficient User (C1, C2), Independent User (B1, B2), and Basic User (A1, A2). These levels form the basis for many proficiency tests used internationally.

When teaching English, assess students' language development

- for students to be placed in appropriate levels or to see their progress;
- for others (e.g., parents, school administrators, and even countries) to see your students' achievement; and
- for you, as a language teacher, to know what you have or haven't taught well and, consequently, identify what else needs to be taught.

Every time you ask a question, you are assessing your students. However, when the assessment is formal and meant to compare how well your students compare to students in other schools or countries, what you teach may be limited to what is on the test. In other words, you might end up teaching to the test at the expense of allowing your students to learn other forms of the language. Consequently, the reason for assessing might limit what you teach.

### ***What Do You Need to Know About Assessment?***

Regarding assessment, you need to know the issues that affect students when they are being assessed, especially formally. Such issues can be psychological, political, and affective factors, as well as aspects such as timed testing. To use assessments successfully with your students, become knowledgeable about different types of classroom assessment such as performance-based and traditional. Develop a conscious knowledge of English language structure and of first and second language acquisition so that you will not expect more from your students in English than they know in their primary language (Kuhlman, 2006; Valdez Pierce & Tu, 2022).

Find out what your students think about why they are being assessed. For many, this might not be an educational experience but rather just guessing what the teacher wants. Students might see assessment as something done to them rather than for them. For these reasons, many assessments might not actually tell you what your students really know.

Finally, establish an understanding about basic assessment concepts. Among the most important concepts are accountability, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing, validity and reliability, and formative and summative assessment.

### ***Accountability***

Accountability means being answerable. It is usually seen "to guarantee that students attain expected educational goals or standards" (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996, p. 3). This can be for a specific classroom or a more global level such as a specific city or country. Accountability is generally reached through standardized tests. Here, standardized means based on consistency (same test and conditions for everyone with same outcome reporting); it does not necessarily mean based on standards. Standardized tests can be norm-referenced or criterion-referenced.

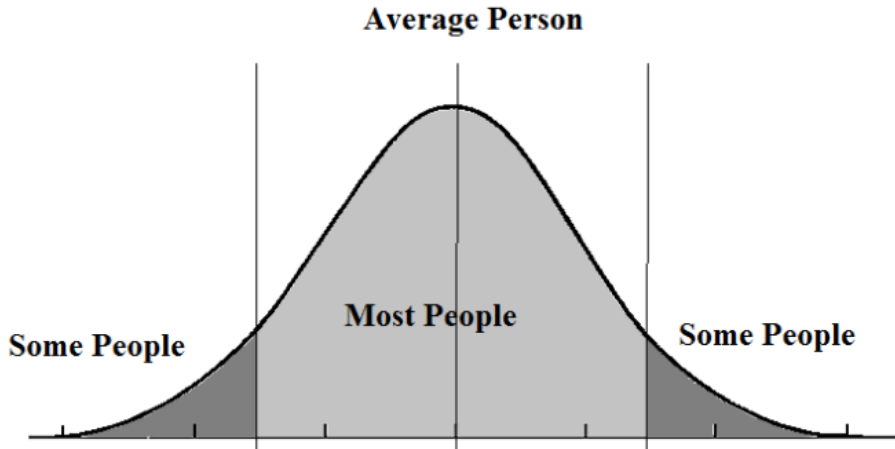
### ***Norm-Referenced Testing***

Norm-referenced testing is primarily used for local and national achievement tests and large-scale language proficiency tests (Gottlieb, 2006). The primary reason for using norm-referenced tests is to make statistically valid comparisons for accountability. These tests use a bell curve where half of the students are at or above the average or mean score, and the other half are below that average or mean score, such as is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1

*Representation of a Bell Curve*



### ***Criterion-Referenced Testing***

Criterion-referenced testing is “an approach to testing in which a given score is interpreted relative to a pre-set goal or objective (the criterion), rather than to the performance of other test-takers” (Bailey, 1998, p. 243). In other words, on criterion-referenced tests, all your students can be successful. The TOEFL is an example of a criterion-referenced test.

### ***Validity and Reliability***

Validity simply means that a test measures what it is supposed to measure. The test can be of any type, informal or formal, as well as performance based. There are two common kinds of validity: content validity and consequential validity. In content validity, the objectives of the curriculum (or standards) are aligned to the content of the test. In consequential validity, the assessment has an effect on instruction. In other words, this assessment leads to a consequence such as follow-up instruction.

Reliability means that a test (or other assessment) has consistent results. Generally, reliability is measured by using a test/retest model. The same test or assignment is given approximately two weeks apart to the same students. If reliable, this test will produce approximately the same results each time it is administered. Reliability is often used in the development of standardized tests such as TOEFL.

### ***Formative Assessment and Summative Assessment***

Formative assessment is used to monitor, on an ongoing basis, how well you and your students are doing by gathering information and interpreting progress (Elturki, 2020). As an analogy, formative assessment is like a flower that is being planted and nurtured, with ongoing tracking of its growth and corresponding adjustments as needed. Summative assessment can take place yearly for accountability or at the end of a given cycle (e.g., end of a textbook chapter or end of

a grading period). To finish the analogy, summative assessment is like a flower that is full grown and is being assessed for height and number of blossoms.

## Pedagogical Applications

Now let's examine two kinds of classroom assessments: traditional assessment and performance-based assessment. Such information gathering can be formal or informal.

### *Traditional (Objective) Assessments*

As a student, you almost certainly took traditional assessments in the form of quizzes or tests (which have been used for a long time). Such assessments are usually called objective because they focus on right or wrong answers (i.e., correct or incorrect). Sometimes there are degrees of correctness such as in cloze items and fill-in-the-blank items. Although considered "objective" assessments, they actually aren't. The test designer (either an individual or a group) decides which items to put on the assessment and how to identify students' responses as being either right or wrong. As the teacher, you are usually unaware why your students respond in a certain way. Consider having students write why they choose a certain answer, and this might change your interpretation of their response as being right or wrong. Following are several common types of traditional assessments (Coombe et al., 2012; Kuhlman, 2006)

**Multiple-Choice.** When conducting a multiple-choice assessment, have students respond to questions by selecting from among several options (usually from three to five per question). Although multiple-choice questions are seen as objective, someone selected the questions and determined the correct answers. In that sense, this type of assessment is somewhat subjective (i.e., based on someone's opinion). As an example of this subjectiveness, think about when you took a test as a student and disagreed with the correct answer.

**True-False.** When you conduct a true-false assessment, students respond by selecting "true" or "false" and, therefore, have a 50% chance of selecting the right answer. Words such as "never" and "always" can guide students in making their selection because almost nothing is always right or wrong. As a teacher, you usually do not know why students selected either "true" or "false." To use true-false questions for better identifying knowledge, consider asking students to explain why they chose either "true" or "false."

**Dictation.** When conducting a dictation assessment, read something aloud and have students write exactly what they hear. This is more complicated than it appears. In advance, decide how many times you will read the passage. Consider if you will read it slowly, or at normal speed, or both. Determine whether to read a passage that is unknown to students or one that they have already seen or heard. Decide whether to take spelling into consideration. Use a key to score the dictation and then count the errors.

**Cloze and Other Fill-in-the-Blank Assessments.** When conducting a cloze assessment or another type of fill-in-the-blank assessment, have students read a sentence or passage and then write the missing word or words (usually every 3 to 7 words depending on the length of the text). Decide whether correct responses are open-ended (several responses are acceptable) or closed (only one response is acceptable). Multiple choice can also be used, especially for low level students who, after becoming more proficient, move to open-ended. Correcting cloze and fill-in-the-blank assessments can be complicated. Does correct mean the exact word, or can it be a synonym? What if the response is something unexpected but, yet, has the same meaning?

### ***Performance-Based Assessment***

Contrary to the traditional assessments explained above, performance-based assessments require students to construct an oral and/or written response (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996). They can provide first an oral response and then a written response, or they do just one or the other. A performance-based assessment can be anything your students perform, produce, or create. This can be an assigned task or an observation (e.g., of student behavior), and it can be formal or informal. Students “accomplish complex and significant tasks, while using prior knowledge, recent learning, and relevant skills to solve realistic or authentic problems” (Herman et al., as cited in O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996, p. 4). For performance-based assessments, students may do oral and/or written projects, class debates, book reports, and writing journals. These can be with or without assigned topics.

As an alternative to grades, which are more common in traditional assessments, rubrics are often used to score performance-based assessments. Rubrics show degrees of learning, rather than just correctness. Usually, different levels will have descriptions of what should be achieved at that level, as in the CEFR (COE, 2022). Rubrics are useful in also providing additional feedback for both you (the teacher) and your students. Rubrics can be used with any type of assessment and especially with portfolios. However, using portfolios is also challenging because there are no right or wrong responses. Even when teachers are trained to use rubrics, subjectivity always plays a role.

Frequently, performance-based assessments are compiled in a portfolio. The contents can vary from daily journals to essays (perhaps first and last draft). This assessment portfolio can include all types of work (including traditional assessments) that show growth over time.

### ***Which One to Use?***

As the teacher, select the assessment type that matches your curriculum objectives and activities. For example, a multiple-choice test (traditional) cannot determine how well students write book reports (performance based). Select assessments based on content and form. Differences between traditional assessments and performance-based assessments are summarized in these columns:

<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Performance-based</b>
Knowledge/facts	Language use
Objective	Subjective
Receptive	Productive
Discrete sub-skills	Integrated skills
Overall mastery	Process and progress
Right/wrong	Rubric criteria

### ***Why Should You Know About Assessment?***

To be an effective language teacher, you need to know about assessment. You need to identify where you are going (goals, objectives, standards) to know how to get there (curriculum/teaching and learning). You also need to determine where you and your students

are along the way as well as when you have reached your destination (assessment and evaluation).

In this chapter, you learned about formative and summative assessments. You learned to differentiate between traditional assessments (e.g., multiple-choice) and performance-based assessments (e.g., actual writing samples, projects, communicative activities) and between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessments. You also learned how assessment can inform teaching.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about assessment:

- Assessment and learning go together. You can't have one without the other.
- Assessment is collecting information, and evaluation is making decisions based on the information you have collected.
- Formative assessment is used daily, and summative assessment is used upon finishing a chapter, semester, or year.
- Traditional assessment uses objective measures (e.g., multiple-choice, true-false), and performance-based assessment requires students to produce or create something.
- With norm-referenced assessment, your students are assessed based on norms and judged against each other with 50% below average and 50% above average. With criterion-referenced assessment, everyone can succeed.

## Discussing

Based on this chapter about assessment, answer these questions:

1. Is testing a good practice? Why or why not?
2. How do you know your students are learning?
3. In your situation, what are the purposes of assessment? Who decides?
4. Should curriculum dictate assessment or should assessment dictate curriculum? (trick)

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about assessment, do the following:

1. List several traditional assessments you have given (assigned) as a teacher and/or taken (produced) as a student. Think about what you learned from these assessments (as teacher or student), and what you did with the results.
2. List several performance-based assessments you have given as a teacher and/or taken as a student. Think about what you learned from these assessments, and what you did with the results.

3. Compare your responses regarding traditional and performance-based assessments.

EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about assessment, visit these websites:

- Center for Applied Linguistics. [www.CAL.org](http://www.CAL.org)
- Common European Framework of Reference. [www.coe.int/lang-CEFR](http://www.coe.int/lang-CEFR)
- International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language. [www.IATEFL.org](http://www.IATEFL.org)
- TESOL International Association. [www.TESOL.org](http://www.TESOL.org)

## See Also

Aspects related to assessment are also provided by other chapters in this book:

- Chapter 17** *Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output* by C. Cristóful  
**Chapter 19** *Incorporating Inclusive Education Practices in ELT* by R. Mazzoleni  
**Chapter 24** *Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms* by Y. Grevtseva and E. Zyrianova  
**Chapter 25** *Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning* by H. Lalwani  
**Chapter 33** *Current Approaches to English Language Teaching* by N. Dantaz  
**Chapter 42** *Strategies to Teach Writing* by M. Harrison  
**Chapter 47** *Authentic Assessment of, for, and as Learning* by G. Díaz Maggioli  
**Chapter 48** *International Frameworks to Assess Language Development* by E. Núñez  
**Chapter 49** *E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning* by B. Jiménez

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# CHAPTER 47

## Authentic Assessment of, for, and as Learning

# Authentic Assessment of, for, and as Learning

Gabriel Díaz Maggioli

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## Abstract

The most important job of a teacher is to organize the environment so that students can actually learn. One contested area of teaching is precisely how teachers realize whether students have learned—or not! This brings the issue of assessment to the forefront of many language teaching discussions: from the suitability of different frameworks for teaching, to the dispositions that students should embody, and finally, to the tools and environments used to gather information about students' learning. This chapter takes a closer look at assessment and positions it as a critical tool for teaching and learning. It also explores ways in which assessment can become instrumental in redirecting teaching efforts and in informing students of what they need to change with regard to their own learning efforts.

*Keywords:* authentic assessment, language assessment, language learners, learning English

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## Introduction

Assessment is a complex and multifaceted educational practice. The term “assessment” is frequently equated with testing or evaluation. However, this is not always the case. From an etymological point of view, assessment comes from the Latin word *assessus*, which means sitting by or with. Hence, in its origin, assessment meant something similar to accompanying someone by sitting beside them but not necessarily evaluating or testing them. This sitting with metaphor for assessment is the image that I use throughout this chapter. It is an image of collaboration oriented towards empowerment and presents teaching and assessment as dialectical processes and not as independent educational practices.

Assessment is an umbrella term that encompasses many educational practices oriented towards finding out whether students are learning or have learned (Díaz Maggioli & Painter-Farrell, 2016). In that sense, its focus is decidedly on the outcomes of a process of knowledge being appropriated by students. Assessment information allows teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching and to make the necessary changes to their instructional approach so that student learning is enhanced (McThige & Ferrara, 2000). At the same time, assessment provides students with valuable information regarding their learning efforts, which, in turn, allows them to adjust their approach to learning (Dann, 2002; Díaz Maggioli, 2012).

For assessment to be effective, a focus on process needs to be adopted. This is because any one-time evaluation of students’ learning—for example, a test or exam—can only provide a partial view of the learner’s actual progress. Thus, to provide a fair appraisal of students’ progress, and, more importantly, to make judgements about it, we need information about both the process and the product of learning.

Hence, I define assessment as the art and science of discovering what students know. Assessment provides evidence of students’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions. This evidence supports our inferences about what students know and can do, thus guiding and informing our teaching.

## Background

Assessment in education became prominent in the first half of the 20th century and evolved into being its own subfield. The work of Tyler (1949) on curriculum served as the starting point to incorporate assessment as part of the teaching process. During this time, Tyler proposed that teaching was believed to be a multi-stage practice that started with setting the learning objectives from which curriculum contents are selected. Once these had been established, teachers would select the necessary materials to support teaching and organize class time around methods, activities, and frameworks. Finally, teachers would use assessment to prove that the objectives have been achieved. Fortunately, this rather narrow view of teaching and the positioning of assessment have evolved over the years. Since the early 21st century, assessment has been understood as a crucial component of both the teaching and the learning processes.

## Major Dimensions

There are three major dimensions to assessment: assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning, and assessment *as* learning. These three dimensions are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*The Three Dimensions of Assessment*



Each of the dimensions illustrated in Figure 1 fulfills a different purpose and provides different kinds of valuable information about students' attainment of learning outcomes. Because of this, it is important to balance these three forms of assessment to determine actual student learning. We will now explore each of these dimensions individually.

### ***Assessment OF Learning***

Assessment of learning is implemented to find out if, and how much, students have learned. This dimension of assessment is summative and generally takes the form of tests or exams. These have expected answers and are graded according to the number of correct answers provided by students. These assessments are given at the end of a module, unit of work, semester, or course. The grade earned by students is final.

In this sense, we can say that assessment of learning is high stakes. Such assessment is used to make decisions that profoundly affect a students' educational trajectory and future. The final grades can imply pass or fail, or they can be used to place students in a particular group.

Precisely because of its high-stakes nature, this kind of assessment tends to promote teaching practices that are not necessarily aligned with students' learning but with making sure that students succeed in a test. As a result, many teachers tend to teach to the test and devote many hours to practicing for the test. The influence that assessment has on teaching is referred to as the *washback* effect. When testing drives teaching, thus disregarding actual students' learning, we say that the washback effect from assessment is negative, as it impairs the normal learning process. However, if the assessment of learning information is used to improve teaching and align it better to students' needs, we say that the washback effect is positive. An example of a positive washback effect is when a teacher, upon seeing test results, realizes that the students have not yet mastered a learning objective and therefore decides to devote additional time to helping them learn the targeted information or skill.

To summarize, according to Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY),

Assessment *of* learning is the assessment that becomes public and results in statements or symbols about how well students are learning. It often contributes to pivotal decisions that will affect students' futures. It is important, then, that the underlying logic and measurement of assessment *of* learning be credible and defensible. (2006, p. 55)

If we use a photo album metaphor to understand the interface between assessment and learning, then we say that the assessment of learning provides only a snapshot of the student's competence as it is given on a certain day and at a certain time during the course. We need to understand that assessment results may change if a different assessment tool were used, or if testing conditions were different. Hence, to be able to see more than just this snapshot of a student, we need to use other forms of assessment to access the full album.

### ***Assessment FOR Learning***

Assessment for learning allows teachers to gather and use evidence about students' progress during learning activities to inform their teaching as well as to allow them to make timely changes to their approach (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996). This form of assessment is embedded within learning activities and is not graded or corrected. Instead, it is used to guide teachers in their planning and instruction so that both are more aligned with students' actual learning.

Because of this, assessment for learning is ongoing and based on very clear goals for each learning activity (Boyle & Charles, 2014). Information gathered through assessment for learning is used to provide students with mindful formative feedback (Díaz Maggioli, 2012) that conveys to students the message that all of them can improve.

Assessment for learning is seen as authentic because it is embedded in and responsive to learning activities and capitalizes on obtaining real responses from students. In other words, it seeks to find out whether students can successfully apply new knowledge gained in the classroom to real life contexts.

In short, and to quote MEYC (2006) once again, the assessment for learning is, within itself, part of learning. Assessment for learning is interactive with teachers for

- aligning instruction
- identifying particular learning needs of students or groups
- selecting and adapting materials and resources
- creating differentiated teaching strategies and learning opportunities for helping individual students move forward in their learning
- providing immediate feedback and direction to students (p. 29)

Finally, it should be highlighted that the systematic implementation of assessment for learning has been reported to increase scores in standardized tests (assessment of learning), particularly for those students who generally experience difficulties and perform below the class average (Díaz Maggioli, 2020). According to some researchers (Boyle & Charles, 2014), the systematic

use of assessment for learning in class has a more positive impact on students' learning than other interventions, such as reduced class sizes.

### ***Assessment AS Learning***

Another dimension of assessment is what has been termed assessment as learning. This label itself implies that we cannot draw a clear line between assessment and learning. We can define this dimension as the systematic practice of allowing students to audit their work and their own learning process. In this sense, we are engaging students' metacognition, which is their self-knowledge about themselves as learners. Metacognition involves the higher order thinking skills and critical thinking skills that students use to reflect on what they have learned and how much (Chick, 2013).

This form of assessment also includes opportunities for students to assess the work of their peers. Coupled with students' awareness about their own learning process, peer assessment and feedback become important instances of learning through a process of self-discovery and collaborative exploration.

Finally, it should be noted that regularly involving learners in assessment as learning helps them become more responsible for their own learning. It also guides them with becoming more autonomous and self-directed, which are key characteristics of successful learners.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

In this section, I suggest pedagogical applications targeted for each of these three perspectives: assessment of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning.

### ***Assessment OF Learning***

To facilitate assessment of learning, do the following:

- Make sure that students are prepared for the various testing techniques to be used. This does not mean teaching to the test or incorporating a negative washback effect to your teaching. Rather, this is for exposing students to the kind of testing item during regular teaching so that they are not caught by surprise on the day of the test.
- Combine data from assessment of learning together with data stemming from the other two assessment dimensions in order to assess and grade students' performance.
- Incorporate alternative forms of summative assessment such as Integrated Performance Assessment (Adair-Hauck et al., 2013; Díaz Maggioli, 2020). This form of assessment implies creating a sequence of tasks on the same topic (selected from topics already studied in class or recently introduced), such as in the following example:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> class—Students do an *interpretive task* (listening or reading) using authentic materials as part of a lesson on that topic. The teacher grades this task and brings it ready for comment to the following class.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> class—The teacher proposes an *interpersonal task* (oral interaction in pairs) that is recorded (e.g., on students' mobile phones) and uses information and material from the interpretive task. Again, the teacher grades this task.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> class—The teacher provides students with grades and explicit formative feedback on their performance. During this final lesson, the teacher engages students in doing a *presentational task* (individual presentation or writing), which is also derived from the previous interpretive and interpersonal topic and tasks.
- Use rubrics to assess and grade students' work. This form of assessment is more authentic than a paper-and-pencil test. It promotes motivation and reduces anxiety because students do not have to do a formal test.

### ***Assessment FOR Learning***

To facilitate assessment for learning, do the following:

- Start each lesson by informing students what they are going to learn and why. Connect these learning outcomes to assessment by explaining what students are expected to be able to do at the end of the lesson and by providing the criteria to assess successful learning.
- Engage students in setting personal learning targets for the lesson.
- Always start the lesson by activating students' background knowledge about both the topic and the language and explain how this connects with what will be assessed.
- Devote the last few minutes of the lesson to recap what has been learned, ask students to assess whether they have achieved their learning goal for that day, and explore together the takeaways of the lesson.
- Give students time after tasks to prepare how they want to share their work with the rest of the class, which, in turn, will increase learning and support assessment for learning.
- Provide ongoing formative feedback whenever possible that is specific to the task assigned and that informs learners of what they can do to improve.

### ***Assessment AS Learning***

To facilitate assessment as learning, do the following:

- Encourage students to regularly self-assess their performance.
- Use Google forms or similar electronic tools to create peer-assessment questionnaires that can be filled from students' mobile phones. Frequently engage students in peer assessment.
- When debriefing students' work in groups, ask students to self-assess the outcome of the task and the language they have used as well as their contribution to the work of the entire group.
- At the end of each lesson, encourage students to self-assess whether or not they have attained their personal learning goals for the session.

In this chapter, you learned that assessment is a critical tool for teaching and learning. You learned about three major dimensions: assessment of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning. You also learned how assessment can be instrumental for directing your teaching efforts and for informing students of their learning efforts and achievements

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about assessment of, for, and as learning:

- Assessment is more than tests and grades.
- Assessment is valuable information about student learning.
- Assessment is a process and not a single instance or moment in time.
- Assessment has three dimensions: one that seeks to give students a grade so that decisions about their educational future can be made; one that seeks to inform teachers and students about the learning process so that they can redirect their efforts towards success; and one that encourages self-reflection and discovery and is, within itself, a form of learning.
- A true assessment system makes systematic use of all three dimensions to secure valid, reliable, and productive judgments about student learning.

## Discussing

Based on what you know about assessment, answer these questions:

1. When you were a language learner, what was your experience with assessment? Describe your experience using concepts from the chapter.
2. If you are already teaching, or if you are now doing your teaching practice, which dimensions of assessments are most frequently used?
3. How effective are these forms of assessment to improve student learning?
4. What are your beliefs about assessment in English language teaching? What do you imagine your assessment practices will look like after you become a teacher? Why?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about assessment, do the following:

1. The next time you plan a sequence of lessons, incorporate one aspect of assessment as learning towards the end of the lesson and then discuss results with your students.
2. As you participate as a learner in your various college courses, compile a list of assessment dimensions and tools that your instructors use in their classes to assess your performance.

3. Search the web for exemplars of assessment for learning tools that you can use and/or adapt to your teaching (and remember to reference them and acknowledge their source).

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about applying assessment of, for, and as learning, visit the websites of these international groups that are dedicated to language assessment:

- European Association for Language Testing and Assessment.  
<https://www.ealta.eu.org/>
- IATEFL Testing, Evaluation, and Assessment Special Interest Group.  
<https://tea.iatefl.org/>
- New South Wales Government: Assessment.  
<https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/understanding-the-curriculum/assessment/approaches>

## See Also

Aspects related to language assessment are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 17** Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output by C. Cristóful

**Chapter 46** Introduction to Language Assessment by N. Kuhlman

**Chapter 48** International Frameworks to Assess Language Development by E. Núñez

**Chapter 49** E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning by B. Jiménez

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# CHAPTER 48

## International Framework to Assess Language Development

# International Frameworks to Assess Language Development

Elena Núñez Delgado

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## Abstract

Teachers need a way to measure and assess students' language development, and their students need a way to identify how well they are doing. These needs are addressed by international frameworks that use standards and scales for assessing language development. In this chapter, you will learn about three widely adopted frameworks: the Common European Framework of Reference, the Global Scale of English, and the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment. You will learn about using these frameworks to identify the stage of a learner's language development and, upon doing this, to set attainable goals. You will also learn to help English language learners use these standards and scales for monitoring their own language development.

*Keywords:* international frameworks, language assessment, monitoring language development, standards, scales

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## Introduction

As teachers, we want our language learners to feel confident of their ability to communicate in English. We realize that language learners do not follow linear learning trajectories and that their trajectories differ from person to person, especially regarding the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). We also realize that, by being aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, our learners can become confident users of English and be able to set attainable goals for the next stage in their language development.

Language proficiencies are often identified as beginner, intermediate, and advanced. However, these terms might have different meanings in different institutions and in different countries. For consistency in how to identify and assess language proficiency at a given institution and across institutions and countries, several language development frameworks have been developed with standards and scales to assess language growth. Some of these frameworks have gained in popularity and are used worldwide.

This chapter explores three frameworks for assessing language development: Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), Global Scale of English (GSE), and World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA). The CEFR and GSE frameworks were developed for speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL), and WIDA was developed for speakers of English as a second language (ESL) but later expanded for EFL. This chapter will prepare you to consider using one or more of these frameworks to identify the language development stages of your language learners and to assess their language growth. This will allow you to establish greater consistency in teaching and assessing language and, by doing so, more effectively serve your learners through meaningful lessons and attainable targets.

## Background

All three frameworks (CEFR, GSE, WIDA) provide guidelines for designing and developing curriculum, planning lessons, and measuring learner outcomes. As such, these frameworks can be used by curriculum developers, administrators, teachers, and students. Even though each of these frameworks was developed by a different type of entity (e.g., council, publisher, university), all three were developed based on years of ongoing comprehensive academic research and are periodically and systematically revised by their respective entities.

CEFR was developed in 1989 by the Council of Europe (COE) as part of a larger project called Language Learning for European Citizenship (COE, 2020). In 1996, CEFR was expanded. In 2001, COE recommended the use of CEFR for teaching and assessing all languages taught in Europe and, also, published Can Do statements as expectations of what learners can do at each CEFR level.

GSE was developed by Pearson, a global corporation dedicated to publishing and testing. GSE uses a “standardized, granular English proficiency scale from 10–90 and is psychometrically aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” (de Jong et al., 2016, p. 4). The process for developing and constantly reviewing the GSE has involved over 6,000 teachers and specialists in 50 different countries (Pearson English, 2019).

WIDA was developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States. Its creation was triggered by the 2001 U.S. legislation named No Child Left Behind. WIDA’s English Language Proficiency Standards were produced in 2003 through a grant managed by the Wisconsin Department of Public Education in consortium with two other states. By the early 2020s, the WIDA consortium included 41 U.S.-based members (states, territories, federal agencies) and approximately 500 international schools throughout the world (WIDA, 2022a).

## Major Dimensions: Three Frameworks

### *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)*

CEFR “presents a comprehensive descriptive scheme of language proficiency and a set of Common Reference Levels (A1 to C2) defined in illustrative descriptor scales, plus options for curriculum design promoting plurilingual and intercultural education” (COE, 2020, p. 27). Since the 1990s, CEFR has informed the teaching and learning of English and other European languages. Since the early 2020s, CEFR has also informed the assessment of non-European languages.

One of CEFR’s main characteristics is an action approach “oriented towards real-life tasks and constructed around purposefully selected notions and functions” (p. 28). CERF has moved away from linear syllabi and encourages using syllabi based on needs analyses. CERF has three broad levels of language proficiency (A = *Basic User*, B = *Independent User*, C = *Proficient User*). Each level has two divisions (1 = *lower* and 2 = *higher*). This provides the six Common Reference Levels outlined in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*The Common Reference Levels in CEFR*

A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Basic User		Independent User		Proficient User	

For each of the six common reference levels outlined in Figure 1, the CEFR manual provides illustrative descriptors for language abilities within that level (COE, 2020). CEFR also provides Can Do statements so that “Educators can select CEFR descriptors according to their relevance to the particular context, adapting them in the process if necessary” (p. 42). To facilitate selecting these descriptors, CEFR was expanded to include three “plus” levels (A2+, B1+, B2+).

CEFR’s descriptors and Can Do statements define communicative activities and abilities at each level. For example, to illustrate reception activities in oral comprehension at the A2 level and the ability of *understanding conversation between other people*, one of the Can Do statements is: “Can follow in outline short, simple social exchanges, conducted very slowly and clearly” (COE, 2020, p. 49). To illustrate mediation at the B1 level and the ability of *processing text in speech or sign*, a Can Do statement is “Can summarize the main points made during a conversation on a subject of personal or current interest, provided people articulated clearly” (p. 211).

When using CEFR, keep in mind that its C2 level was never intended to compare competence of C2 users to that of native-speakers or near native speakers. “What is intended is to characterize the degree of precision, appropriateness and ease with the language which typifies the speech of those who have been highly successful learners” (COE, 2020, p. 37).

***Global Scale of English (GSE)***

GSE provides a framework for assessing the English skills of adults learning general English, professional English, and academic English as well as the skills of young learners aged 6–14 years. According to David Nunan (Pearson, 2019), “the Global Scale of English represents the most significant advance in performance-based approaches to language learning, teaching and assessment since the development of the CEFR” (p. 3). Hence, GSE targets a wider audience than does CEFR, which was originally targeting adult language learners. GSE provides an interactive digital toolkit with Can Do statements for speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

By using the GSE, you can identify learners’ abilities along a scale from 10 to 90. This GSE scale starts above CEFR’s C2 and ends below its A1 (Pearson, 2016), as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

<b>GSE</b>	<b>CEFR</b>
85-90	C2
76-84	C1
67-75	B2+
59-66	B2
51-58	B1+
43-50	B1
36-42	A2+
30-35	A2

22-29	A1
10-21	below A1 (e.g., tourist)

*Note.* Adapted from *The GSE Teacher Toolkit*. Pearson. <https://www.english.com/gse/teacher-toolkit/user/lo>

### ***World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)***

WIDA was developed in the United States at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for assessing and tracking the English development of children with other home languages who are learning English simultaneously with grade-level academic content (e.g., mathematics, social studies, science, English language arts). Targeted for English language learners (ELLs) in PK-12 school settings, WIDA offers a suite of English proficiency tests at six development levels across five standards. These standards “provide educators with a connection between language development and academic content area learning” and are grounded in the “belief that multilingual learners are best served when they learn content and language together in linguistically and culturally sustaining ways” (WIDA, 2020b, p. 9).

WIDA meets federal U.S. requirements for monitoring and reporting the progress of ELLs in reaching English language proficiency. WIDA’s suite for assessing English language proficiency is called ACCESS for ELLs (ACCESS). WIDA consortium members administer annual ACCESS assessments to students, from pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, who are identified as ELLs. Student scores reflect their English proficiency at six language levels (1 = *entering*, 2 = *emerging*, 3 = *developing*, 4 = *expanding*, 5 = *bridging*, 6 = *reaching*) within four language domains (listening, reading, speaking, writing) and, also, across three composite areas (oral language, literacy, overall).

WIDA focuses on developing social language and academic language as reflected in five standards (WIDA, 2022a):

- Standard 1: ELLs communicate for social and instruction purposes within the school setting.
- Standard 2: ELLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Language arts.
- Standard 3: ELLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Mathematics.
- Standard 4: ELLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Science.
- Standard 5: ELLs communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Social Studies.

WIDA also provides Can Do descriptors to guide educators and students with understanding what learners can do at different levels of language proficiency (WIDA, 2022a). Educators use these Can Do descriptors by collaborating with each other to scaffold language and content

instruction so that students can more effectively learn new language and academic content at the same time. By using Can Do descriptors, educators are better able to interpret the ACCESS scores of their ELLs and, by doing so, differentiate language instruction from language assessment.

## Pedagogical Applications

With increasing frequency, EFL institutions in Paraguay and many other countries are adopting CEFR to map their courses and implement instruction. However, although your institution might be using CEFR, consider applying aspects from GSE or WIDA to better identify your students' language levels when preparing and delivering lessons. For example, if teaching in a bilingual school where content (e.g., science) is taught in English, consider using WIDA because it was developed to assess students' English that they learn simultaneously with content.

When teaching at an institution that has adopted CEFR, inquire about the CEFR level for the course that you are assigned to teach. This will make you better informed to serve your students and reach the goal determined by your institution. CEFR levels will also allow you to better understand the “big picture” for each student's learning trajectory.

EFL materials and instructional resources are often labeled with CEFR levels. Most textbooks published in the 21st century display CEFR levels on a book's back cover. If a commercial textbook has been assigned to your course, take its CEFR level into consideration. This level will help you understand where your students are when starting to use these materials, guide them for success in your course, and identify where they need to be upon completing your course.

Knowing CEFR levels is very useful when planning lessons. Based on the CEFR level for your course, choose a corresponding language function or Can Do statement and then plan your class based on that description. Train yourself to map the language expectations of your textbook lessons to CEFR. This can help you choose developmentally appropriate materials such as for the receptive skills (listening, reading).

International frameworks and their accompanying standards are also useful when it comes to assessing our students' language skills. Use the scales and pre-defined performance descriptors in an assessment framework to “design tests which ask the students to do the things which the descriptors suggest” (Harmer, 2015, p. 419) and then to grade them on their progress. Harmer strongly recommended such frameworks for assessing the productive skills (speaking, writing).

These frameworks also offer another powerful pedagogical application, that of sharing Can Do statements with students. Can Do statements provide students with opportunities for self and peer assessment and, as such, “encourage them to be more autonomous in their learning” (Harmer, 2015, p. 411). When students use Can Do statements as tools to assess their learning, they are better able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and then set their own attainable goals.

Also mapped to CEFR are international exams such as IELTS, Cambridge, and Trinity. When preparing your students for these exams, locate a specific exam's CEFR level and identify targeted language expectations. By considering these levels and expectations, you will be better able to prepare your students for success on these exams.



In this chapter, you learned about three widely adopted frameworks for assessing language development: CEFR, GSE, and WIDA. You learned how to use these frameworks to identify a learner's stage in language development. You also learned about guiding ELLs to use these scales and standards to set attainable goals and monitor their own language progress.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about language assessment frameworks:

- Language assessment frameworks were developed to guide course developers, school administrators, teachers, and students in understanding the proficiency of language learners and in tracking their progress with learning a new language.
- Three commonly used language assessment frameworks are CEFR, GSE, and WIDA.
- Each of these language frameworks can be used to map learners' progress in language development from beginning to advanced.
- Some frameworks also serve to identify skills of learners at an initial language stage where they can understand simple language chunks but do not yet produce much language.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about language assessment frameworks, answer these questions:

1. Does your school or language institute place students into groups based on their language levels? Which assessment framework, if any, is used to do this grouping?
2. Have you ever taken an international English proficiency test? If so, how did your test preparation and the test results inform your English language learning? From your perspective, which frameworks and standards described in this chapter were used in developing this test?
3. Use descriptors from one of these language frameworks (CEFR, GSE, WIDA) to self-assess your own level of language proficiency in any of the languages that you know. Because of variability in skill proficiency, conduct a separate self-assessment for each of your language skills. How does this exercise help you understand the need of standardized frameworks for assessment purposes?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about language assessment frameworks, do the following:

1. Compare the scope and sequence of a commercial language textbook based on the CEFR, GSE, and/or WIDA frameworks. Describe differences and similarities. If this textbook is supposedly mapped to a specific assessment framework, identify the extent of this mapping.

2. Evaluate a student's language proficiency based on levels in one of the three frameworks (CEFR, GSE, WIDA). Select a language level (e.g., beginning) and write from six to eight oral prompts or questions to determine if your students are at that level.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

For more information about frameworks to assess language development, visit these websites:

- CEFR. [www.coe.int/lang-cefr](http://www.coe.int/lang-cefr)
- English language development standards framework, Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. <https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld>
- English language portfolio, COE. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio>
- English vocabulary profile: The CEFR for English, Cambridge University Press. <https://www.englishprofile.org/the-cefr/cefr-for-teachers-learners>
- GSE, Pearson. <https://www.english.com/gse/teacher-toolkit/user/lo>
- World-readiness standards for learning languages, American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages. <https://www.actfl.org/resources/world-readiness-standards-learning-languages>

## See Also

Assessing language development is also addressed in other chapters of this book:

- Chapter 9** Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning by M. Zalimben
- Chapter 18** Teaching English in Different Contexts by R. Díaz
- Chapter 25** Preparing to Teach Through Effective Lesson Planning by H. Lalwani
- Chapter 46** Introduction to Language Assessment by N. Kuhlman
- Chapter 47** Authentic Assessment of, for, and as Learning by G. Díaz Maggioli
- Chapter 49** E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning by B. Jiménez

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Photo by Christopher Gower on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 49

## E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning

# E-Portfolios to Assess Language Learning

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## Abstract

Assessing language learners' knowledge and skills can be challenging for teachers. Fortunately, quality assessment is achievable through electronic portfolios (e-portfolios), which are attractive for learners and accessible for teachers. An e-portfolio is a powerful tool that can engage and motivate learners, increase their language learning opportunities, and help them with developing communicative competence. This type of portfolio is characterized by constructive learning that enhances language learners' reflection, autonomy, and communicative skills (Mazlan et al., 2015). Through e-portfolios, teachers obtain evidence about learners' language development and about their progress toward achieving a school's curricular goals. E-portfolios can help language learners identify their strengths and weaknesses and, by doing so, guide them toward reaching greater awareness of their own language learning progress. In this chapter, you will learn how to use e-portfolios to support learners' growth and to assess their language learning.

*Keywords:* e-portfolios, language learning, constructive learning, reflection, autonomy

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## Introduction

Electronic-portfolios (e-portfolios) provide opportunities for students to show what they have learned and accomplished during a single semester or across an entire program. E-portfolios provide evidence of language learning outcomes and are, therefore, used by teachers to assess language development. The electronic nature of e-portfolios presupposes that technology and digital applications (apps) are required to create and upload content. When creating e-portfolios, students are usually creative with using apps and eager about displaying their self-produced audios and videos, something that is more difficult to do with traditional binder portfolios. By posting digital artifacts in their e-portfolios, students can track their own progress and reflect on their use of learning strategies. E-portfolios also facilitate formative assessment by establishing a venue for teachers to provide immediate and ongoing feedback from the beginning to the end of a term. By doing this, teachers monitor student progress and determine whether reinforcement is needed to support a single student, a group of students, or all students in the development of their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This chapter examines how to use e-portfolios for assessing language learners' knowledge and skills across time, explores how e-portfolios can positively influence learners' academic performance, and addresses how e-portfolios can be further enhanced through technology.

## Background

A learner's ability to understand and communicate in a target language can be assessed by various means. Among these are traditional tests for serving diagnostic, placement, achievement, and proficiency purposes (Nurdiana, 2020). These types of tests are as follows:

- diagnostic tests—for measuring students' abilities on certain aspects of language,
- placement tests—for placing students in an appropriate level,
- achievement tests—for identifying students' comprehension and abilities related to course content, and
- proficiency tests—for assessing knowledge and language by using global measures that can qualify test-takers for a certificate.

In addition to these traditional tests, language can also be assessed through e-portfolios, which are digitalized collections of diverse authentic evidence representing the work performed by one or more individuals (Bahrani, 2011). When used by students to document their work, e-portfolios are “an engaging process of connection, integrating academic learning, life experience, and profound processes of personal growth” (Mazlan et al., 2015, p. 38). Supported by constantly emerging apps, e-portfolios are a low-cost, practical approach for students to learn while using their preferred learning styles (Muin et al., 2021). Because e-portfolios offer language learners the opportunity to explore, analyze, and self-reflect on their learning process, learners often become more thoughtful in their use of language learning strategies.

Since the 1990s, technological advances have served to popularize e-portfolios for teaching, learning, and assessing English as a foreign language (EFL). E-portfolios are frequently used to assess EFL students' language development, content achievement, and effort. However, for these technology-supported assessments to be valid and reliable, e-portfolios must necessarily contain authentic material such as artifacts of students performing real-world tasks (Bahrani,

2011). By doing these tasks and creating the corresponding artifacts, students develop critical thinking skills and problem-solving that can enhance their ability to communicate.

Based on its main purpose, a student portfolio can be classified as a working portfolio or a display portfolio (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997). A working portfolio is for systematically documenting a student's work in one class across time. A display portfolio is for gathering and displaying a student's best work. Both types can serve as formative assessment by highlighting achievement throughout a semester (or year) and as summative assessment by demonstrating final competencies. Although this working versus display classification was initially used for binder portfolios, it is also useful for e-portfolios.

Language skills are used to produce portfolio artifacts. While paper artifacts usually represent literacy skills (reading and writing), digital artifacts can represent all four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), thus making e-portfolios extremely useful for teaching and assessing language development. Through their e-portfolio artifacts, English learners can be assessed on multiple tasks for their overall language competence. This contrasts sharply with multiple-choice exams and short-response questions through which learners can be assessed on just one or two skills. Because e-portfolios can assess all four language skills, they complement traditional language tests and, in some instances, can even replace them (Apple & Shimo, 2004).

In a study on portfolio assessment in EFL classrooms, students perceived portfolios as both fun and demanding, reported spending more time on content because of how the portfolios were their own product, and described portfolios as a perfect tool to support their learning (Apple & Shimo, 2004). These same students perceived portfolios as beneficial for setting goals, self-assessing, and having their language assessed over extended time as well as for providing a greater sense of language achievement, more joy than taking tests, and more opportunities to learn cooperatively and to reflect on learning. In a study on e-portfolios to assess learning, students reported feeling motivated by actively participating in projects and viewed e-portfolios as positively influencing their learning (Muin et al., 2021). In other studies, e-portfolios were effective at developing student self-efficacy (López-Crespo et al., 2022) and facilitated the teaching-learning process by having students assume interactive roles, reflect on learning, and identify their own progress (Chere-Masopha & Mothetsi-Mothiba, 2022; Gallego et al., 2009).

E-portfolios are highly effective at assessing student performance and language development because of intersecting components that entail theoretical and practical attributes (López-Crespo et al., 2022). E-portfolios are also effective because of a constructivist approach that promotes critical thinking, learner autonomy, and learner-centeredness as well as self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses (Mazlan et al., 2015). When creating their e-portfolios, language learners engage interactively, acquire knowledge constructively, and assume responsibility to meet learning objectives. When selecting tasks and artifacts based on their individual needs and interests, language learners also work towards meeting institutional goals.

## Major Dimensions

To better navigate the constant variation and expansion of Englishes during your lifetime, take To maximize potential benefits from using e-portfolios, compare your individual beliefs with institutional expectations, enhance your students' motivation by offering choices, and increase student buy-in by defining purpose.

### ***Compare Individual Beliefs With Institutional Expectations***

When beginning a new job, compare your individual beliefs with your institution's expectations. To benefit your future students, remain open-minded to new ideas and shape your beliefs based on research findings. Be willing to adjust when your employer adopts new research-based policies. New policies might lead to a change in methods and teacher obligations and, as such, could even be related to e-portfolios. Some changes are imposed by school authorities, and others are determined by teacher committees.

Before entering the teaching profession, some pre-service teachers might have their own beliefs about how students learn. At times, however, such beliefs are erroneous (Borg, 2006). In one study, some first-year teachers did not readily abandon their former beliefs, even when the teaching context was different from what they had initially anticipated (Farrell, 2012). In another study, eleven EFL teachers became frustrated when expected to teach and assess contrary to their beliefs (Phipps & Borg, 2009). To avoid this type of frustration, compare your individual beliefs about using e-portfolios to assess language development and your institution's expectations. Then find a healthy balance between your beliefs and these institutional expectations.

### ***Enhance Student Motivation by Offering Choices***

As a future teacher, you will face challenges in the classroom related to student motivation and achievement. E-portfolios can motivate some students positively and others negatively. These opposite motivational responses are often related to the students' learning styles and needs (Muin et al., 2021). Because students usually learn best through their preferred learning styles, enhance their motivation by offering portfolio choices regarding topic and technique.

### ***Increase Student Buy-in by Defining Purpose***

When introducing e-portfolios to your class, define your purpose for using an e-portfolio based on content and learning expectations. Increase your students' buy-in by explaining how this portfolio can meet their interests, needs, and competencies. Make sure your students understand what is being assessed (e.g., one skill or a group of skills) and how this assessment will take place. Before starting their e-portfolios, students must understand the portfolio structure and your expectations. This will allow them to successfully organize their portfolio, make it integrative, show knowledge acquired, and reflect on their own learning.

In preparation for assigning an e-portfolio, determine whether you will be using it as formative assessment, summative assessment, or both. Decide how you will be giving feedback to ensure constructive input that supports student growth. When launching this portfolio, give students clear instructions and criteria about what and how each artifact will be assessed, including written tasks, oral production, reading comprehension, listening skills, and performance.

Before students start to create their e-portfolios, give them an assessment rubric, such as the one in this chapter's appendix. Explain to your students how they will be receiving feedback for each of their artifacts (e.g., discussions, written comments, dialogues) and how they can give feedback to classmates on their respective artifacts. Encourage students to seek clarification regarding the feedback that they receive before starting to implement suggestions and



corresponding revisions. In this way, students can establish their own “give and take” feedback process through which they can then assume greater responsibility for their own learning.

## Pedagogical Applications

To help you be successful with using e-portfolios in your EFL classes, this section suggests ways to explain expectations, assess individual and group portfolios, and involve all students.

### *Explain Expectations*

If you are new to e-portfolios, you might feel confused and need help knowing what to do next. Similarly, if your students are new to e-portfolios, they also need help. As their teacher, explain everything, including the plan, objectives, guidelines, and expectations for this e-portfolio. Make sure that all students understand what to do. If expectations are not well explained at the very beginning, both you and your students can get lost along the way. In fact, if students are not fully informed about all aspects related to their e-portfolio, they will experience difficulty with meeting expectations.

### *Assess Individual and Group Portfolios*

As an EFL teacher, I personally know how time-consuming it can be to assess e-portfolios. In my eagerness to implement e-portfolios as extensively as possible, I initially had each student create an individual e-portfolio. When I assigned individual e-portfolios in four classes, each with about 37 students, that generated almost 150 portfolios for me to assess at the same time! After that overwhelming experience, I discovered other options that are more suitable to my teaching context. One option is for each student team to create a group portfolio through which group members explore their selected topic by using social skills and further developing their language skills. If you decide to use group portfolios, ask student teams to find solutions for an engaging problem and then encourage and support all team members to participate actively.

Some teachers might think it is unfair to grade a group portfolio because some students might contribute more than others. Minimal contributions from one student can negatively impact the motivation of other students. Mitigate this potential problem by assigning a specific task to each team member at the very beginning of a group-based portfolio project. Assess the group portfolio based on aspects such as accomplishment, objectives, effort, group performance, individual performance, and productive language skills (speaking, writing). Use an assessment rubric with criteria for group performance (e.g., content and quality of the overall portfolio) and individual performance (e.g., each student’s productive language skills). Consider adapting the sample rubric provided in the Appendix or finding other examples on the internet.

### *Involve All Students*

Some students might be reluctant to participate in certain activities (e.g., speaking) required in their group e-portfolio. Here is an example of how I involved all students in my intermediate EFL class who were working in groups of three to create a group e-portfolio. One of the portfolio tasks was to perform a talk show; however, many of these students struggled with speaking. To help students prepare for the talk show’s speaking component, I had each student do an internet search and find ten useful phrases to use in the talk show script. After each team member had gathered phrases, the team worked together to brainstorm ideas and then started writing their script. One student was charged with writing, another with proof-reading, and the third with doing phonetic transcriptions of unknown words. After collaboratively working on

the script, the group members supported each other in practicing their respective speaking parts. Through their balanced participation, each group attained the main objective, that of performing the talk show. Although their performance was good, it could have been better if students would have had more time to prepare their talk show. Because time is often an issue with e-portfolios, teachers must plan by anticipating enough time for students to be able to do their best.

In this chapter, you learned about using e-portfolios in EFL classrooms. You learned that e-portfolios can motivate learners and foster active learning. You learned about identifying an e-portfolio's purpose, balancing your individual beliefs with institutional expectations, and implementing pedagogical applications. You also learned how to use e-portfolios to assess language learning.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some points to remember when using e-portfolios to assess language development:

- E-portfolios can be used for formative assessment and summative assessment.
- E-portfolios help promote student-centered activities and reinforce student motivation.
- Through their e-portfolios, students develop skills and attributes for doing teamwork, communication, and critical thinking.
- By receiving feedback on their e-portfolios, students can improve their performance.
- Don't be afraid of your first experience with using e-portfolios. If something goes wrong, you will know what to avoid when planning to use e-portfolios with another class.

## Discussing

Given what you have learned about e-portfolios, answer these questions:

1. Why are e-portfolios so popular?
2. How can you go about classifying e-portfolios?
3. Should students create e-portfolios individually or as a group? Why or why not?
4. What do students need to know if they are new at creating e-portfolios?
5. What should you consider before using e-portfolios to assess student achievement and language development?
6. What are some advantages and disadvantages about using e-portfolios to teach and assess?

## TAKING ACTION

By using what you have learned about e-portfolios, do the following:

1. Describe earlier experiences with e-portfolios (if any), as a student and possibly as a teacher.
2. Talk to your colleagues and compare ideas on assessment criteria when using e-portfolios.
3. Explain why it is important to establish assessment criteria before assigning e-portfolios.
4. Identify objectives for students to reach upon finishing their e-portfolios.
5. Estimate your time availability for reviewing and assessing e-portfolios and the time it might take you to review a single e-portfolio as summative assessment.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge about using e-portfolios for assessment, visit these websites:

- Describe how students could use these webpages when creating their e-portfolios and brainstorm how you might assess students' language development.
  - Edublogs. <https://edublogs.org/>
  - Evernote. <https://www.evernote.com>
  - Google. <https://www.google.com>
  - Seesaw. <https://web.seesaw.me/>
  - Weebly. <https://www.weebly.com>
  - Wordpress. <https://wordpress.com>
- Learn more about creating and using rubrics for assessment purposes. <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/resources/creating-and-using-rubrics/#j5>
- Visit University of Waterloo (Canada) and explore student perspectives on e-portfolios. <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/resources/integrative-learning/eportfolios/examples-student-eportfolios>
- Watch this video and create a mind map. <https://youtu.be/tyCFvzP6Tww>

## See Also

Aspects related to e-portfolios and language assessment are also addressed in the following chapters in this book:

**Chapter 9** *Empowering Adults for Autonomous Learning* by M. Zalimben

**Chapter 10** *Building Language Awareness* by H. Lalwani

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

- Chapter 17** *Providing Feedback on Learners' Language Output* by C. Cristóful
- Chapter 23** *Integrating Technology in Language Classrooms* by H. Hubbard, A. Foss, and C. Strawn
- Chapter 24** *Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms* by Y. Grevtseva and E. Zyrianova
- Chapter 42** *Strategies to Teach Writing* by M. Harrison
- Chapter 46** *Introduction to Language Assessment* by N. Kuhlman
- Chapter 47** *Authentic Assessment of, for, and as Learning* by G. Díaz Maggioli
- Chapter 48** *International Frameworks to Assess Language Development* by E. Nuñez

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# APPENDIX

## ch.49

### Assessment Rubric for Students' E-Portfolios

Criteria	1	2	3	4
Roles/assigned work	Members of the group do not have similar workloads.	Each member has assumed a role, but some have more work than others.	Each member knows their duties, and the workload is equal.	Group members establish similar workloads and assign roles. They kept a record of their efforts.
Multimedia	Multimedia is not related to the purpose of the tasks.	Multimedia is not suitable for the content.	Multimedia is usually related to content and to the purpose of tasks.	Multimedia is always related to the content and purpose of tasks.
Oral communication	The speaker talks softly and with great difficulty (often inaudible). Little is said, and errors are noticeable.	The speaker exchanges some ideas (but with difficulty) and does not seem motivated because of weak language.	The speaker is engaged most of the time and has good language control with just a few hesitations.	The speaker is engaged all the time, produces fluid speech for their level, and has excellent control of the language.
Written communication	The writing does not match the purpose of the task. The ideas are not organized. There are frequent grammar errors.	The ideas are not well organized. There is limited sentence structure with many run-ons.	Writer expresses ideas with some details and usually communicates clearly. The information is well-structured most of the time.	Writing is clear and catches the reader's attention. The writer shares information related to the purpose of the task.

# Career Development and Enhancement

**50*****Developing Intercultural Competencies***

Lisbeth S. Rojas-Barreto, Jairo Enrique Castañeda-Trujillo, Jhon Eduardo

**51*****Observing in the Transformative Teaching Process***

Verónica Sánchez Hernández, Yonatan Puón Castro

**52*****Becoming a Reflective Practitioner Through Action Research***

Valentina Canese

**53*****Doing Research in the ELT Undergraduate Classroom***

Araceli Salas

**54*****Promoting Collaborative Professionalism Among Pre-Service Teachers***

Diana Patricia Pineda Montoya

**55*****Building and Engaging With Your Professional Community***

Mark S. Algren



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# CHAPTER 50

## Developing Intercultural Competencies



# Developing Intercultural Competencies

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## Abstract

The world is interconnected with people from multiple cultures who are interacting in a third space of confluence (Zhou & Pilcher, 2019). To help English learners navigate in this third space and participate in globalization, teachers need to learn more about interculturality, Intercultural Competence (Fantini, 2000), and Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram et al., 2001). In this chapter, you will learn about these concepts and how to promote them among English learners through activities such as experiential learning, intercultural workshops, virtual cultural exchanges, and telecollaboration projects. After further developing your own interculturality and intercultural skills, you can then guide your students in developing theirs.

*Keywords:* intercultural competencies, intercultural communicative competence, interculturality, globalization, third space of confluence, experiential learning, telecollaboration

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[https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc\\_ch50](https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc_ch50)

## Introduction

All countries have their own cultural traditions as evidenced by traditional dishes, customs, and beliefs plus many other cultural traits. In fact, within any given country, some people even have regional dishes, customs, and beliefs. These cultural traits differ greatly because of the dynamic, context-sensitive nature of culture. Because of such differences, it is important for everyone to learn to recognize, respect, appreciate, and celebrate cultural traits. This is called interculturality.

In the 21st century, interculturality has began gaining importance in English language teaching (ELT) as its own field of knowledge. It represents how people from diverse cultures interact in a third space of confluence (Dietz, 2018; Zhou & Pilcher, 2019). By learning to navigate in this space, people from different cultures relate with each other and expand their interculturality. As a field, interculturality seeks to promote effective and appropriate behaviors during interactions with people from other cultures (Byram, 2021). As a practice, interculturality guides families with raising children to be empathetic, adaptable, and willing to learn about other cultures.

Given the globalization and virtual accessibility of the 21st century, all educators (especially language teachers) need to develop interculturality. By doing so, we strengthen our Intercultural Competence (IC) and are able to communicate and act flexibly, appropriately, empathetically, and cooperatively in a myriad of complex environments with individuals from other cultures who have different expectations, practices, and attitudes (Fantini, 2000). By strengthening our IC, we can also build Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), which is an “ability to interact with ‘others,’ to accept other perspectives and perceptions of the world, to mediate between different perspectives, to be conscious of their evaluations of difference” (Byram et al., 2001, p. 5).

In this chapter, you will learn about interculturality, IC, and ICC and about their respective roles in ELT. You will learn about major dimensions needed to promote interculturality in your classroom. You will also learn how to promote ICC through experiential learning, intercultural workshops, virtual cultural exchanges, and telecollaboration projects

## Background

Historically, IC has been perceived from different angles. Although these distinct perspectives might appear to lack consensus, this is not problematic given how IC has frequently undergone deconstruction because of its complex and context-bound nature (Dervin & Gross, 2016). Among these varying definitions, an important convergence is viewing IC as embodying one or more abilities such as

- ability to develop and maintain relationships,
- ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss or distortion, and
- ability to attain compliance and obtain cooperation with others. (Fantini, 2000, p. 26)

Other definitions of IC (Byram et al., 2001; Dietz, 2018) have included abilities such as the following:

- ability to establish one’s own identity while mediating and negotiating meaning among cultures,
- ability to lose focus by no longer focusing just on one’s own culture but rather being able to see beyond one’s self and focus on other cultures (i.e., moving from ethnocentric to intercultural),
- ability to relativize one’s own point of view by recognizing one’s positionality relative to the positionality of others and their cultures, and
- ability to understand another’s point of view.

Within the ELT field, a precursor to ICC was the movement against approaches favoring “the memorization of grammatical paradigms and the word-for-word translation of decontextualized sentences” (Kramersch, 2006, p. 249). This movement initially led to communicative competence, which described what native speakers know that enables them to interact effectively with other native speakers in a spontaneous, unrehearsed way. Yet, despite attempted redefinitions, communicative competence continued to be questioned because the concept positioned native speakers as a model for language learners, thus implying that language learners are able to become native speakers of the target language (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Upon feeling pressured to perhaps imitate native speakers, some language learners might exclude their own social context, culture, and identity from both the learning process and the communication process. This concern led to IC and eventually to ICC.

### Major Dimensions

To help promote learners’ interculturality, it is important to understand pragmatic competence and the ICC model.

#### *Pragmatic Competence*

Pragmatic competence is understanding what is and is not appropriate in a culture to avoid breakdowns and misunderstandings (Domaneschi & Bambini, 2020). This competence is related to metalinguistics, which is the language awareness necessary to participate in a communication act. Pragmatic competence is based on knowledge of the communicative context and of a person’s linguistic resources. This competence can help students share personal feelings and thoughts, thus strengthening their rapport with interlocutors (Godwin-Jones, 2019), who are the other people participating in the same conversation. To enhance your students’ pragmatic competence, consider doing the following:

- select materials and activities that generate reflection,
- implement activities that lead to understanding and negotiating the cultural aspects being analyzed as well as possibly accepting or rejecting them,
- design activities for your students to better understand an interlocutor’s context,
- integrate knowledge of the other, and
- create an accurate intercultural background for their conversations.

Pragmatic competence is developed when students participate in activities such as experiential learning, intercultural workshops, virtual cultural exchanges, and telecollaboration projects. Here, students are placed in real-world settings and convert a learning process into a transformational experience. In such activities, students develop pragmatic competence by

creating their own knowledge. This type of learning is based on constructivist theories that view knowledge as being built individually and collectively (Kolb, 2015) as shown below with the ICC Model.

### *The ICC Model*

To increase your students' interculturality, consider adopting the ICC model, which is one of the most popular intercultural models used in language classrooms. This ICC model (Byram, 2021; Byram et al., 2001) is composed of the following five dimensions of critical cultural awareness:

- skills to interpret and relate,
- skills to discover and interact,
- knowledge of self and other and of individual and societal interaction,
- education about critical cultural awareness and political education, and
- attitudes for relativizing self and valuing other.

Of these ICC dimensions, the first two are identified as skills (skills for interpreting and relating and skills for discovering and interacting). These skill-based dimensions refer to perspectives that individuals portray during intercultural encounters, such as respect, willingness, open attitude, and suspension of judgment. The other three dimensions are identified as knowledge (self and other, individual interaction, and societal interaction), education (critical cultural awareness and political education), and attitudes (relativizing self and valuing others). These three dimensions are commonly associated with an individual's capacity to relativize values and behaviors. By learning to relativize, individuals are able to treat values and behaviors relative to a specific culture rather than absolute for all cultures. Through their growing capacity to relativize, these individuals become objectively aware of differences relative to the norms of their culture—yet conditioned by it and dependent upon it. They also become more critical and reflexive about their surrounding reality and are able to move from a culture-bound position to a universal position. Similarly, these five ICC dimensions can guide you with advancing your own ICC and also with promoting your students' ICC such as described in the following section.

## **Pedagogical Applications**

To promote interculturality and ICC in physical and virtual classrooms, identify strategies that incorporate cultural aspects in ways that are personal and real for your students. Select online tools to establish synchronous and asynchronous contact with your partner teachers in another country and with their students. The goal is for the students in both countries to co-construct an understanding about their own culture and the other culture (Godwin-Jones, 2019). Finally, match these strategies and tools to implement activities such as the following: experiential learning, intercultural workshops, virtual cultural exchanges, and telecollaboration projects.

### *Experiential Learning*

To promote ICC in your ELT classroom, consider implementing transformational experiences such as experiential learning, which encourages students to discover, reflect, and critically analyze what they have experienced. By participating in experiential learning, students gain concrete experience, reflect on this experience, experiment actively, and engage in abstract thinking. After putting their new understanding into practice, students often change their

behavior from ethnocentric to intercultural. Experiential learning can include simulations (virtual or face-to-face) where students position themselves in specific situations while maintaining their own identity. Such learning can also include dramatizations and roleplaying scenarios where students adopt a role and behave according to instructions or scripts. To reflect on targeted aspects in these situations, students engage in debates, discussions, and group projects. These opportunities create an experiential learning journey in which students experience living in a foreign culture, albeit virtually. Such activities serve to enhance students' ICC and to develop their empathy and openness toward differences, both inside and outside their own culture.

### ***Intercultural Workshops***

Intercultural workshops are an effective way for introducing your students to the traits of a targeted culture. Design these classroom-based workshops with activities that guide students in recognizing and describing targeted cultural traits. For example, if the cultural trait is about food, begin the workshop by showing foods from the targeted culture that are generally unknown in your students' culture (though perhaps available in an ethnic grocery store). Ask students to jot down their initial reaction at seeing these foods (and perhaps also smelling foods if in a face-to-face workshop). Then, encourage students to share their reactions. With curiosity now raised, students view a video clip about these foods and read a short article. Students then work with a partner to interpret a picture or comic strip, and each student pair explains their interpretation to another student pair. The workshop ends with students working in groups to discuss thought-provoking prompts. Such workshops lead students toward reflecting deeply about the targeted cultural trait. Although intercultural workshops can be implemented as stand-alone activities, they are even more effective when used to launch extensive follow-up activities such as virtual cultural exchanges and telecollaboration projects.

### ***Virtual Cultural Exchanges***

Many ELT contexts are located geographically far from Anglophone cultures. In such contexts, it is almost impossible to coordinate face-to-face contact with people from the target culture. Although textbooks might include some tasks targeting ICC development, these tasks cannot adequately replicate authentic environments. Fortunately, physical travel is no longer needed for such interactions to occur. Instead, by using digital tools, teachers can replicate cultural exchanges in their classrooms and perhaps also in their students' homes.

To conduct classroom-based cultural exchanges with meaningful language and cultural learning, have your students interact with students of approximately the same age but in another country and from diverse geographic and cultural backgrounds (Alghasab & Alvarez-Ayure, 2021; Godwin-Jones, 2019). Although these virtual exchanges can serve to develop participants' linguistic competence, the main purpose is not to focus exclusively on developing language but rather on using language to explore aspects about the participants' culture and cultural identities. With classroom walls thus extended to the world, these virtual cultural exchanges contribute toward developing students' ICC.

### ***Telecollaboration Projects***

Face-to-face interactions are not always necessary (or realistic) in today's global, web-connected world. Teachers can effectively support students in building their ICC through telecollaboration projects. As the teacher, your role is essential for ensuring how successfully your students can implement telecollaboration projects (Alghasab & Alvarez-Ayure, 2021). When planning a telecollaboration project for the virtual learning spaces of your classroom, select from among

numerous digital resources. Use these digital tools to develop students' ICC by designing intercultural workshops around cultural topics that are attractive to your students and that can meet the objective of strengthening their ICC. Provide constant monitoring so that your students remain fully engaged while virtually implementing these activities. As you plan and implement telecollaboration projects, keep in mind that the work of the teacher is often more extensive in virtual activities than in face-to-face activities (Godwin-Jones, 2019).

Before actually planning and implementing your telecollaboration project, establish a partnership with a teacher in another country. Although it is not necessary for you to share the same home language with your partner, both of you should have at least one language in common. For example, if you teach English in a Spanish-speaking country, consider partnering with someone who teaches Spanish in an English-speaking country.

Telecollaboration projects are usually based on an e-tandem model or an intercultural blended model. In these models, students from both countries spend somewhat equal time using each of their shared languages. In the e-tandem model, students meet virtually in pairs or small groups and participate freely in synchronous and asynchronous conversations. In the intercultural blended model, students also meet virtually in pairs or small groups. However, they participate first in synchronous group activities, which are collaboratively planned in advance by teachers and students from both countries, and then in asynchronous activities (such as interacting with partners). Because of its planning phase, the intercultural blended model is very effective for projects with specific learning goals.

When using the intercultural blended model for your telecollaboration project, work together with your partner teacher in selecting topics that are of interest to students in both countries. One way is for you and your partner to discuss and select topics to be used by your respective students during their telecollaboration interactions. Another way is for each of you to elicit topics from your respective students and then, together, jointly consider topics suggested by your students. Whichever way you take, be sure the selected topic represents cultural aspects and shows promise of promoting discussion and of fostering ICC development.

In collaboration with your partner teacher, plan the synchronous sessions of your project and identify activities for each session. To foster the interaction of students from both countries, create groups of four students—with two from each country. Plan for each telecollaboration session to begin with groupmates participating in different ice-breaker activities so that they can get to know each other better in each subsequent session. After finishing the ice-breaker for a given session, students participate in content-based activities with collaborative work related to the main topic. For example, in a collaborative writing activity, students can work together to design a blog or poster. This can lead to a collaborative speaking activity in the upcoming sessions for which students create a video or radio program.

Between these synchronous sessions, groupmates maintain contact with each other by doing asynchronous activities. To help students with asynchronously sharing ideas and related information for developing their group's cultural project, create virtual project spaces on Forum, Facebook, Edmodo classroom, and/or Google classroom. Your telecollaboration project reaches closure when all student groups share their products with the whole class. By describing their respective products and listening to other groups describe their projects, students expand their interculturality and further develop their ICC.

In this chapter, you learned about ELT classrooms as ideal settings to promote interculturality and ICC. Although some textbooks include tasks to enact cultural scenarios, you learned that

students can more fully develop their interculturality and ICC by participating in experiential learning, intercultural workshops, virtual cultural exchanges, and telecollaboration projects.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Some key concepts about interculturality and ICC are as follows:

- Interculturality offers the possibility of developing a more open attitude towards all cultures and opportunities to achieve a more reflexive and critical view of reality.
- Pragmatic competence is essential for becoming interculturally aware. Also vital for intercultural communication is a metacognitive knowledge of linguistics and culture.
- Although diverse intercultural models exist for understanding one's own culture and the cultures of other people, Byram's ICC (Byram et al., 2001) provides the most concrete example of how interculturality can be promoted among students.
- Experiential learning focuses on issues and real-life examples involving critical reflection and discovery.
- Virtual cultural exchanges and intercultural workshops provide intercultural practice.
- Telecollaboration creates virtual opportunities for developing a close relationship with people in other countries and opens a virtual window to critical intercultural awareness.

## Discussing

Based on your new knowledge about interculturality and ICC, answer these questions:

1. To what extent can your students benefit from participating in interculturally oriented classroom workshops?
2. If you intend to apply a series of interculturally oriented workshops to develop your students' ICC, what guidelines should you follow when selecting topics?
3. To what extent should you consider your students' needs and wants when designing ICC workshops? Which of their needs and wants are most important in this ICC process?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about interculturality and ICC, do the following:

1. Use recommendations from this chapter to identify your students' needs and plan activities, utilize materials, and analyze results.
2. Seek other ways to foster and assess students' ICC such as observations and portfolios.

3. Analyze progress in promoting your students' ICC and identify ways to continue advancing.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge and application of ICC, visit these websites:

- Activities centered on interculturality in ELT classrooms.  
<https://ppgi.posgrad.ufsc.br/livros/doing-interculturality-in-the-english-classroom>
- Center for Intercultural Dialogue.  
<https://centerforinterculturaldialogue.org/publications/key-concepts-in-intercultural-dialogue-by-concept/>
- Portfolios focused on intercultural competence.  
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/autobiography-intercultural-encounters>
- Pragmatic competence.  
<https://corkenglishcollege.wordpress.com/2015/06/15/the-importance-of-developing-pragmatic-competence-in-the-efl-classroom/>

## See Also

Intercultural aspects and virtual venues are also addressed by other chapters in this textbook:

**Chapter 2** *The Diversity of Global Englishes* by L. Barratt

**Chapter 11** *Using Social Media to Enhance Language Awareness* by S. Terol and J. Amarilla

**Chapter 15** *Exploring Meaning Through Translanguaging Practices* by K. Liu and J. Choi

**Chapter 16** *Incorporating Interjections to Facilitate Conversational Flow* by A. Rodomanchenko

**Chapter 22** *Strengthening Communication Through Classroom Discourse* by K. Buckley-Ess

**Chapter 24** *Teaching in Virtual and Hybrid Classrooms* by Yulia Grevtseva and Elena Zyrianova

**Chapter 38** *A Socio-Cultural Approach to Teaching Grammar* by C. Davies, J. Prado, and J. Austin

**Chapter 54** *Promoting Collaborative Professionalism Among Pre-Service Teachers* by D. Pineda



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# CHAPTER 51

## Observing in the Transformative Teaching Process

# Observing in the Transformative Teaching Process

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## Abstract

Observations play a key role in promoting the professional growth of language teachers, especially when guided by a supervisor-mentor. Teachers and their mentors collaborate by using practical observation resources framed by a transformative view of English language teaching. Here transformation is a developmental learning process that is undertaken jointly as a social effort. Through such observations, pre-service teachers and in-service teachers learn to reflect on their teaching performance. To facilitate observations and reflections, they use practical, contextualized resources at strategic moments to analyze and reflect on their own teaching. In this chapter, you will learn about the role of observations in the transformative teaching process. You will also learn about an observation model with components, steps, and considerations to be implemented before, during, and after an observation.

*Keywords:* observing, observation tools, professional growth, transformative practices, supervisors, mentors, developmental learning process

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## Introduction

In Latin America, the professionalization of English language teaching (ELT) has faced various challenges such as systematizing language education, establishing certification of language levels, and recognizing this discipline as a professional field within public higher education (Quezada, 2013; Sánchez Hernández et al., 2021). Also related are challenges for adopting external language education models and then adapting these models to meet diverse sociocultural needs in emerging ELT contexts. Teacher educators arrange teaching practicums in these diverse contexts to better prepare pre-service teachers for future employment. As such, a related challenge is developing models to prepare these pre-service language teachers for effectively teaching in diverse contexts. To meet this challenge, effort has been focused on redesigning language education pedagogy for current and future teachers to teach in our increasingly diverse and rapidly changing world (Johnson & Golombek, 2018). Through this effort, observations have become essential in our transformative teaching practice.

## Background

From a socio-cultural perspective, the main premise for ELT educators is how human cognitive development and learning are inherently social (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning arises through participation in different external forms of social interaction that become internalized psychological resources for thinking (Johnson & Golombek, 2018). This type of transformation from external to internal is not a direct process but rather a mediated process that triggers a transformation in our understanding. Hence, teacher transformation is understood as a process through which language practitioners learn from their teaching contexts by sharing, interacting, observing, and reflecting on these contexts in social and joint efforts (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978).

Teaching approaches traditionally had “limited utility in places other than the places in which they were originally developed” (Pawan & Pu, 2019, p. 2). Similarly, initial ELT programs seemed to promote “a workforce capable of delivering a standardized product into the educational marketplace, capable of using basic tools of the trade such as textbooks—but with little . . . reasoning skills” (Block & Gray, 2016, p. 491). Since the 1990s, global or macro ideologies have influenced language teacher education through glocalization (Robertson, 1992), with global aspects influencing local and, also, with local aspects influencing global. Social, economic, educational, and scientific influences have been driving educational reforms around the world. This, in turn, has led teacher preparation programs to placing greater relevance on supervising and mentoring.

An effective way to enhance the supervision and mentoring of teaching practices, as well as promote mediation in language education, is for pre-service and in-service teachers to participate actively in observations (Orland-Barak, 2010). Observation is about being an observer in the language classroom and, also, about learning and becoming transformed from being observed (O’Leary, 2014). Classroom observation also plays a key role in teacher education with respect to supervising and mentoring. In numerous contexts, experienced supervisor-mentors have commonly described observation as a powerful tool to enhance teacher learning (Orland-Barak, 2010).

In this chapter, we conceptualize observation in teacher education as an “appreciation of pedagogical practices where a discursive activity is inherently constructive and builds on informed contemplation in order to build knowledge around repertoires of observed practices” (p. 52). This observation model supports supervisor-mentors and teacher-practitioners at various times during the mentoring process. This two-prong support makes observation central to the teacher-mentor relationship and, also, key to the teacher transformation process (Johnson & Golombeck, 2018).

## Major Dimensions

Before participating in observations within a transformative teaching process, establish a strong understanding of teacher observations in general and, more specifically, of the model that you will be using. Consider learning about observations from the perspective of a supervisor-mentor and, also, from that of a teacher-practitioner. To demonstrate this process, we describe a model that we have used when observing English teachers.

### *Observation: The Model*

Based on the above literature about teacher observations, we describe an observation model for language teacher educators and their mentees. In this model, classroom observation is perceived as a continuous learning experience for all parties involved. Such observation also serves to create common experiences between the observer and the observed as well as rich points for discussion and negotiation of understandings about language learning and teaching.

This observation model, which includes a resource guide, was developed during several years of supervising and mentoring pre-service teachers during ELT practicums in Mexico (Brenes Carvajal et al., 2010). This model can be enhanced to meet the specific observation needs of users in various types of institutions and further adapted for the local circumstances of language practitioners and their teaching contexts. Through reflections and conversations among teacher educators, this model can also be adapted for use in other Latin American countries and beyond.

### *Observation Cycle: Three Key Components*

In the teacher transformation process, an observation cycle can foster dialogue and reflection so that the supervisor-mentors (who will be observing) and the teacher-practitioners (who will be observed) are able to negotiate an observation’s purpose and process. This cycle specifies what takes place before, during, and after an observation. Resources needed for these three moments in the observation cycle are as follows:

- Before the lesson to be observed, mediation artifacts are needed by practitioners and supervisor-mentors to negotiate the focus of an upcoming observation.
- During the lesson being observed, guides and protocols are used by observers while observing and taking note.
- After the lesson is observed, tools are needed to help mediate the observer’s and practitioner’s post-observation conference and to enhance ongoing communication via written exchanges and face-to-face conversations.

## Pedagogical Applications

Upon reaching a basic understanding of how you might use observations in your teacher preparation program, learn about major aspects associated with three strategic moments in the observation process: before, during, and after.

### *Basic Steps and Considerations Before the Lesson to be Observed*

Collaborate with your supervisor-mentor in anticipation of being observed when teaching an English lesson. Together, make plans for your pre-observation conference, participate in this pre-observation conference, and identify the focus of the planned observation. Gather the needed resources and consider possible follow-up observations.

Together, decide whether to meet in person or via videoconferencing. Ideally, this conference will occur one or two days before the observation. This will give you, as the practitioner, time to focus on the lesson specifics (e.g., activities, materials) needed to meet your students' needs. Use this opportunity to prepare for the expected and unexpected. The main goal of this initial pre-observation conference is to build trust and rapport between you and your mentor. This conference is also for you to share information about the class that is going to be observed and to provide other relevant context and background information to your mentor. Later, in future pre-observation conferences for subsequent observations and follow-up conversations, focus on lesson specifics with corresponding negotiations worked out between you and your mentor.

In each of these pre-supervision conferences, discuss with your mentor about the main purpose for the upcoming observation. Explain the types of feedback that you would like to receive about your teaching. Also share issues that you anticipate may pose difficulties during your lesson. For instance, if some students in the back corner routinely create disturbances when you are trying to teach, ask your mentor to observe interactions involving these students and then provide recommendations to remediate such disturbances. Your mentor will probably offer ways for conducting this observation to respond to your request and suggest potential observation forms (e.g., formats, protocols, guides). Together with the mentor, select an observation form that can guide this observation in meeting your needs. Your mentor will use this form when observing your class and taking notes.

In these pre-observation conferences, your mentor might use prompts such as these to help you reflect and share in preparation for teaching your lesson:

- How are things going in general?
- How do you feel about the pending observation?
- Would you like to share any updates or developments about this class?
- How do you think you might introduce me to your class or explain my presence?
- Where would you like for me to sit?
- Which activities and/or students would you especially like for me to observe?
- What kind of notes or feedback do you think would be most helpful?
- Which resources do you feel I should use when taking notes?
- When will you be available for a post-observation conference (e.g., directly after the lesson, later that day, after school, or via videoconference)?

A positive supervising-mentoring relationship is instrumental in supporting your own teacher transformation process. To enhance this relationship, share your self-identified need so that you

can receive desired feedback and support from your mentor. In pre-service supervisory contexts, an observation purpose might be for the mentor to observe your lesson for evaluating general performance based on certain criteria or for noticing specific aspects of the program or lesson. Hence, some observation protocols are a type of inventory or checklist covering aspects of your general performance or your performance in a targeted domain (e.g., lesson delivery).

If possible, take a collaborative approach with your mentor. One way to start is for the two of you to collaboratively examine an inventory of general teaching practices (such as the one used for classroom observations). Together, identify a few items from this inventory with which you need the most help (e.g., maintaining discipline). Such collaboration is best established in pre-observation conferences whether face-to-face or virtual. Although pre-conferences are essential for teacher learning purposes, it is noteworthy that they have not traditionally been part of observations conducted for supervisory and evaluative purposes. So, if your mentor-supervisor has not mentioned a pre-observation conference, consider requesting one to help you to prepare for the observation and, of course, to improve.

### ***Basic Steps and Considerations During the Observation***

As was discussed in the pre-observation conference, your mentor will conduct the observation by focusing on specific lesson aspects and targeted students. During this observation, your mentor might unexpectedly notice other aspects that could become relevant as your lesson advances. And, as was decided during the pre-observation conference, your mentor might also focus on aspects from one or more of these five teaching domains (Brenes Carvajal et al., 2010):

Domain 1—Planning and preparing,

Domain 2—Teaching the lesson,

Domain 3—Managing the lesson,

Domain 4—Establishing rapport and communication, and

Domain 5—Self-mentoring and professionalizing.

For each of these domains, your mentor might use a specific protocol such as the Domain 1 observation protocol in Appendix A (Brenes Carvajal et al., 2010). In this protocol (and other protocols), your mentor can take notes about aspects within that domain such as lesson presentation, task design, lesson and general classroom management, knowledge and awareness of subject matter, teacher rapport, and communication skills. Based on discussions during the pre-observation conference, your mentor might also observe other types of student performance and activities. This selected protocol will probably be used to focus conversations with your mentor during the post-observation conference. This is particularly relevant when the observation is carried out virtually, such as occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to aspects discussed in the pre-observation conference, your mentor might also notice other aspects such as certain issues or behaviors (positive or negative). Your mentor might take notes about these unanticipated aspects and share them with you to provide additional support and help you grow. When discussing such unexpected aspects during the post-observation conference, your mentor will probably follow a similar approach such as when discussing aspects that had been negotiated during the pre-observation conference.



### *Basic Steps and Considerations After the Observation*

After your observation takes place, participate in a post-observation conference with your supervisor-mentor. As before, make sure this conference is in a relaxed and safe setting, either face-to-face or virtually. If virtual, your post-observation conference might even take place asynchronously on a blog that resembles an ongoing conversation. Collaborate with your mentor to arrange this post-observation conference immediately following the observation or soon thereafter. Your mentor will probably start this post-observation conference by asking you to share your impressions of the lesson. After this, your mentor might ask clarification questions to elicit deeper understanding and alternative perspectives from you regarding your lesson and, by doing so, guide you in reflecting. When prompted, share what you feel were strengths of your lesson as well as challenges that need further development. When conducting this conference, your mentor might use a guideline, such as Appendix B, to empower you—the person being observed—with leading this post-observation conversation based on what you feel is most important.

If something questionable or confusing occurred during your lesson, your mentor might discuss this during the post-observation conversation or later in a less formal setting. In a supportive manner, your mentor will ask you about your classroom situation and listen attentively to your perspective before commenting. This type of mentoring often resembles counseling. When prompted, describe the targeted situation. Your reflective response opens a two-way discussion with your mentor about a potentially difficult or sensitive issue. This, in turn, can lead to a resolution with the overall purpose being for you to grow and for your students to benefit.

In this chapter, you learned about teacher observations as part of a transformative teaching process. You learned about an observation model with three key components and about basic steps and considerations that occur before, during, and after an observation.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Key concepts about observation as a transformative process are as follows:

- A positive relationship between the supervisor-mentor and teacher-practitioner can maximize success with a teacher's transformative process and minimize challenges.
- To facilitate this transformative process, the supervisor-mentor and teacher-practitioner are both responsible for evaluating the teaching performance before, during, and after the observation and, also, for reflecting.
- Reflection and self-evaluation are important to the transformative teaching process.
- Participating in observations can greatly enhance understanding and transformation.
- Observation occurs when an educator carefully observes a practitioner teach, identifies sound pedagogical practices, suggests ways to improve observed practices, and guides follow-up conversations with that practitioner to build knowledge and skills.
- Transformation occurs when language teachers learn and improve their teaching skills by reflecting on their own teaching while sharing and interacting with another educator who had observed them teach.

## Discussing

Based on observation as a transformative process, answer these questions:

1. Which aspects should you consider when asked by a supervisor-mentor about your relationship with students and why these aspects are important?
2. Which aspects should you consider when asked by a supervisor-mentor about how your lesson addressed the course curriculum content?
3. Which aspects should you consider when asked by a supervisor-mentor about your classroom organization, classroom management, student discipline, and related?

## TAKING ACTION

To apply observation as part of the transformative teaching process, do the following:

1. Select three aspects from the protocol in Appendix A and ask a mentor to look for these aspects when observing you teach with the goal of improving. Explain why you chose those three aspects.
2. Systematically conduct a self-evaluation of your teaching practicum, perhaps every two weeks.
3. Keep a record of transformations that have occurred with your teaching and look for patterns. Do this as a journal, recorded narrative, or any other format.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

To learn more about observations to transform teaching, visit these websites:

- American English Teaching Forum.  
<https://americanenglish.state.gov/forum>
- Observation protocols for five teaching domains.  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WAwDLAkytGF7syyCGZI5Zeeawh8Ippfi?usp=sharing>
- Resilient educators. <https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/learning-revolution-transformational-teaching/>
- Shaping how we teach.  
<https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/shaping-way-we-teach-english-successful-practices-around-world>

## See Also

Aspects related to observing and transforming teachers are also addressed in other chapters of this book:

**Chapter 52** *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner Through Action Research* by V. Canese

**Chapter 54** *Promoting Collaborative Professionalism Among Pre-Service Teachers* by D. Pineda

**Chapter 55** *Building and Engaging With Your Professional Community* by M. Algren

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APPENDIX  
A  
**ch.51**

**Domain 1: Planning and Preparing**  
(adapted from Brenes Carvajal et al., 2010)

Teacher's Name: _____
School/Class: _____ # of Students: _____
M/S or Peer's Name: _____ Time: _____
Date: _____ Unit Theme/Topic: _____
Observation Focus: _____

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Check (√) the statement that you consider appropriate according to your criteria. Use the following scale.

1. Needs improvement.
2. Has basic awareness
3. Has mastered the basic elements
4. Shows high proficiency

My lesson showed...	1	2	3	4	And this is why . . .
Previous preparation					
Lesson aims and objectives according to the teaching context					
How it fits in the whole picture with respect to course aims and relates to previous and future learning					
Preparation of the teaching material and resources					
A variety of techniques/teaching strategies according to the learning context					
Selected activities/tasks according to the lesson					
Sensitivity to students' needs/level of knowledge and skill					

Teacher's comments, questions. and signature:

Mentor/Supervisor's or Peer Teacher's comments, recommendations, and signature:

APPENDIX  
B  
**ch.51**

## Post Observation Guidelines: Building Trust and Giving Teachers the Lead

(adapted from Brenes Carvajal et al., 2010)

During the post-observation conference, the supervisor-mentor should allow the teacher-practitioner to do the talking. The mentor should ask questions that guide the practitioner with initiating topics and leading the discussion. When the practitioner talks and the mentor listens, a positive dynamic is built during this conference and for subsequent discussions. This dynamic needs to be constantly nurtured by the supervisor-mentor because it may not seem natural to professionals in positions of authority. Because mentors are usually senior in age and experienced professionally, cultural norms may dictate that the mentors direct a conversation and do the talking and that the practitioners listen. So, the supervisor-mentor generally needs to be very deliberate about getting the practitioner to lead the conversation.

Mentors must avoid leading the conversation and must not make evaluative comments. Instead, they should use listening skills, be mindful, and develop a counseling style. During mentoring conversations, the first consideration is building rapport, confidence, and trust. This will serve to create a context in which the mentor can later provide feedback, information, and recommendations of a more technical nature.

- To help a practitioner start discussion topics during a post-observation conference, the mentor should consider using statements such as the following:
- Overall, how do you think the lesson went? Did it go similarly or differently from what you had expected and why?
- How do you feel about the lesson? (What makes you feel good or bad about it?)
- What did you like the most about teaching this lesson? What specifically occurred in the lesson that you felt was good (effective, difficult, etc.)?
- How did student performance and participation compare with what you anticipated?
- Was there something particular on your mind during this lesson?

Most of these questions start with what or how in order to help practitioners explain their thinking. If a question were to start with why (e.g., Why did you decide for students to work in groups to answer the questions?), it could be interpreted as inferring a motive and thus make the practitioner feel resentful, defensive, unsuccessful, or uncomfortable.

Some practitioners are less comfortable than others in describing their performance. Others might struggle in responding to open-ended prompts such as tell me all about it. In such cases, the mentor should provide specific examples of observed behaviors.

Mentors should listen as carefully as possible to everything being said by practitioners. They should remain carefully focused on what the practitioners are saying at that moment instead of thinking ahead to possible ways for responding afterwards. Such focused concentration is necessary because a practitioner's comments may indicate a different perspective from what a mentor had originally considered. Furthermore, if a practitioner's comments are highly negative or evaluative, the mentor should redirect the conversation in a productive direction.





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# CHAPTER 52

## Becoming a Reflective Practitioner through Action Research

# Becoming a Reflective Practitioner through Action Research

Valentina Canese

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## Abstract

Reflective practice allows us to direct our activities with a vision and plan for taking deliberate action. It is an evidence-based approach based on concrete experiences and observations made about these experiences. Reflective practice can be enhanced through action research about the teaching-learning process. In this chapter, you will learn about becoming a reflective practitioner by conducting action research to identify and investigate problematic situations, formulate an action plan, and implement this plan by collecting and analyzing data and then evaluating actions taken. You will learn about becoming empowered through action research by participating actively in this decision-making process about your own practice. You will also learn about the importance of sharing the results from your action research with others to contribute towards the continuous improvement of your educational community.

*Keywords:* reflective practitioner, reflective practice, teaching practice, action research, continuous improvement

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## Introduction: Reflective Practice

Teachers, researchers, and educational theorists have long focused on the concept of reflective practice in relation to professional development, planning, and educational improvement. In the early 20th century, Dewey examined the importance of reflection in teaching practice. In his seminal work *How We Think*, reprinted in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953* (Boydston, 2008 revised), Dewey explained reflection in teaching practice, indicating that it

emancipates us from merely impulsive or merely routine activity ... [it] enables us to direct our activities with foresight and to plan according with ends-in-view, or purposes of which we are aware ... to act in deliberate and intentional fashion ... it enables us to know what we are about when we act. (Dewey, 2008, p. 125)

To ensure that language students have access to learning opportunities, we must constantly pay attention to the quality of our teaching. Engaging in reflective practice is an important element in learning to become a competent teacher (Mann & Walsh, 2017). Reflective practice is when we, as teachers, question ourselves about situations and concerns that arise in our teaching contexts and, by doing so, demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning. Becoming reflective practitioners is fundamental in our growth as teachers of English as an additional language, especially for teaching students with diverse needs.

## Background: Evidence-based Approach

Through reflective practice, we can make informed decisions about our teaching (Farrell, 2015). By basing our decisions on evidence rather than on perceptions that may or may not be correct, we become reflective practitioners and researchers who analyze and evaluate what is happening in our classrooms. With evidence that we gather and examine, we can make informed, evidence-based decisions (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2018). To become reflective practitioners, we ask ourselves the following questions:

What is meant by reflective practice?

In what ways is it possible to reflect on my practice?

What kinds of information can be gained when I reflect on my practice?

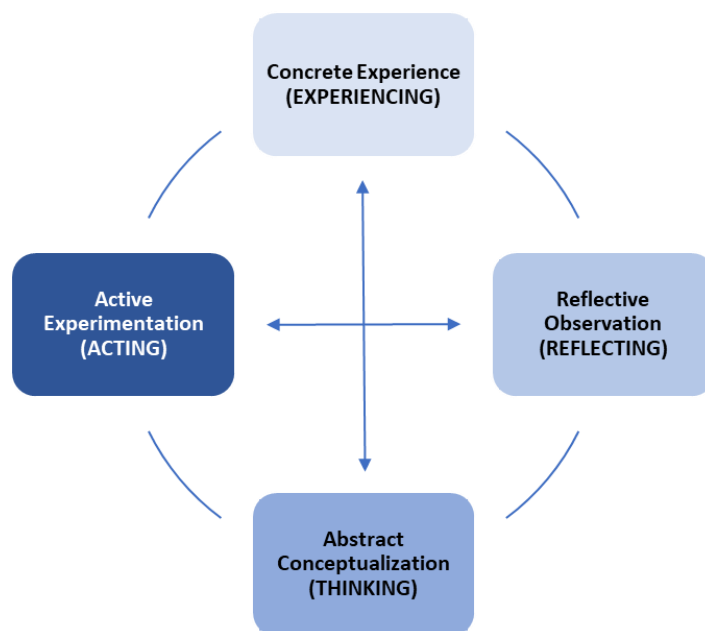
What are main barriers or obstacles to overcome if I want to reflect on my practice?

As reflective practitioners, we are constantly engaged in a cycle of self-observation and self-evaluation. This cycle allows us to better understand our own actions as well as our students' actions, which we could have elicited, either intentionally or unintentionally, through our teaching (Farrell, 2015). Research findings suggest three types of reflective practice: reflection *on* action, reflection *in* action, and reflection *for* action. To reflect broadly and deeply, we should try reflecting from each of these three perspectives.

An effective approach for establishing reflective practice is Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb et al., 2001). This cycle consists of the four components (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation) illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle*



*Note.* Adapted from <https://serc.carleton.edu/details/images/22738.html>. (Originally uploaded in Starting Point at <https://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/service/experiential.html>). This item is offered under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>.

In Figure 1, the first component is concrete experience (experiencing), which refers to doing or having the experience. The second is reflective observation (reflecting), which refers to reviewing or reflecting on the experience. The third is abstract conceptualization (thinking), which refers to concluding or learning from this experience. The fourth and final is active experimentation (acting), which refers to planning or acting on the previous steps.

Building on Kolb's four-step cycle, reflective practice has been represented as a framework with nine dimensions (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2018). This framework is based on the premise that reflective practice is "a disposition to inquiry, incorporating the process by which students as well as experienced and inexperienced teachers structure and restructure their actions, beliefs, knowledge, and theories that inform teaching for the purpose of professional development" (p. 5). These nine dimensions of reflective practice are illustrated in Figure 2.

As shown in Figure 2, the first dimension in this reflective practice framework (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2018) is studying our own practice for personal improvement, which implies a systematic study of the actions carried out in the classroom. From this, the second dimension is evaluating our own practice through research procedures, and the third is for connecting theory to our own practice. Following from these dimensions,

the fourth is for questioning our personal theories and beliefs, and the fifth is for considering alternative perspectives and possibilities. These first five dimensions establish the basis for the final four dimensions, which focus on actions to improve our teaching practice. With that, the sixth dimension involves experimenting with new strategies and ideas for our classrooms, and the seventh involves maximizing our students' learning potential. Finally, the eighth dimension focuses on enhancing the quality of our teaching and the ninth on continuing to improve our teaching.

**Figure 2**

*Dimensions of Reflective Practice*

DIMENSIONS OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE	
1	Study your own teaching for personal improvement.
2	Systematically evaluate your own teaching through classroom research procedures.
3	Link theory with your own practice.
4	Question your personal theories and beliefs.
5	Consider alternative perspectives and possibilities.
6	Try out new strategies and ideas.
7	Maximize the learning potential of all your pupils.
8	Enhance the quality of your own teaching.
9	Continue to improve your own teaching.

*Note.* Information based on *The Teacher’s Reflective Practice Handbook: Becoming an Extended Professional through Capturing Evidence-Informed Practice* by P. Zwozdiak-Myers, 2018, Routledge.

To apply this framework toward becoming a reflective practitioner, identify actions for self-evaluating your own teaching practice. Carry out these actions by using teaching journals, teaching stories, and portfolios as well as by participating in reflection groups and doing action research as described in the next section.

## Major Dimensions: Action Research

Action research is a type of inquiry that allows us, as teaching practitioners, to investigate and evaluate our work by asking questions such as the following:

- What am I doing?
- What do I need to improve?
- How can I improve?

In response to these questions, we often tell stories about our practice, which, in turn, can serve to improve our learning and positively affect the learning of others (Burns, 2010). When initially telling a story, we might be unaware that our story could eventually lead to action research. However, by following up from this story, we can initiate an action research process as a practice-based approach for

- collaboratively co-creating knowledge about our practice,
- improving practice and generating living theories of practice,
- assuming responsibility for our actions through intentionality,
- questioning at high levels of thinking to create knowledge, and
- contributing to social and cultural transformation. (McNiff, 2016)

Upon considering the above characteristics, we can deduce that action research is a tool specially formulated to develop reflective practice. By using this tool, we can observe our practice and, based on our observation, generate an action plan to improve our practice. Depending on the issue, we can conduct action research either individually or collaboratively and can do so at an institutional or organizational level (Burns, 2019).

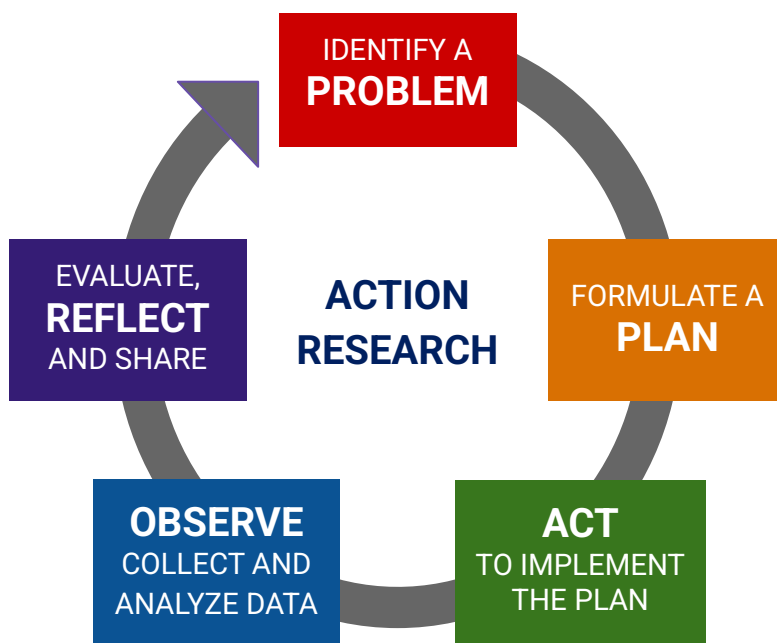
Depending on the focus and purpose of our action research project, we can consider taking different approaches. However, regardless of the approach taken, our action research project must entail these five stages (McNiff, 2016):

1. Identify a problem or issue.
2. Formulate a plan.
3. Take action to implement the plan.
4. Collect and analyze data.
5. Evaluate, reflect, and share the results of the analysis.

During this fifth and final stage, we can reflect on possibly repeating our action research as part of a cyclical process. The five stages of this cyclical process are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3

*Action Research Process*



*Note.* Information based on *You and Your Action Research Project* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) by J. McNiff, 2016, Routledge.

## Pedagogical Applications

The five stages of the action research process illustrated in Figure 3 (McNiff, 2016) are described below along with suggestions for implementing each stage.

### *Stage 1. Identify a Problem or Issue*

In this first stage, identify the areas in which you or your students are having problems or experiencing challenges that need improvement (McNiff, 2016). Think about issues that need attention so that you can improve as a teacher and your students can improve as learners. Ask the question: What are some areas in which you or your students are having problems? When determining answers to this question, select one or more skills or attributes listed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Identifying the Problem*

---

What are some areas in which my students are having problems?

---

- listening
- speaking
- reading
- writing
- thinking critically
- being motivated
- behaving

---

***Stage 2. Formulate a Plan***

In the second stage, formulate a plan for addressing the problem or issue that you had identified in the first stage (McNiff, 2016). Determine the best course of action by responding to this question: How can you address a certain issue or problem? Guided by this question, design a plan that includes the steps and actions outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Formulating a Plan*

---

How can I address the issue/problem at hand?

---

1. Collect and analyze data about the issue or problem
2. Review the literature to study possible solutions
3. Identify improvement strategies and actions

---

***Stage 3. Take Action (Implement Plan)***

In the third stage, take actions to address the problem (identified in the first stage) by implementing the plan (designed in the second stage). Start by collecting and analyzing data about the problem or issue, reviewing the literature, and considering possible solutions. Then focus on identifying and implementing strategies for improvement (McNiff, 2016). While



carrying out each of these steps in your action plan, maintain a reflective attitude and keep a detailed record through notes and other means. These actions are outlined in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Implementing a Plan*

How can I best implement my plan?
1. Collect and analyze data about the problem or issue
2. Review the literature to study possible solutions
3. Identify and implement improvement strategies
4. Maintain a reflective attitude
5. Keep detailed notes

**Stage 4. Observe (Collect and Analyze Data)**

**Table 4**

*Collecting and Analyzing Data*

What type of data should I collect and analyze?
Qualitative Data
Journals
Interviews
Reflections
Observations
Recordings
Student work
Quantitative Data
Tests
Structured observations
Questionnaires

In the fourth stage, observe and evaluate outcomes by collecting and analyzing data from the improvement strategies that you implemented in the third stage (McNiff, 2016). Depending on the problem that guides your action research, gather qualitative data (journals, interviews, reflections, observations, recordings, student work) or quantitative data (tests, structured observations, questionnaires) or both types of data. Establish a good tracking system to ensure that data collection and data analysis are organized and systematic. These data sources are outlined in Table 4.

Gather data by using notebooks, file folders, wall charts, classroom assessments, and technology. Of available technology, the most accessible is your cell phone with its pre-installed features (e.g., notepad, camera) to write notes, take pictures, make recordings, and film videos. Other digital tools (e.g., spreadsheets, word processors) and applications are easily accessible through Google. In addition to using the above devices to gather data, also consider using them for analyzing data and maintaining records. Further enhance your data collection and analysis by using digital tools such as the following:

- Data collection tips for teachers. <https://www.weareteachers.com/16-teacher-hacks-for-making-data-collection-a-piece-of-cake/>
- Data collection tools in K12 settings. <https://k12engagement.unl.edu/databasic1>
- Data tracking apps to use in classrooms. <https://www.gpb.org/blogs/education-matters/2016/12/13/10-data-tracking-apps-you-can-use-in-your-class-tomorrow>
- Google apps to use in classrooms. <https://www.educatorstechnology.com/2014/06/32-ways-to-use-google-apps-in-your.html>
- Google forms to use in schools. <https://ditchthattextbook.com/20-practical-ways-to-use-google-forms-in-class-school/>
- Ways to use smart phones. <https://www.gettingsmart.com/2013/01/07/part-1-44-smart-ways-to-use-smartphones-in-class/>

### ***Stage 5. Reflect (Evaluate and Share Results)***

In the fifth stage, reflect on your action research process. Although you will be reflecting throughout the action research process, it is particularly important to reflect in this final stage while also evaluating and sharing your results. When doing this, ask yourself the following questions: What went well? What went wrong? How can I improve? Based on evidence from the data collection and analysis process, follow the steps outlined in Table 5.

Although this fifth stage represents the end of an existing action research cycle, it also signals the start of a new action research cycle. During this new cycle, you will again plan, research, and reflect—but now in response to a new or refocused issue or problem. Together with your educational community, reflect on the improved actions that you began carrying out during the previous action research cycle with the goal of continuing to provide your students with the best possible learning experiences within their learning context. During this new action research cycle, gather rich data in your classroom for responding to a new set of guiding questions and

systematize your reflections to continue transforming and improving your teaching practice (Banegas & Villacañas de Castro, 2019). Since the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, action research has become increasingly popular in foreign and second language teaching classes (Nasrollahi et al., 2012). By using these action research tools, you are empowered to reflect on your teaching practice, carry out action research, and improve your teaching (Hei & David, 2017).

**Table 5**

*Reflecting, Evaluating, and Sharing Results*

---

How can I best reflect about my action research process?

---

Ask these questions:

1. What went well?
2. What went wrong?
3. How can I improve?

Do the following:

4. Evaluate outcomes and conclusions from this action research process
  5. Share outcomes and conclusions with your educational community
  6. Collaborate with your colleagues and formulate a new action research plan
- 

In this chapter, you learned about becoming a reflective practitioner by using action research in response to classroom issues and teaching challenges. You learned about designing and implementing action research by gathering concrete evidence, making informed decisions to address a problem, and designing a plan. You also learned about reflecting in an educational community to address student needs in learning English as an additional language. Finally, you learned that reflective practice and action research are essential elements within your teacher toolkit for keeping the needs of your students first and foremost in mind.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Following are several key concepts about reflective practice and action research:

- Reflective practice allows us to know if the actions we are taking as teachers are having the desired impact, or if we should adjust them for reaching our students in a more meaningful way.
- Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle is a framework that includes the four steps of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting.
- Zwozdiak-Myers's Dimensions of Reflective Practice is a framework for reflective practice with nine dimensions, which, among others, include studying our own teaching for personal improvement, systematically evaluating our own teaching through classroom research procedures, and trying out new strategies and ideas.
- Action research is a useful and timely tool for reflective practice that involves the following: identifying a problem, formulating a plan, acting to implement the plan, observing and evaluating improvement strategies, collecting and analyzing data, reflecting on the process, and sharing results.

## Discussing

Based on what you have learned about action research, answer these questions:

1. What are your views about teachers doing action research? What are the advantages and disadvantages of teachers doing action research?
2. How can you apply the dimensions of reflective practice to an action research project?
3. In what ways can action research help you become a better teacher? How can you apply action research to your own learning process?

## TAKING ACTION

By using what you have learned about action research, do the following:

1. Think of a teaching/learning issue that you have experienced as a student or future teacher. Design a plan for improving your practice and then put this plan into action. Reflect on the results and share them with your classmates and colleagues. Explain how the process helped you, if at all, with addressing the issue/problem at hand.
2. Interview a teacher you know. Ask this teacher about a recurring problem with students. Help this teacher design and implement a plan for doing action research. Together, evaluate the results and reflect on what to do next?

EXPANDING FURTHER

To expand your knowledge and application of action research, visit these websites:

- Action Research in Language Teaching. <https://www.modernenglishteacher.com/action-research-in-language-teaching-go-to-the-next-level-in-professional-development>
- Action Research, British Council. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/action-research-0>
- Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition. <https://carla.umn.edu/>
- Center for Applied Linguistics. <https://www.cal.org/resource-center/>
- Directory of Open Access Journals. <https://doaj.org/>
- English Teaching, British Council. <https://www.britishcouncil.me/en/teach/resources>
- Google Scholar (Search: Action Research). <https://scholar.google.com>
- Open Access Online Research Journals for Language Teachers. <https://americantesol.com/blogger/onlineresearchjournals/>

## See Also

Reflective practice and action research are also addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 35** *Developing Critical Thinking Through Inquiry-Based Learning*  
by V. Canese

**Chapter 51** *Observing in the Transformative Teaching Process*  
by V. Sánchez and Y. Puón

**Chapter 53** *Conducting Research in the ELT Undergraduate Classroom* by A. Salas

**Chapter 54** *Promoting Collaborative Professionalism among Pre-Service Teachers*  
by D. Pineda

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Photo by Mimi Thian on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 53

## Doing Research in the ELT Undergraduate Classroom

# Doing Research in the ELT Undergraduate Classroom

Araceli Salas

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc\\_ch53](https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc_ch53)

## Abstract

Doing research has become a priority in undergraduate classrooms that prepare teachers to enter the English language teaching (ELT) profession and teach in diverse ELT contexts and with diverse modalities. This priority is based on the personal, academic, and professional benefits experienced by pre-service teachers who complete research projects. Yet, despite such benefits, many pre-service teachers feel anxious about conducting their own research and sharing their findings in a thesis. In this chapter, you will learn why it is important to have a positive attitude about this research requirement. You will learn about the purpose for conducting your own research project and the basic steps for successfully finishing it. You will also learn that, by exploring your ELT classroom through research, you will create new knowledge for your current and future teaching practice. Moreover, by sharing your findings with others, you will create new knowledge for the practice of other professionals.

*Keywords:* undergraduate research, pre-service research projects, thesis requirement, conducting research, creating new knowledge

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## Introduction

Teacher preparation programs in English language teaching (ELT) are faced with the challenge of preparing pre-service teachers for real-life classroom situations. When pre-service teachers begin their ELT practicum, most are not yet ready for solving problems by themselves or for making classroom-based decisions. This situation became more acute during and after the pandemic when our teaching contexts changed, and all teachers (including pre-service teachers) encountered uncertainties. New challenges and scenarios have since emerged that are changing education across the globe. Many pandemic and post-pandemic situations have led ELT educators to innovate, find solutions, and become even more creative. As a result, the English as a foreign language classroom has become a space for new ways to interact, new ways to teach, and new ways to learn. To be a successful English teacher, explore your classroom and other ELT classrooms to acquire a better understanding of these changes and challenges. In other words, discover what is currently happening. Then, to prepare for your future in the ELT profession, embark on systematic explorations by conducting research and participating in your own professional development.

## Background

During the first half of the 20th century, English teaching was often an activity carried out by people who spoke the language, regardless of their preparation. During the second half of that century, many universities in Latin America upgraded English teaching by offering teacher preparation programs. Then, during the early 21st century, ELT professionals began to focus not just on transmitting knowledge but also on generating new knowledge for this growing field. This new focus led to research becoming an integral part of the ELT profession. To better prepare pre-service teachers for doing research as future ELT professionals, most teacher preparation programs started including research courses in their respective ELT curriculum (Méndez García, 2019; Nakata, 2015). These research courses provided support to pre-service teachers for conducting research projects, fulfilling their program's research requirement, and earning an undergraduate degree.

In the ELT field, research is often defined as an investigation or inquiry that involves several steps: planning, organizing, gathering data, analyzing data, interpreting results, and drawing conclusions (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). These conclusions are based on evidence and systematic inquiries or inferences with the goal of making contributions to the field in which researchers perform or apply their knowledge. The best way to start your journey as an ELT researcher is to view research as a “disciplined inquiry” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 15). By pursuing your inquiry in a disciplined manner—that is also systematic and consistent, you will be able to plan and conduct research that is well grounded, rigorous, and ethical. Moreover, when you finish your research study, you will feel confident of yourself, proud of your achievement, and prepared to continue growing as an ELT professional.

## Major Dimensions

Prior to initiating your own research study, become informed about the following aspects:

### *Stages of the Research Process*

Within the ELT field, many teacher education programs require students to conduct a research study for the purpose of increasing their “understanding of a topic or issue” (Creswell, 2012, p. 3). As with all such studies, “research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information” (p. 3). In general, these steps can be grouped into three main stages:

- pose a question,
- collect data to answer the question, and
- present an answer to the question.

In ELT research studies, we gather information as “empirical data and insights to bear on timely topics” (Duff, 2008, p. 103). This information is based on our experiences and direct observations about aspects related to the teaching and learning of languages. We conduct our research by talking, listening, and reading about what generally happens in language classrooms and, also, by observing what specifically happens in certain classrooms.

After collecting and analyzing data, we share our findings and conclusions based on the premise that doing research is not useful until the findings are shared with other professionals. In other words, sharing is an essential conclusion of the research process. For students, sharing consists of writing and defending a thesis. After defending your thesis, consider sharing your findings with a wider audience by presenting at a conference and writing a journal article.

### *Benefits*

Conducting a research study and writing a research thesis are experiences that will benefit you, as a future professional, in many ways. By doing research and writing a thesis, you will benefit academically and professionally from

- having fulfilled a requirement for earning your degree,
- learning how to identify issues in your teaching context and to seek solutions,
- knowing how to conduct a study that allows insightful understanding of issues and that generates findings leading to implications and doable actions, and
- participating in an ELT research community and, from this early-career experience, being motivated to continue doing research throughout your career.

You will also benefit personally by feeling satisfied at successfully completing this study, empowered as an ELT professional, and self-affirmed that your findings and opinions are worthy of being shared. Nonetheless, even after acknowledging these (and other) benefits, you might feel overwhelmed when thinking about everything you need to do for conducting your research study and writing your thesis. Fortunately, concrete steps exist for making this process systematic and manageable. While following these steps, always remember that, by doing research, you will reap benefits at the academic and professional levels and, also, at the personal level.

### *Challenges*

After learning about the benefits of conducting research during your initial preparation as an ELT professional, you need to become aware of challenges that you might encounter during this process (Tapia Carlin, 2013; van Gelderen et al., 2004). By knowing about these challenges in advance, you will be better prepared to successfully carry out the necessary tasks for doing your research project. Some of these challenges are feeling unmotivated, not knowing how to start, and having a distant relationship with a supervisor. To successfully overcome these and other challenges, do the following:

- Establish plans for managing your time and money.
- Identify sources of positive feedback.
- Seek guidance from a supportive mentor.
- Recognize your own feelings and emotions.

### *Affective Factors*

Doing research can be more meaningful for student researchers if they have a positive attitude and perform appropriate steps as recommended (Tarman, 2012). In this way, even undergraduate students can provide valuable contributions to the ELT field. To build a positive attitude about your required research project, do the following:

- Before starting your research, identify the affective factors (e.g., feelings, emotions, attitudes) that might impact your performance and mood during this relatively long process (Borg, 2010; Dörnyei, 2007).
- To positively manage these affective factors, interact regularly with peers and mentors who can provide emotional and academic support throughout this research process.
- Whenever you need help, ask your peers and mentors for guidance.
- Follow up by regularly seeking support from these peers and mentors.

### *Academic Writing*

Another issue is the type of academic writing needed to write a research paper. Academic writing is formal non-fiction writing used in academic reports and scholarly publications to communicate ideas, information, and research to a broader academic community. Such writing provides objective evidence and offers critical, balanced views; it is precise and structured. To produce quality academic writing in your thesis, do the following:

- Support the basic characteristics of academic writing (coherence, cohesion, clarity, objectivity) through topic building and global coherence.
- Include reader–writer interactions to make your writing more dynamic and interesting (Wang & Xie, 2022).
- Develop strategies for using academic writing in your research paper to meet institutional requirements and, at the same time, reach a wide audience.
- Support your writing process by following the format for citations and style required by your institution or by the American Psychological Association (APA).
- Place ethical considerations at the center of your research process and, as needed, talk with your supervisor about confidentiality, identity protection, and plagiarism.

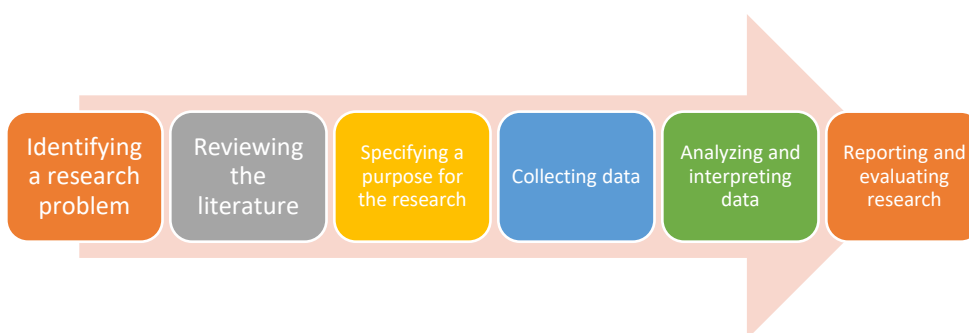
As you can see, doing research is not an easy task. However, by meeting this challenge, you will reap enormous benefits. In addition to fulfilling a degree requirement, research is an excellent way for you to examine current issues and generate local knowledge based on your own teaching experiences. By knowing how to conduct research, you will have strategies to solve problems and implement innovations in your current and future classrooms. To better understand your own context and experiences, start by exploring your proposed research question through information provided by educators in other contexts and at all levels of education. While learning about these other ELT contexts, keep in mind that you are the only person who knows your own context as well as you do. No one else works in your same context. Nor does anyone else have your same experiences. Therefore, you are the perfect person to do research about your ELT context and experiences.

## Pedagogical Applications

When conducting your research study, follow Creswell's (2012) six steps for guiding researchers along the research process. To help you understand these steps, I created the graphic in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Six Steps in the Research Process*



*Note.* Compiled from *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (p. 7) by J. W. Creswell, 2012, Pearson.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the six steps in this research process (Creswell, 2012) are

- identifying a research problem,
- reviewing the literature,
- specifying a purpose for the research,
- collecting data,
- analyzing and interpreting the data, and
- reporting and evaluating research. (Creswell, 2012)

A detailed explanation of each step is provided below. Use these steps and explanations as a guide when identifying, designing, and conducting your research study.

### **1. Identify a Research Problem**

When you see the array of themes or topics related to ELT research, you may feel confused and overwhelmed. So, as a first step in identifying a research problem to guide your study, think about some topics that interest you. The topic you choose will become the central idea for your study. To guide your thinking, ask yourself these questions:

- What problems or situations have you identified from your experiences as a teacher or as a student?
- What topics are people in the field talking about?

Choose a thesis topic that is of utmost interest to you because you will be spending considerable time reading, writing, and thinking about aspects related to this topic.

## ***2. Review the Literature***

After choosing a topic for your research (and perhaps, also, an alternative topic), explore existing literature on that topic. To conduct an extensive search related to this topic, follow these suggestions:

- Look for recent studies on the topic in books and journals.
- Use a search engine such as Google or Google-Scholar.
- Do a search for your selected topic in databases (e.g., Scopus or Redalyc).
- Use the virtual library at your educational institution.
- Participate in courses or workshops (perhaps offered by your library) for learning to conduct efficient information searches.

By following these suggestions during your literature review, you will become aware of the literature that is available and, also, of the relevancy related to your topic.

## ***3. Specify a Purpose for the Research***

Now that you have chosen the topic for your research, specify a purpose for doing this research. In other words, be specific about what you want to find out. Start by writing the objectives for your study, which, in turn, will become your research questions. These research questions will guide your study, influence your research design, and determine the instrument that you will use to conduct your study. Here are two examples of the relationship between the purpose of your research and the corresponding research design:

- Are you interested in what your participants say or write? If so, select a qualitative approach as the most appropriate design for your study.
- Are you interested in statistics and numerical results? If so, select a quantitative approach as the most appropriate design for your study.

## ***4. Collect Data***

For whichever approach you select, plan to collect your data in a systematic manner. Start by describing the context of your study and creating a profile of your participants. Then, in preparation for doing the data collection, consider the following questions:

- How will you collect information to answer your research questions?
- Will you use a questionnaire?
- Will you interview your participants?
- Will you create one or more focus groups?

Next, design your data collection instrument. Be sure to include your contact information on this instrument so that participants can contact you if they have any questions. After you have designed your data collection instrument, pilot this instrument to make sure your targeted participants will understand your questions as intended and be able to answer accordingly. Based on your experience with piloting the instrument, answer the following questions:

- How will you apply your instrument(s)?
- Will you distribute it by mail or email?
- Will you meet with your participants face-to-face?
- Or will you use an online platform for distributing your instrument?

After you have answered these questions, administer your instrument and collect the data. Such data can be in the form of oral or written responses from your participants as well as stories and recordings (audio or video).

### ***5. Analyze and Interpret Data***

After you have collected your data, the next step is analyzing and interpreting your data. For this step, do the following:

- Read and review your data several times until you can identify meaning in your participants' responses.
- Look for repeated words and phrases, and then try to find similarities and differences.
- Determine the best way to organize the results of your study. Visually illustrate these results by creating figures, charts, and graphs.
- Interpret and discuss your results based on existing theories.
- Based on these results, draw conclusions.

### ***6. Report and Evaluate Research***

The last step in the research cycle is reporting the results and evaluating the research. Reporting the results occurs when you write and defend your thesis. Reporting can also occur later when you deliver a presentation at a conference or write an article for a journal. When preparing to report the results from your study, consider evaluating your study at this same time. To evaluate your study, answer these questions:

- What worked well and what did not work well?
- What were the challenges and limitations?
- What recommendations do you have for applying the results from this study and, also, for doing follow-up studies?

You might feel that writing a thesis is challenging and that orally defending your thesis is stressful and perhaps frightening. However, it is only through this final step that other people can read your thesis or listen to your defense and, thus, be able to benefit from your research. Contrary to what some students might believe, your thesis defense is a time to celebrate. You deserve a big celebration!

In this chapter, you learned about doing research in an ELT classroom. You learned about the six steps of the research process as well as the benefits, challenges, affective factors, and academic writing associated with conducting research. It is now time for you to put your new knowledge and skills into practice by designing and conducting your own research study.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about conducting research:

- Meet the requirements to earn your degree by designing and conducting a research project. By doing this, you will also become a member of the ELT research community.
- Choose a research topic that really interests you. This will keep you focused and motivated throughout the process.
- Follow the basic research steps proposed by Creswell (2012) so that you always know where you are in your research journey.
- Follow your institution's guidelines and your supervisor's advice while carrying out your research. This will keep you headed in the right direction.
- Take initiative and be sure to trust your knowledge and intuition. Your research is a story that only you know well and that, as such, only you can tell.

## Discussing

Based on your own ideas and what you have learned from this chapter, answer these questions:

1. How do you feel about doing research as a pre-service teacher?
2. How can conducting a research study influence your growth as an ELT professional?
3. How can doing this research improve your performance as an English teacher?

## TAKING ACTION

To optimize your research process and to organize plans and actions, follow these steps:

1. Upon starting this research journey, create a timeline to organize your time and activities.
2. Write a research diary. Based on systematic notes of your research activities and personal reflections, this diary will be a record of your academic progress and personal growth.

EXPANDING FURTHER

To support your research experience, visit these websites:

- Channel for novice researchers.  
<https://www.youtube.com/c/MassarikCanalEducativo>
- Open resources for researchers.  
<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/library/educator-resources>
- Resources for academic writing.  
<https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/discussion>
- Style manual based on the American Psychological Association (APA).  
[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/in\\_text\\_citations\\_author\\_authors.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/in_text_citations_author_authors.html)

## See Also

Several aspects of conducting research are also addressed in the following chapters of this book:

- Chapter 51** Observing in the Transformational Teaching Process by V. Sánchez and Y. Puón
- Chapter 52** Becoming a Reflective Practitioner Through Action Research by V. Canese
- Chapter 54** Promoting Collaborative Professionalism Among Pre-Service Teachers by D. Pineda
- Chapter 55** Building and Engaging With your Professional Community by M. Algren

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# CHAPTER 54

## Promoting Collaborative Professionalism among Pre-Service Teachers

# Promoting Collaborative Professionalism Among Pre-Service Teachers

Diana Patricia Pineda Montoya

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc\\_ch54](https://doi.org/10.47133/tegc_ch54)

## Abstract

All of us were once pre-service English teachers wondering whether the theories being studied would work in real life. After becoming professionals, we realized that making theory work depended not solely on us, as teachers, but also on context-situated realities. We learned that the key to navigating our profession is participating actively with a community of educators in our initial years of teaching and then continuing to participate throughout our career. Likewise, by belonging to a community of practice (e.g., study group), you will also be better able to understand what is happening in your classroom. In this chapter, you will learn about three dimensions—professional capital, collaborative professionalism, and teacher learning—and how these can help you transition from being a pre-service teacher to a novice teacher and then to an experienced teacher. As part of these dimensions, you will learn about the professional practices needed for becoming an effective teacher and, also, for advancing your career.

*Keywords:* collaborative professionalism, professional capital, teacher learning, context-situated realities, community of practice

## How to cite this chapter:

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## Introduction

After 20 years of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), I began reflecting on what was most helpful for me and others in becoming effective teachers. I also reflected on my experiences helping novice teachers in their initial years of teaching. Overwhelmingly, the key to becoming an effective teacher is belonging to a professional community. By collaborating with colleagues in a professional community, all of us can benefit from collaborative professionalism.

During my own pre-service program, I had the opportunity to collaborate with peers in opportunities that positively influenced the trajectory of my profession. These opportunities for collaborative professionalism were initially promoted by professors who encouraged us to participate in research groups and to present at conferences. Similarly, even though you might still be a pre-service teacher, you can already start benefiting from collaborative professionalism. To do so, join a community of practice such as a study group or research group and, through this professional community, support your own transition from pre-service teacher to novice teacher. By doing so, you can have an experience like the one described by this pre-service teacher: “I am a teacher because we are a teacher community, and because we are a teacher community, I am a teacher” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 284).

## Background

One of my most meaningful pre-service activities was being invited by a professor to participate in a research group. This was a privileged experience because my teacher education curriculum did not include research courses. This early-career experience was a catalyst in prompting me to develop research skills, which included reflecting on my own teaching practices.

These initial research experiences were instrumental as I advanced in my own career such as guiding pre-service teachers in a research project during their teaching practicum. Years later, when I coordinated a university outreach program (English courses for adolescent learners), I mentored pre-service teachers in their final semesters and—after they graduated—continued to mentor them as novice teachers in their first hired teaching position. Although these mentees (initially as pre-service teachers and then as novice teachers) were not required to conduct research, my support served to foster their reflective practices about curriculum, lesson planning, class development, and learner assessment.

An important part of my mentoring support for these novice teachers was to inquire about their classroom practices. This led me to realize how important it was for them to know that they were not alone, which, in turn, kept them from feeling isolated in this profession. Since then, I have advocated for spaces where teachers can share who they are, what they do, and why they do it. By sharing the knowledge behind your practice and connecting your experiences with theory, you can also go beyond your classroom and enter the realm of professional collaboration (Pineda Montoya, 2018). Moreover, by examining, acknowledging, and sharing your knowledge through ongoing collaboration and support, you will become empowered by your own continuous learning and, thus, be able to positively influence your students’ learning.

In my journey as an educational researcher and teacher educator, I was fortunate to be empowered by professional capital, collaborative professionalism, and teacher learning. Professional capital helped me understand the intricacies of teacher work. Collaborative professionalism shed light on what I could do for making improvements. Teacher learning gave me the tools to situate a teacher's individual learning within the context of school and society.

In this chapter, I explain professional capital, collaborative professionalism, and teacher learning with respect to their corresponding theories and research findings. I also recommend pedagogical applications to help you connect these concepts through your participation in professional communities. By following these recommendations, you will be able to develop your own professional capital, collaborative professionalism, and teacher learning. By doing so, you will be in a position for having a highly successful teaching career.

## Major Dimensions

When participating in a professional community, teachers receive feedback, advice, and support for facing pedagogical challenges. They also receive help for overcoming pervasive feelings of uncertainty and loneliness that often afflict teachers in their seemingly isolated classrooms (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). By participating in professional communities, teachers can reflect on their own practices and develop professional capital, collaborative professionalism, and teacher learning.

### *Professional Capital*

*Professional capital* is a concept introduced by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012). After examining different types of educational collaboration, these researchers introduced the term capital as a metaphor that represents an investment in teaching for later receiving a return from this investment. They viewed professional capital as essential for effective teaching. It consists of the three types of capital—human capital, social capital, and decisional capital:

- *Human capital* is the economic value of knowledge and skills that people develop through education and training. After having invested their time and money in such training, people hope to receive economic returns (i.e., capital). Specifically for the field of education, human capital is the development and acquisition of knowledge and skills for learning to teach.
- *Social capital* exists in human relationships and contributes to a productive activity. It is affected by the quality and quantity of interactions and social relationships among people who are accessing knowledge through other people's human capital. As such, social capital is inherently based on collaborative support and advice. When teachers expand their network of influences and opportunities, they create social capital through which they can increase their knowledge while also developing resilience.
- *Decisional capital* enables teachers to make wise judgments in uncertain situations. As such, it is an ability for making discretionary judgments. Decisional capital is built on colleagues' insights and experiences. It is acquired through structured and unstructured experiences, skilled and thoughtful practice, and shared reflection. Together, these experiences and practices constitute the essence of professionalism.

### ***Collaborative Professionalism***

*Collaborative professionalism* describes how educators transform their teaching and their students' learning by collaboratively working together with other colleagues in pursuit of meaning, purpose, and success. Collaborative professionalism is evidence-informed; however, it is not data-driven (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). It consists of “rigorous planning, deep and sometimes demanding dialogue, candid but constructive feedback, and continuous collaborative inquiry” (p. 4). This rigorous professional collaboration is evident when teachers participate in lesson studies, collaborative planning, and cooperative learning.

Collaborative professionalism can result from the collaborative inquiry of teachers during professional learning communities and other teacher-led groups (Hargreaves, 2019). When teacher conversations lead to actions that impact students, their collaboration permeates the whole life of the school. When educators care about one other and show solidarity with each other, their collaborative professionalism becomes embedded in a school's culture:

Professionals—at all levels of the education system—working together, sharing knowledge, skills, and experience to improve student achievement, and [the] well-being of both students and staff. Collaborative professionalism values the voices of all and reflects an approach in support of our shared responsibility to provide equitable access to learning for all. All staff are valued and have shared responsibility as they contribute to collaborative learning cultures. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016, as cited in Hargreaves, 2019, p. 614)

### ***Teacher Learning***

Teacher learning is based on the premise that teachers who know more teach better. To facilitate our understanding of this premise, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) deconstructed knowing more and teaching better as follows:

- the way that teachers learn,
- the knowledge and professional practice that underpin teacher learning, and
- the intellectual, organizational, and social contexts that support teacher learning in relation to the objective of schooling and educational change.

This teacher learning framework consists of three types of teacher knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999): knowledge-for-practice, knowledge-in-practice, and knowledge-of-practice:

- *Knowledge-for-practice* refers to how the researchers generate formal knowledge and theory that the teachers use to improve their practice. Here, teachers are expected to learn from coaches who help them with a particular teaching model. Distinctions exist between expert teachers and novice teachers as well as between competent teachers and teachers who do not have enough content or methods for being able to teach effectively.
- *Knowledge-in-practice* places value on practical knowledge possessed by teachers without distinguishing knowledge generation and knowledge use. Teachers are seen as competent professionals who problematize situations in their classrooms and make new sense of these situations by connecting them to previous experiences. Knowledge

and learning are socially constructed with experienced teachers guiding novices through the practical and intellectual path of a mindful teacher.

- *Knowledge-of-practice* is when teachers investigate their practice by interpreting and interrogating knowledge and theory produced by others. Within their inquiry community, teachers learn by generating local knowledge that theorizes and constructs this knowledge and by connecting it to larger social, cultural, and political issues. Knowledge and the knower are indistinguishable with knowledge being seen as transformative and, also, as constructed collectively among local and broader communities.

Teacher learning is further enhanced when teachers belong to a professional community, which, in turn, can make a big difference in their professional career (Pineda Montoya, 2018). To better understand teacher learning within professional communities, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) introduced inquiry-as-stance to show

- how inquiry is related to practice,
- what teachers learn from inquiry, and
- which knowledge is being generated.

Inquiry-as-stance leads to a richer understanding of knowledge such as occurs when teachers and pre-service teachers work together in their inquiry communities. Here, these educators work together and generate local knowledge while envisioning and theorizing their practice. They also interpret and question the theory and research of others. As such, when used by teachers in these inquiry communities, inquiry-as-stance is both societal and political.

As shown above, teacher learning is much more than the knowledge needed by teachers to support their practice. Teacher learning goes beyond examining one's own actions in the classroom, beyond reflecting on one's actions, and beyond identifying one's practices within a community. Teacher learning occurs when teachers work together as part of a community by taking a problem-posing stance where they question their own practices and assumptions and then take leadership roles to transform the curriculum, classroom, and school.

### ***Intersection: Professional Capital, Collaborative Professionalism, Teacher Learning***

Professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), collaborative professionalism (Hargreaves, 2019), and teacher learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) can take place separately (such as described earlier), or they can intersect with one another to further support teachers' professional growth. Findings from my initial study (Pineda Montoya, 2018) and preliminary interpretations from a follow-up study suggest that these concepts often intersect during the professional growth of all teachers (pre-service, novice, and experienced). Professional capital intersects with teacher learning when human capital aligns with knowledge-for-practice, when decisional capital aligns with knowledge-in-practice, and when social capital aligns with knowledge-of-practice. Another intersection is when social capital and knowledge-of-practice align with collaborative professionalism. To help you better understand these dimensions and concepts and their respective intersections, I created the graphic shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Intersection of Professional Capital, Collaborative Professionalism, and Teacher Learning*

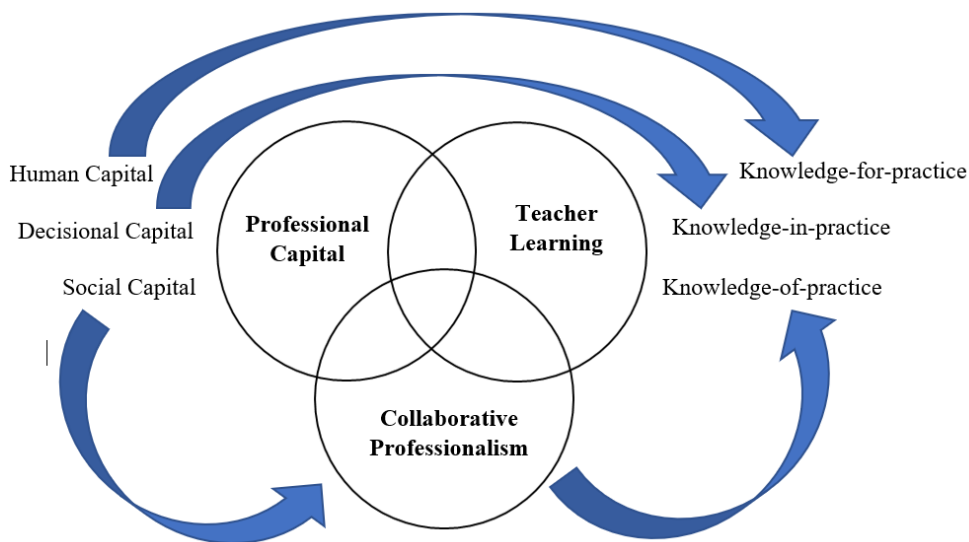


Figure 1 illustrates how these dimensions and concepts intersect with each other and how, by doing so, they contribute to the learning experienced by pre-service teachers, novice teachers, and experienced teachers. These intersections support teachers in the following ways:

- Human capital (knowledge and skills) is developed by teachers during their education and is realized through the generation of formal knowledge and theory that teachers acquire throughout their lives (knowledge-for-practice).
- Decisional capital provides teachers with agency to make wise judgments in their everyday practice and build on the insights and experiences of colleagues, which, in turn, correspond to the practical knowledge that teachers acquire (knowledge-in-practice).
- Social capital becomes a resource for teachers to establish relationships with colleagues such as in the collaborative professionalism that transcends the context of the school system to impact larger social, cultural, and political contexts of education (knowledge-of-practice).

These three bulleted items extend beyond the relationships illustrated in Figure 1 by further explaining the connection between teacher learning and professional capital and their relationship to collaborative professionalism. Hence, a single bulleted item does not correspond to any single concept (teacher learning, professional capital, or collaborative professionalism) but rather describes the connections that I found among these concepts.



## Pedagogical Applications

Develop your professional capital, collaborative professionalism, and teacher learning by participating in one or more of these learning communities.

### *Communities of Practice*

A community of practice is an organized group of people with a common interest who continuously negotiate the goals and topics to be discussed in their meetings. When participating in your community of practice, commit to providing mutual support by collaborating jointly with others to develop resources over time (Wenger, 1999). For example, if you are teaching in a school that uses Content and Language Integrated Learning, consider joining an online community of practice, such as one that might be accessible on the website for the TESOL International Association. This will provide you with an opportunity to meet regularly (e.g., perhaps monthly) with others who teach in similar settings worldwide.

### *Professional Learning Communities*

A professional learning community is a group of teachers who inquire collaboratively about improving their practice and take collective responsibility to implement what they have planned (Hargreaves, 2019). When participating in your professional learning community, establish clear goals, promote team building, gather data, solve problems, and design and conduct interventions. For example, if you would like to improve your pronunciation teaching skills, meet virtually with colleagues (locally and worldwide) who have similar interests. Together with your new friends, identify learners' pronunciation difficulties and share teaching techniques.

### *Study Groups*

A study group is a place where teachers participate voluntarily, negotiate their own agendas, sustain collaborative dialogue, and reflect on their work (Birchak et al., 1998). For example, a study group might be a great place to learn about translanguaging from your colleagues. When participating with colleagues in a study group, follow your interests and needs, critique your beliefs and practices, and explore alternative possibilities for thinking about these concerns. A specific type of group would be a lesson study group where you can collaborate to plan, teach, observe classes, and collect information about your students' learning (Díaz Maggioli, 2012). After you have collected information about how your students learned, use it to refine future lessons. Another type of group would be a collaborative lesson study (Collet, 2019), which is for planning lessons collaboratively with a colleague and later revisiting with each other to see how your respective lessons worked out.

### *Peer-Coaching*

Peer-coaching is when two peers work together to improve their teaching practices by focusing on specific dilemmas within their respective classes. When participating in peer-coaching, work collaboratively with one of your professional peers to improve your respective teaching practices (Díaz-Maggioli, 2004, 2012). During a pre-determined time (e.g., one month), collaborate to better understand classroom challenges and identify solutions. This works especially well with colleagues who teach at the same institution. For example, if two of you teach the same behavior-challenged students, consider providing mutual support by implementing peer-coaching. Such coaching can consist of visiting each other's classrooms and then following up with feedback and reflection.

### *Research Seedbeds*

A research seedbed is an extracurricular learning community consisting of pre-service teachers who learn to do research with the guidance of a professor (Saavedra-Cantor et al., 2015). It is organic in nature and can be derived from the initiative of students, professors, or researchers. When joining a research seedbed, be sure that you and your colleagues share a common interest (Mesa Villa et al., 2020). Then, collaborate with others in decision-making processes and in defining your joint goal-oriented work. For example, perhaps you could join a research seedbed that examines the effectiveness of incorporating social media as an instructional tool.

In this chapter, you became aware that teachers (especially novice teachers) can tend to feel uncertain and isolated. You learned how to promote collaborative professionalism among pre-service teachers to minimize possible feelings of uncertainty and isolation and, also, establish a mindset of ongoing professional development. You learned that, by participating in one or more learning communities, you can develop your own collaborative professionalism, professional capital, and teacher learning. By now knowing about these dimensions and concepts, consider participating in at least one learning community to ensure positive progress along your career trajectory.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Some of the key concepts from this chapter are as follows:

- Professional capital is investing time and money into becoming a good teacher (i.e., receiving a return on your investment). It consists of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital.
- Teacher learning is based on the premise that teachers who know more teach better. It consists of knowledge-for-practice, knowledge-in-practice, and knowledge-of-practice.
- Collaborative professionalism describes how educators transform their teaching and student learning by working together with meaning, purpose, and success.
- Learning communities are educator groups such as communities of practice, professional learning communities, study groups, peer coaching, and research seedbeds.
- By participating in learning communities, all teachers (pre-service, novice, experienced) can further develop professional capital, collaborative professionalism, and teacher learning.

## Discussing

Based on the above concepts, answer these questions:

1. To what extent do you feel that isolation and uncertainty are inherent within the teaching profession? Why?
2. How can you work on your human capital, social capital, and decisional capital during the time that you are a pre-service teacher? How will this change when you become a novice teacher and then an experienced teacher?

3. Have you noticed examples of collaborative professionalism among your own teachers and professors? What characteristics of collaborative professionalism can you identify? How do you think these affected your quality of learning?
4. Based on your experiences and observations, how can you go about identifying teachers' actions as being motivated either socially or politically?

## TAKING ACTION

In a learning community, develop collaborative professionalism by doing the following:

1. Start sharing informally with your peers and respond positively to opportunities for participating in educator groups.
2. Identify your own research interests and those of your peers.
3. Join a community of learners to support pedagogy and research within your teacher preparation program and foster your ongoing development of the English language.
4. Seek opportunities to participate in research seedbeds, study groups, or research groups on topics of interest.
5. As a pre-service teacher, reflect on implications, challenges, and social realities for teaching and learning English in local and global contexts.

## EXPANDING FURTHER

Additional insights to collaborative professionalism are provided at these websites:

- Communities of practice. <https://www.communityofpractice.ca/>
- Professional capital. <https://www.andyhargreaves.com/>
- Research seedbeds. <https://web.redcolsi.org/inicio> and *Introducción a la Estrategia Semilleros de Investigación: Encuentra tu alma semillerista*
- Study groups. <https://lessonresearch.net/>

## See Also

Aspects related to collaborative professionalism are addressed by other chapters in this book:

**Chapter 4** Humanism in English Language Teaching by B. Meadows

**Chapter 35** Developing Critical Thinking Through Inquiry-Based Learning by V. Canese

**Chapter 52** Becoming a Reflective Practitioner Through Action Research by V. Canese

**Chapter 53** Doing Research in the ELT Undergraduate Classroom by A. Salas

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Photo by M ACCELERATOR on Unsplash

# CHAPTER 55

## Building and Engaging with Your Professional Community

# Building and Engaging with Your Professional Community

Mark S. Algren

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## Abstract

You are never too young, too new, or too inexperienced (or too old or too experienced) to engage with your professional community. Upon completing your teacher preparation program, you will be well-versed in the latest literature of our English language teaching field. That will be the ideal time to begin building and engaging with your professional community. In this chapter, you will develop an understanding of what it means to be a professional educator, not just a teacher. You will learn to create a personal development plan that includes both receiving knowledge from colleagues locally, regionally, and internationally as well as contributing knowledge to others. You will also learn to explore multiple avenues of professional engagement. Finally, you will receive ideas on how to develop a network of professional colleagues, both local and distant.

*Keywords:* professional community, professional engagement, personal development plan, building networks, colleague network

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## Introduction

The children's book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 2011) has an amusing conversation about finding direction when you don't know where you are going. Lost in unfamiliar territory, Alice asks the Cheshire Cat:

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don't much care where—” said Alice.

“Then it doesn't matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

“—so long as I get somewhere.” Alice added as an explanation.

“Oh, you're sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.” (p. 74)

As you enter your teaching career, you may feel like Alice. You are in unfamiliar territory where you are now the leader (teacher) and not a follower (student). You may feel overwhelmed by wanting to know more about grammar, vocabulary, writing, reading, listening, pronunciation, pedagogical skills, assessment, lesson planning, classroom discipline, educational technology, materials development, and everything else. Herein lies the role of professional development (PD). I once asked a workshop audience to explain PD. After defining the concept, participants named several activities: attend conferences, read books, join professional associations. Then one person said, “Make a plan for what you need to learn and then find ways to learn it.” That gave everyone new insight into planning their own PD. Now let's look at how you can develop a plan for yourself, and how you can implement it.

## Background

By teaching English, you provide your students with a life-changing and career-enhancing opportunity. Hence, you should never underestimate the value of your work and how you impact students' lives by enabling them to communicate effectively in another language. When asked “What do you do?”, teachers often denigrate themselves and their career by saying: “I am just a teacher.” We must remove the collocation just + a teacher from our vocabulary. Instead, we must state our profession with pride: “I am a teacher, and I change lives.”

Since the 1960s, our English language teaching (ELT) profession has been supported worldwide by two global professional associations. The TESOL International Association (TESOL, formerly called Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.) is headquartered in the United States. The International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) is headquartered in the United Kingdom. Both associations provide standards, PD opportunities, and advocacy. Both also foster engagement with a community of scholars through special interest groups and country-based affiliates and chapters. Together, these associations have been eminently instrumental in developing our field. Through advocacy and collective voice, TESOL and IATEFL unify us and provide collective and individual strength.



Hence, your engagement in a professional association, either locally or globally, is essential not just for the growth of your own career but also for the health of our profession.

At TESOL's 2006 convention, Dr. Elliot Judd's presidential plenary focused on the traits of a profession. Judd (2006) explained how professions (e.g., teachers, lawyers, engineers, pilots, physicians, architects, pharmacists) require specialized preparation and licensing, and how professionals must continually do PD to revalidate their license. As ELT professionals, we are granted authority, power, prestige, and status based on our preparation and the research undergirding this preparation. However, to maintain public trust, we must systematically upgrade our knowledge and skills by participating in PD opportunities and putting new ideas into practice. In other words, each of us must keep building our professional knowledge base so that we can speak with authority.

## Major Dimensions

This well-known statement, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail,” means that you are unlikely to succeed unless you have a plan. Although we might enjoy the inefficient serendipity of the unexpected, we usually prefer planning ahead to maximize time and resources. With a plan in mind, you can effectively engage with your professional community and guide your development in a thoughtful manner.

Businesses and organizations create strategic plans, usually three to five years long, to guide their decisions about allocating resources—including money and staff—to achieve goals. Before a strategic plan ends, an organization reviews its successes and shortcomings and then develops a new plan. Individuals can also have a strategic plan called a Personal/Professional Development Plan (PDP). By definition, a PDP is self-centered with the primary purpose of one person identifying new knowledge and skills needed to further develop oneself as an instructor or administrator.

While developing your PDP, you must decide how to reach your goals. Many new professionals start by picking low-hanging fruit (i.e., choosing easy things that are readily available). This could be viewing a professional website or attending a PD event (e.g., webinar, workshop, symposium), either virtually or face-to-face. Other opportunities include choosing conference sessions to attend or books to read. With internet connectivity, most PD opportunities are no longer isolated activities of a single learner focused on a local entity, but rather connected activities of multiple learners engaged in a global community. While still pursuing your college degree, you can begin interacting with a global community of scholars who share your interests.

Engaging with a professional community includes sharing ideas with colleagues. Your unique perspective as an English teacher has been shaped by your teacher preparation program and your life experiences, which include all teachers and classmates throughout your education, as well as by your own students. While ideas and practices that you use may seem commonplace to you, these same ideas can provide important insights to others. Hence, you should not hesitate to share your ideas, experiences, techniques, and observations. You can do this written or orally, such as by writing a newsletter article or giving live or virtual presentations. If you are unsure or fearful about giving a presentation, just think of it as simply sharing your best ideas with some new friends who want to listen to you.

## Pedagogical Applications

### *Developing a Professional Development Plan*

The first step toward participating in a professional community is developing your PDP. This requires identifying what you want to learn to enhance your career options and deciding how you want to prepare to be ready for these options. The main purpose of a PDP is to do the personal, thoughtful work of reflecting on three aspects: (a) knowledge and skills you want to develop, (b) employment and volunteer positions to prepare for future career opportunities, and (c) your targeted time frame(s).

For the short term, you probably want to develop pedagogical skills and learn more about the overall ELT field. For the medium to long term, you want to think about where your career is headed, what type of work and volunteer positions you would like, and how you want to participate in the field at large. By making a list, you can convert the PDP from a seemingly unapproachable task into one that is doable and even enjoyable. In fact, your emerging list might become so long that a new difficulty arises—that of narrowing your ideas to fit your time and available resources. The important thing is that you have a PDP, which is a plan for making decisions among the competing opportunities that will soon appear on the horizon.

The first PDP of novice English teachers usually focuses on enhancing teaching skills. This PDP is informed by your interests, personal preferences, teaching journals, and lesson plan reflection notes as well as by ideas from your students and colleagues. However, because this is your plan, you can change it as needed. Sometimes you may need to adjust your PDP to meet employer expectations. For example, when I started teaching at the University of Kansas in 1993, I was excited about enhancing my ability to teach listening and speaking skills. Yet, quite unexpectedly, I was charged with developing and launching a computer lab in time to start the new school year. Although I had some experience with computer-mediated instruction, I urgently needed to learn much more. That challenge caused an overnight shift in my PDP.

### *Engaging With a Professional Community*

Everyone's PDP needs a section on career development, which includes building and engaging with a professional community. Although some educators might confine their professional engagement to local communities, the venues for virtual engagement have no boundaries. The internet offers endless materials for teacher education, innumerable websites for career development, and myriad opportunities for interaction with colleagues worldwide. By using internet and other digital tools to engage with your professional community, locally or globally, you will be able to

- build community with others who share your interests,
- have access to a community who can answer your questions and provide guidance,
- participate in a community that values your contributions, and
- add your voice to many other voices for advocating your professional interests.

### *Volunteering With a Professional Association*

An easy and fulfilling way to engage with a professional community is by volunteering with a professional association. For example, when I urgently needed to learn about computer labs and was fortunately able to attend the 1994 TESOL convention, I conscientiously spent my time at the conference's Electronic Village (EV). In this computer-focused community, I was welcomed

with open arms although I didn't yet know any one nor did I have knowledge to share. By the end of that convention, I was volunteering my time to work in the EV alongside new friends and reciprocating their support by welcoming others who, like me, stopped by for help. By the end of those four days, I was asked by EV colleagues, who were members of TESOL's Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Interest Section, to serve on CALL's Steering Committee. Two years later, I co-chaired the EV.

Each of us must decide how much time we are able to give as volunteers in our professional field. However, regardless of the time you spend volunteering with a professional association, your volunteer work will be immensely rewarding. Wherever you are, you can find volunteer opportunities that will enhance your PD while also helping others.

### ***Supporting a Local Association (e.g., Paraguay TESOL)***

In whichever country you work, you should join and support your local professional association. For example, Paraguay TESOL (PARATESOL) is the country-based association for ELT educators in Paraguay. Founded in 1989 as an affiliate of the TESOL International Association, PARATESOL serves educators from preschool through university who teach English, teach other subjects in English, or serve as administrators at these institutions. It is also for pre-service teachers pursuing college degrees or certificates at teacher preparation institutes. Like all TESOL affiliates worldwide, PARATESOL has an executive board, several committees, periodic workshops, an annual conference, a website, and social media presence. Its board and committees are comprised of volunteers who understand that "Many hands make the work light" and devote their time and talent to support PARATESOL and the ELT profession in general. PARATESOL volunteers meet regularly with professionals at local language teaching entities and thus become acquainted with ELT leaders. By doing so, they enjoy the gift of regular conversation with colleagues not just about association operations but also about the field's evolving issues and challenges, both local and global. These connections lead to other connections and open multiple pathways to professional engagement. I sincerely hope you will be inspired to get involved so that you can also enjoy these same benefits.

Associations like PARATESOL organize PD opportunities for seeking professional growth and for building connections within a community of scholars. This can be especially important for instructors in remote areas who are the only English teacher in their region. Even individual teachers in remote schools can use their phones to access internet-based PD opportunities. Local groups can offer workshops or establish social media presence to discuss issues of concern. A professional community, small or large, can provide much needed support such as ideas and resources. For example, you can easily share documents like lesson plans and worksheets on Facebook with others in your Facebook group.

### ***Establishing Global Connections***

The internet has opened a world of opportunities for engaging with a global community of scholars and practitioners. Search engines can generate hundreds of finds for organizations and groups. For example, my recent Facebook search generated 95 groups using <TESOL> and 84 groups using <IATEFL>. Teacher discussion groups abound on social media venues. You can find affiliated groups on the websites of international associations like TESOL. You can also network by attending conferences and workshops (virtually or in person), volunteering to help at these events, and submitting presentation proposals. Another way to meet new colleagues and expand your web of professional connections is through chats/comments of online journals.

Guided by your PDP and by your engagement with professional colleagues and associations, all of you can accomplish much more than what you may have thought possible. That's because you are advancing together in your respective careers with reciprocal support, to and from one other. Your future and your students' future can be summarized in this excerpt from the poem *Youth* by American poet Langston Hughes (1994), who lived in my hometown of Lawrence, Kansas:

We have tomorrow

Bright before us

Like a flame. (p. 39).

## KEY CONCEPTS

Here are some key concepts about building and engaging with your professional community:

- Keep a journal about your teaching and write what went well and where you think you could improve.
- Develop a PDP that includes plans for developing knowledge and skills, your career path, and your engagement with the profession; include ideas for immediate action (within the next year or two), medium-term goals (3 to 5 years), and long-term goals (more than 5 years).
- Engage with a community of scholars, either through an association or independently, by attending meetings or participating in online activities.
- Contribute your time and talent to an association or group of teaching professionals.
- Expand your technology skills and your knowledge of how technology can benefit student learning.

## Discussing

Based on what you learned in this chapter, develop meaningful answers to these questions:

1. What are three benefits of developing, reviewing, and revising a PDP?
2. Why is it important for teachers to engage with their professional community of scholars?
3. What value is there for classroom teachers who belong to a professional association?

## TAKING ACTION

To practice what you have learned about professional engagement, do the following:

1. Based on what you know about the ELT field, write a one-page PDP as a pre-service teacher, and then make plans to update it during your second year of teaching.
2. Explore the website of an international ELT association (TESOL International Association or IATEFL) and of a professional association in your region or country (e.g., PARATESOL if you teach in Paraguay). Briefly outline PD activities provided by these associations and identify opportunities that help connect members with one another. Describe how you might engage in one or more of these associations.

## See Also

Aspects related to professional engagement are provided in the following chapters of this book:

**Chapter 1** *The Teaching of English in Global Contexts* by V. Canese

**Chapter 52** *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner Through Action Research* by V. Canese

**Chapter 53** *Doing Research in the ELT Undergraduate Classroom* by A. Salas

**Chapter 54** *Promoting Collaborative Professionalism Among Pre-Service Teachers* by D. Pineda

## EXPANDING FURTHER

Websites for worldwide ELT professional associations:

- *English Language Testing Society* is a membership association that advocates excellence in English language testing worldwide. <https://eltsociety.org/>
- *International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL)* is a membership association based in the United Kingdom. <https://www.iatefl.org/>
- *TESOL International Association* (formerly Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.) is a membership association based in the United States. Especially useful is the free TESOL Resource Center for lesson plans, which is located under the “Connect to TESOL” tab. <https://www.tesol.org>

Websites with ELT resources provided by governments of Anglophone countries:

- *American English* from the U.S. Department of State provides a compendium of English teaching resources. <https://americanenglish.state.gov/>
- *Discover Mauril* is a free resource from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and can be accessed via an app or on a computer. Audio/video materials focus on high-interest current event topics and include comprehension assessment questions. This CBC site starts with a placement test. <https://mauril.ca/en/>
- *English Online* by the New Zealand Ministry of Education provides high-quality resources. <https://englishonline.tki.org.nz/>
- *Learn English* from the Australian Broadcasting Company (ABC) offers, among other things, sections on elements of English grammar and materials writing. ABC also provides links to video courses. <https://www.abc.net.au/education/learn-english/>
- *Teaching English* from the British Council offers high-quality resources that can help you in the classroom as well as materials and courses to help you with continuing your PD. <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/>

Several other websites with ELT resources:

- *Dave’s ESL Café* is the Internet’s ELT meeting place for ESL/EFL teachers and students from around the world. <http://www.eslcafe.com/>
- *ELTWeekly* supports the ELT field and features articles, research papers, book reviews, conferences, seminars, webinar information, and much more. <http://eltweekly.com/>
- *English Club*, the world’s premier FREE website for learners and teachers of English, offers discussion forums to interact and learn from others. <https://www.englishclub.com/>
- *ESL Made Easy* includes tips, tools, and resources for tutoring and classroom teaching. <http://www.eslmadeeasy.ca/>
- *Linguistic Funland* is a meta-site of links to hundreds and thousands of other sites about language teaching. <http://www.linguistic-funland.com/>

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## About the Author

**Mark Algren** began teaching English in 1979 in Hong Kong, followed by 14 years as university instructor and administrator in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. He then taught and directed ESL programs at the University of Kansas and University of Missouri (USA). He has published numerous articles and book chapters and delivered over 150 presentations in 24 countries on 5 continents. Before and after being president of the TESOL International Association, Mark assumed so many responsibilities that he received the James E. Alatis Award for Distinguished Service. He has also served as accreditation commissioner for the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation, and trustee of the English Language Testing Society.

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# Epilogue

Leslie Barratt

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*Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning* is an appropriate title for this book because of its expansive nature—recognizable by anyone who has read even just a few chapters. More than 60 authors from nine countries contributed 55 chapters to this book. Arranged in nine parts, these chapters cover a vast range of topics that are valuable to all educators teaching English regardless of their setting.

An Epilogue typically summarizes the main points of a given book. However, because the Prologue provides such a summary, this Epilogue instead focuses on how readers can best use this book. Likewise, because the Prologue emphasizes how instructors can employ the contents from this book in their teacher preparation courses, this Epilogue focuses on how all readers can benefit, including those who are reading these chapters as assigned coursework.

Given the expansiveness of this volume, it may be difficult for you to reflect on all of it at once. Instead, start by asking yourself this simple question: How can the things I learned in this book affect my teaching? You could ask this question after reading a selected chapter, all chapters in one of the book's nine parts, or the entire book. However, even if you have already graduated with your degree or have taught for several years, it is never too late to reflect on how this book can enhance your teaching. In the future, you might even consider re-reading this book or going back to your favorite chapters. If you revisit this book, ask yourself how its chapters can continue to support your lifelong learning, perhaps as ongoing professional development or within future studies or research endeavors.

To maximize what you can learn from this book, think about why it was written. As explained in the Prologue, it was originally planned as a textbook for pre-service English teachers during their teacher preparation program in Paraguay. However, when this plan became reality, the actual book had doubled its anticipated size and expanded its scope. It had become a volume that could also serve as a major resource for experienced teachers who wanted to fill possible gaps in their knowledge and skills. These gaps could be aspects that had not been included in these teachers' pre-service teacher preparation programs such as developments that emerged after having graduated. Later, these teachers might discover gaps in their own knowledge such as the importance of social emotional learning, the benefits of translanguaging, and the use of technology for teaching and learning.

The Prologue provides several suggestions on how this book can be used for fulfilling its original purpose, that of preparing pre-service teachers. Here in the Epilogue, I provide suggestions on how this book can be used for fulfilling another purpose, that of providing professional development for experienced teachers. With that goal in mind, I encourage all readers, including those who contributed chapters to this book, to look through the book's table of contents and identify book parts and chapter titles that might offer new information, new strategies, or new ways to think about teaching and learning.



If you are reading this volume primarily as a textbook, you have probably read chapters assigned by your course instructors. Nevertheless, you can also benefit from other chapters listed in the **See Also** section of each chapter. By reading these related chapters, you will gain an even broader understanding of the topics in the assigned chapter. By doing so, you might even be previewing some chapters before they become assigned readings in one or more of your future courses.


For those who are embarking on a thesis or dissertation, this book can be invaluable. First, think about whether you want to focus your research on language, learners, or learning. Next, examine the titles of the nine parts listed in this book's table of contents and think about the variety of topics represented by each of these parts. Then, carefully examine the chapter titles within each part and think about topics that might be represented by these chapter titles. Based on this, identify a part with chapters that seem to fit well with your projected interest. After identifying this part (e.g., Part VIII Assessment), read the abstracts for the chapters in that part and narrow the scope of a potential topic. From within this part, choose one or more chapters that could support this topic. Finally, carefully read one of your chosen chapters as well as related chapters listed in this chapter's **See Also** section, recommended websites in its **Expanding Further** section, and cited sources in its **References** section—especially via online links such as the digital object identifier known as DOI. Use the information gathered from these multiple sources to guide you in making decisions about your research questions, theoretical stance, and research methodology. Because this book contains contributions from around the globe, it can provide a global perspective of your chosen topic as well as a sense for the variety of perspectives held by diverse scholars.

Indeed, the large number of contributions from around the world that represent the thinking of multiple scholars in the 2020s is one of the many reasons that makes this book so special. Originally envisioned as a textbook for a specific audience (pre-service Paraguayan teachers), this book expanded its scope to the extent that it became a volume offering an amalgamation of concepts important to all language teaching professionals. Furthermore, as stated in the Prologue, because this volume is an online open resource publication, it offers equal access to all English teachers worldwide. As such, the impact of this volume cannot be overstated.

For this *Teaching English in Global Contexts: Language, Learners, and Learning* book, we owe our thanks to the editors, Valentina Canese and Susan Spezzini. When they began this project, it was envisioned simply as an e-textbook for teacher preparation in the Paraguayan context. With limited time to undertake such a project, Valentina encouraged Susan, her longtime colleague, to collaborate while in Paraguay as a Fulbright Scholar. When Valentina and Susan realized the broad scope of their ambition, they emailed a call for chapters to colleagues near and far, and these colleagues then forwarded this call for chapters to an even wider pool of potential authors. The result of this global collaboration is the volume that you have just read. To the editors, to the authors, and especially to Julia Austin for her careful editing, we are extremely grateful.

In closing, this Epilogue acknowledges the contribution made to this book by the government of the United States of America through its Fulbright grant program (<https://fulbrightscholars.org/>). In truth, this book was only possible because of the Fulbright scholarship received by Susan so that she could collaborate with Valentina, herself a two-time Fulbrighter. As also a recipient of two Fulbright awards, I am intimately aware of the deep lifelong connections that international scholarships foster as well as the global impact of these

associations. As such, I am excited to share this volume with my own colleagues around the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leslie Barratt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

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INSTITUTO SUPERIOR DE LENGUAS

Facultad de Filosofía

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Asunción, Paraguay

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**Teaching English in Global Contexts** involves understanding cultural diversity and intercultural communication, as well as being able to adapt your teaching to meet the needs of diverse learners in all contexts. Through a collaborative process, the authors of this book have come together to discuss the principles and pedagogical implications for adopting an international or global perspective toward the teaching of English, which include knowing our learners, promoting multiculturalism, understanding language variation, creating conditions for language learning, designing high-quality lessons, and engaging in a community of practice. Organized into nine parts that represent the language, learners, and learning aspects identified in the book title, its 55 chapters provide pre-service teachers in international contexts with a quality open-access educational resource that addresses these principles and pedagogical implications.

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